
BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
(Crown & Covenant Publications)
7408 Penn Avenue • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15208

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This project is made possible by the History Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (rparchives.org).



BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME I.

JANUARY 1946

NUMBER 1.

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

Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IV.4.

A Monthly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the System of Doctrine set forth in the Standards of the Covenanter Church. Subscription \$1.00 per year.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. # 1.

Clay Center, Kansas.

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

Volume I.

January 1946.

Number 1.

STUDIES IN THE LARGER CATECHISM OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

Introductory Note:

How to Use this Material

The Larger Catechism consists of 196 questions and answers arranged according to the following plan:

Nos. 1-5. The Foundation. The purpose of human life; the existence of God; the Word of God.

Nos. 6-90. What Man Ought to Believe Concerning God. God's attributes; his unity; the Trinity; God's decrees and his execution of them in creation and providence; the covenant of works; the fall of the human race; sin and its punishments; the covenant of grace; Christ the Mediator, his divine and human natures, his divine Person, his names, titles, offices, estates; the redemption procured by him; the gospel; the Church, visible and invisible; union and communion with Christ in grace and glory; effectual calling; justification; faith; adoption; sanctification; repentance; final perseverance; assurance of salvation; death; the state of souls after death; the resurrection; the judgment.

Nos. 91-196. What the Scriptures Require as the Duty of Man. God's revealed will; his moral law; uses of the law to various classes of men; the Ten Commandments; how the commandments are to be understood; the meaning of each commandment; human inability to keep the commandments perfectly; various degrees of guilt; the wages of sin; what God requires of us that we may escape the penalty of sin; the means of grace: the word and its uses; the sacraments and their observance; prayer and how it is to be practiced; the Lord's Prayer and its uses; meaning of each petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The present studies in the Larger Catechism have been prepared for class or discussion group use and have been actually tested in such use. However they are also suitable for individual study or for reference.

In class or group use, it is suggested that the leader propound each question but withhold the printed answer until the members of the class have had an opportunity to present their own answers to the question. Then the printed answer may be read and compared with the answer or answers that have already been given, and discussed in the light of the Scripture references.

The Scripture references should always be looked up, and an effort should be made to show how each particular reference is related to the subject under discussion. There is but little value in merely reading a large number of verses, unless the leader or members of the group show the relation of each Scripture verse or reference to some element of the doctrine

stated in the Catechism. In these studies, a few words will be added to each reference or group of references to point out their relation to the subject.

It is suggested that a group of adult church members study the Larger Catechism during the Young People's hour on Sabbath evenings. Such a group might be led by the minister part of the time, and at other times by elders or other members taking turns. The leader should always study the material in advance of the group meeting.

The aim of these studies is not to solve all problems or explain all mysteries, but to present the system of doctrine found in the Word of God in an orderly and understandable manner. It should always be borne in mind that the doctrines of the Bible form a system. They are not a miscellaneous collection of isolated truths, but an organism. Each part of a doctrine is related to the whole doctrine, and each doctrine is related to all the other doctrines. The student should seek not merely to grasp the individual doctrines (such as the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of Christ's two natures, or the doctrine of sanctification, for example), but to see how each of these is related to other doctrines and how each fits into its proper place in the divinely revealed system of truth.

The Foundation, Nos. 1-5.

Lesson 1. For the Week Beginning January 6, 1946.

Q.1. What is the chief and highest end of man?

A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever.

Scripture References:

Revelation 4:11 (All things created for God's pleasure). Romans 11:36 (All things exist for God). 1 Corinthians 10:31 (It is our duty to glorify God in all we do). Psalm 73:24-28 (God teaches us how to glorify him, and that we shall enjoy him in glory). John 17:21-24 (Our supreme destiny is the enjoyment of God in glory).

Questions:

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

It means the purpose for which something exists.

2. Could a consistent evolutionist agree with the Catechism's answer to Question 1?

No. A consistent evolutionist could not agree that man's chief and highest end is to glorify and enjoy God, for he must hold that the human race has evolved from a brute ancestry by a process which originated in blind chance. Therefore he must hold that the human race cannot exist for any purpose outside of itself. There are "theistic evolutionists" who believe that evolution was God's method of creation, but they are not consistent, for creation concerns the origin of things, while evolution starts by assuming that things already exist and seeks to show their

development to other forms. The consistent evolutionist cannot believe in creation by the sheer power of God, and therefore he cannot believe that the human race exists not for itself but for God.

3. What is wrong with the following statement: "Men's chief and highest end is to seek happiness" ?

This statement makes the purpose of human life something within man himself. This cannot be reconciled with the Scripture teaching that all things exist for God because they were created by God for his own glory. To say that man's chief end is to seek happiness is contrary to belief in the God of the Bible. Of course man's real happiness results from his recognizing and seeking his true end, namely to glorify and enjoy God his Creator.

4. What is wrong with the following statement: "Men's chief and highest end is to seek the greatest good of the greatest number" ?

This statement involves the same error as the one just discussed, for it makes the purpose of human life something within men himself. The difference is that the present statement makes the happiness or welfare of the human race in general the purpose of human life, whereas the former statement made the happiness of the individual the purpose of human life. Both are contrary to the Bible teaching concerning God the Creator and End of all things. Both are essentially the same as the pagan idea that "Man is the measure of all things". Because modern life is largely dominated by this false idea, it is essentially pagan rather than Christian. Even some churches have absorbed this pagan viewpoint and talk about God being "a democratic God".

5. Why does the Catechism place glorifying God before enjoying God?

Because the most important element in the purpose of human life is glorifying God, while enjoying God is strictly subordinate to glorifying God. In our religious life, we should always place the chief emphasis on glorifying God. The person who does this will truly enjoy God, both here and hereafter. But the person who thinks of enjoying God apart from glorifying God is in danger of supposing that God exists for man instead of man for God. To stress enjoying God more than glorifying God will result in a falsely mystical or emotional type of religion.

6. Why can the human race, or any member of it, never attain true happiness apart from glorifying God?

Because true happiness depends on our consciously aiming to serve the purpose for which we were created, namely to glorify God and enjoy him. Consciously to serve the purpose for which God created him is man's glory, and apart from a conscious consecration of himself to that purpose, there can be no real, deep and satisfying happiness. As Augustine said in his Confessions, "Thou hast created us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless until it finds repose in Thee".

Lesson 2. For the Week Beginning January 13, 1946.

Q.2. How doth it appear that there is a God?

- A. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.

Scripture References:

Romans 1:19,20 (God revealed by the light of nature and by his works). Romans 2:14-16 (The law of God revealed in the human heart). Psalm 19:1-3 (God revealed by the heavens). Acts 17:28 (Human life totally dependent on God). 1 Corinthians 2:9,10 (God's natural revelation inadequate; not equal to his special revelation by his Spirit). 2 Timothy 3:15-17 (Holy Scripture a sufficient revelation for salvation). Isaiah 59:21 (God's word and Spirit given to his covenant people, unlike his natural revelation which is given to all mankind).

Questions:

1. What is meant by "the light of nature in man" ?

This means the natural revelation of God in the human heart and mind. This "light of nature" is common to all mankind. The heathen who have never received God's special revelation, the Bible, have a certain knowledge of God by nature, and a certain consciousness of the moral law in their own hearts (Romans 2:14-16). To believe in God is natural to mankind; only "the fool" says in his heart that there is no God.

2. What is meant by "the works of God" ?

This expression means the revelation of God in nature outside of human nature. It includes the whole realm of nature, great and small. The starry heavens as observed by the largest telescope, and the tiniest particles of matter that can be photographed by the electron microscope, all disclose the God who is their Creator and Ruler. The works of God also include all living creatures, and all God's works in the course of human history. All bear witness to the invisible God who created, preserves and controls them all.

3. What message do the light of nature and the works of God bring to mankind?

The light of nature and the works of God bring to mankind a message concerning the existence of God, his eternal power and deity (Romans 1:19,20), his glory (Psalm 19:1), and his moral law (Romans 2:14-16). This natural revelation of God and of his will is sufficient to leave men without excuse for their sins (Romans 1:20,21).

4. Why is this message of the light of nature and the works of God inadequate for mankind's spiritual needs?

This natural revelation of God and of his will is insufficient for mankind's spiritual needs, in his present fallen and sinful condition, for two reasons. (1) When mankind fell into sin, his spiritual need changed. He now needs more than he did when he was created. Men now needs salvation from sin by divine grace through a Mediator. But the light of nature and the works of God have nothing to say about salvation from sin. They reveal no gospel suited to the sinner's need. (2) Men's fall into sin changed his capacity to receive and understand even the message which the light of nature and the works of God do bring to him. Men's heart and mind became

arkened by sin (Romans 1:21,22). The result of this was that the natural revelation of God was misinterpreted and corrupted into idolatry (Romans 1:23). This lapse into false religion in turn resulted in terrible moral corruption and degradation (Romans 1:24-32). But in spite of all this, the natural revelation of God and of his will still leaves men without excuse, because their changed need and their present inability to understand that natural revelation are their own fault. Mankind is responsible not only for falling into sin, but also for all the consequences of falling into sin.

5. What fuller revelation of God and of his will do we have?

Besides the natural revelation of God, we have the supernatural revelation of God, which exists today only in the form of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This supernatural revelation of God is sometimes called his special revelation. It is called supernatural because it was given to men not through the operation of the laws of nature, but by the miraculous working of God the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

6. What are the principal differences between God's natural revelation and his revelation in the form of Holy Scripture?

- (a) The former is given to all men without exception; the latter is limited to those whom the Bible reaches.
- (b) The former is sufficient to leave men without excuse; the latter is sufficient for salvation.
- (c) God's revelation in the form of Holy Scripture is clearer and more definite than his natural revelation.
- (d) God's revelation in the form of Holy Scripture imparts many truths about God and his will which cannot be known from his natural revelation.

7. In order that God's revelation in the form of Holy Scripture may make us wise unto salvation, what is needed besides the Bible itself?

For Holy Scripture to make a person wise unto salvation there is required, besides the Bible itself, a true faith (2 Timothy 3:15, Hebrews 4:2). This true faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8; Acts 16:14), being wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 1:17-19). Thus besides the Bible itself there is required the illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit, so that the sinner can understand and appropriate the truth unto his salvation. The Holy Spirit, in his illuminating work, does not reveal any truth in addition to what is revealed in the Bible, but only enables the sinner to see and believe the truth already revealed in the Bible.

Lesson 3. For the Week Beginning January 20, 1946

Q.3. What is the word of God?

- A. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.

Scripture References:

2 Timothy 3:16 (All Scripture is divinely inspired). 2 Peter 1:19-21 (The Scrip-

tures not of human origin, but the product of the Holy Spirit). Ephesians 2:20 (The apostles --- New Testament --- and prophets --- Old Testament --- form the foundation of the Christian Church). Revelation 22:18,19 (Scripture, being of divine origin, character and authority, may not be added to or subtracted from). Isaiah 8:20 (Scripture the standard of faith and obedience). Luke 16:29-31 (No new revelation could supersede Scripture). Galatians 1:8,9 (Anything contrary to Scripture to be rejected, no matter how appealing it may be). 2 Timothy 3:15-17 (Scripture a complete and perfect rule of faith and life).

Questions:

1. Why is it proper that the Scriptures be called "holy" ?

Because they are the revelation of a holy God; because they set forth holy teaching; and because when accepted with true faith they lead to a holy life.

2. In what sense is it true that the Scriptures are the word of God?

The Scriptures are the word of God in the plain, literal sense of the word "are". They are the word of God in written form, without any other limitations whatever. That is to say, the Bible itself, as a book, is the word of God, and the actual written words of the book are the very words of God.

3. In what sense is it true that the Bible "contains" the word of God?

The Bible "contains" the word of God in the sense that the word of God forms the contents of the Bible, just as it is proper to say that the Bible contains two Testaments, or that the Bible contains sixty-six books.

4. In what senses is it not true that the Bible "contains" the word of God?

(a) It is not true that the Bible "contains" the word of God in the sense that the word of God forms only a part of the contents of the Bible, the rest being merely the words of men.

(b) It is not true that the Bible "contains" the word of God in the sense that there is a distinction between the actual written words of the Bible, on the one hand, and the word of God "contained" in them, on the other hand. This distinction, which has been popularized by the Swiss theologian Karl Barth and his followers, cannot be reconciled with the statements of the Bible itself, nor with the doctrine concerning Scripture which is set forth in the Westminster standards. If the written words of the Bible are not themselves actually the word of God, then the Bible cannot be infallible.

5. If the Scriptures in their entirety are the word of God, how can we explain the fact that they contain the words of Satan and of wicked men?

The words of Satan and of wicked men are incorporated into the word of God as quotations, in order that we may learn the lessons that God wants us to learn. The statement "There is no God" is a human falsehood, but the statement "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1) is a divine truth. The words "There is no God", are the words of

the fool, but the complete sentence, including the words of the fool as a quotation, is the word of God. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life", was the devil's lie; but the complete sentence, "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life", is the word of God, a divinely inspired and infallible record of what Satan said. When we affirm that the Bible in its entirety is the word of God, this does not mean that any verse or portion of the Bible may be taken out of its context and interpreted as if it stood alone.

6. For what two things are the Scriptures our rule?

The Scriptures are our rule for faith and obedience.

7. Why are the Scriptures our only rule of faith and obedience?

The Scriptures are our only rule of faith and obedience because as the written word of God they are unique and infallible, and therefore no other rule of faith and obedience may be placed alongside of them. This principle of course does not rule out such subordinate standards as the Larger Catechism itself, which present not another rule in addition to Scripture, but merely a systematic summary of what Scripture teaches. The Larger Catechism, for example, is a legitimate rule of faith and obedience only because, and only so far as, it is faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures. It possesses no inherent authority of its own.

8. What is wrong with saying that conscience is our guide for faith and conduct?

The human conscience cannot tell a person what to believe nor how to live. It cannot tell a person what is right and what is wrong. The conscience can only tell a person whether or not he is acting according to what he already believes to be right. If a savage believes it is right to practice cannibalism, his conscience will not reprove him for eating human flesh. If a person somehow believes it is wrong to consult a physician, take medicine or wear eye glasses, his conscience will reprove him when he does these things. The conscience can only indicate whether a person's conduct is in accordance with his beliefs; it cannot tell him whether his beliefs are true or not. Therefore the conscience cannot be the rule for faith and life.

9. If we add some other rule along with the Bible, what effect will this have on the authority of the Bible for our faith and life?

The inevitable result will be that the Bible will take second place, and something else will become our real authority for faith and life. It is not possible to have two supreme authorities in any field. Nor is it possible to have two equal authorities without making one of them the standard for interpreting the other.

10. What large church makes tradition a rule of faith and conduct along with Scripture?

The Roman Catholic Church. The effect, of course, is to make void the word of God by the tradition of the church. For the Bible is interpreted

in accordance with the tradition, not the tradition in accordance with the Bible.

11. How do the followers of Mary Baker Eddy violate the principle that the Scriptures are our only rule of faith and life?

By placing Mrs. Eddy's book, "Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures", alongside the Bible as an authority, with the inevitable result that Mrs. Eddy's book is their real authority and the Bible is nullified. "Christian Science" cannot stand with the Bible alone as its guide book; it has to have Mrs. Eddy's writings, which are utterly contrary to the Bible, to prop it up.

12. How do the Friends or Quakers violate the principle that the Scriptures are our only rule of faith and life?

By their emphasis on the mystical "inner light" as their guide for faith and life. There are verious sects of Quakers; not all are alike. But historically the "Friends" movement has emphasized the "inner light" and has tended to subordinate the Bible to the "inner light".

13. Is the New Testament more fully or more truly the word of God than the Old Testament?

No. The New Testament itself shows that our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles regarded the Old Testament as the word of God in the fullest and strictest sense, and taught this high view of the Old Testament consistently.

14. Are the words of Christ, which in some Bibles are printed in red ink, more truly the word of God than the other parts of the Bible?

No. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the word of Christ. The Old Testament is Christ's word through Moses and the prophets; the New Testament is Christ's word through the apostles and evangelists; included in the New Testament is the record of Christ's sayings during his earthly ministry; but these sayings, although spoken by God more directly than most of the other parts of the Bible, nevertheless are not more truly the word of God than the other parts of the Scriptures. See 2 Samuel 23:1,2; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Revelation 1:1, 22:16.

15. If we think of our Christian belief as a building, what part of the building would the answer to Question 3 of the Larger Catechism be?

The foundation, on which all the rest must stand. Sometimes objection has been made to this statement on the ground that the Bible represents Christ as the only legitimate foundation. This objection is without weight, as it seeks to employ a metaphor --- the idea of a foundation --- without analyzing its meaning. Christ is the foundation of our reconciliation with God, by his blood and righteousness. Christ is the foundation of the Church, by his finished work of redemption and his present exaltation in glory. But an acknowledgment that the Scriptures are the word of God and the only rule of faith and obedience must be the foundation of any legitimate formulation of Christian doctrine.

Lesson 4. For the Week Beginning January 27, 1946.

Q.4. How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the word of God?

- A. The scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.

Scripture References:

The majesty of the Scriptures: Hosea 8:12. 1 Corinthians 2:6,7,13. Psalm 119:18, 129.

The purity of the Scriptures: Psalm 12:6. Psalm 119:140.

The consent of all the parts of the Scriptures: Acts 10:43. Acts 26:22.

The scope of the Scriptures as a whole: Romans 3:19, 27.

The power of the Scriptures to convert sinners and edify saints: Acts 18:28. Hebrews 4:12. James 1:18. Psalm 19:7-9. Romans 15:4. Acts 20:32. John 20:31.

The witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart: John 16:13,14. 1 John 2:20, 27.

Questions:

1. What is meant by the "majesty" of the Scriptures?

The "majesty" of the Scriptures means their lofty or wonderful character, which lifts them far above all human writings. In the Scriptures are indeed found things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which God has revealed by his Spirit, who searches all things, even the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9,10).

2. What is the position of the Bible among the books of the world?

The position of the Bible among the books of the world is altogether unique. It has been translated into more languages than any other book; more copies have been circulated than of any other book. It is recognized as the world's greatest book from the literary point of view. But the Bible is unique especially with respect to its teachings. Among the sacred books of the religions of the world there is none that can compare with the Bible in inherent loftiness or majesty.

3. What is meant by the "purity" of the Scriptures?

The "purity" of the Scriptures means their character as the true word of God, wholly free from all impurities of error and foreign matter.

4. Why can other books not equal the Bible in purity?

Because the Bible is the only book whose very words are the product of supernatural inspiration of God, and therefore it is the only book which is infallible and wholly free of errors.

5. Why do we believe that the Scriptures are entirely free from errors?

We believe that the Scriptures are entirely free from errors, not because we find no apparent errors in the Bible, for it cannot be denied that a few apparent errors have been pointed out in the Bible, but because the Bible itself claims to be free from errors. Our belief about the Scriptures must not be an inference from facts of our own experience, but a formulation of the teachings of the Scriptures themselves about themselves. If we find some apparent errors in the Bible, that is a matter of our own experience as finders. But if we observe that the Bible represents itself as being free from errors, that is an observation concerning the teachings of the Bible. We must accept the Bible's teaching about itself just as we accept the Bible's teaching about creation, providence, salvation, heaven, hell and other matters. The fact is that the Bible teaches that the Bible is inerrant. Even though we may have some unsolved problems concerning apparent errors in the Bible, still these problems do not justify setting aside the Bible's teaching about itself, unless it can be proved that the Bible really contains errors, and that they exist in the genuine text of the Hebrew or Greek original. If that could be proved, the trustworthiness of the Bible as a teacher of truth on all subjects would thereby be destroyed. If we are to trust the Bible in what it says about God and men, sin and salvation, we must also trust the Bible in what it says about its own infallibility.

6. What is meant by "the consent of all the parts" of the Scriptures?

By "the consent of all the parts" of the Scriptures is meant: (a) that there are no real contradictions in the Bible; (b) that all the parts of the Bible form a unity, an organism, a harmonious whole, not merely a collection of separate writings with diverse ideas and viewpoints. This beautiful harmony of the various parts of the Bible is an evidence that back of all the human writers there was a divine Author, the Spirit of God, controlling them all so that a harmonious whole would be produced.

7. How many books are there in the Bible? By how many human writers were these books written? How many centuries did this work of writing require?

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. These books were written by about forty different writers. The work of writing required about fourteen centuries, from Moses to the apostle John.

8. How can the absence of contradictions in the Bible be explained?

The absence of contradictions in the Bible cannot be explained on the theory that the Bible is merely a collection of human writings. Forty men writing a collection of sixty-six books over a period of 1400 years could not possibly avoid a vast multitude of contradictions. The absence of contradictions in the Bible can be explained only by the fact that all the human writers were supernaturally controlled by God the Holy Spirit, so that the product is truly the word of God, and therefore wholly free from errors and contradictions.

9. What is the "scope" of the Bible as a whole?

The "scope" of the Bible as a whole is to give all glory to God. In this

the Bible is contrary to the spirit of paganism, ancient and modern, which is to give all glory to man.

10. Why must a book which gives all glory to God be genuine?

It must be genuine, that is, it must be what it claims to be, the word of God, because no one but God could have had a motive for writing it. Wicked men would not write a book which condemns wickedness and gives all glory to a holy, sin-hating God. Good men could not write a book on their own initiative and represent it falsely as the word of God, for if they did that they would be deceivers, and therefore not good men. For the same reasons neither devils nor holy angels could have written it. Therefore God is the only Person who could be the real Author of the Bible.

11. What fruits or results of the Bible show that it is the word of God?

Where the Bible is known and believed, wickedness and crime are curbed, human life and property are secure, education is widespread, institutions of mercy for the care of the sick, unfortunate and insane are established, and civil liberty is honored and safeguarded.

12. What is the condition of human society in places where the Bible is entirely or practically unknown?

"The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Psalm 74:20). Where the Bible is unknown or almost unknown human life is cheap and insecure; dishonesty is almost universal; men live in bondage to superstitions and fears; moral corruption and degradation abound.

13. In addition to the evidences that have been mentioned, what is needed to give us full conviction, or certainly, that the Bible is God's word?

In addition to the evidences that have been discussed, the almighty work of God the Holy Spirit in our hearts is needed to give us full conviction that the Bible is the word of God. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The evidences that have already been discussed, are valid in themselves, and may lead to a conviction of probability that the Bible is the word of God. But the work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in the heart results in full conviction or certainly that the Bible is the word of God.

14. Why do many highly educated and intelligent people refuse to believe that the Bible is God's word?

1 Corinthians 2:14, quoted above, provides the answer to this question. These highly educated unbelievers lack the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They are what Paul called "natural" men, that is, not born again. Being spiritually blind, of course they cannot see the light.

15. Why are intelligence and education not enough to enable a person to believe with certainty that the Bible is the word of God?

Because in the sinful human heart there is a strong prejudice against God

and the truth of God. The ordinary evidences are sufficient to convince a neutral, unprejudiced inquirer that the Bible is the word of God. But the fact is that there are no neutral, unprejudiced inquirers. The whole human race has fallen into sin; the human heart has been darkened; the "natural" man is gripped by a tremendous prejudice against accepting the Bible as God's word. Apart from the special work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts, there would not be a single true Christian believer in the world. There are of course unconverted people who readily assent to the statement that the Bible is God's word, by mere custom or tradition rather than by personal conviction. Such people are not really convinced that the Bible is God's word; they merely have a hearsay or second-hand faith which reflects the true spiritual faith of other persons.

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 the questions.

Question:

Is it wrong to "raffle" some article by selling "chances" at 5 or 10 cents each and giving the article to the person holding the "lucky number" ?

Answer:

The "raffle" is simply a form of gambling and is unquestionably sinful. Many Christians do not understand this, and have participated in "raffles" without realizing that they were doing wrong. The fact that the article raffled is not of great value, and that the "chances" cost only a few cents each, does not change the principle that is involved, nor make it right to participate. If it is sinful to gamble for thousands of dollars at roulette, it is also sinful to raffle a \$1 box of candy for "chances" sold at 5 cents each. If anyone can tell the difference in value to God between \$1 and \$1,000, he may be able to tell the difference in sinfulness between "taking a chance" on winning \$1 and "taking a chance" on winning \$1,000. All gambling is sinful because it is an attempt to gain something without giving an adequate value in exchange. Moreover it amounts to an attempt to make use of God's providence in order to gain something without giving an adequate value in return. There really is no such thing as "chance". What we call "chance" is simply that which cannot be humanly calculated or predicted or controlled. In reality God's providence controls every event, even the smallest, that ever comes to pass. If a coin is flipped, whether it turns out to be "heads" or "tails" was decided by God before the creation of the world. In every raffle, it is really God who decides who shall have the "lucky number". The Christian, having consecrated his life to serving God, may never stoop to the wicked world's level of trying to use God. We should understand that this is wicked, and should leave all forms of gambling strictly alone. The "punch-board" is another very common form of gambling. In principle it is identical with the raffle.

SKETCHES FROM OUR HISTORY

Columba of Iona

Columba was the great evangelist and missionary to the North Picts of Scotland. He was born in the year 521 and died in 597. When Columba started his work, no messenger of Christ had ever reached the North Picts; when he died, the work of their evangelization had been largely accomplished and well done.

Columba was born at Garten, in the county of Donegal in Ireland. An old Irish life of him says: "The noted saint forsook his homeland out of love and surrender to Christ. . . and this thought filled him his whole life through". A certain Dallen Forghaill, one of Columba's contemporaries, who may have known him personally, says of him: "He was a very prudent man, a believing Christian, learned, chaste, full of love; he was noble, friendly, the physician for the soul of every prudent man; protection for the naked, comforter of the poor. No one ever left this world who held the cross grasped in a more lively way than he." Another writer says of him: "From tender youth he cherished the most intimate love for Christ."

In the year 563, at the age of 42, Columba entered upon his mission. He went first to Scotland with twelve companions, himself their leader. Among the twelve was a certain Mochenna, a son of a chieftain of Ulster. Columba thought that this youth was needed in Ireland, and sought to dissuade him from going to Scotland, but it was no use. Mochenna replied to Columba: "You are my father; the Church is my mother; and my fatherland is everywhere, wherever I can win souls for Christ."

Instead of establishing himself on the mainland of Scotland, Columba decided to make his permanent headquarters on the island of Hy or Iona, which belonged to the Scottish kingdom of Dalriada. In later times this island was often known as Hy-Columbkille, or "Island of St. Columba". Soon after arrival, Columba and his monks built cells out of wood and earth. They built a cell for their abbot on a slight elevation. This rude foundation was destined to be of great consequence for Christendom. The Catholic historian Bellesheim says: "These are the unpromising looking buds of an establishment which was to bring the benefits of religion, culture, and civilization, during the course of time, to millions of people. Only with feelings of the deepest admiration could even men whose religious conceptions make the spirit of monasticism incompatible with the Christian religion, visit these places which are so worthy of reverence."

Here Columba spent two years without a break. In addition to the routine of supervising the monastery, he spent part of his time in manual work, and especially in copying the Bible. He is said to have made 300 copies of the New Testament with his own hands. Besides these activities, he was careful to maintain good relations with the ruler of the land. One Conal was at that time king of Dalriada. He received Columba courteously, and made him a present of the island of Iona.

The Scots of Dalriada were Christians at this time, but the North Picts

were not, Columba, therefore, sought their conversion, beginning in the year 565. In this work, of which we have no detailed knowledge, Columba remained occupied for some years.

Iona formed the center and nucleus of activity of the missionary workers who grouped themselves about Columba. Working from this base of operations, Columba established a great number of monastic foundations in both Scotland and Ireland. These new monasteries retained their bond of connection with Iona, and all together formed a single organism. From our Protestant point of view, which we believe with good reason to be Scriptural, monasticism is a perversion of the Christian religion. However we should remember that in those early days nearly all missionaries were monks, and these men were without doubt among the most faithful and Christ-like Christians of their time. They were true witnesses for Jesus Christ and his gospel, and each monastery they founded was a beacon light of Christian truth throwing its rays far out into the darkness of the surrounding paganism. Without approving of monasticism itself, we can realize and appreciate the Christian consecration of these men and the great good they accomplished by their self-sacrificing labors. And as Covenanters we are especially their debtors, for they were greatly used of God toward the conversion of Scotland to Christianity, and thus they were among those who, humanly speaking, laid the original foundations of the Covenanter Church.

As Columba felt the end of his earthly pilgrimage approaching, he said: "I shall repose from my labors, and the following night I shall go the way that my fathers have gone. . . . Be of good comfort, for the Lord Jesus will gather me unto himself. . . ." Then he slowly and laboriously climbed a high hill near the monastery of Iona and blessed the establishment he had been permitted to establish, using these words: "Small indeed and of mean appearance is this house, but it will be held in great honor, not only by the king and people of Ireland, but also by foreign princes and barbarian nations; yes, even the saints of other churches shall gaze upward toward it with admiration." At the time of his death Columba had been a missionary among the Pictish peoples for 37 years.

Adaman, who died in 704, was the ninth successor of Columba as head of the monastery of Iona. He says of Columba: "From childhood he was brought up in Christian discipline and the study of wisdom. . . . His face was like that of an angel; his speech was captivating; his activity was holy, with which he always employed his high talents and his mature intelligence to good effect. . . . He was loved by all, for a never-fading joy, which rested upon his features, gave evidence of that happy attitude of mind, with which the Holy Spirit had filled the depths of his soul."

Bellesheim says of Columba: "At all events the force of his character makes itself felt with irresistible power, and Columba belongs in just that category of bold men who have impressed the imprint of their exalted soul in ineradicable features upon the century which gave them birth. The Spirit of Christianity, however, had taken that exaltation into its service, and had mildened all sharpness in such a way that the child-soul which spoke from within the great men involuntarily conquered all hearts." Surely in Columba God gave a very great man to his Church, a man who accomplished a great work for Christ.

WHY BE A COVENANTER?

Why be a Covenanter? The Reformed Presbyterian Church is a small, unpopular denomination with "old-fashioned" beliefs and strict principles. It is easy to see that it differs considerably from other denominations. Why should we continue as members of this church which is regarded as "queer" by so many people?

Not Because of Custom

Some people have remained Covenanters just because of tradition. They attend services and follow the Covenanter manner of worship just because they are in the habit of doing so. They cannot give any real Bible reasons for their Covenanter faith and practice. If you ask them why they do not vote in political elections, they can only reply that voting is against the principles of the Covenanter Church. They are like the little girl who was asked why we do not have organs in our churches. She replied solemnly, "We don't because we're Covenanters, and Covenanters don't!" The person who is a Covenanter merely because of custom or tradition is not really a Covenanter at heart. His loyalty is not a conscientious loyalty to the truth of God; it is merely a blind loyalty to church tradition. This is a very poor reason for being a Covenanter.

Not Because of Cowardice

There is such a thing as being a Covenanter because of cowardice, remaining in the Covenanter Church just because we lack the moral courage to get out of it. Sometimes people remain in the denomination because they are afraid to offend parents or relatives by leaving it and joining some other church. Persons who do not believe in the principles of the Covenanter Church, and who do not hesitate to violate some of those principles in practice on occasion, may remain nominal Covenanters for years, because they do not dare to make a change. For them to be nominal Covenanters is the path of least resistance. But of course it really is not honest to hold membership in the Covenanter Church unless we really accept its principles and intend to practice them in our life.

Not Because of Convenience

For some people, it may be more convenient to be a Covenanter than to join some other church. A person may happen to live next door to a Covenanter church building. For others, it may be just the other way around: to be a Covenanter may involve a great deal of inconvenience, and even real sacrifice. A person may have to drive many miles to attend services in a Covenanter congregation. In some cases, it may be possible to attend Covenanter services but seldom. But inconvenience or convenience should never be the basis of our decision concerning church membership. We should join and support the church which we believe to be most faithful in witnessing for the truth, regardless of personal convenience or inconvenience. Our forefathers in Scotland suffered imprisonment, torture and death in order to worship God as they believed right. At the risk of their lives they attended "conventicles" in the wilds of Scotland. Shall we, their descendants and spiritual heirs, decide the question of our church membership according to our own convenience? God forbid!

But Because of Conviction

The person who is really a Covenanter at heart is the person who is a member of the Covenanter Church because of conviction. This means not just human opinion or preference, but conviction of truth. The person who is a Covenanter because of conviction accepts the doctrines and principles of the Church, not merely because of the tradition or authority of the Church, but because he is convinced in his heart and mind that they really are the doctrines and principles of the word of God, the Holy Bible. His loyalty is a loyalty to the written word of God. He realizes that to be a member of a religious denomination means giving his testimony and his support, moral and financial, to the doctrines and principles of that denomination. Because he is convinced in his heart and mind that the Covenanter Church maintains a fuller and more faithful testimony for the truth of God than any other denomination, his conscience constrains him to be a member of the Covenanter Church. This kind of Covenanter is not a reed shaken by the wind; he is established firmly in his heart. He knows both what he believes, and why he believes it. He can give real Bible reasons for his belief. As a member of the Covenanter Church he is convinced, honest, and faithful to his obligations, regardless of inconvenience, unpopularity or reproach. He will receive the reward of a conscientious and consistent Christian.

OUR MARTYRS' ANSWER

By the Rev. Owen F. Thompson

The stones of Scotland mark our rest;
Not laid in rows nor tended well,
But scattered over hill and dell.
Like wind-blown flowers we fell. We fell
Beneath His banner, gave our best.
We stood the test!

O Covenant Dust, in Scotland's hills,
We hear thy call. God grant our wills
May falter not, nor pass the call.
O Lord, our Christ, we offer ALL!
And may our fathers' vow of old
Be now our Covenant --- let it hold!

Yes, we have died. Among the dead
We lie. O Christ, we died for Thee!
We died for men, to make them free!
Oh, may our dying fruitful be
To rear a race who'll hold instead
Christ's Kingly Banner o'er our head.

Ye cloud of witnesses, be near!
We need your presence with us here.
And Christ, our King, for whom ye died,
Leave not Thy place at our right side.
And in thy strength we'll carry on,
Till all the kings of earth are won;
And kingdoms of the world shall be
One mighty Kingdom unto Thee.
Then from all lands a wondrous throng
Shall sing eternal praise in song.

All dead are we? Nay, spirits live;
And of our spirit to you we give.
Be true, ye coming race, be true!
Ye soldiers of the Crown, be true! . . .

(Used by the author's permission)

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume,
Or sullied snow grow white
As overnight?
Men 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.

(Mrs. Rossetti)



BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE

VOLUME 1.

FEBRUARY 1946

NUMBER 2.

*"Let Thy Scriptures be my
pure delights. Let me not
be deceived in them, nor
deceive out of them."*

Augustine

A Monthly 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. Subscription \$1.00 per year postpaid anywhere.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Publisher

R.F.D. # 1.

Clay Center, Kansas.

Paraphrase of Psalm 89: 19-37.

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 always
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 transgression 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."

(This paraphrase of a portion of Psalm 89 is intended for reading rather than for singing. 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 this Psalm are true in their fullest sense of Christ alone.)

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

- 19 -

Volume I.

February 1946.

Number 2.

Sketches From Our History

Patrick and the Evangelization of Ireland

Patrick, the great missionary to Ireland, was born about 372 A.D. His native country is not certainly known, for he does not mention it by name in his writings, but it seems certain that it was somewhere in the Roman Empire, probably in Britain or Gaul (France). Patrick's father, Calpurnius, was a deacon in the church, and his grandfather, Potitus, was a presbyter, or as we would say, a minister. Patrick's own baptismal name was Succat, which indicates that he was of the Celtic race.

At the age of sixteen Patrick was captured by a marauding expedition and sold into slavery in Ireland. He says of this experience: "I was led away captive into Ireland with thousands of others, and deservedly, because we had turned away from God, disobeying his commands, and rebelling against his presbyters, who taught us the way of salvation, and the Lord brought upon us the wrath of his indignation, and scattered us among many nations, even to the end of the earth". This statement indicates that Christianity in Patrick's home country was at a low ebb and lacked the power of godliness, but that there remained a faithful element in the church which protested against this unspiritual condition, and did what they could to proclaim the way of salvation to others. However the gospel message fell on deaf ears in Patrick's case, as he frankly admits he was no Christian at the time of his capture.

He was sold in Ireland to a man named Milcho, who set him to tending sheep at the wood of Fochlad in Connaught. Here, in what was then a desolate country, he served as a slave for six years. To a person from the civilized Roman Empire this region must indeed have seemed to be "the end of the earth". Here in his lonesomeness Patrick had time to reflect on his past life, with the result that he remembered the Christian teaching he had received in his early years at home, and he became a Christian in reality as well as in name. He says: "There the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief, that even though late I should remember my sins, and be converted with my whole heart unto the Lord my God, who had regard unto my lowliness, and had compassion on my youth and on my ignorance, and preserved me, before I knew him, and before I could understand or distinguish between good and evil, and protected me, and comforted me, as a father would a son". So complete and radical was this spiritual transformation that Patrick tells us that "the Spirit was burning within" him, and that often he would pray a hundred times in a day, and a hundred times in a night, in rain and snow, and hail, and frost.

During this captivity Patrick had a dream in which someone told him that he should escape from captivity and make his way to the sea coast,

where a boat would be waiting to receive him. After some difficulties, Patrick succeeded in accomplishing this escape, and embarked, probably from the western coast of Ireland. The master and crew of the ship were pagans. After the voyage they arrived at some country, the name of which Patrick does not give, but which seems to have been Gaul. After landing, Patrick and the ship's crew wandered for twenty-eight days through a wilderness, and ran desperately short of provisions. However, they came through to civilization alive, and sooner or later Patrick parted from the pagan sailors.

There is some doubt about the details of the next period of Patrick's life. But after a period of some years, it would seem, he became conscious of a divine call to preach the gospel in Ireland. In the dead of night he had a dream in which a certain person named Victoricus, from Ireland, came to him with a number of letters, one of which he gave to Patrick. It bore the words "Vox Hibernacum" ("The Voice of the Irish"). As Patrick repeated these words over and over in his dream, he seemed to hear the voices of the people of Fochlad calling him: "We pray thee, holy youth, to come, and henceforth walk amongst us". And so Patrick decided to go.

Before sailing for Ireland, however, Patrick returned home to visit his parents, whom he had not seen for many years. When his relatives and friends realized that he had his heart set on preaching the gospel in Ireland, they all attempted to dissuade him from what they regarded as a hazardous and foolish adventure. They urged him to remain where he could enjoy the safety and comforts of home, but Patrick, intent on obeying the will of God, refused to heed them, and when the way was open, he embarked for Ireland.

Let us consider briefly the social and political conditions in Ireland in Patrick's time. Beneath the king there were five social classes, namely, the landed aristocracy, tenants who owned chattels but no land, freemen who did not even own chattels, non-free laborers or serfs who were yet members of the tribes, and slaves who were not members of the tribes. This is a fairly complex system based on the use of land, and including both serfdom and slavery. Nominally at the head of all Ireland was a "high king", but his authority was often very slight except in his own immediate district. Beneath this "high king" there were six "over-kings" (those of Cashel, Connaught, Leigin, Aileach, Ulaid and Oriel). Beneath these six "over-kings" were a great number of tribal kings. The spirit of the country was individualistic and localistic, and there were many feuds and petty conflicts.

The religion of Ireland was a form of Druidism, with belief in spells, charms and magic. In a poem called the "Lorica", thought by many to have been written by Patrick, we get some intimations about the character of the Irish Druidism of the time:

"I bind to myself today,
The power of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The whiteness of snow,
The force of fire,
The flashing of lightning,
The velocity of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The hardness of rocks. . .

"I have set around me all these powers,
Against every hostile savage power,
Directed against my body and my soul,
Against the incantations of false prophets,
Against the black laws of heathenism,
Against the false laws of heresy,
Against the deceits of idolatry,
Against the spells of women, and smiths, and druids,
Against all knowledge which blinds the soul of man."

Patrick, or if he did not write this poem, then whoever was its author, had a powerful Celtic imagination and saw vividly all the forces of nature, which he would "bind to himself" against the druids and the powers of darkness. No doubt this state of mind was fostered by conflict with a pagan faith such as Druidism. However there is nothing reprehensible or childish about it. Similar imaginative language occurs in several of the Psalms, especially Psalm 148 where the sun, moon, stars, heavens, clouds, depths, fire, hail, snow, vapors, stormy winds, mountains, hills and all other creatures are commended to serve or "praise" the Lord, and the stormy wind is spoken of as "fulfilling his word".

Besides the druids, or priests of Druidism, there were the bards or poets. After the conversion of Ireland to Christianity, these bards became in a general way the successors of the druids. Many of these bards professed Christianity, but some were disposed to be hostile to the new religion. The bards served a useful purpose by keeping records of various sorts, antiquarian, historical, genealogical, geographical, as well as composing poems and songs about national heroes and great events.

In the district of Meath, the king was one Loigaire or Laoghaire, his full name being Laoghaire mac Neill. This king ruled from 428 to 463 A.D. To his district went Patrick to preach Christianity. Loigaire tolerated the new religion, but did not himself accept it. Loigaire formulated a new code of laws, and it is possible that Patrick, because he was regarded as a sensible man and had come from the Roman Empire, was asked to assist in this work. Although Patrick was comparatively uneducated, he was vastly better equipped for such a task than the ignorant Irish of that day. The Irish of that time were not entirely illiterate, however. Their language was written with an alphabet of twenty-one letters, based on the Roman alphabet.

Tara, the court-city of Meath, seems to have been the stronghold of Druidism. In the course of time legends grew up about Patrick and his activities, some of them being quite incredible, so that it is difficult at some points to sift historical truth from medieval legends. At any rate it seems to be a fact that Patrick approached the king's court on a great pagan festival day when the druids and civil officials were assembled at the king's court, and that he boldly challenged Druidism as a false religion and proclaimed Christianity as the only true religion. His bold proclamation of the gospel was remarkably successful.

After working in Meath and Dalaradia, Patrick went to Connaught, and later to Ulster. The "Annals of Ulster" contain the following entries: (A.D. 441) "Patrick the bishop is approved in the Catholic faith"; (A.D. 443) "Patrick the bishop in the zeal of faith is flourishing in our province". From Ulster Patrick went to southern Ireland again. He made the church at

Armagh his ecclesiastical headquarters.

Some information exists concerning the church discipline instituted by Patrick. This discipline consisted chiefly of rules for the life of the clergy. However it also contained some provisions concerning the life of Christian people in general. Among other things, it is stated that it is the duty of Christians to redeem Christian captives from slavery. Another regulation forbids Christians to accept alms or contributions for church purposes from pagans.

Patrick says that he baptized thousands of people, and ordained ministers everywhere. He founded many churches and groups of believers. Usually the church buildings were erected on land donated for the purpose by the nobles or tribal chieftains from their own property.

Patrick was always single-minded and sincere in his relations with the Irish, both pagan and Christian. He always kept his word, and never resorted to tricks or subterfuges of any kind to accomplish his purposes. Impressed with the importance and dignity of his work, he knew that the almighty power of God was behind him and that Christianity must gain the victory in the end.

Among Patrick's writings there is a letter written to a certain Coroticus, which is really a letter of excommunication against Coroticus. It is addressed to the people who lived under Coroticus, who was a chieftain in Britain and who had allowed some of his dependents, or their heathen allies, to kidnap a large number of Christian Irish people and carry them away into slavery. In vain Patrick attempted to negotiate for the return of the booty which had been stolen and the release of the captives. Failing in this attempt, Patrick denounced Coroticus in no uncertain terms, and asked all Christian people to regard him as an excommunicated person. It is worth noting that in this letter Patrick does not mention either the pope or the church of Rome; it is simply a sentence of excommunication issued by virtue of the authority held by Patrick as a bishop.

Patrick was not the first to introduce Christianity to Ireland. Before Patrick began his work of evangelization, a certain bishop Palladius had ministered to a small number of Irish Christians at a few points on the coast. Palladius remained in Ireland only a short time, however, whereas Patrick labored there for many years. The whole interior and western part of the island was evangelized by Patrick, including the wild region of Fochlad where he had once tended sheep as a slave. Patrick was thus the first to preach the gospel far and wide in pagan Ireland. He carried his message to the common people everywhere, and also to the courts of heathen kings. Patrick also organized the Christian communities which already existed in Ireland, and established Armagh as the center of organized Irish Christianity. Besides all this, he brought Ireland much closer to the Roman world, and probably diffused some knowledge of the Latin language in Ireland. Although Ireland was never a part of the Roman Empire, it had now become a part of Christendom.

Patrick did not attempt to translate the Bible into the Irish language. His Irish converts, if they were to read the Scriptures, had to learn a foreign language (Latin) in order to do so. That meant that the Scriptures

were the possession of the more educated of the clergy alone. Probably Patrick was not qualified to translate the Bible; at all events, it was not done until long after his time. It must be remembered that Patrick was working among a semi-barbarous people who had never been under the educating and civilizing influences of the Roman Empire. He was not a great scholar, but a man of action, and he worked hard and well. Other men came after him and built on his foundation.

The Costly Ointment

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." --- Matthew 26:6-13.

From John's Gospel we know that this woman was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. She seems to have been the only person who really understood the Lord's prediction that he would rise again after being crucified. Here in these verses we see the token of very great love and gratitude being bestowed on Christ. Mary brings an alabaster box of very precious, fragrant ointment, and pours it on Jesus' head. To Jesus she gave the best she could as the token of love and devotion.

Nothing is too precious to bestow on Jesus. Mary gave the best she had. If we are Christ's and know him as our divine Saviour, we too will bestow our best on him. For even the greatest and best of gifts and offerings are just nothing in comparison with our obligation to Jesus. Of course Mary was not motivated by a legal spirit but by the attitude of spiritual love and devotion. What Jesus gave up for us shows how much he loved us; what we give to him will show, at least in some measure, how much we love him.

The world cannot understand the Christian's love and devotion to Christ. "But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor". The world values philanthropy higher than worship and devotion. For the world does not know Jesus and feels no love toward him. In one of his sermons the Scottish preacher of a century ago, Robert Murray McCheyne, speaks as follows: "When you are weeping by the chiselled monument of a departed friend, you do not wonder that the careless crowd passes by without a tear. They did not know the virtues of your departed friend; they do not know the fragrance of his memory. Just so the world cares not for the house of prayer, the sprinkled water, the broken bread, the poured-out wine; for they never knew the excellency of Jesus. But with believers it is far otherwise. You have been divinely taught your need of

Jesus; and therefore you delight to hear Christ preached. You have seen the beauty of Christ crucified; and therefore you love the place where he is evidently set forth. You love the very name of Jesus; it is as ointment poured forth; therefore you could join for ever in the melody of his praises"

The world does not realize who Christ is, nor does it have part nor portion in the redemption which he has purchased for his own. No wonder the world thinks lightly of Jesus! But here in this text of Matthew we find not the world but the disciples thinking lightly of Jesus: "To what purpose is this waste?" As if something given to Jesus was wasted! What a tragedy that sometimes the disciples, Christian people, think and speak just like the unsaved world!

But Christ values and appreciates the devotion and love of his people. He took Mary's part and defended her action. He said that she was right, and had done a good work on him. Jesus values worship higher than philanthropy. And those who follow Jesus and place the higher emphasis on worship will not usually be found lacking in a proper concern for the needs and sufferings of their fellow men.

May we, too, have the love and devotion to Jesus that Mary of Bethany had, giving our best --- and ourselves --- in love and devotion and service to him.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 5. For the Week Beginning February 3, 1946.

Q.5. What do the scriptures principally teach?

A. The scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. (2 Timothy 1:13).

Questions:

1. What are the two principal parts of the teaching of the Bible?

The two principal parts of the Bible's teaching are (1) a message of truth to be believed, and (2) a message of duty to be obeyed.

2. Why is belief mentioned before duty?

Belief is mentioned before duty because in the Christian life as in the natural world, the root must come before the fruit. "As a man thinketh in

his heart, so is he". Belief is the root and determiner of life. Therefore the truth to be believed must be set forth before the duties to be performed can be considered.

3. What is wrong with the present-day popular slogan: "Christianity is not a doctrine but a life"?

This saying is one of the subtle half-truths of our day. It would be correct to say: "Christianity is not only a doctrine but also a life". It is not a question of "either. . . or" but of "both. . . and". When anyone says that Christianity is not a doctrine but a life, he is setting doctrine and life in opposition to each other. This is a very perverse tendency and is thoroughly characteristic of the anti-doctrinal prejudice of our day. Of course according to the Bible Christianity is both a system of doctrine and a life. Moreover the doctrine and the life are organically related, and the life cannot exist and grow apart from the doctrine. After all, roots are important things.

4. Which is more important in the Christian life, belief or conduct? Or should we say that both are equally important?

Which is the more important part of a building, the foundation or the roof? No doubt each is equally important for its own proper purpose. Which is more important for an automobile, a motor or four wheels? No doubt each is equally important for its own proper purpose. Our Lord said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37,38). Since to love the Lord our God with all the mind is required in the first and great commandment, we may say with confidence that nothing is more important than belief of the truth. Of equal importance in its own sphere is adorning the truth by a godly and consistent life.

We have now studied the first five questions of the Catechism, which constitute The Foundation, dealing with the purpose of human life, the existence of God, and the word of God. Having completed this introductory section, we now come to the first of the two major divisions of the material contained in the Larger Catechism, namely, WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD. Questions 6 to 90 deal with this subject, which we shall now proceed to study.

Inasmuch as the editor has knowledge of a considerable number of groups or classes that are studying this material, which were not able to begin their study the first week of January, and are therefore behind the schedule of materials provided in "Blue Banner Faith and Life", the lessons for the month of February will be made somewhat briefer than those for January, so that such groups or classes can take more than one lesson at a session and thus have an opportunity to catch up with the schedule. With the March issue lessons of approximately the same length as those in the January issue will be resumed.

Lesson 6. For the Week Beginning February 10, 1946.

- Q.6. What do the scriptures make known of God?

A. The scriptures make known what God is, the persons in the Godhead, his decrees,

and the execution of his decrees.

Scripture References:

What God is: Hebrews 11:6. John 4:24.

The persons in the Godhead: 1 John 5:7. 2 Corinthians 13:14.

God's decrees: Acts 15:14,15. Acts 15:18.

The execution of God's decrees: Acts 4:27,28.

Questions:

1. What are the four parts into which we may divide what the Bible reveals about God?

(1) The being of God, or what God is; (2) The persons in the Godhead, or what the Bible reveals about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; (3) God's decrees, or the plans God made in eternity before the universe existed; (4) The execution of God's decrees, or the carrying out of his plans by creation and providence.

2. How could we divide this information about God into two parts?

(1) Information about God himself; (2) Information about God's works.

3. Why does the Bible nowhere present an argument to prove that God exists?

The Bible does mention the fact that God has revealed himself in the world of nature and in the human heart, and that this natural revelation of God witnesses to his existence (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). But apart from such references to the revelation of God in nature, the Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God. Nowhere does the Bible present a formal argument to prove God's existence. Instead, the Bible starts out in its very first verse by assuming the existence of God, and going on to tell about his nature, character and works. Because of the revelation of God in the world of nature and in the human heart, it is natural for mankind to believe in the existence of God. By starting out by assuming that God exists, the Bible really presents the greatest argument of all for the existence of God. For this assumption of God's existence is the key that unlocks the countless mysteries of nature and of human life. Suppose we make the contrary assumption, that God does not exist ---- immediately the universe, human life, our own souls, all are buried in unfathomable darkness and mystery. The person who is not willing to start by assuming that God exists has the responsibility of showing that his theory of no God yields a better and more credible explanation of the universe and of human life than that given in the Bible. Of course the atheist and the agnostic are not able to do this. When we follow the Bible and start out by assuming the existence of God as the Bible does, then every fact in the universe becomes an argument for God's existence. For there is not a single fact anywhere that can be better explained by denying God's existence than by assuming God's existence.

4. What does the Bible have to say about the character of atheists?

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1). The

3. What false religion, known in the United States, teaches that God has a material body?

Mormonism, or the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints".

4. Why is idolatry, or the worship of God by images, always wrong and sinful in itself?

Since idolatry is plainly forbidden in the Ten Commandments, there can be no doubt as to its sinfulness. The reason back of the Second Commandment is doubtless the truth that God is a pure Spirit, and because God is a pure Spirit, no material object or picture can avoid giving a false idea of God.

5. What is the meaning of the word "infinite" ?

Literally, it means without limits, or boundless; and therefore it means that which cannot be measured.

6. In what four respects is God declared to be infinite?

In his being, glory, blessedness, perfection. (Being means existence).

7. Why does the idea of God being infinite baffle our minds?

Because we are finite beings, and the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. We cannot know all the truth about God, nor can we fully know any single part or item of the truth about God.

8. If our minds could comprehend God, and understand how he can be infinite, what would this mean?

It would mean that we ourselves would be infinite, too, and equal with God.

9. Why do our minds instinctively raise the question, "Who made God"?

Because we are created beings and therefore we naturally tend to assume that all other beings must have been created, too. But of course a God who had been made would not really be God at all, but only a creature, and we would have to think of another God who created him.

10. What do we mean by saying that God is eternal?

We mean, first, that God never had a beginning; secondly, that God will never have an end; and thirdly, that God is above distinctions of time: past, present and future are all equally present to God; to him one day is as 1,000 years, and 1,000 years as one day.

(To be continued in the next lesson)

Lesson 8. For the Week Beginning February 24, 1946.

(Continued from Lesson 7, on Question 7, "What is God?")

11. How can we illustrate the idea that God is above distinctions of time?

This idea may be illustrated by a circle. The circle has a center and a circumference. The center is equally distant from every point on the circumference. But the points on the circumference are not equally distant from each other. If we think of the circumference of the circle as representing the ages of the world's history, and of the center of the circle as representing God's position in relation to the ages of history, this may help us to realize that all the ages of history --- past, present and future --- are equally present to God.

12. What is meant by saying that God is incomprehensible?

The Catechism uses this word in the sense of 1 Kings 8:27, "Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee", meaning that the whole created universe cannot "comprehend" or contain God; although the Bible speaks of God as the one who "filleth all in all", and although God is everywhere in the created universe, still God is so great that the whole universe cannot "contain" him --- there is more beyond.

13. If God is unchangeable, why does the Bible speak of God "repenting" or changing his mind, as for example in the case of the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:10) ?

God himself never changes; God's creatures change, and the result of this is that the relation between them and God changes. In the case of Nineveh, for example, God did not really change his mind. It was the people of Nineveh who really changed; they turned from their wicked way. God did not change his mind, for the whole series of events, including Jonah's preaching and the people of Nineveh turning from their wickedness, and God "repenting of the evil that he had said he would do", was all a part of God's original plan. In other words, even before Jonah arrived at Nineveh, God planned and intended to "change his mind" following the Ninevites' change of their conduct. But when God "changes" his mind according to plan, it is clear that he does not really change his mind at all, but only changes his dealings with his creatures.

14. If God is almighty, as the Catechism says, then is there anything that God cannot do?

The Bible tells us some things that even God cannot do. For one thing, we are told that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Also, we are told that God cannot deny himself (2 Timothy 2:13). We may sum up these teachings by saying that God cannot deny his own nature --- he cannot deny his moral nature by telling a lie or doing anything unrighteous; and he cannot deny his rational nature by doing anything that contradicts itself. For example, God cannot create a square circle, or make two plus two equal five. Apart from things which would be contrary to his own perfect nature, there is absolutely nothing that God cannot do.

15. What is the importance of the truth that God knows all things?

Apart from this truth, the prophecies of the Bible would be impossible. Only because God knows all things could events be foretold hundreds and thousands of years before they occur. Also there is the practical lesson

that nothing can be concealed from God, since he sees and knows all things. And because God knows all things, we can be sure that all the wickedness of men will be dealt with in the Day of Judgment.

16. What is the meaning of the statement that God is "most holy"?

This means (1) that God is high above all created beings; (2) that God is infinitely removed from all sin and cannot have fellowship with sinful beings unless an atonement has been made for their sin.

17. What is meant by saying that God is "most just"?

This means that it is God's nature, or character, to deal with all his rational creatures exactly according to their standing in relation to God's moral law.

18. What is the difference in meaning between "merciful" and "gracious"?

The term "grace" means any undeserved favor extended by God to any of his creatures, regardless of whether they are sinful or not. But the term "mercy" means undeserved favor extended to sinful creatures, to those who are not only undeserving, but also ill-deserving. Thus, for example, it was an act of grace on God's part to enter into the Covenant of Works with Adam, since God was not obliged to do it, even though Adam had not yet sinned. God owed him nothing. But when God established the Covenant of Grace, this was a much greater act of grace than God's act of establishing the Covenant of Works, because the Covenant of Grace meant extending God's favor to sinful creatures; and therefore the Covenant of Grace shows both the grace and the mercy of God. We may say that God's mercy is his grace extended to sinful creatures.

19. What is meant by saying that God is "long-suffering" ? What illustrations of this can be given from the Bible?

When we affirm that God is "long-suffering" we mean that God in his mercy often waits long before visiting judgment upon sin, giving the sinner time to repent. The Bible is full of examples of God's long-suffering character. Revelation 2:21 may be cited. Also Genesis 15:16. The student will be able easily to think of other examples.

20. What is the meaning of God's goodness?

"Goodness" is a more general term than "grace" or "mercy". God's goodness, which is sometimes called "benevolence", is that attribute of God which leads him to provide for the general welfare of all his creatures except those who have been judicially condemned on account of sin. God's goodness, therefore, includes not only angels and men, but also the animal creation. God's goodness is exemplified not only by the Plan of Salvation, but also by God's works of creation and providence in general. For instance, the fact that millions of tons of coal exist underground, available for the use of mankind, making human life possible in cold climates, shows the goodness of God. For a Bible example of God's goodness to animals see Jonah 4:11 and Genesis 9:9,10,16.

21. What is meant by God's attribute of truth?

God's truth is an attribute which affects his knowledge, wisdom, justice and goodness. (1) God's knowledge of all things is perfectly and wholly true and exact. (2) God's wisdom is true because it is wholly unbiassed by prejudice or passion. (3) God's justice and goodness are true because they are perfectly true to his own nature or character. Scripture expresses God's attribute of truth by saying: "He abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself". More particularly, God is true in all his revelations to the human race, including the entire Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and God is reliable in fulfilling all his promises and covenants.

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 the questions.

Since the publication of the January issue quite a number of questions for answer in this department have been received. The editor desires to thank all who have shown their interest in this way. The questions are being kept on file and all will be answered in this department in the course of time. It is hoped that beginning with the March issue this department can be enlarged somewhat and a larger number of questions be discussed in each issue.

Question:

Who is the "Jesus" mentioned in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8?

Answer:

This "Jesus" is Joshua who led the people of Israel into the promised land. The Hebrew name Joshua, also spelled Jehoshua (Numbers 13:16) means Jehovah is salvation. The Greek form of Joshua is Jesus. Matthew 1:21 explains why our Saviour's personal name was Jesus, namely because he should save his people from their sins. To avoid confusion, the Authorized Version of the English Bible should have translated the Greek form Jesus, in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8, by using the Hebrew form of the name, Joshua. The American Revised Version has Joshua in both texts, with Jesus in a marginal note in each case.

Question:

Who decided what books should be included in the New Testament, and on what basis was the decision made?

Answer:

God the Father gave all authority in heaven and earth to the God-man, his Son Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus Christ appointed the twelve apostles and delegated authority to them for the establishment and organization of the Visible Church (Matthew 18:18; John 20:21). The apostles and some men associated with them wrote the books which form the

New Testament. These writings were imposed on the church by the apostles. They are divinely inspired and therefore they are "Scripture" (see Revelation 1:1-3; 22:18,19; 2 Peter 3:15,16; 1 Corinthians 14:37). The Early Church decided, on the basis of the evidence, which books had been written or sanctioned by the apostles. Because these books were known to be Apostolic, the Church recognized them as inspired Scripture. Because the Church recognized them as inspired Scripture, the Church included them in the "canon" or list of books of the New Testament. The only question that the Church had to answer concerning a particular book was: "Was this book either written or sanctioned by an apostle?" The 27 books in the New Testament were able to pass this test and accordingly they were admitted to the "canon"; a number of other books failed to pass the test, and accordingly were rejected. The Church had no choice of its own in the matter; its function was simply to pass judgment on the evidence for or against the apostolic authorship or sanction of the books. It should not be supposed, of course, that this function of the Church in connection with the New Testament books was exercised wholly at one definite time and place. Rather, the process of sifting the evidence took place over a period of many years. In the course of time the Church as a whole came to agreement as to which books had been written or sanctioned by the apostles, and therefore should be included in the New Testament.

Of-Quoted Words of Famous Christians

Augustine (North Africa; died 430): "The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so."

Martin Luther (Germany; died 1546): "It is neither safe nor right to act against conscience."

John Calvin (Switzerland; died 1564): "True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves."

John Knox (Scotland; died 1572): "Go read where I cast my first anchor" (John chapter 17).

Alexander Peden (Scotland; died 1686): "Grace is young glory."

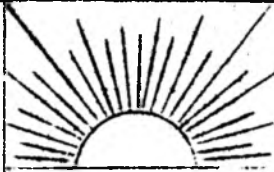
Last Words of Covenanter Martyrs

James Guthrie (Hanged, 1661): "The Covenants, the Covenants, shall yet be Scotland's reviving."

Hugh MacKail (Hanged, 1666): "Every step of this ladder is a degree nearer heaven."

Richard Cameron (Killed in battle, 1680): "Lord, spare the green and take the ripe."

James Renwick (Hanged, 1688): "Death to me is as a bed to the weary."



BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE

Volume I. MARCH 1946 Number 3.

*"They who have been inwardly
taught by the Spirit feel an
entire acquiescence in the
Scripture."* John Calvin

A Monthly 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.
Subscription \$1.00 per year postpaid anywhere.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Publisher
R.F.D. # 1. Clay Center, Kansas.

From "The Pilgrim's Progress" by Bunyan

Now I saw in my dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation (Isa. 26:1). Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "Hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood still a while, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks (Zech. 12:10). Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him, and saluted him with "Peace be to thee". So the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5); the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment (Zech. 3:4) the third also set a mark on his forehead (Eph. 1:13), and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate: so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing.

From "The Martyrs' Graves" by Marion Paul Aird

O! Martyr-sprinkled Scotland!
Thy covenanted dust,
Like gold amid our mountains,
Gleams through tradition's rust.

We bless the hands that tear away
Dark weeds from martyr graves,
And gravings o'er time's mossy urns,
Faith's witness-story saves.

Thy old gray stones are sprinkled
with
"Blood poured like water free,"
And speak in holy oracles,
O! Martyr-land, to thee!

Like promise-stars in heaven's eye,
The lyart and the leal
Sleep lonely by the heath-bound tarn,
Where eerie cries the teal.

Their prophet-mantles rolled in blood
By tribulation riven,
From Scotland's ark drove back the
flood.

"That chased them up to heaven;

Where Peden bold, in flood and fold
On mountain, moor, or glen,
All seer-like, bore salvation's cup
To fainting martyr-men.

Their home was oft the mountain cairn
Their couch the waving fern;
Their pillow oft the gray moss stone
In moorlands dark and stern.

The old cairn, where the plover wails
And fern or thistle waves,
Mid green spots in the wilderness
There seek the martyrs' graves.

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

Volume I. MARCH 1946

Number 3.

Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

CHAPTER 1

Faithful Unto Death in the Reign of Trajan, 98-117 A.D.

List of the Early Roman Emperors with Dates of their Reigns

Caesar Augustus, 31 B.C. - 14 A.D.	Otho, 69 A.D.
Tiberius, 14 - 37 A.D.	Vitellius, 69 A.D.
Caligula, 37 - 41 A.D.	Vespasian, 69 - 79 A.D.
Claudius, 41 - 54 A.D.	Titus, 79 - 81 A.D.
Nero, 54 - 68 A.D.	Domitian, 81 - 96 A.D.
Galba, 68 - 69 A.D.	Nerva, 96 - 98 A.D.
Trajan, 98 - 117 A.D.	

From the time of Julius Caesar, before the birth of Christ, the Roman government had given special protection to the Jews and their religion. When Christianity appeared on the scene, it was at first regarded by the Roman authorities as merely a new branch or sect of Judaism. Therefore in the earliest period of Christian history the Roman Empire tended to protect rather than to persecute Christianity. For example, the apostle Paul's Roman citizenship on occasion saved him from the fanatical wrath of the Jews. In the early period Roman justice, law and order made it impossible for the Jewish leaders to extirpate Christianity by persecution.

But in the course of time it became evident that Christianity was more than a sect of Judaism ---- that it was a new religion, and moreover a religion which claimed to be the only true religion in the world, and which commanded all men everywhere to repent and believe in Christ. When the Roman government realized that this was the nature of Christianity, the attitude soon

changed, and Christianity came to be regarded as an illegal religion, to profess which was to be disloyal to the state and the emperor. The early Christians refused to pay divine honors to the emperor or his image, nor would they participate in idolatrous ceremonies under any circumstances. Because they worshipped only the true God, and rejected the many gods of the heathen, the Christians were reproached with being "atheists". Because they refused to join in the immoral conduct and sinful revelries of the heathen, they were accused of being "haters of the human race". Rumors of scandalous practices among the Christians arose, as for example, that in their religious worship they practiced cannibalism. If there was lack of rain, it was blamed on the Christians, who were said to have angered the old gods. Or if there was too much rain, the fanatical heathen were ready to shout: "To the lions with the Christians!"

The first important persecution of Christians by Rome was that under Nero, 64 A.D. This however was not intended as a punishment for being Christians, but as revenge for setting fire to the city of Rome, of which crime the Christians were absurdly accused. However this cruel persecution under Nero showed the bitter hatred of Christians in the popular mind. It was the opening of a long series of bloody persecutions.

During the reigns of Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus, a period of some thirteen years, the Christians were not seriously interfered with by the government. Under the next emperor, Domitian, trouble began again. Domitian insisted on being called "Lord and God" by his subjects. He condemned many Christians to death on the charge of atheism; others were sent into exile and their property confiscated. It was during the reign of Domitian that the apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos "for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Under the next emperor, Nerva, persecution subsided, but under his successor, Trajan, it broke out with renewed fury. Though Trajan was regarded, in general, as one of the best of the Roman emperors, he was bitterly opposed to Christianity, concerning which he really knew very little. Trajan was the first to formally declare Christianity an illegal religion, and to enforce against it the Roman laws against illegal organizations.

The governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor from 109 to 111 A.D. was a friend of Trajan named Pliny. In the course of his official duties Pliny came in contact with the Christians who were quite numerous in his province. Regarding the new religion only as a "depraved and immoderate superstition", Pliny was at loss to explain its popularity. He wrote a report to the emperor, stating that this new "superstition" was spreading rapidly, not only in the cities, but also in the country districts of Asia Minor. So great was the success of the Church that in some regions the heathen temples were almost deserted. To put a stop to this growth of Christianity, Pliny had condemned many Christians to death. Some, who were Roman citizens, he sent to Rome to be tried before the emperor. Pliny asked Trajan for instructions. Should he make any distinctions between aged and young persons; or should he punish all Christians, even if they were not accused of anything except the profession of Christianity?

Trajan replied to Pliny's inquiries as follows: "You have adopted the right course, my friend, with regard to the Christians; for no universal rule, to be applied to all cases, can be laid down in this matter. They should

not be searched for; but when accused and convicted, they should be punished; yet if any one denies that he has been a Christian, and proves it by action, namely, by worshipping our gods, he is to be pardoned upon his repentance, even though suspicion may still cleave to him from his antecedents. But anonymous accusations must not be admitted in any criminal process; it sets a bad example, and is contrary to our age". Thus to be convicted of being a Christian meant the death penalty.

The persecution under Trajan was especially severe in Syria and Palestine. Symeon, bishop of Jerusalem, was accused by the Jews of being a Christian, and was crucified in the year 107, being 120 years old. Not long after this the bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, was condemned to death. He was sent to Rome and there thrown to the wild beasts in the arena. Pliny had two Christian female slaves arrested and subjected to terrible tortures in order to get them to confess the real secrets of the Christian "superstition". But the only confession he could get from them was to the effect that "the Christians assembled on an appointed day at sunrise, sang responsively a song to Christ as to God, and then pledged themselves by an oath not to do any evil work, to commit no theft, robbery nor adultery, not to break their word, nor sacrifice property intrusted to them. Afterwards they assembled again to eat ordinary and common food."

By no means all who professed to be Christians stood the test of this persecution. The growth of the Church had been very rapid and it is not surprising that there were some professing Christians who were not really born again and who fell away when to be known as a Christian was to live in daily danger of death. For a time Pliny thought that he could really succeed in suppressing Christianity. But though some fell away, the great majority were faithful to their Lord. Pliny and Trajan did not know that Christ's Church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. There were large numbers who willingly laid down their lives rather than deny Christ. The blood of the martyrs turned out to be "the seed of the Church", and soon the number of Christians was greater than ever. Moreover the persecution had the good result, in God's providence, of purifying the Church of unconverted people. When being a Christian involves suffering, shame and danger of death, there is seldom any problem of how to deal with hypocrites in the Church. The Church came out of the fires of Trajan's persecution stronger than ever, for God had turned the persecution into a blessing.

Great Power By Weak Faith

Mark 9, 1-29

This miracle is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The account in Mark is the fullest of the three. The tradition of the early Church was that Mark's Gospel records the missionary preaching of Peter. This would explain why Mark had such a detailed account ----- obviously an eyewitness account ----- of this miracle, mentioning little details which Matthew and Luke omit.

A Scene of Misery and Need

We have here perhaps the most outstanding contrast in the Gospels. Jesus

has just descended from the manifested glory of heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration, to the depths of the suffering and woe of earth at the base of the mountain. It is a contrast between the glorious harmonies of heaven and the discords and miseries of earth.

The lad's affliction showed symptoms of epilepsy. We know, however, that this was not merely a case of bodily disease, but that back of this physical affliction was demon-possession, the seizure of the child's personality by a malignant evil spirit. It was a scene of affliction, and we may regard this particular case of human suffering as a sample of the universal suffering which has come on the human race through our fall into sin. "The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery". This world is indeed a vale of tears.

It was also a scene of human helplessness. This man had brought his son to Jesus. But Jesus was not there; he had gone up on the mountain, taking with him three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, the three who were closest to Jesus and who might perhaps be supposed to have had a greater portion of Jesus' power than the rest of the twelve disciples. There were nine disciples left at the base of the mountain, and the father had brought his afflicted child to them, and they had tried to cast the evil spirit out, but had failed to do so. Not only had their attempt ended in utter failure, but it had become an occasion of scoffing on the part of Jesus' opponents, the scribes. The scribes were taking advantage of their opportunity to dispute with the disciples while Jesus was absent. Of course the scribes could not cast the evil spirit out. Yet they were disputing with the disciples, and no doubt ridiculing their failure to accomplish the miracle. Very likely they were also saying that Jesus himself would have failed, too, if he had been there. And very likely the nine disciples were emphatically denying this assertion of the scribes. It was to such a scene of defeat and disputing that Jesus and the three disciples returned as they descended the mount. To all appearances, Satan had won a victory.

To the afflicted child's father, Jesus seemed a bare possibility of a last hope. The father included himself in his child's affliction: "Have compassion on us and help us". But there is no trace of faith, really, in this plea. It starts out with an "if", and this "if" is not the "if" of faith but the "if" of despair. The father approaches Jesus not with faith but with doubt: "If thou canst do anything. . . ". As much as to say, "Thy disciples were unable to do anything; now if thou canst do anything. . . ".

The Birth of Faith in a Human Soul

Jesus' way of helping people was by their faith, but this man did not seem to have any real faith; rather, he had doubts, questions, despair. But noting that a tumult was resulting, and unwilling for Satan to hold the field any longer, Jesus takes matters in hand to bring order out of confusion and gladness out of grief. Entering into conversation with the father of the child, he first asks him a question: "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" The father answers, "Of a child", and then adds a pathetic description of the distressing symptoms of this demon-possession (verse 22).

"If thou canst do anything. . . ". This man was representing a limitation of Jesus' power as the obstacle in the way of relief. But the real problem was his own lack of faith. So Jesus turns the matter around and replies, "If thou

canst believe. . . ". The real lack in that scene was not a lack of power in the Son of God, but a lack of connection with His power in the man who needed help. By his reply, Jesus helped the poor father to the first faint, feeble beginnings of faith. Out of the depths of his desperate helplessness and need, by the gift of divine grace, faith was born. Not much faith, not strong faith, but faith, a glimmer of faith, a ray of faith, a little spark of faith. "Lord I believe. . . ".

But that first flickering flame of faith did something more for that man. It illuminated his own heart enough for him to realize something of the greatness of his own unbelief. He began to understand how little faith he really had and how much more faith he really needed. So he added: "Help thou mine unbelief." This was a new idea to him. Previously he had not regarded himself as an unbeliever, but now he frankly and freely confessed that he was one.

These words, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief", are one of the greatest cries ever uttered from the depths of a human soul. They ring down through the centuries from that day to the present as the cry of every human soul that becomes conscious of desperate spiritual need and helplessness. The first sign of real faith is a realization of the lack of faith. Here is faith at its weakest and lowest. Less faith than this, no one could have and still say "Lord I believe. . . ". But weak as it was, it was faith in Christ, and therefore it brought relief.

Faith a Channel, not a Force

The popular modern idea about faith is that faith is a force, a psychological attitude which of itself brings benefits to the human personality. But this modern view of faith is utterly contrary to the Bible teaching of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is not a force, it is a channel. It is not a power; it is a link which connects us with the power of Christ.

If faith were a force, it would have brought no relief to this man and his afflicted child, for he had too little faith to accomplish much of anything that way. But because faith is not a force, but a channel, even weak faith brought the almighty power of the Son of God to bear on his need.

The Ledo-Burma road from India to China, which was reopened by the allied victory in Burma, was a channel, not a force. Over that highway the resources of the United Nations could move to needy China, to strengthen resistance against the tyranny and aggression of Japan. This illustrates the Christian doctrine of saving faith. Faith itself does nothing; it is only a channel which connects us with our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is Christ, not faith, that saves us. The modern idea that we win through to salvation by keeping ourselves in a mental attitude of faith or optimism by our own self-discipline, is utterly contrary to what the Bible teaches about saving faith.

Faith is a gift of God, but viewed from its human side it is born of the consciousness of desperate need. Christian faith and experience are largely in eclipse today because of the widespread lack of this sense of need. The sense of need and helplessness will melt away objections to miracles and doctrines of the Bible as the summer sun melts the snow of winter. The person who feels his desperate need will not pick flaws in the Bible.

Because faith is a channel, not a force, even the weakest faith served to connect this man with the strong and mighty Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And even the weakest faith will do the same for us today. The prayer we have been studying should be the prayer of every one of us until we come to the point where we can pray a better prayer because we have a stronger faith: "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief". It is fine to have a strong faith. But never forget what even the weakest faith can do when it is faith in the Son of God.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 9, For Week Beginning March 3, 1946,

Q. 8. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

Scripture References:

The unity of God set forth in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4.
There is only one true God and all others are false: 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.
The true God is Creator and Ruler over all: Jeremiah 10:10-12.

Questions:

1. What do we call the system of religion which believes in only one God?

Monotheism.

2. What is the opposite of Monotheism?

Polytheism, or belief in many gods.

3. What idea of the development of religion is commonly held by evolutionists?

That religion developed gradually, starting with animism, or belief in spirits, later reaching the stage of polytheism, or belief in many gods, and finally attaining the highest stage, that of monotheism, or belief in only one God.

4. What should we think of this evolutionary theory of religion?

In the first place, it is plainly contrary to the Bible, which represents mankind at the creation as worshipping only one God, and later through the fall and subsequent sinful corruption of the human heart coming to believe in many gods. See Romans 1:21-23. Secondly, the evolutionary theory of religion is contrary to the known facts of the history of religions. Not only the Bible, but ordinary history, proves that monotheism came first and that it later degenerated into polytheism. In China, for example, the oldest known form of religion was monotheism, which

was the religion of the Chinese thousands of years ago; whereas today the Chinese are extreme polytheists, worshipping innumerable gods and spirits.

5. Which of the Ten Commandments forbids the sin of polytheism?

The first Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

6. What is the difference between polytheism and idolatry?

Polytheism is belief in many gods; idolatry is the worship of any god, true or false, by means of images or pictures. The heathen with their many gods are polytheists; they are also idolaters, for they worship by means of images and pictures. This may take the crude form of actually worshipping the image or picture itself, or the more rational form of worshipping the god or spirit by means of the image or picture; that is, using the idol as an "aid to worship". Those who worship the true God by means of pictures or images are idolaters but not polytheists. The Roman Catholic Church draws a subtle distinction between the worship which is due to God alone, and the honor which is given to Mary and the saints. Unquestionably there are multitudes of Roman Catholics who cannot grasp such a distinction, and who give what amounts to divine honor to Mary and the saints, and who are therefore practically polytheists as well as idolaters.

7. What terrible sin was committed by the Christian Churches of Japan and Korea during the past few years?

The sin of officially sanctioning and practicing polytheism by worshipping the Sun Goddess and the Japanese Emperor, and putting Shinto Shrines in church buildings.

Lesson 10, For Week Beginning March 10, 1946,

Q.9. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

Scripture References:

Names of three divine persons mentioned together: Matt. 28:19. 2 Cor. 13:14.

The Father declared to be God: 1 Cor. 8:6.

The Son declared to be God: John 10:30. John 1:1. 1 John 5:20 (last part).

The Holy Spirit declared to be God: Acts 5:3,4.

Though there are three persons yet there is only one God: 1 Cor. 8:4.

Exodus 20:3.

The divine persons the same in substance: Matthew 11:27. Hebrews 1:3.

The divine persons differ in their personal properties: John 1:18; 15:26.

Questions:

1. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity a stumblingblock to many people?

Because it is a mystery which human reason cannot explain.

2. What system of belief denies the doctrine of the Trinity?

Unitarianism, which teaches that there is only one person in the Godhead, the Father, and therefore that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not divine persons.

3. Is the doctrine of the Trinity contrary to reason?

No. It is not contrary to reason, but it is above human reason.

4. Does the doctrine of the Trinity contradict itself?

No. There is no contradiction involved, although opponents of the doctrine never weary of calling it "contradictory". The doctrine teaches that God is ONE in one sense, and THREE in a different sense. He is ONE in substance and THREE in persons. While we may freely admit that this is a mystery which baffles the human mind, still it does not involve a contradiction. It would be contradictory if we were to affirm that God is both one and three in the SAME sense, that is, if we were to say that there is only one person in the Godhead and at the same time there are three persons in the Godhead. This would be an absurdity, but no Christian creed sets forth any such a view of the matter.

5. What are some of the illustrations that have been proposed to help people to understand the doctrine of the Trinity?

The same chemical substance having the various forms of water, ice and steam; the relations between fire, light and heat; and many similar comparisons.

6. Why are all these illustrations without value for explaining the Trinity?

Because the Trinity is a divine mystery, has no parallels in the natural realm, and has not been revealed in nature, but only in Scripture. Besides, all the illustrations suggested make use of physical distinctions which in the nature of the case cannot represent relations between persons. Moreover, the same substance is water at one time, ice at another time, and steam at still another time, not water, ice and steam all at the same time; whereas the three persons in the Godhead are the same God, yet distinct persons, at one and the same time.

7. What phrase in the answer to Question 9 is very important as a test of real belief in the doctrine of the Trinity?

The phrase "the same in substance". Many people today say that they believe in "the divinity of Christ", for example, but they are not willing to say that Christ is the same in substance with God the Father.

8. What is the practical importance of the doctrine of the Trinity?

This is far from being a mere technical theory or abstract doctrine. Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible represents the Plan of Salvation as a compact or covenant between the persons of the Trinity. Where the doctrine of the Trinity is abandoned, the whole Bible teaching about the Plan of Salvation must go with it.

Lesson 11, For Week Beginning March 17, 1946,

Q. 10. What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead?

A. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

Scripture References:

The Father begets the Son: Hebrews 1:5, 6, 8.

The Son is begotten by the Father: John 1:14, 18; 3:16.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son: John 15:26.
Galatians 4:6.

These personal properties existed from all eternity: John 17:5, 24.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "begets" in speaking of the Trinity?

This word is the nearest there is in human language to set forth the relation between God the Father and God the Son.

2. How can it be shown from Hebrews 1:5-8 that the Son is not a created being, but was eternally begotten by the Father?

The words "this day" in verse 5 do not imply that before that the Son did not exist; rather "this day" is the day of eternity, as shown by verse 8, which calls the Son "God" and states that his throne is "for ever and ever". If the Son had ever had a beginning, he would not be called "God".

3. In speaking of the three persons in the Godhead, why do we always name the Father first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third?

Because the Bible speaks of the Father sending and operating through the Son and the Holy Spirit; also the Bible speaks of the Son as sending and working through the Holy Spirit. In the Bible this order is never reversed; the Bible never speaks of the Son working through the Father, nor of the Holy Spirit sending or working through the Son.

4. What should be our attitude toward these truths of the Trinity?

We should accept them with a reverent attitude, realizing that they are divine mysteries far beyond our power to explain or comprehend.

Q. 11. How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?

A. The scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

Scripture References:

Divine names ascribed to the Son: Isaiah 6:3-8 compared with John 12:41.
 Divine names ascribed to the Holy Spirit: Isaiah 6:8 with Acts 28:25.
 Divine names ascribed to the Son: 1 John 5:20.
 Divine names ascribed to the Holy Spirit: Acts 5:3,4.
 Divine attributes ascribed to the Son: John 1:1. Isaiah 9:6. John 2:24,25.
 Divine attributes ascribed to the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.
 Divine works ascribed to the Son: John 1:3. Colossians 1:16.
 Divine works ascribed to the Holy Spirit: Genesis 1:2.
 Divine worship ascribed to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: Matthew 28:19.
 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Questions:

1. According to the Bible, how many Gods are there?

Only one. This is the consistent teaching of the entire Bible.

2. How many distinct persons does the Bible speak of as divine?

Three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. What is the only conclusion that can logically be drawn from these facts?

The only conclusion that can logically be drawn from the Biblical data is the conclusion that there is only one God, who exists in three distinct persons, each of which is truly God and equal with the other two.

Lesson 12, For Week Beginning March 24, 1946,

Q. 12. What are the decrees of God?

A. God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:11 (God, who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, predestinates men according to his own purpose).

Romans 11:33 (God's plans and purposes cannot be explained or discovered by men).

Romans 9:14,15,18 (God's decrees do not make God the author of sin; God's

decrees are according to the counsel of his own will; God's decrees are free from constraint from any source outside of himself).

Ephesians 1:4 (God's decrees, including those concerning the eternal destiny of men, were made in eternity, before the creation of the world).

Romans 9:22,23 (God has predestinated some men to wrath and others to glory).

Psalms 33:11 (God's plans and purposes are unchangeable).

Questions:

1. What great truth is set forth in the answer to Question 12?

The truth that God has an inclusive and exact plan for the universe which he has created.

2. According to the Bible, when was God's plan made?

In eternity, or before the creation of the world.

3. What three adjectives are used to describe the character of God's decrees?

Wise, free and holy.

4. What is meant by affirming that God's decrees are "wise"?

This means that God's decrees are in perfect harmony with his own perfect wisdom, which directs the use of the right means to attain right ends.

5. What is meant by affirming that God's decrees are "free"?

This means that God's decrees are not constrained or influenced by anything outside of God's own nature.

6. What is meant by affirming that God's decrees are "holy"?

This means that God's decrees are in perfect harmony with his own perfect holiness, and therefore are utterly free from sin.

7. Should we regard God's decrees as arbitrary decisions, like the heathen ideas of "fate" or "luck"?

No. God's decrees are not "arbitrary", for they were framed according to the counsel of his will. Back of God's decrees is the mind and heart of the infinite, personal God; therefore they are totally unlike "fate" or "luck".

8. What is the aim or purpose of God's decrees?

The aim or purpose of God's decrees is the manifestation of his own glory.

9. Is it selfish or wrong for God to seek his own glory above all else?

No, for God is the Author of all things, and all things exist for his

glory. It would be selfish and sinful for human beings to seek their own glory above all else; but since God is the highest being, and there is no being higher than God, it is proper that God should seek his own glory.

10. What is the nature of God's decrees?

God's decrees are unchangeable; they cannot be changed; therefore they are certain to be fulfilled. Psalm 33:11.

11. What do God's decrees include?

God's decrees are all-inclusive; they include everything that ever happens.

12. Prove from the Bible that God's decrees include what are commonly called accidental or "chance" happenings.

Proverbs 16:33. Jonah I:7. Acts 1:24, 26. 1 Kings 22:28, 34. Mark 14:30.

13. Prove from the Bible that God's decrees include even the sinful acts of men.

Genesis 45:5,8; 50:20. 1 Samuel 2:25. Acts 2:23. In affirming, as the Bible plainly teaches, that God's decrees include even the sinful acts of men, we must carefully guard against two errors: (1) God's decree does not make God the author of sin, nor render him responsible for sin; (2) The fact of God's foreordination does not cancel man's responsibility for his own sins. The Bible teaches both God's foreordination and man's responsibility. Therefore we should believe and affirm both, although we frankly recognize that we cannot fully harmonize the two. If we give up belief in either God's foreordination or man's responsibility, we immediately become involved in gross errors which contradict the Bible teaching at many points. It is better and wiser to accept what the Bible teaches in simple faith, and confess "a holy ignorance" concerning secret mysteries which have not been revealed, such as the solution of the problem of divine foreordination and human responsibility.

14. What is the difference between foreordination and predestination?

Foreordination is a term for all God's decrees concerning anything whatever that comes to pass in the created universe; predestination concerns God's decrees concerning the eternal destiny of angels and men.

15. Why do many people object to the doctrine of God's decrees?

Most objections to this doctrine are based, not on Scripture, but on human reasoning or philosophy. It is common for those who oppose the doctrine to set up an absurd caricature of it and then demolish it with a great show of indignation. In dealing with a question of this kind no argument that does not take up, thoroughly and in detail, the various Scripture passages on which the doctrine is based, can be of any weight against the doctrine of God's decrees. Human opinions, reasonings and philosophy are of no weight whatever against the statements of God's Word. Some objections urged against predestination, or the doctrine of election, will be considered in the next lesson.

Lesson 13, For Week Beginning March 31, 1946,

Q. 13. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men?

A. God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory; and in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof: and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favor as he pleaseth), hath passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.

Scripture References:

Angels elected to eternal glory: 1 Timothy 5:21.

Men chosen in Christ to eternal life: Ephesians 1:4-6. 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

The rest of mankind passed by: Romans 9:17, 18, 21, 22. Matthew 11:25, 26.
2 Timothy 2:20. Jude 4. 1 Peter 2:8.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "immutable"?

It means unchangeable.

2. What is the first reason why God elected some of the angels to glory?

"Out of his mere love".

3. Why is the word "mere" included in this statement?

Because God was under no obligation to elect any of the angels to glory.

4. What is the second reason why God elected some of the angels to glory?

To manifest the praise of his glorious grace.

5. What is the difference between God's election of angels to glory and his election of men to eternal life?

In the case of men, God elected them "in Christ"; that is, to be redeemed from sin through the atonement of Jesus Christ, and to be clothed with Christ's righteousness. But in the case of the angels, salvation had nothing to do with it. God simply elected them to glory, and then prevented them from ever falling into sin.

6. Besides electing men to eternal life, what else has God elected them to?

He has also elected them to "the means thereof"; those whom he has chosen for eternal life, he has also chosen to receive the means of obtaining eternal life. That is, if God has foreordained that a certain person shall receive eternal life, then he has also foreordained that that person shall

hear the Gospel, repent of sin, believe on Jesus Christ, etc., so as to make sure of that person's receiving eternal life without fail.

7. What is meant by speaking of God's "sovereign power"?

This expression refers to the truth that God is supreme; there is no authority or law higher than God to which God himself is responsible. No one has the right to say to God, "What doest thou?"

8. In the case of those whom God has "passed by", what is the reason for his passing them by and not choosing them to eternal life?

The Bible represents this act of "passing by" as grounded in God's sovereignty, that is, it is not based on the character or works or life of the persons involved, but proceeds from God's own supreme authority. This does not mean that God has no reasons for "passing by" those whom he has passed by; it only means that the reasons are God's secret counsel, not revealed to us, and not based on human character, works or conduct. See Romans 9:13, 15, 20, 21.

9. In the case of those whom God has sovereignly "passed by", what is the reason for also ordaining them to dishonor and wrath?

The reason for ordaining them to dishonor and wrath is their own sin. Note the words "to be for their sin inflicted". Therefore God's foreordaining some men to eternal punishment is not based on the pure sovereignty of God (as is his act of "passing by" these same persons), but proceeds from God's attribute of perfect justice. They are punished because as sinners they deserve to be punished, not because God has passed them by. In hell the wicked will recognize that they are suffering a deserved punishment and that God has dealt with them strictly according to justice.

10. Suppose some person says, "If I am predestinated to receive eternal life, then I will receive it no matter whether I believe in Christ or not. So I need not bother to be a Christian". How should we answer such a person?

The objection raised is based on a misunderstanding of the doctrine of election. God does not elect persons to eternal life apart from the means thereof. When a particular person is elected to eternal life, it is also foreordained that that person shall believe in Christ as his Saviour.

11. Suppose some person says: "If God from all eternity has ordained me to dishonor and wrath for my sins, then it is no use for me to believe in Christ, for I cannot be saved no matter how good a Christian I might become. There is no use for me to believe in Christ". How should we answer such an objector?

It is no use for us to try to pry into the secret counsel of God and find out by a shortcut whether we are among the elect or not. The secret things belong to God, and the things that are revealed are for us to know. If a person is really dead in earnest about wanting to believe in Christ and be saved, that is a good sign that God has chosen that person to eternal life. The only way we can find out about God's decrees is by actually coming to Christ and receiving, in due course, the assurance of our own salvation. Then, and only then, can we say with confidence that we know ourselves to be of the elect.

12. What special difficulty is involved in this doctrine of election?

The difficulty is, How can God's decree of election be harmonized with human free agency? If God has foreordained all that comes to pass, including the eternal destiny of all human beings, how can we ourselves be free agents and how can we be responsible for what we do? We cannot solve this problem, for it is a mystery. We can only affirm that the Bible plainly teaches both God's sovereign foreordination and human freedom and responsibility. To reject either of these Bible truths is to reject the clear teaching of the Word of God and to become involved in even greater theological difficulties.

13. How should we answer the objection that "It is not fair for God to elect one person to eternal life, while he passes by another"?

This objection is based on the assumption that God is under an obligation to treat all men with equal favor, and to do for all whatever he does for any. The Bible answer to this objection is found in Romans 9:20,21. The objection really involves a denial of the sovereignty of God, for it assumes that God is responsible to the human race for his decisions, or else that there is some higher law or power to which God is responsible and by which he must be judged. The truth is (1) God is sovereign and is responsible to no one but himself for his actions; (2) God is under no obligation to elect anyone to eternal life; it would be perfectly just for him to leave all mankind to perish in their sins; (3) If God elects some to eternal life, he is under no obligation to elect all; for his electing of some is a matter of grace, and therefore cannot be claimed as a right by any that are "passed by". It is quite true that the Bible represents God as dealing with men unequally, that is, giving to some what he withholds from others; but this is not "unfair" because there is no injustice involved. No one has any basis for a claim that God has treated him unjustly.

Blue Banner Question Box

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

Question:

If Mary and Zacharias could break forth into songs of their own at the birth of Christ, why cannot Christians today break forth into songs of their own when they too have great religious experiences? Will Covenanters be able to join in the "new songs" mentioned in Revelation 5:9, 14:3?

Answer:

The position of Mary and Zacharias was not parallel to that of modern Christians. They lived in the age of revelation, when the process of God imparting his special revelation was still going on; we live after the age of revelation, when God's special revelation is no longer being given; it exists today only in the written form of the Bible. Mary and Zacharias spoke by supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which is not the case with any present-day Christian. The modern Christian is illuminated by the Holy Spirit to

enable him to understand the special revelation of God which is already completed and deposited in the Scriptures; he is not inspired by the Holy Spirit to add something new to that special revelation. Mary and Zacharias participated in something far beyond "great religious experiences". They had parts to perform in the great transaction of divine redemption, for both were closely connected with the coming of Christ to this world to redeem his people. Far beyond having "great religious experiences", they were privileged to have a part in the preparations for the purchase of redemption which forms the basis of our Christian experience today. The Holy Spirit will not lead any Christian today to pass by the divinely inspired songs of the Scriptures and substitute his own compositions in the worship of God. As for the songs mentioned in the Book of Revelation, it may be stated that the rules and principles concerning the worship of God which are set forth in the Bible apply to the present life only. In the life eternal we shall no longer need the Bible for we shall have a more direct revelation of God, seeing his face. Nor will there be any division of God's people into separate denominations in heaven; these unhappy divisions will have passed away and God's people will be truly united in Christ their Head. But it does not follow from these considerations that Scriptural practices in the worship of God are invalid or unimportant during the present life. It is unsafe and sinful to deviate from the teachings of the written Word of God.

Question:

We know that the Scriptures often command the use of musical instruments. Is there any place where they definitely forbid their use? Is Moffat wrong when he translates Ephesians 5:19b, "Praise the Lord heartily with words and music"? If musical instruments are a sin why are they even used as symbols in the Book of Revelation?

Answer:

The Scriptures do not command the use of musical instruments indiscriminately in divine worship. They were commanded for use in the temple service under the ceremonial system of the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace. The whole ceremonial system passed away, having served its purpose, when Christ was crucified. This passing away of the ceremonial system was signified by God rending the veil of the temple, thus opening the way into the Holy of Holies apart from the ceremonial system. Instrumental music being a part of the system of ceremonial worship of God passed away along with the other elements of the system, such as sacrifices, incense, etc. It is not necessary to find a text which positively forbids instrumental music in New Testament worship, as it has automatically passed away with the rest of the system of which it was a part. If we say that instrumental music ought to be continued unless positively forbidden to the New Testament Church, then to be consistent we ought to insist on continuing all elements of ceremonial worship except those that may be positively forbidden. This is turning the whole matter around the wrong way. The right principle is that what is not commanded for the New Testament Church is automatically forbidden. The Greek text of Ephesians 5:19b may be literally translated as follows: "Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord". There is no reference to instrumental music; rather, since the music is to be in the heart, it would seem to be excluded. The word in this verse which the King James Version translates as "making melody" occurs in Romans 15:9 (translated "sing"); James 5:13 (translated "sing psalms"); 1 Corinthians 14:15 (twice, both translated "sing"). Moffat's version of Ephesians 5:19b is rather a free paraphrase than an accurate translation; but even Moffat's translation does not necessarily imply the use of instrumental music. Musical instruments are not a sin in themselves. They become a matter of sin only when introduced into the worship of God without

warrant from his Word, the Bible. The occurrence of musical instruments in the Book of Revelation, with a symbolic meaning, has no bearing on the question of whether instrumental music is legitimate in the Christian Church during the present age.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
 Which was my sin, though it were done before?
 Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run,
 And do run still, though still I do deplore?
 When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
 For I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won
 Others to sin, and made my sins their door?
 Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
 A year or two, but wallow'd in a score?
 When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
 For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
 My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
 But swear by Thyself that at my death Thy Son
 Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore:
 And having done that, Thou hast done;
 I fear no more.

John Donne

Not a word or look
 I affect to own,
 But by book,
 And Thy Book alone.

Though I fail, I weep;
 Though I halt in pace,
 Yet I creep
 To the throne of grace.

George Herbert

Safe where I cannot die yet,
 Safe where I hope to lie too,
 Safe from the fume and the fret;
 You, and you,
 Whom I never forget.
 Safe from the frost and the snow,
 Safe from the storm and the sun,
 Safe where the seeds wait to grow
 One by one,
 And to come back in blow.*

* blow: bloom.

Christina G. Rossetti

God doth not need
 Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His State
 Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
 And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:
 They also serve who only stand and wait.

John Milton



BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE

Volume I. APRIL, 1946 Number 4.

*"The Scripture makes itself the
judge and determiner of all
questions and controversies
in religion."*

Samuel Rutherford

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J. G. Vos, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. # 1.

Clay Center, Kansas.

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 Savior 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.

(Concluded on page 67)

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

Volume I.

APRIL, 1946

Number 4.

Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

CHAPTER 2

Martyrdom in the Reign of Marcus Aurelius, 161 - 180 A.D.

Roman Emperors with Dates of their Reigns

Trajan, 98 - 117 A.D.

Antoninus Pius, 138 - 161 A.D.

Hadrian, 117 - 138 A.D.

Marcus Aurelius, 161 - 180 A.D.

As the emperor Trajan lay on his deathbed he adopted as his son a relative named Hadrian, who thus became the next emperor. Hadrian did not particularly persecute the Christians. He was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, under whom the Church enjoyed a period of some 24 years of peace and quiet. It is true that during his reign there were riots and mob demonstrations against the Christians, the heathen people blaming the Christians for the public calamities which had occurred. But the emperor was unwilling to sanction any general persecution of the Christians, and he used his authority to settle these outbursts of popular wrath against the Christians.

Antoninus Pius was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius. Under this emperor the Church's period of peace and quiet came to an end and serious persecution had to be faced again. Marcus Aurelius was a believer in the Stoic system of philosophy, which taught that when a person dies his soul is immediately absorbed into the divine essence. Because of this belief Marcus Aurelius had no patience with the Christian doctrine of personal immortality. He even considered this doctrine as harmful to the welfare of the State. While it is true that Marcus Aurelius was, in general, one of the greatest and best of the Roman emperors, still he was totally lacking in sympathy for the Christians, and he brought

about a cruel and ruthless persecution of the Christians. At this period there were many Christians serving as soldiers in the Imperial army, who were called upon to suffer for their loyalty to their Saviour.

During the reign of Marcus Aurelius there occurred in the Roman Empire a series of terrible calamities, including several serious fires, a flood in the valley of the Tiber river near Rome, an earthquake, rebellions against the government, and a wave of pestilence and famine which spread from Ethiopia to Gaul (France). The heathen people claimed that these calamities had been caused by the increase of Christianity. They alleged that the old heathen gods were angry because the Christians had insulted them by refusing to worship them and by teaching people that there is only one true God and all others are false. The popular notion was that floods, earthquakes, pestilences and the like were sent by the heathen gods to express their anger at the spread of Christianity.

Marcus Aurelius might have used his authority as head of the State to check these waves of popular indignation against the Christians. But he did not do so; instead, he sided with the heathen populace and used his authority to issue proclamations against the Christians. The result was a general persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Multitudes of Christians were killed.

A famous Christian who suffered martyrdom in this period was Justin Martyr. Born and raised in Palestine, he was a man of remarkable gifts. Before he became a Christian he had taken up one after another the various systems of philosophy that were known in his day, though none of these satisfied his soul. While studying the Platonic philosophy, the grace of God overtook him and he became a Christian. After his conversion Justin spent a period of time in seeking instruction from other Christians. Thus equipped, he devoted his time and talents to the defence of the Gospel against the attacks that were being made on it. Justin wrote especially against the Gnostic heretic Marcion who was troubling many Christians by his attacks on their faith. Marcion accepted only Paul's epistles and a part of the Gospel of Luke. Justin, who had been raised up by God for such a task as this, answered Marcion effectively. Justin also wrote an "Apology", addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, in which he defended the Christians against the popular charges that were being levelled against them. Very likely this "Apology" had something to do with the mild attitude toward Christianity which characterized the reign of Antoninus Pius. Justin sent a similar "Apology" to Marcus Aurelius, though this was not successful. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Justin was arrested and brought to trial on the charge of confessing the Christian faith. Along with six other Christians he went to his martyrdom joyfully and without fear. The Christian Church bestowed a fitting monument on Justin by giving him the title or surname of "Martyr".

Under Marcus Aurelius serious persecutions occurred also in southern France. The heathen people there were alarmed and infuriated at the growth and success of Christianity. At first the opposition of the heathen was expressed only by insults, slanders and ridicule. Later, however, the public officials prosecuted the Christians. A young man of noble birth, by the name of Vettius Pagatus, came forward and offered to prove to the officials that the Christians were innocent of the things urged against them by the public. As a result he was arrested and condemned to death along with other Christians. Many Christians were treated with great cruelty. Some were forced to fight wild beasts in the arena. A female slave named Blandina, after enduring cruel tortures, was tied up in a net and thrown to a wild steer which put an end to her sufferings. Houses of Christians were looted. Even death of Christians did not appease the wrath of

the heathen, for the bodies of many Christians who had been killed were shamefully mutilated, after which they were burned and the ashes thrown into the Rhone river, thus preventing burial. It is recorded of the martyrs of Lyons (France) that they followed the example of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, in praying for those who persecuted them: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

The Blood of Sprinkling

Hebrews 12:24b, "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Blood Stands for Life

Blood that does not remain in the veins, but is shed and so becomes visible to the eye, produces a powerful impression on a person. Some people sicken and faint at the sight of blood. The sight of blood reminds us of death. It indicates the danger of death. Sometimes it means that death has already taken place.

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6), was God's command to Noah after the flood. Here the sin and crime of murder is referred to as "shedding man's blood", and we see that the expression "shedding blood" is equivalent to a violent death.

The sight, and even the thought, of shed blood is dreadful because it speaks of human life that has flowed out with the blood. Human blood never should have been shed. The fact that human blood actually is shed, indicates that something is radically, terribly wrong with the human race.

There is a reason for the violence, warfare and bloodshed that have existed in the world, and still exist today in spite of the return of "peace" to the world following the surrender of the Axis powers. We find the reason in the Word of God. It really goes back to the beginning, when our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, and brought the violence and lawlessness of sin into the world.

Eating the forbidden fruit might seem like a little thing; but it was the germ of a world of iniquity and sin and crime, which continues even today. It was not long before sin reached its fullest development in the sin of murder. Cain killed his brother Abel. He shed Abel's blood. God said that Abel's blood cried to him from the ground.

The Blood of Abel

Sin did not stop with eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was only the beginning, the first sin. Sin went on to the shedding of human blood. This is the climax of sin. Sin destroys the soul, by alienating it from God, but sin does not stop with that; it goes on until it destroys the human body, too. Only by God's common grace is this destructive power of sin restrained and limited so that the death of the body is postponed.

Sin results in the shedding of human blood. This may help us to understand

why the shedding of blood is necessary for salvation from sin. As the poet Browning wrote,

"It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue
with death."

Now let us think of the blood of Abel. Cain killed him, and as we think of Abel lying on the ground, his blood poured out on the earth, we realize at once that Abel died as a victim of violence and injustice. Abel is the first of that long line of people who have been victims of violence and injustice, whose life has been taken away by iniquity and oppression on the part of their fellow men. How many there must have been through the ages, since that day when Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him! Throughout the ages there have been multitudes who, like Abel, were killed by injustice. Their blood, like Abel's, cries to God for justice upon the wrongdoers and murderers.

But there have been others whose blood was shed, not just as innocent victims of injustice and violence, but as great heroes and patriots, men who lived and died for their country, men who laid down their lives for a cause, men whose blood was shed for freedom, who suffered and died for their earthly country. By the shed blood of heroes and patriots, nations have been established and made great, freedom has been won and preserved.

And then there have been still others, whom we call martyrs, whose blood was shed not for an earthly country, but for the truth of God, because of loyalty to God and to his Word. Long ago Tertullian said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. And that is true. If nations have been established and made great by the blood of their heroes and defenders, the Church has been extended and built up by the blood of the martyrs. There were untold tens of thousands of them during the 250 years of persecution in the Roman Empire. They formed the seed of the Church in all the regions of the Empire. There were martyrs in the Middle Ages; many at the Reformation; many during the days when the Covenanters and Puritans of England and Scotland were persecuted 300 years ago; many in more recent times in China, Ethiopia, Russia and other lands.

Now Abel was not merely a victim of injustice. He was also a martyr. He died not only because of Cain's wickedness, but also because of his own devotion to God. The Bible tells us that Cain killed Abel because his own works were evil, and his brother's works were righteous. Abel was a righteous man; Abel pleased God; Abel's life of faith and service to God angered Cain and gave Cain's conscience no peace or rest. In the end Cain killed Abel. This marked the beginning of the age-long conflict between the world and the Church, which continues even at the present day. 1 John 3:12

The blood of heroes and patriots may build nations, but the blood of Abel and others like him builds the Kingdom of God, that kingdom which is destined to outlive the nations and even the world itself. Abel did not die in vain. None of the martyrs ever died in vain. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. It is still true that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

The Blood of Christ

Let us now turn to the consideration of the blood of Christ. The text tells us that Christ's blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

Abel died as a victim of injustice. He also died as a martyr to truth and right. He died --- his blood cried to God for justice.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died, and his blood was shed. He too was a victim of injustice. Truly the trial of Jesus was a mockery of justice. Even Pilate recognized that. And Jesus also died as a martyr to truth and right. It was because he would not compromise, because he insisted on witnessing to the truth and carrying out the work that the Father had committed to him, that he was crucified. But Jesus was infinitely more than a martyr. His shed blood was not merely martyr's blood, as Abel's was. For Christ's blood spoke better things than Abel's blood spoke.

Christ's shed blood is called "blood of sprinkling". Abel's blood was not blood of sprinkling; it was shed on the earth. The term "sprinkling" speaks to us not of martyrdom but of sacrifice. The High Priest took the blood of the sacrifices and sprinkled it on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. That blood of the sacrifice represented Christ's precious blood. So we see the truth that Christ, our Saviour, died not merely as a martyr, but as a sacrifice. His blood was not merely that of a martyr suffering for the truth, but of a sacrifice, a life laid down in sacrifice to God for the sins of others. He was not merely a martyr, but also, and pre-eminently, a sin offering. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17,18).

Christ's sacrificial blood speaks better things than Abel's martyr blood. Let us note some of the things that Christ's shed blood speaks to us.

It speaks of the completion of God's plan of redemption, as Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished".

It speaks pardon and peace with God for every believer: effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and the various benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

It speaks eternal security and freedom from the condemning power of the law, for ever and ever. It speaks a title-deed to eternal glory, as Jesus said to the dying thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise!"

The world, the modern, sophisticated, unbelieving world, scoffs at the blood of Christ, and represents it as a primitive, even a barbarous idea. A noted preacher called it "the theology of the slaughterhouse". But the Bible stresses it from cover to cover. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Note: The editor acknowledges his indebtedness, for some of the thoughts set forth in the above sermon, to Dr. Abraham Kuyper's meditation on "The Blood of Abel", in "His Decease at Jerusalem", Eerdmans, 1928.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

LESSON 14

For Week Beginning
April 7, 1946.

Q. 14. How doth God execute his decrees?

A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:11. (Additional Scripture references will come under the following questions, dealing with God's works of creation and providence. This 14th question is of the nature of a summary or outline, dividing God's works into two great parts, namely Creation and Providence. The questions which follow deal with these two subjects; 15, 16 and 17 with Creation; and 18, 19 and 20 with Providence).

Questions:

1. What kind of foreknowledge does God have of all things?

Infallible foreknowledge. His foreknowledge is inclusive, exact, and detailed.

2. What is meant by saying that the counsel of God's will is free?

This means that God acted

according to his own nature, without constraint from any source outside God himself.

3. What is meant by saying that the counsel of God's will is "immutable"?

This means that God's purposes cannot be changed by "chance" or by any of his creatures. What God has decreed will surely come to pass.

Q. 15. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is that wherein God did in the beginning, by the word of his power, make of nothing the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good.

Scripture References:

Genesis 1:1 and also the entire first chapter of Genesis. The account of the work of creation.
Hebrews 11:3. The universe created out of nothing; not formed from pre-existing materials.
Proverbs 16:4. God made all things for himself.
Revelation 4:11. All things created by God, for his own pleasure.

Questions:

1. What truth is implied by the use of the words "in the beginning"?

These words imply that the world or the universe is not eternal; it did not always exist; it had a beginning. God, on the other hand, is eternal; God always existed; God never had a beginning.

2. What is the importance of the first three words of the Bible?

These words ("In the beginning") prove that the universe had a beginning; therefore the universe did not exist of itself; therefore the universe owes its existence to God; therefore the universe is dependent on God; therefore all attempts of men or nations to live independently of God are foolish, wicked, and doomed to failure in the end.

3. What does the doctrine of Creation show about the nature of God?

That God is absolutely independent of the world; that God is an almighty being, who possesses infinite supernatural power by which he can do anything which does not contradict his own nature.

4. What was the aim of God's work of creation?

God created all things for himself; that is, to manifest his own perfection and glory.

5. What was the character of the created universe as it came from the hand of God?

It was "all very good"; that is, it was wholly free from evil of any kind, both moral evil and physical evil. The evil which exists today is therefore abnormal and alien to the universe as God created it.

6. What is the meaning of the phrase "in the space of six days"?

The most natural meaning of this phrase is six literal days of 24 hours each. However

some orthodox students of the Bible hold that the expression means six "ages" or periods of time. It is possible, of course, that this is the true meaning. In the Bible the word "day" is sometimes used to designate a long period of time; one day is said to be with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, etc. However the more natural and probable meaning in Genesis chapter 1 is six literal days.

7. When was the world created?

We can only say "In the beginning", as the Bible tells us. We are not told when the "beginning" was.

8. What was the origin of the idea that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C.?

Archbishop Usher, a scholar of about 300 years ago, made elaborate calculations of the chronology and genealogies of the Bible, and on the basis of these calculations he decided that 4004 B.C. was the time of the creation.

9. What should we think of this idea that the world was created in 4004 B.C.?

(1) We can be sure that the world was created at least that long ago, if not longer. (2) Usher's calculation is not a statement of the Word of God, but only a human opinion, which may or may not be reliable. (3) Usher's conclusion is based on the assumption that the genealogies given in the Bible are complete with no links omitted. But it can be proved by comparison of Scripture with Scripture that in Bible genealogies sometimes generations are omitted; for example, a grandson is spoken of as a son of some person, etc. Therefore it is impossible accurately to calculate the date of the creation of the world from the genealogies.

10. What should we think of the statements of scientists who tell us that the world is millions and even billions of years old?

(1) Such statements are only speculations without any real proof. This is shown by the fact that the scientists do not agree among themselves, even as to the approximate age of the world. (2) The idea that the world is millions or billions of years old is usually held by evolutionists who need millions or billions of years to have room for a supposed process of evolution from a single cell to the complex forms of life that exist today. These evolutionists do not believe in the Bible account of creation. It is foolish and useless to try to adjust the opinions of such men to the details of the record in Genesis. The real divergence between evolution and creation is not a matter of a few minor details; it concerns the basic conception of the nature and origin of living species. To attempt to reconcile evolution and creation by adjusting details is as futile as it would be to try to reconcile the theory that the world is flat with the fact that the world is round by a compromise between the two.

11. How old is the human race?

The Bible does not tell us. But from the genealogies of the Bible it can be proved that the human race is at least 6,000 years old. It may, of course, be older than that. The Bible leaves room for any reasonable antiquity for the human race. Mankind is not millions of years old, but rather a few thousand years old.

12. Why does the Bible not tell us the exact date of the creation and the exact age of the human race?

If we really needed to know these things, God would have revealed them in the Bible. Since he has not done so, we can only conclude that these are matters which we do not really need to know. We should always remember that the Bible was not written to satisfy our curiosity, but to show us the way of salvation.

Note:

A thorough discussion of the theory of evolution, from the standpoint of orthodox Christianity, would require far more space than could be devoted to this important question in the columns of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The reader is referred to the following excellent books on this subject:

"Evolution in the Balances", by Frank E. Allen. New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1926.

"After Its Kind", by Byron C. Nelson. Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1940.

LESSON 15

For Week Beginning

April 14, 1946.

Q. 16. How did God create angels?

A. God created all the angels, spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute his commandments, and to praise his name, yet subject to change.

Scripture References:

Colossians 1:16. All the angels created by God.

- Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:7. The angels are spirits.
- Matthew 22:30. The angels are immortal.
- Jude 6. The angels were created holy.
- 2 Samuel 14:17; Matthew 24:36. The knowledge of the angels.
- 2 Thess. 1:7. The angels' power.
- Psalm 103:20. Hebrews 1:14. The functions of the angels.
- 2 Peter 2:4. Jude 6. The angels created subject to change.

Questions:

1. Why is it important to believe that all the angels were created by God?

Because of the fact that if any of them were not created by God, they would be divine, existing from eternity as God did.

2. What important difference is there between the angels and human beings?

The angels are spirits without any bodies; man on the other hand is a composite being consisting of two elements, body and soul, mysteriously united in a single personality.

3. What other important difference is there between the angels and the human race?

The angels are simply a great host of individual beings, not organically related to each other nor descended from a common ancestor; whereas the human race is an organic unity, all members of the human race being mutually related by organic ties, and all being the posterity of a single first ancestor, Adam. Adam has no counterpart among the angels.

4. If the angels are pure spirits with no bodies, how could they appear in human form as is related several times in the Bible?

The angels are pure spirits and have no body of their own. When God sent them, on certain occasions, to appear to men, they appeared in human form. This bodily form was merely assumed for the purpose of appearing to men, and was dropped again when their commission had been carried out.

5. What is wrong with the sentiment expressed in an old hymn which says: "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand" ?

This sentiment is based upon a misunderstanding of the Bible teaching about the eternal destiny of the redeemed. We can never be angels, and we would not be satisfied or happy if we could, for the human soul is not complete and self-sufficient apart from the human body. Jesus said that at the resurrection the redeemed will be as the angels in one respect, namely, that they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; but that is very different from affirming that the redeemed will become angels.

6. What wonderful truth did our Saviour set forth concerning the work of the angels in connection with little children?

See Matthew 18:10.

LESSON 16

For Week Beginning
April 21, 1946.

- Q. 17. How did God create man?

A. After God had made all other creatures, he created man male and female; formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man, endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls; made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and

holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, with dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.

Scripture References:

- Gen. 1:27. Mankind created male and female.
 Gen. 2:7. Adam's body made of dust.
 Gen. 2:22. Eve made of Adam's rib.
 Gen. 2:7. Mankind created with living souls.
 Job 35:11. Mankind created with intelligent souls.
 Eccles. 12:7. Matt. 10:28. Luke 23:43. Mankind created with immortal souls.
 Gen. 1:27. Created in God's image.
 Col. 3:10. God's image includes knowledge.
 Eph. 4:24. God's image includes righteousness and holiness.
 Rom. 2:14, 15. Mankind created with the moral law written on their hearts.
 Eccles. 7:29. Mankind created with power to fulfil God's law.
 Gen. 1:28. Psalm 8:6-8. Mankind given dominion over the creatures.
 Gen. 3:6. Rom. 5:12. Mankind created subject to the possibility of a fall into sin.

Questions:

1. What is the importance of the fact that Adam's body was made out of dust from the ground?

This shows the truth that our physical body is composed of the same chemical elements as the ground, a fact which can be demonstrated by chemical analysis.

2. Why did God make Eve from a rib of Adam, instead of making her of dust from the ground as he had made Adam?

It was necessary for the organic unity of the human race that Eve's body be derived from that of Adam, not created separately from the lifeless elements. Otherwise it would not be true that God had made of one blood (Acts 17:26) all nations of men. According to God's plan, the human race must have one single origin, not two.

3. Why is it important to believe that mankind were endued with immortal souls at the creation?

Because some present-day sects teach that no person has an immortal soul by nature, but only by believing in Christ for salvation. These sects teach this false doctrine as a convenient way of getting rid of the idea of hell. If unbelievers and wicked people do not have immortal souls, then of course they cannot suffer eternal punishment in hell, for if they do not have immortal souls, then death must be the end of their existence. A correct understanding of the Scripture doctrine of the creation of the human race will counteract this dangerous heresy.

4. What common error must be avoided when we say that mankind was created in the image of God?

We must guard against the popular error that the image of God consists in a physical resemblance to God. The false religion of Mormonism teaches something like this. Since God is a pure Spirit and has no body, such a thing is of course wholly impossible.

5. If the "image of God" does not involve a physical resemblance to God, then what does it involve?

The Bible itself gives the key to the meaning of this expression, in Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24. The "image of God" consists in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. To state the same truth in a different

way, the image of God in man consists in man's rational nature, man's moral nature and man's spiritual nature. Or we may say that man has a mind, a conscience and a capacity for knowing and loving God.

6. Does mankind have this "image of God" at the present day?

Yes. The "image of God" in man remains, but not perfect as it was at the creation. On the contrary, it is marred and broken because of our fall into sin. Yet the broken fragments remain in every human being even today.

7. What is involved in the statement that mankind was created "with dominion over the creatures"?

This divine commission, given to man at the creation, as recorded in Genesis 1:28, includes the whole relationship of mankind to the world of nature, including science, invention and art. Scientific inventions and discoveries are part of the fulfilment of this commission. See Psalm 8:5-8. We should not think that "the creatures" means only animals, birds and fishes; really it means all created things in this world below man himself.

8. What one element of total perfection was lacking in the condition of mankind at the creation?

As created by God, mankind was "subject to fall", that is, it was possible for the human race to fall into sin. Thus the condition of the human race at the creation was not the highest possible condition. The highest condition will be the state of glory when it will no longer be possible for the redeemed to sin.

9. What serious error, contrary to the doctrine of creation, is prevalent today?

The theory of evolution, which denies that mankind was a special creation of God, and holds that the human race developed gradually from a brute ancestry, that is, from the lower animals.

10. What should we think of the theory of human evolution?

(1) Even from the scientific viewpoint it is only a theory, and lacks conclusive proof of its validity. (2) It is clearly contrary to the teaching of the Bible, which unquestionably represents mankind as a special creation of God, wholly apart from the brutes. (3) It is true that the acceptance of evolution as truth often, if not always, leads to a gradual deadening of the conscience and weakening of the sense of moral responsibility. It is entirely true that the recent World War was, in the deepest sense, a result of widespread acceptance of the doctrine of human evolution as the truth, accompanied by a gradual but very real rejection of the Bible, by highly educated people, as their standard of faith and life. The logic involved in this moral decline is really unavoidable when once the assumption of the truth of human evolution has been made. If we were not created by God, then we are not responsible to God for our beliefs and actions. If we are not responsible to God for our beliefs and actions, then we are responsible only to our fellow men and to ourselves. In that case there is no absolute, permanent moral standard; what is right and wrong changes with the times and the circumstances. From this position it is but a step to the ideology of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. The apparently innocent theory of evolution has wrought tremendous havoc in human life. We should always realize that evolution is not merely a biological theory; it is also a philosophy of life held by many.

LESSON 17

For Week Beginning April 28, 1946.

Q. 18. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.

Scripture References:

Psalm 145:17. God's providence is holy.
 Psalm 104:24. Isaiah 28:29. God's providence is wise.
 Hebrews 1:3. God's providence is powerful.
 Matthew 10:29-31. God governs all his creatures.
 Genesis 45:7,8. God controls the actions of his creatures.
 Romans 11:36. Isaiah 63:14. God controls all things for his own glory.

Questions:

1. What is the relation of all created things to God?

All created things are always totally dependent on God for their existence. No created thing can ever be independent of God.

2. What religious system denies the doctrine of God's providence?

Deism, which holds that God created the universe in the first place, and then left it to work out its own destiny. According to Deism, the universe is like a clock, God made it and wound it up, and since then

he has let it alone, and now it is slowly running down in its own way, according to natural laws, and without divine control.

3. Why is the doctrine of Deism a serious error?

Because Deism denies that God has anything whatever to do with the world in which we live today. According to Deism, God and the world parted company ages ago, and therefore we cannot come into contact with God. He cannot answer our prayers, nor can we have communion with him.

4. What important and popular organizations of the present day are largely founded on the doctrine of Deism?

The Freemasons and some other "fraternal" orders, which speak of God as "the Grand Architect of the Universe", are largely based on the Deistic conception of God.

5. Why should Christian people not join these lodges or "fraternal" orders?

There are many good reasons why a Christian should not belong to any secret, oath-bound order; but perhaps the most important reason is that these orders, especially the Masonic order, are founded on the Deistic idea of God, and therefore are really a false religion. The Christian, who holds the Bible doctrine of God, should keep separate from them.

6. What would happen to the whole created universe, including the human race, if God's work of providence were to be withdrawn or suspended for one minute?

The entire universe, and the human race, would instantly cease to exist. It is God's providence that sustains the entire created universe in existence from moment to moment.

7. Prove from the Bible that God's providence controls what are commonly regarded as "chance" happenings.

Matthew 10:29.

8. Prove from the Bible that the free acts of men are under the control of God's providence.

Genesis 45:8.

9. Prove from the Bible that even the sinful acts of men are under the control of God's providence.

Acts 2:23.

10. How do the prophecies of the Bible show that God's providence controls all that comes to pass?

The Bible contains many prophecies which have already been fulfilled, and others which still await fulfilment in the future. If God's providence did not control all things that come to pass, without exception, predictive prophecy would be impossible. For unless God controls all things, it would be impossible for him to reveal beforehand what is to come to pass, because forces outside of God's control might change everything, so that the prophecy would not be fulfilled. Only a God who controls absolutely everything can really foretell the future with certainty, accuracy and detail.

11. What is the end or purpose of God's providence?

The end or purpose of God's providence is the manifesting of God's own glory.

12. What false idea is common today about the end or purpose of God's providence?

Today many people say they want to believe in "a democratic God" who does things, not for his own glory, but for the benefit of the majority of his creatures, or for the greatest good of the greatest number.

13. What should we think of this idea of "a democratic God"?

(1) It is contrary to the doctrine of God revealed in the Bible. (2) It is idolatry, for it sets up a god made in man's image as the object of worship. (3) It overlooks the truth that the glory of God includes the welfare of his creatures in general; not the welfare of all of his creatures individually, but of his creatures generally. The non-theistic viewpoint that is dominant in the world today makes the welfare of the creatures, or of humanity, the end or purpose of all things. The theistic viewpoint of the Bible, on the contrary, regards the glory of God as the great end or purpose of all things. According to the Bible, the welfare of the creatures (including humanity) is not the main thing, but rather the by-product of the glorification of God.

14. If God's providence controls the actions of human beings, does not this destroy human free will?

No. While it is true, as the Bible clearly teaches, that God's providence controls all the acts of human beings, still this does not destroy human free will (more correctly called free agency), because God does not control the acts of people by forcing them to do something against their will, but by so ordering the facts and circumstances of their lives, and the moral state of their hearts, that they voluntarily, of their own accord, without any constraint, always do exactly what God has foreordained that they are to do.

15. If even the sinful acts of wicked men are controlled by God's providence, does not this make God responsible for their sins?

No, because they sin of their own free will, and are not forced to sin by God's providential control. This truth is best understood by considering an actual case, for example the crucifixion of Christ. See Acts 4:27,28, "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." Herod, Pilate, etc., all acted according to their own desires and free will; God did not force them to commit this sin; yet when they did commit it of their own accord, it all turned out exactly according to the plan of God. The same principle is illustrated in the history of Joseph's brothers selling him into Egypt. They acted freely, according to their own evil wishes and desires; yet what they did, wicked as it certainly was, turned out to be the exact plan of God.

16. How can it be that God foreordains and controls the sinful acts of men, and yet is not responsible for the sin?

This is a mystery which we cannot wholly understand. However the Bible plainly teaches that it is so.

"God's goodness hath been great
to thee;
Let never day or night unhallow'd
pass,
But still remember what the Lord
hath done"
William Shakespeare

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.

Questions:

Please explain the meaning of "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) and "Of that day and hour knoweth no man. . . neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). How can these statements be harmonized with the doctrine of Christ's deity?

Answer:

The problem presented by these two texts is insoluble except on the basis of the doctrine that Christ was and is God and man in two distinct natures and one Person forever. Christ has two natures, divine and human. The two natures are united mysteriously in one divine Person, but they are distinct, therefore not mixed or blended. Because the two natures are distinct, Christ had both a human soul and his divine Spirit. Therefore he had two distinct kinds of knowledge, the relation between which must always remain a mystery to us. As God, in his divine nature and Person, Christ was and is fully equal to the Father and absolutely omniscient, knowing everything, including "that day and hour". As man, by reason of his human nature, he could truthfully say "My Father is greater than I". We should understand that sometimes the properties of the one nature, and sometimes the properties of the other nature, are attributed to the Person in whom both natures were united. See the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VIII, Sections 2, 3, and especially Section 7. When Christ disclaimed knowledge of "that day and hour" (the day and hour of his own second coming) he was referring not to his divine knowledge but only to the knowledge which pertained to his human nature. As a divine Person he certainly knew all things.

Question:

Can a Covenanter participate in a primary election?

Answer:

A primary election is held, under State auspices, for the purpose of nominating candidates of the political party holding the election, for elective offices of the government. It is chiefly concerned with the higher and more important offices, and, in most cases, requires enrolment of the voter with the political party holding the election.

In any case, however, partisan or non-partisan, it is plainly one phase of the action of the political body for the election of government officers who, if and when elected, will be required to take the oath to the Constitution of the United States.

The law of the Covenanter Church forbids its members to take the oath to the United States Constitution. What is wrong for a church member to do, it must be wrong for him to ask another to do. The Synod has repeatedly taken action maintaining this principle; for example, the following:

"A Covenanter cannot consistently vote for an official who will be required to take an oath which the voter himself could not take, or to subscribe to a constitution that is out of harmony with the law of God."

(Minutes of Synod, 1915, pages 77,78)

Such action is based on the Church Covenant, Section 3, where speaking of the goal of a constitutional recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ and His law, Covenanters pledge that "we will continue to refuse to incorporate by any act, with the political body, until this blessed reformation has been secured." Also, it is based on the Testimony, Chapter XXX, Error 1, where Covenanters declare: "We condemn the following errors, and testify against all who maintain them: 1. That it is lawful to profess or swear allegiance to an immoral constitution of civil government."

F.D.F.

(Concluded from Page 53)

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.



**BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE**

VOLUME 1

MAY - JUNE, 1946

NUMBERS 5-6

“God gives His Word; and whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is, and will be, the Word of God forever.”

John Lightfoot

A Monthly 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.

Subscription \$1.00 per year postpaid anywhere.

J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

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

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

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!

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

 VOLUME 1

MAY, 1946

NUMBER 5

Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

Chapter 3

Sufferings in the Reign of Septimius Severus, 193-211 A. D.

Roman Emperors with Dates of their Reigns

Marcus Aurelius, 161-180 A. D.

Pertinax, 193 A. D.

Commodus, 180-192 A. D.

Didius Julianus, 193 A. D.

 Septimius Severus, 193-211 A. D.

After the time of Marcus Aurelius, severe and widespread persecution of Christianity subsided for a time. During the last years of the second century, however, there were a number of local persecutions. At that time Clement of Alexandria (Egypt) wrote: "Many martyrs are daily burned, confined, or beheaded, before our eyes."

During the early years of his reign, the emperor Septimius Severus made no special effort to persecute the Christians. He is said to have been cured of an illness by the efforts of a Christian slave named Proculus, and it is possible that this may have influenced him against attacking the Church. But in the year 202 he suddenly abandoned this policy, and issued a strict law forbidding both Judaism and Christianity to spread any further, and thus prohibiting evangelism and reception of new members by the Church. This wicked law was the occasion of bloody persecutions in various places, especially in Egypt and North Africa.

When this new law was enforced in Alexandria, a Christian named Leonides, the father of the famous scholar Origen, was beheaded. A Christian woman named Potamiaena, together with her mother, was sentenced to be burned to death in a tank of boiling pitch. One of the executioners, named Basilides, was conscience-stricken because of his part in this cruel deed, and soon afterwards he became a Christian and was himself beheaded for violating the new law.

Elsewhere in North Africa the persecution was even more severe than in Egypt. In a city of Numidia a Christian named Speratus, and eleven others including three women, were arrested and tried by the proconsul Saturninus on the charge of being Christians. The Roman official attempted to persuade them to renounce Christ and worship the heathen gods and the emperor. But not one of the group would yield, and Speratus stated that they could not give up their faith in Christ which was founded upon the "four Gospels and the epistles of the apostle Paul, and all Scripture given by inspiration of God". Finally the proconsul had them led away to the place of execution. They suffered death praising and thanking God that they were counted worthy to be martyrs of Jesus Christ.

In Carthage three young men and two young women were tried on the charge of being Christians. The officials made earnest efforts to persuade them to deny Christ and worship the Roman gods and emperor, but all remained faithful to their Redeemer. One of them was Perpetua, a young woman of a noble family. Her aged heathen father piteously urged her to save her life by denying Jesus Christ; besides this, her mother-love for the helpless babe on her breast caused her an intense spiritual struggle. But in the end her love for Christ proved stronger than all, and like the rest of the little group, she was faithful unto death. They were executed by being cast to the wild beasts in the arena on the next public holiday.

There is some reason to believe that the martyrs at Carthage belonged to a sect of Christians called Montanists, the followers of a certain Montanus, a man who went to extremes in some matters, urging his followers to seek martyrdom rather than merely passively accepting it when God brought it upon them. Unquestionably the Montanists were sincere and earnest Christians, but the Church as a whole opposed their extreme teachings and held that while martyrdom is not to be avoided by sinful compromise, at the same time God's word does not warrant any action which deliberately seeks martyrdom.

A famous Christian of this period was Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul (France). There is a tradition that he suffered a martyr's death in the year 202, but this cannot be certainly established. Irenaeus spent his

early years in the city of Smyrna, in Asia Minor, where he was a pupil of the aged bishop Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the apostle John long before. From Polycarp, Irenaeus learned much; he also came in contact with a number of other men who had been disciples of the apostles. Irenaeus was noted especially as a scholar and writer. His principal work was a book entitled "Against Heresies", in which he attacked the false doctrines of the Gnostics, who mingled heathen philosophy with Christian truth, and taught that we are saved by knowledge rather than by faith. Irenaeus was zealous for sound doctrine and the pure Christian faith, yet he was true to his name, which means "peaceful", for he had a kind and loving disposition and displayed a reasonable and moderate attitude toward differences on minor points among Christian people.

The Biography of a Religious Man

Genesis 4:1-24

Cain was a religious man. This does not mean that he was a righteous man, or a man that pleased God. But he showed that he was religious in two ways. First, he brought an offering as an act of worshipping God. Secondly, after God's punishment had been pronounced upon him, he showed that he felt the need of God's protection and help; we may say that he prayed to God for protection and safety.

A man who worshipped God with offerings; a man who prayed to God for protection—this was a religious man. His religion was inadequate, even false, but religion it was. If living at the present day Cain would probably be known as a regular church goer and a liberal supporter of what is called a "liberal" church. Let us study the biography of this religious man, Cain, the first person born into this world.

A Sinner Who Thought Himself Righteous

Cain worshipped God by an offering but not by a blood sacrifice. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord" (verse 3). Presumably this was on the Sabbath ("in process of time"; Hebrew, "at the end of days"). He brought a vegetable offering, in contrast to the lamb offering by his brother Abel. Abel's lamb prefigured Christ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Cain's vegetable offering was not a sacrifice; it did not involve death, the shedding of blood, the taking of the life of the offerer's substitute.

Cain sought access to God's presence directly, without a Mediator. Abel's lamb prefigured Christ the Mediator, but Cain felt no need of a Mediator. He would approach God directly just as if the human race had never fallen into sin.

Cain acknowledged God as Creator and Preserver, but not as Redeemer. He recog-

nizes God's gift of life, God's daily care and preservation, but not salvation from sin by divine grace. In short, Cain's vegetable offering was a thank offering in recognition of natural blessings, but not a sin offering confessing the need of atonement.

Cain's vegetable offering would have been legitimate if offered by his parents Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before they fell into sin. But in Cain's case it was too late.

Cain exemplifies religion minus conviction of sin. He had a feeling of need, and a feeling of thankfulness, but no realization of his lost and sinful condition. In this respect Cain is typical of multitudes of people of the present day. This kind of religion is widespread, and very popular, but it is not Christianity. For Christianity is the way of salvation for lost sinners, which was entirely lacking in Cain's religion.

20 p 82

A Human Being Who Became Angry With God

"Cain was very wroth"; "his countenance fell" (verse 5). Cain became angry with God because God did not agree with his own religious ideas. Here is the strange paradox of a religious man, a worshipper of God, becoming angry with God because God's will is different from his own notions.

God was not pleased with Cain's offering. Why? The record in Genesis 4 does not give the answer. But in Hebrews 11:4 we are told that it was **by faith** that Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. We may rightly infer that Cain's offering was not offered by faith. No doubt if Cain had had faith as Abel had, he would have offered a lamb as Abel did. So we may say that God was not pleased with Cain's offering, first, because it was the wrong kind of an offering for a sinner to bring to God, and secondly because it was not presented by faith, that is, in conscientious obedience to the will of God. So Cain became angry with God.

A creature may not be angry with the Creator; much less a sinful creature; but the fact is that sinners are that way. The extreme lawlessness of sin has produced this awful distortion of the relation between God and man, so that sinners become angry with God. This is true today, too.

Some people become angry with God's Word. There are infidels and atheists who would like to destroy every copy of the

Bible in the world today. But we are not considering atheists; we are considering religious people. The fact is that there are at the present day religious people who are angry at God's Word. They dislike this or that doctrine of the Bible, so they denounce and deny it. A noted leader of a large Protestant denomination in America said not long ago that today the cry of men is for a **limited God**. This prominent leader is angry with the Word of God, which teaches that God is infinite, unlimited. There are religious people—even Christian people—who are really angry at the doctrine of predestination. Just to mention it is like waving a red flag in front of their faces. They cannot tolerate this teaching of God's Word.

There are also those who become angry with God's providence. This is perhaps much the more common way of getting angry with God. It is so common that we have a very common name for it, and hardly ever think of it as a sin; we just call it "discontent". But it really amounts to becoming angry with God's providence. Whether it is the weather, or our portion of the material things of life, or the Lord's taking some of our dear ones from us, there are those who resent God's actions and actually work up a state of rebellion against God's providence. This is becoming angry with God. It is a sign of a heart at enmity with God.

Cain's Religion Did Not Prevent a Wicked Life

Cain's enmity with God in his heart soon showed in his life, too. Out of the heart, the Bible tells us, are the issues of life. What is in the heart will work out into speech and conduct sooner or later, usually sooner. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Cain's enmity with God issued in injustice to man and heinous sin against God. He murdered his brother, Abel, and he lied to God, saying "I know not . . .". Even before he murdered Abel, we find Cain rejecting a solemn warning from God (verses 6,7). Cain paid no heed to God's warning, which if heeded would have led Cain to offer a sin-offering to God as his brother Abel had. But Cain hardened his heart and paid no heed.

Cain not only killed Abel and lied to God; he became positively insolent in his words to God: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" This remark was certainly uncalled for and indicates a high-minded,

haughty spirit in addressing God, instead of the reverence that a religious person ought to have in addressing his Maker.

See what sin has done to Cain. It has destroyed his natural love for his brother; it has filled his heart with hatred; it has led him to commit murder; it has destroyed his honesty, for he lies to God; it has destroyed his reverence, for he "talks back" insolently in addressing God. These are the facts of the life of a religious man, but an unsaved man, a man who knew not God.

Such sins proceed **from the heart**, as Jesus said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). The heart being at enmity with God, inevitably brings forth

positive sins in the outward life sooner or later.

Similar sins today come from the same source. We should realize that religion, just religion, is no remedy for sin. Cain was a religious man, but he was a great sinner and lived a flagrantly wicked life just the same. Some of the wickedest men have been the most religious outwardly. It takes more than a religious life to prevent sins such as Cain committed.

The real remedy consists in removing the enmity with God. So the gospel of Christ pleads with men to be reconciled to

God. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10); "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). That is the great message: Be ye reconciled to God. Just a religious life will not do; we must be at peace with God; we must be reconciled to God. Cain tried to live a religious life while his heart was at war with God, but what terrible results came of it! What he needed was to be reconciled to God.

Cain Was Concerned Only With the Consequences of Sin

When God reasoned with Cain, Cain was not in the least concerned about the sin he had committed, but only about the consequences of the sin. "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear (verse 13). Not "my sin," but "my punishment"; not "I am sorry for my sin", but "I am sorry that I am being punished; I am sorry that I got caught".

Cain showed no repentance but only remorse; no concern or sorrow over the sin itself, but only over the consequences of the sin, the penalty visited on him. This is the difference between true repentance and mere remorse, the difference between what the Bible calls "godly sorrow" and what it calls "the sorrow of the world." Godly sorrow grieves over the sin. It is concerned with the sin that has been committed against God. False repentance, mere remorse, the sorrow of the world, is concerned only with the penalty, the consequences of the sin.

At the present day there is much concern about the consequences of sin, but little thought is given to sin itself. The newspapers have been full of accounts of the wicked deeds of the Nazi leaders, that is, their crimes against humanity; but hardly a word is ever spoken about their real primary sin of putting the totalitarian state in place of God. Even when it was proved that the Nazis murdered the whole population of some town or village, public indignation was not aroused over this evil deed as a sin against God, but merely as a crime against humanity.

This is true of ourselves also. It is just human nature to be more concerned over the consequences of our sins than over the sins themselves. A story is told of a king who on his birthday decided to grant an amnesty to a part of the convicts in the prisons of his realm. He disguised himself

in common clothing and went through the prisons, cell by cell, conversing with the convicts, asking them about their past life and the reasons why they were behind prison bars.

To his surprise he found not one who admitted that he had been justly sentenced for violating the law. All had excuses to present, all kinds of excuses. All claimed, as the slang expression is, to have been "framed", and most of them cursed their own stupidity and lack of forethought in getting caught by the strong arm of the law. All were sorry they were in prison but none was sorry for the crime that put him there.

Finally the king came to one prisoner in a certain cell who spoke differently from the rest. This man said, "Prison is too good for me. I ought to have been hung. I have committed so many crimes, and I have lived such a wicked and lawless life, that I know I deserve to die. I cannot complain at spending my days behind prison bars, for my crimes really deserved a worse punishment than that." Here was one man who was concerned with his sin, not just with the consequences of his sin. The story continues to the effect that the king granted this one man a free pardon, and he left the prison a free citizen of the realm.

Christianity is first of all a remedy for sin; only secondarily is it a remedy for the consequences of sin. To state the difference between Cain and Abel in a sentence, it was just this: Abel from the first was concerned over his sin; Cain to the last was concerned only over the consequences of his sin.

Yet Cain was a religious man. He worshipped God; he prayed to God; he felt the need of God's care and protection (verse 14). He was religious, but he had the wrong kind of religion. His religion had nothing in it

that is really distinctive of Christianity, for it knew no consciousness of sin, no forgiveness, no grace, no repentance, no salvation.

By way of contrast, consider the religion of Abel. Abel approached God not only with a sense of need but with a sense of sin. Abel was concerned not only about the troublesome results of sin, but about the sin itself. Abel experienced not merely remorse, but true repentance. Abel was not

merely a religious man, but a child of God. To use the terminology of the New Testament, Cain was a self-righteous Pharisee, but Abel was a Christian.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4).

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 18

For Week Beginning May 5, 1946

Q. What is God's providence towards the angels?

A. God by his providence permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory; and established the rest in holiness and happiness; employing them all, at his pleasure, in the administrations of his power, mercy, and justice.

Scripture References:

Jude 6. 2 Peter 2:4 (God permitted some of the angels to fall into sin.

Hebrews 2:16. God provided no way of salvation for the angels that sinned.

John 8:44. These angels sinned wilfully.

Job 1:12. Matthew 8:31. God limited their sins for his own glory.

1 Timothy 5:21. Mark 8:38. Hebrews 12:22. God established the rest of the angels in holiness and happiness.

Psalms 104:4. 2 Kings 19:35. Hebrews 1:14. God employs the angels as his servants.

Questions:

1. What was the great difference between the fall of the wicked angels into sin, and the fall of the human race into sin?

In the case of the human race, the sin of one man brought about the fall of the whole race (Romans 5:12). In the case of the angels, since they are not a related race, organically connected with each other, but a large number of separate unrelated individuals, each must have gone through his

own probation individually and fallen by his own personal act.

2. What other great difference exists between the fall of the angels and the fall of the human race?

Only part of the angels fell into sin; but in the case of the human race, the whole race fell.

3. What special activities of the fallen angels, or demons, took place in connection with the earthly ministry of our Saviour?

At the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, when God was most active in executing his plans for the redemption of the human race from sin, Satan and the demons carried on a counter-offensive of desperate activity. Many persons were demon-possessed, that is, demons or fallen angels had entered into them and taken possession of their personality, using them for wicked purposes. In one case (Matthew 8:31) we read of a great host of demons possessing one man. Christ by his divine power cast out the demons, a sign of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

4. What special activities do the holy angels have in connection with Christian people?

Read Hebrews 1:14.

5. What truth does the Epistle to the Hebrews teach about the angels in relation to Christ?

Read Hebrews 1:4-8. Christ is higher than the angels, for they are only God's servants, whereas Christ is God's Son. When Christ came into the world, the angels worshipped him, indicating that he is higher than they. The angels are created beings; Christ is their divine Creator.

Lesson 19**For Week Beginning May 12, 1946**

Q. 20. What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?

A. The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help; affording him communion with himself; instituting the sabbath; entering into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, of which the tree of life was a pledge; and forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

Scripture References:

Genesis 2:8, 15, 16. Man placed in paradise, etc.

Genesis 1:28. The creatures placed under man's dominion.

Genesis 2:18. Marriage ordained for man's help.

Genesis 1:28; 3:8. Man originally enjoyed communion with God.

Genesis 2:3. The sabbath instituted.

Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5; 5:14. The covenant of works instituted.

Genesis 2:9. The tree of life.

Genesis 2:17. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Questions:

1. In what part of the world was "paradise" or the Garden of Eden located?

While the exact location cannot be determined, there can be no doubt that it was in the Near East. Many scholars believe it was in Armenia near the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; others hold that it was probably near the head of the Persian Gulf.

2. Of the four rivers mentioned in Genesis 2:10-14, which are still known by the same names at the present day?

The Euphrates. Also the river "Hiddekel" is the same as the Tigris river.

3. Why cannot the other two rivers still be identified with certainty today?

Possibly because the great flood in the

days of Noah altered the geography of the region.

4. How did God provide for the physical welfare of mankind before the fall?

(a) God provided man with a home, the Garden of Eden; (b) He provided man with wholesome work in the garden; (c) He provided food suitable for the human race; (d) He placed the creatures under man's dominion.

5. How did God provide for the social welfare of mankind before the fall?

By instituting marriage, thus establishing the home or the family, the fundamental social institution of the human race.

6. How did God provide for the spiritual welfare of the human race before the fall?

(a) By affording man communion with God; (b) By instituting the weekly sabbath; (c) By establishing the "covenant of works" or "covenant of life" between God and mankind.

7. Why was this first covenant a covenant of life?

Because by it the human race could have attained eternal life, if Adam had obeyed God.

8. Why is this same covenant often called a covenant of works?

Because it was a plan by which the human race could attain eternal life by works, that is, by perfect obedience to the will of God.

9. Who were the parties to the covenant of works?

The parties were God, who established the covenant, and Adam, the head and representative of the entire human race.

10. What was the condition of the covenant of works?

The condition was perfect obedience to God's revealed will.

11. What particular form did this condition take in the covenant of works?

It took the form of a command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

12. Why did God command Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

This was a sheer, arbitrary test of obedience to the will of God. The fruit of the tree was good in itself. It was not poisonous or harmful in itself. The only reason why Adam and Eve were not to eat it, was just because God had said "Thou shalt not eat of it." So it was a pure test of obedience to God's will.

13. What kind of fruit was this fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

We do not know, for the Bible does not tell us. The idea that it was the apple is only a popular legend, without any foundation.

14. What would have been the result if Adam and Eve had obeyed God?

The time would have come when they would have received the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Then they would have received eternal life, and it would have become impossible for them ever to commit any sin or to die.

15. How long did this test or probation of Adam and Eve in the covenant of works last?

It lasted from the time that God gave the command until Adam ate the fruit of the tree.

16. How long would this probation have lasted if Adam and Eve had obeyed God?

We do not know, for the Bible does not tell us. However, since it was a test or probation, it could not have lasted forever. The very nature of a probation is temporary, not permanent. There would have come a time when God would announce that Adam and Eve had passed the test successfully and had earned the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

17. How long did Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden before they ate the forbidden fruit?

We do not know. The Bible says nothing whatever on this point. However, the popular idea that it was only a few days is unfounded. From Genesis 5:3 we know that Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born. It was entirely possible that Adam and Eve may have lived in the Garden of Eden for several years.

18. What was the penalty attached to the covenant of works?

The penalty attached to the covenant of works was death.

19. What was the meaning of death as the penalty of the covenant of works?

Death must have been meant in the fullest, widest sense, including not only the death of the body, but also spiritual death, or alienation from God, and eternal death, which the Bible calls "hell" or "the second death."

20. If Adam and Eve had obeyed God perfectly, how long would they have lived?

They and all their descendants would have lived for ever without dying.

21. How can this be proved from the Bible?

Romans 5:12.

22. If death had not entered the world, and the human race continued to multiply without anyone ever dying, how could the world hold so many people?

No doubt people would have reached a time when God would have taken them to heaven without dying, as he took Enoch and Elijah.

23. How should we answer people who say that it was not fair for God to make Adam the representative of the whole human race?

We should reply as Paul did in answering a similar objection in Romans 9:20, "Nay out, 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?" Sinful human beings have no right to decide what was or was not fair for God to do. God as the Creator of the human race is sovereign and has the right to do as he pleases with all his creatures.

24. Why is this doctrine of the covenant of works very important to us as Christians?

Because it is parallel to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Just as the first Adam brought sin and death, so Christ, the second Adam, brings us righteousness and eternal life. Adam was our representative in the covenant of works; Jesus Christ is our representative in the covenant of grace. Those who reject the doctrine of the covenant of works have no right to claim the blessings of the covenant of grace, for the two are parallel, and stand or fall together, as is proved by Romans chapter 5.

Lesson 20**For Week Beginning May 19, 1946**

Q. 21. Did man continue in that estate wherein God at first created him?

A. Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocence wherein they were created.

Scripture References:

Genesis 3:6-8, 13. The historical account of the fall of the human race.

Ecclesiastes 7:29. Mankind created upright, but later fell into sin.

2 Cor. 11:3. The fall took place through the temptation of Satan.

Romans 5:12. The fall was a definite event involving one particular agent.

1 Timothy 2:14. Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned without being deceived.

Questions:

1. Why was it possible for Adam and Eve to sin against God?

God left them to the freedom of their own will, instead of using his almighty power to prevent them from sinning. Since God is almighty, it would certainly have been possible for him to prevent the human race from falling into sin. But God in his wisdom did not choose to prevent the fall. Since God held back his almighty power, and left Adam and Eve to their own free will, it was possible for them to choose to commit sin.

2. What was the difference between the sin committed by Adam and the sin committed by Eve?

Read 1 Timothy 2:14. Eve was deceived by Satan, and thereupon sinned; Adam was not deceived, but disobeyed God anyway.

3. Which sin was worse, the sin of Adam or the sin of Eve?

Undoubtedly Adam's sin was worse than Eve's. It is bad to sin because a person has been deceived by Satan; it is much worse to commit the same sin without having been deceived, that is, fully realizing that it is contrary to God's will.

4. What was the result of our first parents' eating the forbidden fruit?

They immediately realized that they had alienated themselves from God. Instead of enjoying communion with God,

they became afraid of God and tried to escape from God, because their conscience told them that they had sinned.

5. What great mystery is involved in the Bible account of the fall?

The problem of the origin of evil in the human race. Since Adam and Eve were created in a state of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, there was no evil in their nature to which temptation could appeal. Since they were created in righteousness, evil had to enter their lives from an outside source. But how could temptation to commit sin make a real appeal to a sinless being? What motive could have more influence in a sinless person than the motive to obey God?

6. What should be our attitude toward this mystery?

We should accept what the Bible teaches about it in simple faith, and recognize that the psychological problem of the origin of evil in the human race is an insoluble mystery. The information which the Bible provides may be summarized as follows: (a) Our first parents were sinless as they came from the hand of God. (b) Sin entered the human race from an outside source, namely, from the temptation of Satan. (c) Satan tempted Eve through appealing to desires which are not sinful in themselves, but morally indifferent (Genesis 3:6), but which it is sinful to gratify by disobedience to a direct command of God. (d) The temptation came to Adam not directly from Satan, but through Eve, who had already sinned. (e) Though the psychological problem is insoluble, there is not the slightest doubt as to the fact that mankind, though created holy, was tempted by Satan and thereupon fell into an estate of sin.

7. What false interpretation of the Bible account of the fall (Genesis 3) is popular today?

The mythical interpretation, which holds that the account of the fall is not a record of historical facts, but a story which grew up in ancient times to explain the presence of sin and death in the world. According to this interpretation, Adam and Eve were not historical persons, nor was there a literal tree of life nor a literal tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was all the product of poetic fancy, a beautiful story, but not true.

8. What reasons have we for holding that the account of the fall in Genesis 3 is

a record of historical facts, to be literally interpreted?

(a) The record itself, being a part of a book of history, is most naturally understood as being historical. (b) Our Lord Jesus Christ regarded it as historical, and Adam and Eve as actual persons, as is shown by Matthew 19:4-6, where he quotes Genesis 2:24 as having actually been spoken by God when he "at the beginning made them male and female". (c) If the account of the fall

in Genesis 3 is not literal historical fact, then the apostle Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-21 is meaningless and worthless, for it assumes the historical character of the record of the fall. Since Romans 5:12-21 forms an essential part of the apostle's argument in the entire epistle, we must conclude that since the Epistle to the Romans is infallibly inspired Scripture, the record of the fall in Genesis 3 must be a record of historical fact.

Lesson 21 For Week Beginning May 26, 1946

Q 22. Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.

Scripture References:

Acts 17:26. The organic unity of the human race; all made "of one blood", therefore all the children of Adam.

Genesis 2:16,17, compared with Romans 5:12-21. Adam constituted by God the federal head or representative of the human race, so that his act was determinative for all.

1 Corinthians 15:21,22. Adam, like Christ, a federal head or "public person".

Questions:

1. To what official position was Adam appointed by God in the covenant of works?

God appointed Adam as "head" or representative of the human race, to undergo the probation of the covenant of works for the whole human race.

2. What Scripture passage most clearly proves that Adam represented his posterity in the covenant of works?

Romans 5:12-21.

3. What is the meaning of the expression: "all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation"?

This expression means: all mankind except Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ descended from Adam, it is true, but not by ordinary generation, for Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and had no human father. All mankind except Jesus Christ sinned and fell

with Adam in his first transgression. The sin of the first Adam brought about the ruin of all mankind except the second Adam.

4. Why is the first transgression of Adam specially mentioned?

Because it was only the first transgression of Adam that affected the entire human race as the breach of the covenant of works. Only that first sin of Adam is imputed or reckoned to the whole human race on account of the covenant of works. The rest of Adam's sins, committed in his later life, were committed by him simply as an individual person, not as "head" or representative of the human race. The later sins of Adam have nothing to do with us today; therefore the Bible does not even mention them.

5. How should we answer the person who objects to the Bible teaching that Adam, as the representative of mankind, brought sin and suffering on all of us?

Whether we like it or not, the Bible teaches that God deals with humanity on the basis of the principle of representation, both in the covenant of works and in the covenant of grace. The principle of representation functions constantly in ordinary human life and no one objects to it. The United States Congress declares war, and the life of every individual in the country is affected by it. Parents decide where they will live, and the nationality of their children is determined by it. If it be objected that the people elect their representatives in Congress, whereas we did not choose Adam to be our representative, the answer is: (a) The decisions of lawful representatives are binding whether those represented chose the representatives or not. The acts of Congress affect millions of people who are too young to vote. A child does not choose its own parents, yet its life is largely affected by their actions and decisions.

(b) It is true that we did not choose Adam to be our representative, but God chose him; and who could make a wiser, better or more righteous appointment than God? To object to God's appointment of Adam as our representative in the covenant of works is not only to deny the **sovereignty** of God, but also to set ourselves up as wiser and more righteous than God.

Q. 23. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Scripture References:

Romans 5:12. Death the consequence of sin.

Romans 6:23. Death the penalty of sin.
Romans 3:23. Sin is universal in the human race.

Genesis 3:17-19. The curse on the world of nature because of human sin.

Questions:

1. What do we call the estate of mankind before the fall?

(a) The estate of innocency; (b) the estate of original righteousness.

2. Why is sin mentioned before misery in describing the estate into which mankind fell?

Because sin came first, and misery followed afterwards as the result of sin. Sin is the cause of misery; misery is the effect of sin.

3. Which causes the most concern to the human race, misery or sin?

Except for Christian people, the human race is very much concerned about its misery or sufferings, and very little concerned about its sins. And even Christian people are often more concerned about the misery of their condition than they are about their sin.

4. What is the basic error of many

non-Christian religions, systems of Philosophy, and human plans for world-betterment?

They all try to find a way to relieve the sufferings of humanity, without first providing a way of deliverance from sin, which is the cause of suffering. All human schemes of betterment which are not founded on redemption from sin through Christ are foredoomed to failure. Permanent relief cannot be obtained by treating symptoms only while ignoring the cause of the trouble.

5. What popular false religion of the present day denies the reality of both sin and misery?

Eddyism, or so-called "Christian Science".

6. What is the error of the modern scientific view of mankind with respect to the condition of the human race?

On the whole modern scientists regard man as he exists today as normal, and decide what is normal in any particular matter, whether physical or psychological, by taking the average of contemporary human beings. Normal health, normal intelligence, normal growth, etc., are all determined in this way. This attitude of regarding the average of present-day humanity as "normal" is contrary to the Bible teaching about mankind having fallen into a condition of sin and misery. According to the Bible, man was normal in the Garden of Eden, as created by God. Having fallen into sin, man became abnormal, and there is not a single normal human being in the world today. The average of contemporary human beings, in any particular matter, is abnormal, that is, diverges from the perfection of man as created by God. In particular, modern science regards old-age and death as normal experiences for human beings, but from the Bible standpoint both of these are strictly abnormal and alien to mankind as created by God.

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 can capital punishment be justi-

fied when the Bible plainly says "Thou shalt not kill?"

Answer:

(a) The sixth commandment is correctly translated "Thou shalt commit no murder" (Exodus 20:13.) It does not prohibit

killing, but murder. For an excellent interpretation of the sixth commandment, see the Larger Catechism, 134-136. (b) Our standard of faith and life is not merely the Ten Commandments, but the whole Bible. A comparison of Exodus 20:13 with many other texts of Scripture will show that the meaning is to prohibit murder, not killing under any circumstances whatever. (c) Capital punishment is expressly commanded by God in the Old Testament (Genesis 9:6) and specifically sanctioned by the New Testament (Romans 13:4) which teaches that the civil magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain".

Question:

What is the difference in the "lot" as was used by the children of Israel in determining who should have which portion of Canaan, and the drawing of names or numbers out of a hat?

Answer:

The Lot is a mutual agreement to determine an uncertain event, **no other way determinable**, by an appeal to the providence of God, on casting or throwing something. This is a **decisory** lot (Proverbs 16:33; 18:18). The matter, therefore, to be determined, in order to avoid guilt, should be important, and no other possible way left to determine it; and the manner of making the appeal solemn and grave, if we would escape the guilt of taking the name of God in vain. Wantonly, without necessity, and in a ludicrous manner, to make this appeal, must be therefore highly blameable. And if thus the decisory lot, when wantonly and unnecessarily employed, be criminal, equally, if not more so, must the **divinatory** lot be, which is employed for discovering the will of God: this, being no mean of God's appointment, must be superstitious, and the height of presumption. (Buck's Theological Dictionary). In the case of the division of Canaan among the tribes by lot, this was done in obedience to the express command of God (Numbers 26:55, 56). As explained above, the present-day use of the lot is warranted in certain cases. However the common use of lots, or flipping a coin, for the

determination of trivial matters in everyday life, is undoubtedly sinful and to be avoided by the conscientious Christian.

Question:

Are we consistent in interpreting Ephesians 5:19 literally as requiring Psalm singing, when Paul says that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"?

Answer:

(a) Whether a particular verse of the Bible is to be interpreted literally or not is determined largely by the context, which will show the nature of the matter under discussion. In the case of Ephesians 5:19 and the parallel text Colossians 3:16, the context shows that these are to be interpreted literally. If we say that Ephesians 5:19 is not to be literally interpreted, what will we do with verse 18 ("And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess. . .")? (b) The apostle Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6 ("the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life") has no such meaning as is implied in the question under discussion. This is perhaps one of the most misused texts in the entire Bible. "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life" is often held to mean: "A literal or strict-constructionist interpretation of Scripture deadens the soul, whereas to hold to the essential principle without insisting on literal details liberates and enriches the soul". Such an interpretation is wholly foreign to the nature and context of 2 Cor. 3:6. The apostle is not contrasting literal interpretation of Scripture with free or "liberal" interpretation; he is contrasting the New Testament dispensation with the Old Testament dispensation. "The letter" refers to the Ten Commandments, which were written on tables of stone (verse 3), and which "kill" by convicting the soul of its sinful condition without providing a way of salvation (compare Romans 3:20, 7:10, 11). "The spirit" means the Holy Spirit of God, as shown by 2 Cor. 3:3, 17. Unlike the Ten Commandments, the Holy Spirit gives life to men by the new birth. The King James Version should have printed "spirit" with a capital "S" in verse 6 as in verses 3 and 17.

He that is down needs fear no fall,
 He that is low, no pride;
 He that is humble ever shall
 Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
 Little be it or much:
 And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
 Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is
 That go on pilgrimage:
 Here little, and hereafter bliss,
 Is best from age to age.

John Bunyan

“If faith has not for its basis a testimony of God to which we must submit, as to an authority exterior to our personal judgment, and independent of it, then faith is no faith.”—Adolphe Monod.

“It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and his apostles. It will always be found safe.”—B. B. Warfield.

“The more I study the Scriptures, the example of Christ, and of the apostles, and the history of my own heart, the more I am convinced, that a testimony of God, placed without us and above us, exempt from all intermixture of sin and error which belong to a fallen race, and received with submission on the sole authority of God, is the true basis of faith.”—Adolphe Monod.

For Adoration, David's Psalms
 Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
 And he, who kneels and chants,
 Prevails his passions to control,
 Finds meat and medicine to the soul,
 Which for translation pants.

Christopher Smart

“You may read your Bible, and pray over it till you die; you may wait on the preached Word every Sabbath day, and sit down at every sacrament till you die; yet, if you do not find Christ in the ordinances, if he do not reveal himself to your soul in

the preached Word, in the broken bread and poured-out wine, if you are not brought to cleave to Him, to believe in Him, to cry out with inward adoration: ‘My Lord, and my God’; ‘How great is His goodness! how great is His beauty!’—then the outward observance of the ordinances is all in vain to you. You have come to the well of salvation, but have gone away with the pitcher empty; and however proud and boastful you may now be of your bodily exercise, you will find in that day that it profits little, and that you will stand speechless before the King.”—Robert Murray McCheyne.

“Oh, if ye got but a view of the saints on Mount Zion, clothed with righteousness, even that of Christ, and a sight of the terror of God, ye would know that it is a bitter thing to depart from the living God; ye would abhor nothing like sin! Where there is so little hatred of sin it is an evidence that ye will not come to Him who is the propitiation for sin; even Him who came to be a propitiation for those that are sick and diseased with sin.”—Richard Cameron.

Question:

Is it not contrary to the spirit of Christ to believe in hell?

Answer:

No. The only way we know anything about the “spirit of Christ” is from his teachings recorded in the written word of God. The fact is that Christ’s own sayings contain more warnings about eternal punishment for sin that can be found in any other part of the Bible. It was not the prophets nor the apostles, but Jesus himself who most clearly and emphatically warned men about the worm that dieth not and the fire that never shall be quenched (Mark 9:43-48), the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:40-42, 49, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), the God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28). To reject a doctrine which is clearly taught in the Bible because it seems to us to be contrary to “the spirit of Christ” amounts to deciding for ourselves what we would like to believe, and then labeling our self-made creed “the spirit of Christ”.

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME I

JUNE, 1946

NUMBER 6

Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

CHAPTER 4

In the Furnace During the Reign of Decius, 249-251 A. D.

Roman Emperors With Dates of Their Reigns

Septimius Severus, 193-211 A. D.

Caracalla, 211-217 A. D.

Macrinus, 217 A. D.

Elagabalus, 218-222 A. D.

Severus Alexander, 222-235 A. D.

Maximinus Thrax, 235-238 A. D.

(Gordianus I and II, 237 A. D.)

Gordianus III, 238-244 A. D.

Philippus Arabs, 244-249 A. D.

Decius, 249-251 A. D.

After the death of Septimius Severus, the Church enjoyed peace and security for about forty years. During this period the Roman emperors paid little attention to Christianity. One of them, Philippus Arabs, was even favorable to the Christians. This period of peace was a season of rapid growth of the Church, when large numbers of people became Christians. But it was also a season of moral and spiritual declension, for as persecution decreased, worldliness and unfaithfulness increased in the Church. Some of the Christian writers of that period tell us how the Church had become lukewarm, how members lived in worldly luxury, how pastors neglected their duties and devoted themselves to worldly pleasures and the pursuit of wealth, and how the people attended Church not so much to worship God and be instructed in his Word, as to be entertained and to meet their friends and relatives. The Scriptural prohibition of intermarriage between Christians and unbelievers was largely disregarded; church discipline was neglected; Christian women vied with one another in adopting the latest fashions of the world in dress and adornment. Yet there remained a godly element in the Church which disapproved of this worldly trend and were filled with apprehension because they realized that such a Church was ill-fitted to face the blasts of persecution which were likely to break forth anew at any time.

It was during this period of peace and security that the renowned Christian scholar and teacher Tertullian completed his earthly pilgrimage. Tertullian, who was born about 160 A. D. in Carthage, North Africa, and died about 220 A. D., was one of the most influential teachers of the early Church. His writings had a profound effect in clarifying the Church's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. After studying law, Tertullian was converted to Christianity at the age of about thirty years. Later he joined the sect of the Montanists, and shared their extreme ideas, urging Christians to court martyrdom, and teaching that it is sinful to save one's life by flight during a time of persecution. But in spite of his Montanist errors, and other incorrect ideas in his writings, Tertullian was a great Christian and his writings abound in good things, many of which are often quoted, such as his saying that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church". Tertullian insisted on a clear-cut line of demarcation between the Christians and everything heathen. He taught that it is wrong for Christians to study astrology, to take an oath of allegiance to the Roman government, to attend the immoral Roman amphitheatre, and the like. He also advocated celibacy and frequent fasting, and held that a widow or a widower to remarry is a kind of adultery. In spite of his extreme and erroneous views on some of these questions,

his influence in the main was good and was especially needed in a day when the Church was beginning to succumb to complacency and worldliness.

Persecution was far from finished, and the peace the Church had enjoyed turned out to be only the calm before another, and a more fearful, storm. During the reign of Decius the most cruel, consistent and extensive persecution which the Church had yet experienced suddenly broke out about the year 250. Decius aimed at the total eradication of Christianity, and at restoring the old heathen faith to its original influence and glory. To accomplish this wicked purpose, he issued an edict to all governors of provinces in the Roman Empire, ordering a universal return to the official Roman state religion, under the direst penalties. A date was set before which all Christians must appear before the Roman officials to deny Christ by offering sacrifice to the Roman gods and the emperor. In executing this decree, the official used promises, threats, confiscation of property, exile from home, and terrible tortures, to try to get the Christians to deny Christ.

In some places the officials made use of the emperor's edict to enrich themselves, allowing Christians by the payment of a certain sum of money, **without offering sacrifice**, to obtain official certificates stating that they had offered sacrifice to the gods and the emperor. In some places some professing Christians were even able to get their names entered as having sacrificed, without offering sacrifice and without paying money. Of course these methods of evading the issue of a point-blank, down-right confession of Christ in the face of opposition, were dishonest and sinful. The more earnest and faithful of the Christians

were not willing to save their lives by such doubtful expedients, and remained faithful to their Lord, gladly suffering martyrdom for his name. One of these was Fabianus of Rome, who as bishop of the congregation there was one of the first to suffer martyrdom in this persecution. Another was Alexander, bishop in Jerusalem, who had on a former occasion made a bold confession of his faith before a Roman emperor, and now sealed his testimony with his blood.

The persecution under Decius was the first which extended to all parts of the Roman Empire. Because of this extensive scope it produced a much greater number of martyrs than any previous persecution. Under Decius the utmost cruelty was used against the Christians; they were tortured with sword, fire, racks, hooks of iron, red hot chairs. The officials sought to invent lingering tortures, giving their victims no hope of a speedy death, in order to break their will power and induce them through bodily weakness and anguish to renounce their faith in Christ.

From prison a group of Christians in Rome wrote to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in North Africa: "What more glorious and blessed lot can fall to man by the grace of God, than to confess God the Lord amidst tortures and in the face of death itself; to confess Christ the Son of God with lacerated body and with a spirit departing, yet free; and to become fellow-sufferers with Christ in the name of Christ? Though we have not yet shed our blood, we are ready to do so. Pray for us, then, dear Cyprian, that the Lord, the best captain, would daily strengthen each one of us more and more, and at last lead us to the field as faithful soldiers, armed with those divine weapons which can never be conquered."

Christ's Power to Still Storms

Matthew 8:23-27. Mark 4:35-41. Luke 8:22-25.

"Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." Psalm 89:9.

Christ Stills the Storm on the Sea of Galilee

The Sea of Galilee is frequently troubled by severe storms, which seriously endanger the life of anyone who may be sailing on its waters when the tempests strike. On this occasion such a tempest occurred, and Jesus was asleep in the boat on a pillow. It is interesting to note the contrast here to the history of Jonah, who also was asleep on a ship during a violent storm.

Jonah, having deliberately disobeyed God, had a guilty conscience; Jesus, having wearied himself in doing the will of God, had a clear conscience. Since Jonah was the cause of the storm, it ceased when he was put out of the ship; but in the case of Jesus, his being in the ship caused the storm to cease (Trench).

The situation was desperate; otherwise the disciples would not have disturbed Jesus. They were fishermen and accustomed to handling boats in such storms. Yet they were so terrified that they awoke Jesus, crying "Master, Master, we perish!" (Luke). The double "Master" shows their intense earnestness. Human resources were at an end. Christ must do something, or else, as it seemed to the disciples, they would all perish.

Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and the raging waves. We should note the word "rebuked". Elsewhere we read of Jesus "rebuking" a fever, and "rebuking" evil spirits that possessed someone. We can understand rebuking a person, even an evil spirit. But why rebuke the wind and the waves? Is this just poetic license, a kind of personification of the forces of nature? No, indeed not. Really only a person can receive a rebuke. In rebuking a fever, or the wind and waves, Jesus showed that all physical evil can be traced back to moral evil, or sin, which is inherent in persons.

Back of the pain and suffering of life is the fact of human sin. And back of the pain and afflictions of life there is a kingdom of sin, of which Satan is the king. Back of the storms and calamities of life is that kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of sin of which the devil is the king.

Jesus cured a woman who had been sick for eighteen years. Afterwards he said that Satan had bound her for eighteen years, until he came to loose the bond. Someone will ask, Do we not believe in natural laws? Are not sickness and disease the result of natural causes, such as bacteria or lack of vitamins? Are not storms on the sea the result of natural causes, natural laws which can be studied with scientific methods?

Yes, we believe in natural laws. When we say that back of sickness and suffering lies the kingdom of Satan, we do not mean that Satan is **directly** the cause of the suffering. It comes by natural causes, yet back of all natural causes is the moral explanation, that God has permitted Satan and the kingdom of evil to have a certain control over these natural laws. Of course this control is limited and is under God's providential government. Satan cannot do the least thing apart from God's permission, as is shown by the Book of Job.

This world of nature with its laws was not made by Satan; it was made by God. When God made it, it was "all very good". At the time of the creation, the world of

nature was not the enemy, but the friend, of mankind. There was no pain, no sickness, no destruction or desolation caused by natural calamities.

But something happened to change the situation. The human race yielded to the temptation of Satan and fell into sin, alienating itself from God. This was followed by God pronouncing a curse on the ground for man's sake. From that time on it would bring forth thorns and thistles. Man would have to work desperately hard for a living; in the sweat of his face would he eat bread. In the end the laws of nature would destroy man's life, and he would return to the dust from which he was taken.

Thus nature, which had been man's friend, became man's enemy, an enemy to be fought and wrestled with all his life long, an enemy that would win out in the end and claim the human body to return it to its original dust.

That nature has not become **totally** man's enemy is due to God's grace and kindness. It is by God's grace that man has learned to use many forces of nature for his own benefit. If it were not for God's goodness there would have been total war between man and the natural world. But God intended for human life to be possible on this planet, so he limited the curse. Nature makes human life very difficult, but not absolutely impossible.

In the Epistle to the Romans the apostle Paul explains to us how nature came under this alien power, so as to become man's enemy: "For the earnest expectation of the creature"—that is, the world of nature—"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity"—came under an alien power—"not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Romans 8:19-22).

The creature, the world of nature which God created, was made subject to vanity, but not willingly. It was not willingly that nature ceased to be man's friend and became his enemy. Not willingly, but by constraint, because of bondage to an alien power, the power of the kingdom of evil, of which Satan is the king. Because God had pronounced a curse on the earth on account of human sin, the kingdom of Satan was permitted to turn nature against man, and

the result was all kinds of affliction, pain, suffering, anguish and trouble indescribable.

Never forget the back of the ills and afflictions of life is the kingdom of evil, the kingdom of sin, the kingdom of Satan. This does not mean that if we suffer a headache it is because we have committed some special sin more than other people, necessarily; but it means that back of all suffering is the fact of sin. If it were not for sin there could be no suffering.

So Jesus could rebuke the fever, and he could rebuke the wind and the waves. For Jesus looked back of nature, back of the natural causes of these things to the spiritual explanation, and there he saw the kingdom of evil and sin. He was really rebuking Satan, the author of it all. So Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves. Peter and James and John could not break the power of that curse that God had pronounced on nature. The storm was too powerful for them. They had used all their strength in wrestling with it, and had only failed.

But here is a person who has the authority to speak a word and cancel the power of that curse. Here is one who is stronger than all the power of Satan and

Satan's kingdom. Here is one who can deliver the world of nature from "vanity", from slavery to the power of sin and evil. So Jesus speaks those words of calm, majestic authority to the wind and the waves, "Peace, be still". "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark).

Here stands nature's Lord. The modern view of Jesus makes him nature's product, the best specimen of manhood that evolution has produced to date. But Jesus himself said he was not from beneath, but from above. He is not nature's product, but nature's Creator and Lord. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3).

"And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Be assured, this was a miracle, not a mere coincidence. This was a real tempest, and it was really stilled by the almighty power of the Son of God. People hesitate to believe that today. Why? Because they have such a poor, low idea of who Jesus was. Of course, if Jesus was just a Galilean carpenter, he could not still the storm by a word of command. But if he was God manifest in the flesh, as the Bible teaches, then he could, as we know he did.

Christ Stills the Storm in His Disciples' Hearts

There were two storms that night. One was the storm of the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee; the other was a storm of fear and doubt and panic in the hearts of the disciples. There is no doubt about it; the disciples were not merely alarmed; they were desperately frightened. They regarded the outlook as practically hopeless when they called Jesus to help. "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus was in the boat with them. They included him among those whom they thought about to perish. They thought that Jesus and themselves would all be drowned.

Jesus not only rebuked the wind and the waves. He also rebuked the storm in the hearts of the disciples. "Why are ye fearful. O ye of little faith?" (Matthew). "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark). "Where is your faith?" (Luke). These reports of Jesus' words in Matthew, Mark and Luke are all true and accurate reports of his rebuke to the disciples. They vary in details; their meaning is identical; moreover it is probable that Jesus said all these words, and more too, and each of the Gospel writers has selected part of Jesus' sayings to record in the book he wrote.

The storm in the disciples' hearts was a storm of fear, anxiety, panic. Jesus rebuked them and said that the remedy for that state of mind was **faith**. They did indeed have some faith—just enough to believe that it might help to arouse Jesus and tell him about the situation. But they did not have enough faith to give them peace of mind during the tempest.

After Jesus had stilled the storm, they were astonished, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matthew). Their astonishment indicates that they had not believed such a thing possible. They had not really believed that Jesus had the power to speak a word and calm the tempest. If they had had the right kind of faith, they would have known that no storm could ever sink the ship on which the Son of God was a passenger.

People are troubled by storms in their hearts today, too; storms of fear, anxiety, perplexity; storms of doubt and uncertainty, not knowing what to believe nor whom to trust. Some are giving way to storms of pessimism and despair, seeing nothing in the future but blackness, clouds and thick

darkness. The old "Pollyanna" theology of ignoring the evils of life and just smiling them off, does not work any more. It always failed, but its failure is somewhat more obvious today. The easy-going way people once had of saying "All's well with the world" does not work so well any more these days. There is too much stark evil abroad in the world, too much tyranny and injustice, too much wickedness, too much hatred, too much violence and bloodshed, too much suffering. People ask, "What is the world coming to? What will be the end of all this evil and trouble? Can we still believe in a good God? Can it be that a good God is still on the throne of the universe?"

If storms of doubt and fear like these arise in our hearts, there is only one who can still them and give us calm. It is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who stilled the storm on Galilee and the storm in the hearts of the disciples. The storm on the Sea of Galilee was a real storm. And the storms in people's hearts are real storms, too. Modern complacent unbelief tends to say, Just ignore them. Forget it. Pay no attention to these fears.

Nothing could be more foolish than that. The storms in people's hearts are not imaginary; they are desperately real. There is only one remedy, and that is faith. Jesus said, "Where is your faith?"

It is a pity that the word "faith" is definitely off the gold standard today. People talk about "faith" when they mean self-confidence and even self hypnotism. The person who says over and over, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better" thinks that is faith. It is a kind of faith, but it is the wrong kind. Really it is self-hypnotism. What we need is not self-hypnotism, but faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Not faith in ourselves, but faith in someone else. Not faith in man, but faith in Christ.

Only the Christ who had the power to calm the wind and the waves had the power to calm the storm in the disciples' hearts. Only the divine Christ, the Lord of nature, can really still the storms in our hearts today. Not the purely human Jesus of modern "liberalism", but the mighty, divine Christ of the Word of God.

The same Christ stilled both tempests, the one on the sea, and the one in the disciples' hearts. Modern theology denies the first, calling it a "myth" or "legend", but still tries to retain the second. Christ did not really calm the wind and the waves, they tell us, but he can really calm the storm in your heart.

Oh, no! That is a dangerous falsehood. Such a Christ is not real; he is only a figment of men's imaginations. The Christ of the Scriptures, the Christ of Peter, James, John and Paul, wielded not only moral power, but supernatural power as well.

Make no mistake about this. If we give up belief in Jesus' actual stilling of the wind and the waves—if we give that up, and call it a "myth"— **then by and by we are going to give up belief in Jesus as the Saviour of our souls.** We are not at all ashamed to tell people that we really believe that Jesus Christ actually, literally, stilled a real storm on Galilee by a word of power. And the person who denies that is on the way to giving up all belief in Christ as his Saviour.

The only real Christ is the supernatural Christ of the Scriptures, who is not nature's product but nature's Creator and Lord. Do you know him? He has given spiritual peace to millions. To as many as receive him, he gives the power to become the sons of God (John 1:12). Consider then his gracious invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 22

For Week Beginning June 2, 1946

Q. 24. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.

Scripture References:

I John 3:4. Sin is defined as transgression of the law.

Galatians 3:10,12. Want of conformity

is sin, as well as positive transgression.

Romans 3:20. Sin impressed on the mind and conscience by the law of God.

Romans 5:13. Apart from law there could be no sin imputed to men.

James 4:17. The mere failure to do good is sin.

Questions:

1. Where does the Bible come nearest to giving a formal definition of sin?

I John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law," or as translated in the American Standard Version, "Sin is lawlessness."

2. What is the difference between sin and crime?

Strictly, sin is violation of the law of God; crime is violation of the law of the state. However many old writers used the words "crime" and "criminal" in the sense of "sin" and "sinful".

3. May the same act be both a crime and a sin?

Yes. For example, to commit murder, theft, or perjury.

4. May an act be a sin but not a crime?

Yes. For example, to hate one's brother is a sin against God, but not a violation of the law of the state, for the latter has no jurisdiction over men's thoughts.

5. May an act be a crime but not a sin?

Yes. For example, in Scotland 250 years ago many Covenanters were put in prison and even killed because they assembled to worship God without permission from the king. This was a crime because they violated the law of the state (a wicked and unjust law, in that case), but it was not a sin, because they were obeying God's law by doing it.

6. To what kind of creatures has God given laws?

To his reasonable creatures, that is, to his rational creatures (angels and men).

7. What two kinds of sin does the Catechism speak of?

(a) Negative sin, or want of conformity to God's laws; (b) Positive sin, or transgression of God's laws.

8. What must a person do to be a sinner?

Nothing. Even if there were a person who had never transgressed any of God's laws, still that person would be a sinner, for he would have a sinful want of conformity to God's holy law.

9. What summary of God's law especially stresses the positive sin of transgression?

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17), eight of which begin with the words "Thou shalt not . . .".

10. What summary of God's law especially stresses the negative sin of want of conformity?

The moral law as summarized by Jesus (Matthew 22:37-39): "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

11. What inadequate definition of sin is often given by those who believe in total sanctification during the present life?

They often define sin as "voluntary transgression of known law."

12. Why is this definition of sin inadequate?

Because it omits two forms of sin: (a) original sin, or the sin of nature with which we are born; (b) the negative sin of want of conformity to God's requirements.

Lesson 23

For Week Beginning June 9, 1946

Q. 25. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly in-

clined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

Scripture References:

Romans 5: 12, 19. The guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to all mankind.

Romans 3: 10-19. Mankind universally and totally depraved in sin.

Ephesians 2. 1-3. Mankind dead in sin and therefore unable to please God.

Romans 5:6. Mankind spiritually without strength and ungodly.

Romans 8: 7,8. Mankind at enmity with God and cannot please God.

Genesis 6:5. Mankind sinful in imagination and thoughts as well as in deeds.

James 1: 14,15. Original sin the source of actual transgressions.

Matthew 15: 19. Sinful deeds proceed from a corrupt and sinful heart.

Questions:

1. What are the two principal kinds of sin?

(a) Original sin, or the sin of nature that we are born with; (b) actual transgressions, or the sin of practice that we do ourselves.

2. Why is only the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to his posterity?

Adam acted as our representative only until he broke the covenant of works. After he committed his first sin he ceased to have any covenant relationship to us. However he still had a natural relationship to the human race as the first ancestor of all mankind.

3. What righteousness did mankind lose by the fall?

The righteousness in which he was created, or original righteousness.

4. Besides the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the loss of original righteousness, what other evil resulted from the fall?

Man's nature was corrupted so that he became depraved in heart and loved to sin.

5. What is the extent of the corruption of nature that resulted from the fall?

This corruption of nature is complete or total, and is sometimes called "total depravity."

6. Does total corruption of nature mean that the unsaved person cannot do anything good?

No. The unsaved person, by God's common grace, can do things that are good within the civil or human sphere. For example, an unsaved person may save another from drowning, at the risk of his own life. But the unsaved person can do nothing that is spiritually good, that is, nothing truly good and pleasing in God's sight. He may do things that are good in themselves, but he never does them with a right motive, namely, to love, serve and please God; therefore even the "good" works of the unsaved person are spoiled and corrupted by sin.

7. What is the modern attitude toward the doctrine of total depravity?

Those who pride themselves on their "modern" spirit ridicule and scoff at this truth of God's Word.

8. What practical lesson may we learn from the doctrines of original sin and total depravity?

From these doctrines we should learn the lesson that sins in the outward life proceed from the sin in the heart, and therefore reform of the outward life without spiritual cleansing of the heart cannot lead to a truly good life.

9. Is it possible for a person to save himself from his condition of original sin and total depravity?

No. Jeremiah 13:23 proves that a change in nature is beyond our own power. Because we are not merely sick, but **dead** in trespasses and sins, we are spiritually helpless and unable to save ourselves. A person may reform his outward life to some extent, but he cannot give himself a new heart; he may be able to change his conduct in some respects, but he cannot raise himself spiritually from the dead.

10. What is God's gracious remedy for our condition of depravity and helplessness?

God's gracious remedy for our corrupted and helpless condition is the new birth, also called in Scripture the new creation, the washing of regeneration, quickening, etc. This is a sovereign, supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit on our spirit.

Lesson 24 For Week Beginning June 16, 1946

Q.26 How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?

A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.

Scripture References:

Psalm 51:5. We are conceived and born in a sinful condition.

Job 14:4. Our first parents being sinful, their posterity must be sinful too.

Job 15:14. All mankind are born with a sinful nature.

John 3:6. Natural generation produces only sinful human nature; the new birth produces a new nature.

Questions:

1. Besides being our representative in the covenant of works, what other relationship did Adam have to us?

Besides the federal or covenant relationship, which came to an end when he committed his first sin, Adam also had a natural relationship to us as our first ancestor. This natural relationship continued throughout his life.

2. What has been imputed to us because of Adam's covenant relationship to us?

The guilt of Adam's first sin has been imputed to all of his posterity except Jesus Christ.

3. What have we received from Adam by reason of his natural relationship to us?

We have derived our physical or bodily life from Adam through our parents and more remote ancestors, who descended from him.

4. What was the effect of Adam's first sin on himself?

As a judicial penalty for his violation of the covenant of works, God withdrew from Adam the life-giving influences of the Holy Spirit. The result was, inevitably, moral and physical death. The moment Adam ate the forbidden fruit he became dead in trespasses and sins; at that same moment the principle of death became operative in his physical body, with the certainty that it would return to dust in the end.

5. How is this effect of Adam's first sin on himself paralleled in his descendants?

Every human being is born into the world with the guilt of Adam's first sin reckoned or imputed to him. Therefore because of the broken covenant of works every human being comes into existence morally and spiritually dead, because deprived of the life-giving operations of the Holy Spirit. As for our physical body, the principle of death is at work in it when we are born, so that its return to dust, while by God's common grace it may be delayed, yet cannot be permanently prevented.

6. What is the effect of our beginning our existence morally and spiritually dead?

The effect of our beginning our existence with a depraved and sinful nature, or morally and spiritually dead, is that personal sin and actual transgressions inevitably follow in the course of time.

7. Is it correct to say that we "inherit" a sinful nature from Adam?

It depends on what we mean by the word "inherit". If we mean that we are born with a sinful nature because of our connection with Adam, our first ancestor, then it is correct to say that we "inherit" a sinful nature from Adam. If we mean that we inherit a sinful nature as we might inherit blonde hair or tall stature, then it is not correct to say that we "inherit" a sinful nature from Adam. While we must recognize that the problem of the transmission of original sin is a very difficult one, still it seems safe to say that the Bible does not warrant believing that a sinful nature is transmitted by the mechanism of biological heredity as physical characteristics are transmitted from generation to generation. Sin is a spiritual fact, not a bodily property or characteristic. If original sin were transmitted from parent to child by biological heredity, we would receive it from our immediate parents rather than from Adam. In that case, too, the children of believers would come into the world in a regenerate condition. But as a matter of fact the children of believers are born into the world dead in sin. We may conclude, therefore, that (a) our sinful nature comes to us by reason of our natural birth as descendants of Adam; (b) it comes to us from Adam, rather than from our immediate parents; (c) we "inherit" a sinful nature from Adam as a man might "inherit" money or property from his father or grandfather, not as a person might "inherit" blue eyes or auburn hair from his parents. For a fuller discussion of this difficult subject the reader is referred to A. A. Hodge, "Commentary on the Confession of Faith", pages 151-160.

8. What system of doctrine denies the Bible teaching on original sin?

The system of doctrine called Pelagianism, after its founder Pelagius, a British monk who lived in the fourth century after Christ. Pelagius denied that we are born with a sinful nature, and taught that infants are born without sin, and become sinful only by imitating the sins of other persons. Against the heresy of Pelagius, the Bible doctrine of original sin was defended by Augustine. After a long controversy Pelagianism was condemned as false by the Church, and the Bible doctrine was vindicated. During the Middle Ages, however, a modified form of Pelagianism, called semi-Pelagianism, became the dominant doctrine in the Church.

Lesson 25 For Week Beginning June 23, 1946

Q. 27. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

A. The fall brought upon mankind the loss of communion with God, his displeasure and curse; so as we are by nature children of wrath, bond slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come.

Scripture References:

Genesis 3:8-10, 24. By the fall mankind lost communion with God.

Ephesians 2:2, 3. By nature we are the children of wrath.

2 Timothy 2:26. By nature we are bond slaves to Satan.

Genesis 2:17. Lamentations 3:39. Romans 6:23. Because of the fall we are liable to God's punishments in this world.

Matthew 25:41, 46. Jude 7. Because of the fall we are liable to God's punishments in the world to come.

Questions:

1. What was the first misery which the fall brought upon the human race?

The loss of communion with God.

2. How soon after they sinned did Adam and Eve lose communion with God?

Immediately after they sinned.

3. How did they know that they had forfeited communion with God?

Their own conscience, which had become defiled by sin, caused them to realize that a barrier had come between them and God. Genesis 3:7.

4. Can an unsaved person have communion with God today?

Absolutely not. Only through Christ's work of reconciliation can the barrier between God and sinful human beings be removed so that they can have communion with God.

5. How were God's displeasure and curse visited upon Adam and Eve?

(a) God sentenced Adam to life-long labor as the means of existence, until his body should die and be reclaimed by the dust from which it had been taken; (b) God told Eve that her life would be a life of greatly increased suffering; (c) God expelled both Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, prevented them from having access to the tree of life, and appointed for them a

perpetual conflict with Satan and the kingdom of evil. Genesis 3:15-20, 22-24.

6. How does our experience parallel that of Adam and Eve after they sinned?

(a) They lost communion with God; we come into the world alienated from God.

(b) The woes pronounced upon Adam and Eve are still the common experience of humanity.

(c) They lost their access to the tree of life, though its fruit had been almost within their grasp; we are born into the world far from the tree of life, and no human being can ever receive eternal life except through Jesus Christ.

(d) They faced a life of perpetual enmity between themselves and Satan; we too must fight a life-long battle against Satan and against his allies, the world and the flesh.

7. What is meant by saying that we are by nature children of wrath?

This expression, which is taken from Ephesians 2:3, means that we are born into this world with a nature which is sinful and therefore is the object of God's wrath, that is, his righteous displeasure against sin.

8. What is meant by saying that unsaved people are bond slaves to Satan?

This means that God has justly permitted Satan to have a certain power or dominion over all unsaved people, by reason of which they are not spiritually free, but in bondage to sin and Satan, who tyrannizes over their lives and afflicts them both in soul and in body. Satan's activities are strictly limited by God, however. The believer in Christ, while he may be influenced or tempted by Satan, is no longer a slave of Satan, for he has been liberated by the Son of God (John 8:34-36).

9. What truth is implied by the statement that sinners are "justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come"?

This statement implies the truth that sin involves guilt, for it renders the sinner liable to penalties. Therefore sin is not a mere misfortune or calamity which would call forth the pity of God; nor is it a mere disease which needs to be cured; nor is it a mere moral pollution which needs to be cleansed; it is guilt which deserves punishment and which needs to be forgiven.

10. What is the modern "liberal" atti-

tude toward the doctrines stated in this question of the Catechism?

The modern "liberal" theology denies every one of the truths set forth in the answer to Question 27. (a) Modern "liberalism" teaches that all men are children of God by nature, and therefore anyone can have communion with God by simply realizing that he is already a child of God. (b) "Liberalism" speaks only of the love of God, and objects to the ideas of his displeasure

and curse. (c) "Liberalism" follows Pelagius and denies that we are born with a nature that is the object of divine wrath because of its sinfulness. (d) "Liberalism" does not believe in a personal devil, and therefore cannot accept the idea that we are bond slaves to Satan. (e) "Liberalism" defines sin in human or social terms, and therefore rejects the doctrine that sin is guilt before God which deserves divine punishment.

Lesson 26 For Week Beginning June 30, 1946

Q. 28. What are the punishments of sin in this world?

A. The punishments of sin in this world are either inward, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections; or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments, together with death itself.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 4:18. Blindness of heart and mind as a punishment for sin.

Romans 1:28. A reprobate mind a punishment for sin.

2 Thessalonians 2:11. Strong delusions sent by God as punishment for sin.

Romans 2:5. Hardness and an impenitent heart.

Isaiah 33:14. Genesis 4:13. Matthew 27:4. Horrors of conscience one of God's ways of punishing sin.

Romans 1:26. Sinners punished by being given over to vile passions.

Genesis 3:17. God's curse upon the world of nature a penalty for human sin.

Deuteronomy 28: 15-68. All calamities, sufferings and evils are punishments for sin.

Romans 6:21, 23. Death itself is the wages, or penalty, of sin.

Questions:

1. What is the spiritual state of the unsaved person?

A state of spiritual deadness which the Catechism calls "blindness of mind".

2. Is the unsaved person responsible for his own blindness of mind?

Yes, for this blindness is itself a punishment for previous sin.

3. What is the meaning of the expression "a reprobate sense"?

This expression implies a full and willing abandonment to sin, with little or no restraint.

4. What is meant by "strong delusions"?

This expression means a firm, confident belief in something which is itself false. For example, the confident faith of the modern world in the evolutionary theory of the origin of the human race is a strong delusion; the Nazi belief that the Germans are a "super-race" superior by nature to all other races of men was a strong delusion.

5. How can it be right for God to send people "strong delusions", as Thess. 2:11 affirms that he does?

(a) The Bible often speaks of God doing what he actually permits to happen; for example, God withheld the influences of his grace from Pharaoh; the result was that Pharaoh's heart, following its natural inclination, became harder and harder; then in the Scripture it was said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. If God leaves people to their own ways they will choose lies rather than the truth; in this sense it can be said that God sends them "strong delusions". James 1:13, 14 teaches that God does not himself tempt any man to sin, but he does permit people to be tempted and enticed by their own lusts. (b) God does not send "strong delusions" to deceive innocent or righteous people such as Adam and Eve were before the fall, but only to deceive those who have already corrupted themselves by choosing to sin. All through the Bible God is seen to punish sin by abandoning the sinner to his sin, which always results in even greater and worse sin.

6. What is meant by "hardness of heart"?

This means a condition of moral and spiritual indifference, so that the conscience

is no longer sensitive and active, and the person is not affected by calls to repentance nor by the invitations of the gospel. The person who has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit is given over to the most extreme form of hardness of heart.

7. Give some Bible examples of people who were given over to "hardness of heart".

(a) Pharaoh. Exodus 14:4, etc. (b) King Saul. I Samuel 16:14, etc. (c) Judas Iscariot. John 13:26, 27.

8. What is the meaning of "horror of conscience"?

The Bible teaches that there is such a thing as hardened sinners becoming greatly afraid of the punishments of sin, even though they are quite complacent about the sinfulness of sin. The fact that they have offended against God does not trouble them, but they are terrified at God's judgments which they know will overtake them. There are accounts of famous infidels being filled with terrors and fear of hell while on their deathbeds.

9. How does Paul in Romans 1:28 explain the presence of vile and gross sins in the world?

These "vile affections" are the result of God abandoning people to their own sinful nature and tendencies, as a punishment for their not "liking to retain God in their knowledge".

10. How should we look upon the present condition of the world of nature?

The whole world of nature is under a curse of God, as we learn from Genesis 3:17-19 as well as other places in Scripture. Floods, dust storms, calamities of all kinds, as well as bad climates, extremes of weather, thorns and thistles, are all part of this curse. We should realize that the world as created by God was quite different from the world

as we know it today. We live in an abnormal world, in the wreckage of a world that has been devastated and cursed by sin. Apart from the testimony of the Bible that the world as God made it was "all very good" (Genesis 1:31), modern scientific investigation has proved that there once was a warm climate in northern Alaska and other far northern regions. Fossils of palm leaves and other tropical vegetation have been found there in the rocks of the frozen north.

11. In what sense is the curse upon the world of nature a punishment for sin?

In the case of unsaved sinners, the curse upon nature is strictly and simply a punishment for sin. In the case of Christian people, the curse upon nature is not strictly a **penalty** for sin, for they have been delivered from that by Christ's atonement. Rather, in the case of Christian people, the curse upon nature is to be regarded as a consequence of sin and a part of God's fatherly chastening or discipline by which he prepares us for the life eternal.

12. In what sense is physical death itself a punishment for sin?

Death is called "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23). Wages means "that which we have earned" or "what we deserve". In the case of the unsaved person, death is simply the wages of sin, a judicial penalty. In the case of the Christian, Christ has already suffered death as his substitute. The Christian still has to die, of course, but in the case of the Christian, death is no longer a penalty. It remains an **enemy**, but it is not a judicial penalty. Rather, to the Christian death is a change by which God transfers him to the region and the condition of perfect holiness. Thus physical death, to the Christian, is part of God's fatherly discipline. It proceeds not from God's wrath, but from his love, in the case of the Christian.

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:

What is the Scofield Reference Bible? Is it a reliable aid to Bible study?

Answer:

The Scofield Reference Bible is the King James Version of the Bible together

with a system of references, notes and comments prepared by the Rev. C. I. Scofield, D.D., with the assistance of eight consulting editors. The notes and comments are printed on the same pages as the portions of Scripture to which they refer. The volume was first published in 1909. It is copyrighted and none of its notes or comments can be quoted without special permission, which is difficult or impossible to obtain. The notes contain some excellent material, especially

in the definitions of Biblical terms which they provide. The fact that these helps appear on the same pages as the text of the Scripture itself has given them a popularity which they probably would not have had if printed in a separate book. In spite of the helpful material which it contains, it must be said that the Scofield Bible is a dangerous and misleading book. It provides not merely helps for Bible study, but helps which are thoroughly saturated with the special system of doctrine known as "modern dispensationalism." This system divides the history of mankind, past and future, into seven dispensations or periods of time, each of which is said to be characterized by a distinct principle which forms the basis for God's dealings with mankind during that dispensation.

This system sets law and grace over against each other as mutually exclusive principles. The Scofield Bible teaches that the people of Israel at Mount Sinai foolishly exchanged grace for law when they entered into covenant with God and accepted the Ten Commandments and other laws (page 20). The Reformed theology held by our Church, on the other hand, teaches that the law, including the Ten Commandments, was given as a part of the system of grace. The law was never intended as a way of salvation, for salvation by works became impossible the moment Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. The law was given to lead men to Christ for salvation, and to provide a standard for godly living on the part of those who have come to Christ. The Scofield Bible also teaches that the Lord's Prayer, as a form of prayer, belongs to the dispensation of law rather than to the dispensation of grace (pages 1002, 1089-90). Apart from these false doctrines about law and grace, the Scofield Bible sets forth a special type of premillennial doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ and related events (dispensational futurist pre-tribulationism). Only those who are prepared to make a thorough study of its special doctrines should use the Scofield Bible, and they should certainly investigate the other side of the questions by studying the books and articles that have been written criticizing the system which the Scofield Bible represents.

Question:

Is the doctrine of British-Israelism true to the Bible?

Answer:

British-Israelism is a false and harmful

system of interpreting the Bible which seems to be gaining popularity at the present time. Briefly, it holds that the Bible contains a double message, a double set of promises, and describes two distinct bodies of people on earth who may be called "the people of God". According to this system, the Christian Church is the spiritual people of God, to whom belong the spiritual message of the Bible, that is, the gospel of salvation through Christ, and the spiritual promises of forgiveness, eternal life, etc. Besides this spiritual people of God, British-Israelism holds that there is an earthly people of God, namely those who are descendants of Abraham according to flesh, to whom belong the earthly message of the Bible and the earthly promises of the Bible. To this is added the peculiar idea that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the descendants of the ten "lost tribes" of Israel and therefore are heirs of many Old Testament promises because of their (supposed) racial connection with Abraham. Some go so far as to maintain that it is the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, because of their race, to rule the world. The promise of Jeremiah 33:17 ("For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel") certainly refers to the kingly office of Jesus Christ, as shown by Luke 1:32, 33 ("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"); but British-Israelism claims that Jeremiah 33:17 and related promises are fulfilled in the kings of Britain who reign in London. This is one of the most harmful features of this false system, for it takes these glorious promises of Christ's kingly reign and reduces them to the level of promises concerning an earthly, national kingship. The notion that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are entitled to special standing or privileges because of a supposed racial connection with Abraham is certainly contrary to the Bible which teaches that in this New Testament age it is not physical descent but faith that makes a person a real child of Abraham (Galatians 3:7; Romans 9:6-8). As for the claim that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are descended from the "lost tribes" of Israel, there is not any real historical evidence that such is the fact, nor is there a qualified historian in the world who accepts the claim as fact. The kind of evidence which is offered in British-Israel literature is wholly unconvincing.



**BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE**

VOLUME 1

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1946

NUMBER 7

“Our wisdom should consist in embracing with gentle docility, and without any exception, all that is delivered in the sacred Scriptures.”

John Calvin

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

BE STRONG

By MALTBIE D. BABCOCK

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle; face it: 'tis God's gift.

Be strong!
Say not, "The days are evil; who's to blame?"
And fold the hands, and acquiesce; Oh, shame!
Stand up, speak out, and boldly, in God's name.

Be strong!
It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
Faint not; fight on. Tomorrow comes the song.

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?

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

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

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.

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

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

FROM THE "CONFESSIONS" OF AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Wondrous depth of Thy words! whose surface, behold! is before us, inviting to little ones; yet are they a wondrous depth, O my God, a wondrous depth! It is awful to look therein; an awfulness of honor, and a trembling of love. The enemies thereof I hate vehemently; oh that Thou wouldest slay them with Thy two-edged sword, that they might no longer be enemies unto it: for so do I love to have them slain unto themselves, that they may live unto Thee.

(Book XII, Chap. XIV, Sec. 17, Pusey's Translation)

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Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

Roman Emperors With Dates of Their Reigns

Decius, 249-251 A. D.	Probus, 276-282 A. D.
Gallus, 251-253 A. D.	Carus, 282-283 A. D.
Valerianus, 253-260 A. D.	Diocletian, 284-305 A. D.
Gallienus, 260-268 A. D.	Constantius, 305-306 A. D.
Claudius II, 268-270 A. D.	Galerius, 305-311 A. D.
Aurelianus, 270-275 A. D.	Constantine (jointly with others), 306-323 A. D.
	Constantine (sole ruler), 323-335 A. D.

(Note: Some comparatively unimportant emperors have been omitted from this list).

Chapter 5

The Life and Martyrdom of Cyprian of Carthage

After the death of the emperor Decius in the year 251, persecution of Christians subsided for a short period. During the brief reign of Gallus a number of public calamities occurred which aroused the popular wrath against the Christians, who were accused of angering the pagan gods by teaching people to neglect their temples and worship. When Valerianus became emperor in the year 253 he adopted a tolerant attitude toward the Christians, but after five years, in 258, he changed his policy and issued a new edict against Christianity which was even more severe than that issued by Decius. This new edict was aimed especially at Christian leaders and Church officers and at prominent people who had become Christians. Apparently the emperor believed that if the leaders and prominent members of the Church could be intimidated into denying Christ, the rest of the membership would soon fall in line. The new edict required that church officers be put to death. Roman senators and other prominent members of the church were to suffer confiscation of their property, and if they stubbornly insisted on remaining

Christians they, too, were to be put to death.

The most prominent Christian to suffer martyrdom under the emperor Valerianus was Thascius Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in North Africa. Cyprian was born in a noble and wealthy heathen family of Carthage about 200 A. D. As a young man he was well known as a successful teacher of rhetoric or public speaking. A man of outstanding ability, not only as a public speaker, but in literary, legal and administrative matters, he was destined to become an unusually successful and influential Christian leader. Until he was over forty years old Cyprian lived in the enjoyment of worldly luxury and wealth, and was involved in the common sins and vices of pagan society, as is shown by his own confessions.

An earnest and godly Christian pastor named Caecilius, who was living in Cyprian's house, acquainted him with the truths of the Christian faith and persuaded him to study the Word of God. For a considerable time Cyprian resisted the

grace of God, but in the end the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart proved effectual and he became a Christian, receiving baptism in 245 or 246. At the time of his conversion Cyprian sold his estates and used the money for the relief of the poor. In harmony with the ascetic tendencies which were gaining ground in the Church in his day, Cyprian took a vow of celibacy. After his conversion Cyprian spent much time in the study of the Scriptures and the writings of prominent Christians, especially Tertullian.

Two years after his baptism, Cyprian was chosen bishop of Carthage by the acclamations of the church members. Although it was against the law of the Church for a recent convert to be made a bishop, and although Cyprian himself was extremely reluctant to accept the office and sought to avoid it, the overwhelming demand of the people prevailed, with the result that Cyprian became the acknowledged leader of the entire North African faculties caused by persecution and the Church. For ten years, in spite of great difficulties caused by persecution and the rise of parties in the Church, Cyprian discharged his office with the utmost faithfulness, until his martyrdom in 258 A. D.

Cyprian had not been bishop long before the storm of the Decian persecution broke on the Church. At this time Cyprian escaped death by flight to a place of safety, and remained there in retirement for almost two years. During this period he attended to the duties of his office as best he could by writing letters to the various churches, some of which still exist today along with his other writings. Cyprian's action in fleeing from persecution was condemned by some Christians, who accused him of cowardice and unfaithfulness, but he defended his action, replying to his critics that "Since the crown of martyrdom is received by the grace of God and can not be gained unless the hour for granting it by God has come, so he who, remaining faithful in Christ, withdraws temporarily and abides his time, does not deny his Lord".

When the persecution died down after the death of Decius, Cyprian returned to Carthage and undertook the correction of various evils which had broken out during his absence. He called together a council of bishops to consider the question of how the Church should deal with those members who had saved their lives by denying Christ during the persecution. It was decided that such persons must be placed under church discipline, but on their giving satisfactory evidence of repentance they might be restored to good standing in the

Church. About this time Carthage suffered a devastating famine and pestilence which so demoralized the heathen population that the dead were left in streets or houses where they had fallen. Cyprian roused the Christian people to do what they could in this terrible situation. Disregarding personal danger, and affording what help they could to Christian and heathen alike, Cyprian and the Christians of Carthage made a deep impression upon the public. Here was a practical fruit of Christianity which could not be duplicated by any of the heathen religions or philosophies.

In 257 Cyprian, being the most prominent Christian in the city of Carthage, was arrested and taken before the Roman proconsul Paternus. On being commanded to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods, Cyprian flatly refused to do so, and was sentenced to banishment to a lonely place called Curubis. Here he remained for about a year, meantime attending to the duties of his office so far as possible by correspondence. Then he was recalled to Carthage, only to face a new and more severe edict of the emperor Valerianus, which required that all Church officers be put to death.

Again commanded to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods, Cyprian again flatly refused. The Roman proconsul, thinking to save such a prominent man from death, urged him to think the matter over carefully, to which Cyprian replied: "Carry out your orders. This matter does not admit of consideration." Thereupon the proconsul sentenced him to be put to death by the sword. On hearing this sentence, Cyprian said: "Thanks be to God!" He was immediately led to an open space near the city, whither a vast multitude of people, both heathen and Christian, followed him. At the place of execution, Cyprian prayed earnestly in the hearing of all the people, and then, with the utmost self-control removed his outer garments, covered his eyes, and requested a minister who had accompanied him to bind his hands. Cyprian then made a last request of this friend, namely that after his death twenty-five pieces of gold should be paid to the executioner. By this request the heathen spectators would be impressed with the truth that for a Christian to die is gain. The executioner tremblingly drew his sword and Cyprian gained the incorruptible crown of glory. The Christians of Carthage buried the body of their martyred pastor with great solemnity near the place where he had been executed.

During the great pestilence at Carthage Cyprian composed a tract entitled "Con-

cerning Mortality". In this he speaks as follows concerning the life eternal: "Only above are true peace, sure repose, constant, firm, and eternal security; there is our dwelling, there our home. Who would not fain hasten to reach it? There a great multitude of beloved awaits us; the numerous host of fathers, brethren, and children. There is a glorious choir of apostles; there the number of exulting prophets; there the

countless multitude of martyrs, crowned with victory after warfare and suffering; there triumphing virgins; there the merciful enjoying their reward. Thither let us hasten with longing desire; let us wish to be soon with them, soon with Christ. After the earthly comes the heavenly; after the small follows the great; after perishableness, eternity."

Chapter 6

Through Deep Waters Under Diocletian

Although at this period the Christians were only a small minority of the population of the Roman Empire, they had an influence far beyond what their numerical strength might indicate. One reason for this was the fact that even though they constituted a small minority of the total population, still they had the highest membership of any single definite religion of the Roman world. Whereas heathenism was loose and lacking in cohesion, the Christian Church was a very compact and closely organized body of people. Added to this was the fact that the Christians were mostly concentrated in the cities, while the rural areas remained largely pagan. And the nature of the Christian gospel, together with the pure and consistent life of the Christian people, had produced a profound impression upon the Roman world of that day. The old religions were dying; Christianity was full of life and vigor and making new gains day by day.

Following the death of the emperor Valerianus, the Church, in the good providence of God, enjoyed a period of forty-three years of peace and rest. During this period of relief from persecution, the Church increased greatly in membership and also in material prosperity. In the cities commodious church buildings were erected. Vessels of silver and of gold were provided for the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But as material prosperity and numerical strength increased, the power of godliness waned, church discipline was neglected, and worldliness of life became common among the membership.

Persecution was not finished, however, and the final life-and-death struggle between Christianity and heathenism was still to come. This was the persecution under the emperor Diocletian and after him under Galerius. "All former persecutions of the faith were forgotten in the horror with which men looked back upon the last

and greatest: the tenth wave (as men delighted to count it) of that great storm obliterated all the traces that had been left by others. The fiendish cruelty of Nero, the jealous fears of Domitian, the unimpassioned dislike of Marcus, the sweeping purpose of Decius, the clever devices of Valerian, fell into obscurity when compared with the concentrated terrors of that final grapple, which resulted in the destruction of the old Roman Empire and the establishment of the Cross as the symbol of the world's hope." (Arthur J. Mason).

Diocletian, who was the son of slaves or of humble and unknown parentage, rose by ability and hard work to the position of supreme power in the Roman Empire. During the first twenty years of his reign Diocletian tolerated Christianity, following the policy which had existed when he ascended the throne. Though Diocletian himself was a complete heathen, his wife and daughter and many of his subordinate officials were either Christians or else inclined toward Christianity. Diocletian imitated the emperor Domitian in claiming divine honors. The title applied to him was "Our Most Sacred Lord". No person was permitted to approach his presence except kneeling and with forehead touching the floor.

It was to be expected that heathenism would make a last desperate effort to destroy its rapidly growing rival, Christianity, and Diocletian found that he could not permanently avoid facing the question of the effect of Christianity on the Roman Empire. Finally Diocletian's son-in-law and co-regent, Galerius, persuaded the aged emperor to consent to a persecution of Christians. This storm first broke on the Church in 303 A.D. During that year Diocletian issued three edicts against Christianity, each of which was worse than the one before it. A fourth and even more severe edict was issued in 304 by Maximian, one of Diocletian's co-regents. By the terms of

these edicts Christian church buildings were to be destroyed; all copies of the Scriptures must be surrendered to the authorities to be burned; all Christians were to be excluded from public office and deprived of all civil rights; and finally, all Christians were to be compelled to offer sacrifice to the heathen gods, and those who refused to do so were to be put to death.

Diocletian had established his imperial court in the city of Nicomedia in the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor (located in what is now Turkey). On two occasions the imperial palace caught fire, and the Christians were unjustly suspected of having set the fires. A rash Christian tore down the first edict as a protest against such wicked and tyrannical rulers, and being caught he was put to death by the torture of slow roasting with many other cruelties added.

On February 23, 303, the storm burst in its fury with the destruction of the spacious Christian church building in the city of Nicomedia. All meetings of Christians, for whatever purpose, were forbidden. The persecution spread to all parts of the Roman Empire, although in Gaul (France), Britain and Spain it was largely limited to the destruction of church buildings, owing to the fact that in these provinces the emperor's co-regents were inclined to spare the lives of the Christians. In the other parts of the Roman Empire, and especially in the eastern regions, the persecution raged with the utmost fury and rivers of blood were shed. It is recorded that in some places as many as a hundred Christians were executed in a single day; in others, fire was set to church buildings while the congregations were assembled for public worship, and they were burned to death without mercy. Some Christians were crucified; others were thrown to wild beasts to be devoured.

In 305 Diocletian abdicated and retired to private life. After an attempt to murder him had failed, he finally committed suicide. Galerius, who had been his co-regent, ascended the imperial throne as his successor. He chose several co-regents who like himself were bitterly opposed to Christianity. Persecution had decreased during the last months of Diocletian's reign, but now under Galerius it broke out again. In the autumn of 308 a new edict was issued, commanding that men, women and children offer sacrifice to the heathen gods, and providing that all food products for sale in the markets be sprinkled with wine which was offered in sacrifice to the gods, so that no Christian

could buy food without appearing to compromise with idolatry.

The Church historian Eusebius himself witnessed this persecution in Egypt and Palestine, and in his writings he tells how he saw church buildings torn down, the Scriptures publicly burned, and Christian pastors torn to pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. He describes how the executioners became weary, and had to relieve each other by turns, while the Christians went to their death triumphantly singing praises to God as long as they could breathe.

It is not surprising that in such a terrible persecution, which had broken upon the Church suddenly after a long period of peace and quiet, large numbers of professing Christians chose to save their lives in this world by renouncing their faith in Jesus Christ. In the providence of God persecution has the beneficial effect of purifying the Church of unconverted members, who have only the form of godliness but lack its power. In the Diocletian persecution there were also those who surrendered their copies of the Scriptures to the persecuting authorities to be destroyed. Some who hesitated to hand over the Scriptures, gave other books to the officials instead, and succeeded in evading the issue for the time being in this way. But as the persecution grew more intense, the faith and courage of the Christians rose, and large numbers went to their death victoriously with praise on their lips. Even young boys and girls proved faithful unto death. When the eight years of this persecution finally came to an end, many thousands of Christians had sealed their testimony with their blood, besides those who were tortured or mutilated and later released. Heathenism had made a last, desperate attempt to crush Christianity by ruthless force, and had failed. The Church, purified and tried, was stronger than ever.

As the emperor Galerius lay on his death-bed in 311 he issued one more edict. In this edict he asked the Christians to pray to their God for the welfare of the state and the emperor. The edict also declared that the government's purpose of suppressing Christianity had failed, and that the emperor would now grant permission to the Christians to assemble for worship provided they do nothing against the order of the state. Although this edict of Galerius confesses nothing except his helplessness, and although it wrongly represents the right to worship God as a privilege granted by the state, still it marks the end of the bloody Diocletian

persecution. Except for one or two futile outbursts, the power of paganism was at an end, and the long trail of blood of the

martyrs that began in the time of Nero, two and a half centuries earlier, had come to its conclusion.

Chapter 7 Freedom at Last Under Constantine

The youthful Constantine, who had been brought up at the court of Diocletian in Nicomedia, in the year 306 became ruler of Gaul, Spain and Britain. In 312 he crossed the Alps into Italy with his army to engage in battle with Maxentius, who had been elevated to supreme power at Rome. Constantine's army numbered about 40,000 men, whereas Maxentius commanded more than double this number. Faced with this serious crisis, Constantine realized that he needed more than human power and help. Although he had been somewhat favorable toward Christianity, he was not at this time a Christian. The famous story of Constantine's vision of the cross, and his resultant victory in battle and profession of the Christian faith, is given by the Church historian Eusebius, who stated that he received it from Constantine himself when the latter was a very old man, and that the emperor attested the truth of the account by swearing a solemn oath.

As given by Eusebius, the story is as follows. Constantine had been considering what divinity he could implore for aid in the approaching battle. The highest god worshipped by his father had been the Sun-god, therefore Constantine addressed his prayer to the Sun-god for help. Not long after this he saw a marvelous sign in the heavens. Looking toward the setting sun in the western sky, he beheld a radiant cross above the sun, and beside it the words (in the Greek language) "By this sign conquer". That night Constantine dreamed a dream, and in his dream Christ appeared to him, directing him to place the cross as an emblem on his banners and on his soldiers' shields, and to enter the battle with assurance of certain victory. Regarding the sign in the sky, and the dream he had had, as revelations from heaven, Constantine acted accordingly and his army marched down the Italian peninsula toward Rome under the sign of the cross, winning victory after victory. At the battle of the Milvian Bridge the rival emperor Maxentius was completely defeated, and Constantine with his victorious army entered Rome. Before long he became the sole ruler of the western part of the Roman Empire.

Soon after his triumphant entry into Rome, Constantine went to the city of Milan

where he conferred with his co-regent and brother-in-law, Licinius, after which the famous Edict of Toleration of 313 A.D. was issued. This Edict of Toleration was also published at the eastern capital of the Empire, Nicomedia, the regent there, Maximinus, being compelled to agree to it shortly before he committed suicide in the same year.

The Edict of 313 went far beyond the grudging toleration granted by Galerius two years before, in 311. The new edict was a real step in the direction of a friendly attitude toward Christianity on the part of the Roman Empire, and it prepared the way for the legal recognition of the Christian faith as the religion of the Empire. Among other provisions, the edict required the restoration, in full, of all confiscated church property to the Christian Church, the expense involved to be paid by the government. The magistrates of the various provinces were ordered to carry out this provision immediately and fully. By the Edict of 313, sometimes called the Edict of Milan, the great principle of religious freedom was, for the first time in human history, officially proclaimed by the government of a great and powerful state. While the language of the edict would seem to indicate a **grant of toleration** rather than a **recognition of religious liberty as an inherent human right**—"That we should give both to the Christians and to all men the free power of following that religion which each one shall wish"—still the **effect** of the edict was the immediate establishment of religious liberty. The Christians had not merely **claimed** religious freedom as their right: they had actually **taken** it, had insisted upon it, had regarded all human infringements of it as null and void; and they had been ready, when occasion required, to lay down their very lives in martyrdom in order to make good their claim. After the total failure of two and a half centuries of attempted suppression of Christianity, the highest authority of the Roman Empire, by the Edict of 313, virtually admitted that the whole program of persecution had been wrong and that it is not a proper function of the civil government to control the people's religious belief and practice. This was an amazing reversal of a long established policy and tradition.

Heathenism was not entirely dead, however, and it made one more attempt to attack Christianity. The co-regent Licinius ceased to agree with Constantine, and thereupon resumed persecution of Christianity for a brief period in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In 323, however, Licinius was defeated, with the result that Constantine then became the sole ruler of the Empire. While he did not forbid the practice of the old pagan religions, still he openly favored Christianity and he protected the Church in its rights and liberties, and continued this policy quite consistently until his death in 337.

Constantine himself is one of the riddles of history. Though he became a professed adherent of Christianity at the time of his march on Rome, he did not receive baptism until he lay on his death-bed many years later. This fact does not necessarily imply a lack of faith in Christ, however, for in those days it was already becoming common to postpone baptism as long as possible

because of the mistaken belief that sins committed after baptism are not forgiven with the same freedom as those which, it was believed, were washed away by the sacrament of baptism. Whether or not Constantine was a regenerate Christian, or a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot of course be decided with certainty. That he professed adherence to Christianity, and favored it publicly and consistently, even though himself unbaptized, is beyond question. We can but reflect in reverent wonder upon the mysterious providence of God by which the throne of the the Roman Empire—the throne of Nero, of Decius and of Diocletian—came to be occupied by a professing Christian, the protector and helper of the Church. As another great emporor had said centuries before Constantine's time concerning the Most High, "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

The Special Love of God

I John 4:8, 19, "... God is love ... We love him, because he first loved us."

That God is love is a great truth of Christianity. All through the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, the love of God shines forth. It is true that God loves himself, for each of the three Persons of the divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, loves the other two. In this sermon, however, we are not considering God's love for himself, but God's love for the human race.

We should understand that God's love may be divided into two kinds, which we may call **general** and **special**. God has a general love for all his creatures except those which have been judicially condemned on account of sin; this general love includes the whole human race living in this present world. God also has a special love for **a part** of the human race, his elect, his redeemed, his covenant people. God's general love for all mankind is sometimes called his **benevolence** or his **goodness**. His special love for his elect is closely related to his **grace** and especially to his **mercy**.

God's general love for the human race results in many blessings being bestowed on men. He makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. This general love for the human race brings many blessings

to men, but it does **not** bring them the greatest blessing of all, namely salvation unto eternal life.

As an example of God's general love for mankind, we may recall the history of Nineveh in the days of Jonah. The wickedness of Nineveh was so great that God was ready, in his moral government of the world, to destroy the city. But God had compassion on the people of Nineveh, bad as they were. Nineveh was a very great city. God told Jonah that in Nineveh there were no less than 120,000 children too young to discern between their right and left hands, "and also much cattle." Yes, God even had pity on the animal life of Nineveh. So Jonah was sent to preach there, the people turned from their wickedness, and the city was spared from destruction at that time. That was something quite apart from what we call **salvation** in the spiritual sense. There is no reason to suppose that the people of Nineveh received eternal life and were taken into a covenant relationship with God as his children, as the people of Israel had been. They were not made partakers of God's special, redemptive love. But God's general love for mankind resulted in their city being spared destruction at that particular time.

There are few greater religious errors

than the common failure to distinguish between the general and the special love of God, between the love which God bestows on all men alike, and the love which he bestows on some but not on others.

Suppose one of us were to go to live in Asia or Africa. After a time such a person would become very homesick for America. He would be eager to see some Americans from time to time. If some Americans were to visit his locality, he would go to some trouble to see them. They might be from a different part of America, but still they would be Americans, one's own countrymen, and a person living in a remote foreign land would be glad to see them. But that would not make them members of his own family. He might love them as fellow-Americans, but he would not love them as he would love his own children. There would be a wide difference between his general love for his countrymen, and his

special love for his own dear ones of his own family. This may illustrate, somewhat, the idea of the distinction between God's general love for all mankind and his special love for his elect.

Concerning God's general love for all humanity, we should remember, first, that it is **universal**, given to all, a love for humanity as a whole; and second, that it is **limited to secondary blessings for this present life**, and does not carry with it the blessing of salvation from sin unto eternal life.

Let us now turn aside from this general love of God for mankind, to consider more particularly God's special love for his elect. It is God's special, redemptive love that has been bestowed on us who are believers in Christ. Our text informs us that "We love him, because he first loved us". That is the special love of God; it is the source of our salvation; it results in our loving God.

A Special Love For Particular People

The divine love which we are now considering is a special love for particular people. It is bestowed on some, but not on all mankind. God gives this special love to some but withholds it from others. We see this truth all through the Bible, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in God's choice of Abraham. From all the people in the world of that time, God chose a single individual, Abraham, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).

Some people say that God ought to treat everybody alike; but as a matter of fact God does not treat all people alike; he treats people differently, and he bestows special, undeserved blessings on some which he withholds from others. God gave to Abraham spiritual blessings which he gave to no other person living at that time; this is characteristic of the special love of God, which gives to some what is not given to others.

Abraham was chosen to be the father of God's people, Israel, and later God said to Israel (Amos 3:2), "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Of course God **knows** everything and every-

one; but in this verse the word "known" is used in the special sense of **adopt** or **receive into fellowship with God**. And what God did not bestow on any other person, he bestowed on Abraham; and what he did not bestow on any other people, he bestowed on Israel; and what he has not bestowed on humanity in general, he has bestowed on us who are Christians: his saving grace unto eternal life.

Paul said, "the Son of God loved **me** and gave himself **for me**". That is a very individual, particular, personal matter. Christ was given, and came from heaven to earth, not simply in a broad, general, inclusive way to save the world, but in a definite, particular way, to save certain particular people in the world, God's elect.

God's special, redemptive love singles a person out from the general mass of sinful humanity, and bestows salvation upon that person. It brings that person to Christ without fail. It is the net that fishes and fishes until it catches. The person on whom this special love is bestowed is brought into a vital union with the living God. This special, redemptive love overcomes all unbelief, all obstacles, all reluctance, all unwillingness, all difficulties, and brings that person into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). That is the way God's special love works out.

A Free, Undeserved Gift of God

God's special love is undeserved; it does not find us lovable, but makes us so. It is human to love those who are attractive, unselfish and lovely; it is divine to love those who are unlovely, self-entered and defiled by sin. Our whole human race fell away from God into unfathomable depths of sin and wickedness. Mankind became hopelessly alienated from God, at enmity with God, and guilty before God. Man's guilt was contrary to God's righteousness; man's defilement was contrary to God's holiness. The human race was in a state described in the Bible as "in the flesh"—unregenerate, corrupted sinful human nature—and Scripture informs us that man in that condition cannot please God because he is at enmity with God (Romans 8:7, 8).

The Bible teaches that God loved us even before the creation of the world. God's love is not because of anything fine or noble in us, but simply because of God's own choice. God's love finds a person sunk in the depths of sin, and lifts that person to the heights of holiness and glory. "We love him, because he first loved us". Note also verse 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Yes, God's love is undeserved. It is the wonder of divine love that it is bestowed upon the undeserving. Nor is that all. God's saving love is bestowed not only on the undeserving, but actually **on the ill-deserving**. We not only do not deserve eternal life; we act-

ually deserve the opposite, namely, eternal death. We have offended against God, we have sinned against him; we stand guilty before his judgment bar; we can plead no excuse for ourselves; we deserve to be condemned to spend eternity in hell; yet God's special love is lavished on us, the ill-deserving.

Consider the apostle Paul as an example of this truth. When did God's salvation come to him? When did God's special love reach out and effect a change in his life? Was it after he had abandoned his wickedness and been a faithful Christian for a while? Oh, no, not at all. It was just precisely while he was a most bitter enemy of Jesus Christ that the special love of God overtook him. It was while he was on the road to Damascus breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. While he was on that wicked errand and in that terrible state of mind the special love of God entered his life and Saul the persecutor became Paul the Christian. God's grace is undeserved; it comes precisely to the ill-deserving.

Never get the idea that you are too great a sinner for God's grace. Consider the comforting statements of God's Word: "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20); "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 5:37). God's love is broader and deeper than all our need; his grace is greater than all our sin.

A Boundless Love, Because Divine

We believe, on the authority of the Holy Scriptures, in a God who is **infinite, eternal and unchangeable**. And because God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable, his saving love for his people in infinite, eternal and unchangeable.

God's love is infinite. It is total love. It knows no limits. Only an infinite being could have an infinite love. That is God's love. We can measure it by the infinite gift which he gave, the unspeakable gift of Christ, God's only-begotten Son, his dearest and best. God did not sacrifice one of the angels for our salvation; he gave himself, in the person of his dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to come into this sin-crazed world and to suffer and die on the cross of Calvary for us. Surely, this is an unmeasurable love. There could be no greater love than this.

God's love is eternal. Time cannot

compass it. It stretches from eternity to eternity, from the eternity that is past to the eternity that is still future. God loved each and every individual one of his elect before the world was created, before the starry heavens existed; he will love each and every individual one of his elect after the world as we know it has passed away. All human love has a beginning at some point of time. Sometimes human love has an ending, too. But God's love is eternal. It is a circle—it has neither beginning nor end.

Think of it! God the infinite God, loved us as individuals, ages and ages before we were born. Yes, even before the world and the human race were created, when our only existence was as thoughts in the mind of God, even then he loved us and planned an eternal destiny for us in union with himself. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an

everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

God's love is unchangeable. Sometimes we human beings love a person, and then something happens that changes our love for that person. Sometimes love may fade quite away, or even, alas, may turn to the ashes of the most bitter hatred. But that is not true of God's special love for his elect. God's love never changes, for God never changes. We may change, a thousand times it may be, and sometimes we change for the worse, but that does not alter God's special love that he has bestowed on his own.

An Active Love, Not Mere Feeling

God's love is practical; it is not a mere emotion. Love is an emotion, of course. But true love goes beyond mere emotion, and shows itself in practical ways. The mother who loves her child manifests that love in tender care. A mother may lose sleep night after night caring for a sick child, and will do it gladly because of love.

It is easy to say "I love my country". But the person who really loves his country, as we all know, is the one who is willing, when the test comes, to make real sacrifices for his country's safety and welfare. Love of country is a feeling, but when it is sincere, it goes beyond mere feeling and works itself out in practical activities.

God's love is practical; it works itself out in facts and activity. This activity by which God's love is worked out may be divided into three great parts: (1) What God has done for his elect **in history**: the unfolding of the divine plan of redemption by which the foundation for our salvation was laid, culminating in the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. (2) What God does for

Consider the words of Psalm 89:30-34, which speak of Christ's people: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; **nevertheless** my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips". God's love is unchangeable; it is the permanent, unailing, eternal inheritance of the person who has once received it.

his elect **in their own lives**: the application of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, including all that is rightly called Christian experience—regeneration, repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life either accompany or flow from them. (3) What God will do for his elect **in the future**: the benefits to be received at death and at the resurrection—the mighty redemptive acts which will be wrought by the supernatural power of God at the end of the world or "the consummation of the age".

Just as God's love to us goes beyond mere emotion or feeling, and overflows in mighty acts on our behalf, so our love to God ought to go beyond mere emotion or religious feelings, and to work itself out in the activities of our lives. God loved us, and gave His Son for our salvation. We should love God, and make **doing His will** the ideal and program of our lives, our aim in living.

God Is Not Only Love

Love is not the only attribute of God. The Bible says that "God is love", but that is a very different thing from saying that "Love is God", or "God is only love and nothing else." Those who say that God is too good and loving to condemn any of his creatures to eternal punishment in hell, hold the error that God is **only** love. It is a pleasant error, but of course it is false, and the Bible gives it no support.

Love is just one of God's attributes. It is not the only one. There are others, for example, God's **justice** or **righteousness**, God's **holiness**, God's **truth**. These are not a part of God's love, or subordinate to it; they are distinct from his love, and parallel

to it. Along with love, they are distinct expressions of God's character. God is a perfect being, and his character is perfectly balanced. His different attributes are perfectly harmonious with each other. God's love, for example, is always perfectly balanced with his holiness and his justice. This is a truth which modern "liberalism" usually denies or disregards. One of the basic errors of "liberalism" is the false notion that God is only love.

Because God is not only a God of infinite love, but also of infinite justice, Calvary was necessary for the salvation of the elect. Human sin could not simply be overlooked and forgotten in the interests of love, for

justice had to be reckoned with too. And here we see the wonderful depths of God's love, as well as the awful purity of his justice. Rather than leave human sin unpunished God took the awful weight of guilt upon himself—and so God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, suffered and died for the sins of God's elect. Calvary shows how God could be just, and still be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

What shall be our response to the love of God? "We love him because he first loved us." We can of course never **repay** God's love. To all eternity we shall be his debtors. As the poet Robert Browning wrote in "Saul",

"So shall crown thee the topmost, inefablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!"

While we can never repay God's love, certainly we should appreciate his love and acknowledge the debt by consecrating our lives to seeking his kingdom and his righteousness.

Christian Love

I Corinthians 13.

First Corinthians 13 is one of the great chapters of the Word of God. It is a favorite chapter of many Christian people. Here the apostle Paul describes Christian love, and shows its value and its permanence. (Because the word "charity" has changed in meaning since the Authorized Version of the Bible was made, I shall substitute the correct word "love" for "charity" throughout this sermon.)

Strange to say, this is also one of the most **misused** chapters of the Bible. It is frequently quoted with a view to putting a stop to religious controversy, as if Christian love and argument about religion could not exist together—as if we must choose between Christian love and faithfully maintaining sound doctrine.

We should note right at the outset that no such use can rightly be made of this chapter. Of all Paul's epistles, perhaps none is more controversial than this first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is filled with controversy and argument from beginning to end. We could almost say that this 13th chapter is an island in a sea of arguments. Clearly, then, Christian love as set forth by Paul is not contrary to religious controversy, to argument about religion, to striving to maintain sound doctrine and refute errors.

Nor is Christian love contrary to an effort to purify the Church of disorders and scandals. This chapter is quoted in that connection, too, as if any attempt to purify

the Church of disorders or to deal with members who are living in sin were contrary to Christian love—in a word, as if Christian love meant tolerating any kind of false doctrine and any kind of wicked living in the Church of Jesus Christ. Of course such cannot be the true meaning of this chapter. In chapter 5 of this very epistle, the apostle Paul gives instructions for a certain member of the Church at Corinth to be excommunicated, that is, put out of the Church and deprived of the privileges of Church membership until that person would repent (5:1-5, 13).

Thus we see that Christian love is not contrary to argument about religion; it is not contrary to efforts to maintain sound doctrine; and it is not contrary to efforts to purify the Church of unworthy members who are living in sin. The trouble with many people is that they are not willing to accept **the whole** of God's word; they want to pick and choose, to accept what they like, and to pass by the rest. They like First Corinthians 13, because it speaks of Christian love; but they prefer to by-pass a considerable part of the other fifteen chapters of the epistle. We cannot deal that way with God's Word. We must accept it all, or reject it all. We may not pick and choose among the contents of the Bible.

Paul is speaking about **Christian** love, not just about **human** love. He is dealing with specifically **Christian** love, and therefore we should realize that only Christian people can have this kind of love. Many

people have the mistaken idea that somehow we can persuade ordinary, unsaved, worldly people to live up to the teachings of First Corinthians 13. How foolish! Only Christians can even begin to have this kind of love in their lives. A person who is not a Christian cannot have Christian love in his heart, any more than a person who is blind can appreciate a beautiful sunset.

If a person is not a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he or she had better become a Christian first of all, and then afterwards try to practice Paul's teachings about Christian love. For it is quite impossible to practice real Christian love **before we know Christ**.

Paul is speaking about Christian love **in general**, about what we might call the **principle** of Christian love; not just love to God, not just love to our fellow-Christians, not just love to our fellow-men, but all taken together, Christian love in general. Many people fail to realize this. They tend

The Necessity of Christian Love

A well-known manufacturer of drugs and medicines advertises that his products contain, in addition to the substances listed on the labels, also a priceless ingredient. When your curiosity is aroused and you read the rest of the advertisement you learn that the priceless ingredient is "the honor and integrity of the maker". The idea expressed is a true one, of course. If you buy a bottle of cough medicine or aspirin tablets, you depend on the honesty and reliability of the firm which manufactured the product. That honesty and reliability is the priceless ingredient; it safeguards you against being poisoned or injured by some person's careless mistake.

Now Christian love is the priceless ingredient in all the other Christian virtues. It is not something to be added to all the rest, as if to say, "I will get faith this year, and hope next year, and the year after that I will concentrate on love." No, Christian love is an ingredient of our faith, of our hope, of our service for Christ and his people. Love is the mainspring that makes the

The Nature of Christian Love

Christian love is not a feeling, or rather perhaps I should say, Christian love is not **just** a feeling, not a mere emotion. It may be a feeling, but it is far more than that. It is an attitude, but it is more than an attitude—it is an attitude that carries over into action.

James gives us an example of this in his

to have an unbalanced idea of Christian love. We must have a properly balanced idea of Christian love, including love for God, love for our fellow-Christians and love for mankind in general.

An unbalanced idea of Christian love is back of some people's pacifist ideas. They will not engage in war because they say it is contrary to "the law of love". Now if a robber breaks into your house at night and threatens to murder your whole family, will you say, "I must love this poor robber, so I will not shoot him?" If you love the robber that much, what becomes of your love for your wife and children? Or if we had loved the Japanese militarists so much that we would not fight against them, what would have become of our love for the down-trodden, oppressed peoples of Manchuria, China, Korea, the Philippines, Burma, Siam, and so forth? You see, we have to have a balanced idea of Christian love, not one extending in one direction only.

watch go; the motive power behind all our Christian life and all our Christian work. Paul tells us that nothing else counts unless we have love.

Eloquence, whether of men or of angels; the gift of prophecy; understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge; faith sufficient to move mountains; giving away all my property to relieve the poor and needy; even sacrificing my very life in some great cause—if a person is not actuated by **love**, all is empty, worthless and without meaning. We might summarize these first three verses by saying that religion without love is a sham and a counterfeit, and the person who claims to be a Christian but does not have love for God and man is a hypocrite.

Christian love is the priceless ingredient that makes everything else count. It is like salt that brings out the flavor of any kind of food. It is the priceless ingredient that makes everything else real and sincere and worth-while and pleasing to God.

Epistle, chapter 2:15, 16, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Real Christian love is more than an

attitude; it is a motive power that translates that attitude into action. It was love that made the Good Samaritan go to the expense and trouble of caring for the man who had fallen among thieves. It was love that made Mary of Bethany break the alabaster box of precious ointment and pour it over the feet of Jesus. It was love that made Jesus go to the cross of Calvary to suffer and die for sinners such as you and me.

Now let us consider some of the qualities of Christian love as they are set forth in this chapter. Love suffereth long, and is kind. It leads a person to endure something bad for a long time, and still not to become scornful and sour, but to keep on having a kind feeling and attitude toward other people. Love envieth not. The Greek word includes both envy and jealousy, so we can say, Love knows neither envy nor jealousy. The person who has Christian love will get over being envious of other people's attainments and success; he will overcome the bitter feeling of jealousy.

Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. This has been translated, Love does not display itself, is not conceited. Or, we might say, Love never tries to show off, is not proud of itself. We can be sure that the person who is conceited and tries to show off, who has a proud and boastful spirit, is not actuated by Christian love.

Love does not behave itself unseemly. This means that love never leads a person to act in a foolish, immodest or intemperate way. The person who is actuated by Christian love will not make a fool of himself. He will know how to behave properly. Love seeketh not her own; or, as we would say, Love is unselfish. Love is not easily provoked. There are lots of things to provoke people in this world, and we cannot avoid getting provoked sometimes. So Paul does not say that the person who has Christian love is **never** provoked; he says, not **easily** provoked. The person who has Christian love does not take offense at every little thing, does not take exception to every little remark, is not always getting worked up about slight injuries and wrongs, **even**

though they may be real. He is not **easily** provoked. It takes a great deal to get him really provoked.

Love thinketh no evil. In the Greek it is, Love imputeth not the evil, or, Love does not reckon up the evil. This implies that there is an evil. Someone has done us an injury. We have been insulted, or cheated, or slandered, or whatever it may be. The evil is not imaginary; it is real. But the person who has Christian love will not keep thinking about that wrong; he will not keep adding up the score and brooding over it. He will not hold it against the person who did it. He will be willing to forgive that person just as soon as that person says he is sorry, and he will hope that the other person will say he is sorry.

Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Did you ever know anybody to rejoice in iniquity? I have. People who would come with a juicy morsel of gossip about how some fellow-Christian committed some sin. They really seemed to enjoy telling about it. Maybe that is human nature—fallen, sinful human nature—but certainly it is wrong and contrary to Christian love. If some fellow-Christian has done wrong, we should be very sad about it. We should not rejoice in iniquity, and tell it around as gossip. Instead of gossiping about it, we should take it to the Lord in prayer and pray for that person, that he or she may be given grace to repent and turn from sin.

Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. That is, love goes the second mile, and a third mile if necessary. Love does all that can be done without acting against our own conscience. Love leads us to forgive somebody, not only seven times, but seventy times seven times. Love leads a Christian to be like Christ, who said of the men who nailed him to the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" And like Stephen, who prayed for the men who stoned him to death, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

The Permanence of Christian Love

Love never faileth—it goes on forever. It never dies; it never comes to an end. Paul tells us that "prophecies" shall fail; that is, that the special supernatural gift of prophesying that existed in the early Church, would come to an end. Also that "tongues" should cease; that is, that the miraculous gift of speaking in unknown languages would not continue permanently in the Church. And it has come to pass just as the

apostle predicted. He adds that knowledge shall vanish away; that is, our present, incomplete, partial, imperfect knowledge will be superseded by the perfect knowledge of heaven. Our knowledge is only partial; our prophesying is only partial. Someday our present knowledge will seem as nothing in comparison with the kind of knowledge we shall have in heaven.

At this point Paul gives us two figures

of speech. First, the figure of a child contrasted with an adult. A child speaks as a child, understands as a child, thinks as a child. But it does not stay that way forever. When maturity has been reached, childish things have been put away. Our life in this world, here and now, is **childish** in comparison with the maturity and perfection of the life of eternity in heaven.

Then there is the figure of the mirror. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. This should be more accurately translated, For now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face. We might wonder, perhaps, why it says "darkly", because when we look in a mirror what we see is just as bright as the real things that the mirror reflects. We should realize that our glass mirrors backed with mercury are a modern invention. There was nothing like them in the ancient world. Their mirrors were crude affairs compared with ours. They were always made of metal, usually brass, and polished. A smooth piece of brass highly polished would make a fairly serviceable mirror, but nothing like our glass mirrors of the present day. When a person looked at a brass mirror, the image would be dull in comparison with the real thing. A brass mirror, unless frequently polished, would tend to become dull and tarnished. So Paul could say that now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face.

Our present knowledge, our present understanding, is dim and distorted in comparison with the real face-to-face knowledge that we will have in heaven. Now we know in part; then we shall know as we are known. Knowledge as we have it in this world is going to pass away, and its place will be taken by something greater and better.

Knowledge, prophesying, speaking with tongues, all these will pass away, but one thing will not pass away, namely, Christian love, for love never faileth. But love is not the only thing that will last forever. There are three things in the Christian life that are going to be permanent, that will abide forever: faith, hope and love.

Faith will be different in eternity from what it is now. Now faith is the substance

of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It will not be that in heaven, of course. But faith will remain, even in heaven, as trust or confidence in God, for ever and ever. Even in heaven we will always have faith—faith that God will never change, faith that heaven will always be heaven, faith that eternal life will really be eternal.

And hope will last forever, because the treasures that God has laid up for us are going to be inexhaustable. The Bible says, "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" We do not hope for things which we have already received. But in heaven, no matter how much we receive, there will always be more to hope for, more to look forward to. That is what heaven is going to be like. So we will never get past hope.

Hell is the place where there is no hope; heaven is the place where there will always be hope. In fact, we can say that hell is the place where there is no faith, no hope and no love; and heaven is the place where there will always be faith, and hope, and love, for ever and ever.

And Paul tells us that of these three permanent things, the greatest is **love**. Do you wonder why? Well, we might say that love is the greatest because love is the priceless ingredient of both faith and hope. What would faith be in a loveless life? What would hope be to a person without love? Love is the greatest, because it is the mainspring that makes both faith and hope work.

None of us can read this chapter without feeling our need of more Christian love. None of us would ever feel that we have enough, and can stop with what we have. We need more. Now how can we get it? Not by will-power, not by psychology, not by self-hypnotism, and least of all by organizations, committees, reports, programs, drives, campaigns and projects. We can get it only from God, by the work of his Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. For love is a gift. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that is given unto us. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He alone is the source of Christian love. Let us, then, seek it from him.

The Kingly Office of Jesus Christ

Psalm 89.

I Cor. 15:25, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Luke 1:33, "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

"Christ executeth the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies." We may distinguish two departments of Christ's kingly reign: (1) His reign over his own people, "the house of Jacob", meaning, of course, not especially the Jews, but Christian people, or believers in him; (2) His reign over the entire universe, including all his enemies.

Christ's reign over the universe will be temporary. "He must reign **till he hath put all enemies under his feet.**" When that time comes, Scripture informs us, he will hand

back the kingdom of God the Father, from whom he received it in the first place. But Christ's reign over his own people will be eternal. It will have no end. He will reign as head and king of the redeemed human race for ever and ever.

In this sermon we shall consider especially Christ's kingly rule **over the world**, including his enemies and the nations of the world. In considering this subject we shall think of Christ's kingly reign along three lines, namely: (1) Christ's reign is a reality today; (2) Christ's reign is opposed by the world; (3) Christ's reign is a successful reign.

Christ's Reign Is a Reality Today

We are all familiar with the words of Christ's Great Commission, his last command to the disciples before he left this earthly scene and ascended into heaven. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20).

"All power is given unto me"—in the Greek this is really: "**All authority has been given unto me**". From these words we see that Christ's kingly office and his royal reign are not merely a hope for the distant future. It isn't just that Jesus will be a king someday. He is a crowned king today. God the Father crowned him, by giving him all authority in heaven and in earth.

The apostle Paul speaks of the same thing in First Corinthians 15 when he says: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet". According to this text, Jesus is already reigning as king. He must **keep on** reigning until all his enemies have been brought into submission to him, or else have been destroyed and put out of the way.

There are many other places in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, that prove that Jesus Christ is reigning as a king today. Let me cite two or three of them.

Revelation 1:4, 5, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: grace to you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, **and the prince of the kings of the earth.**" Here the word "prince" in the Greek text means **ruler**.

Ephesians 1:18-2, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, **and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**"

Philippians 2:9-11, "Wherefore **God also hath highly exalted him**, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every

tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father."

Here is a totalitarian authority that the dictators of this world cannot even dream of. It takes in absolutely everything—**far above** all principality and power, might, dominion, every name that is named—it leaves all these far behind, and reaches far above them all; and then to make it really complete, we are told that it includes even every name that is named in the world to come. The little dictators of this world have their day. But death claims them one by one. Mussolini, Hitler, Tojo, Franco, Stalin,

and all the rest of their kind have taken, or will take, their place along with the Pharaohs, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Caesar, Napoleon—just men who grasped at power and held it within a limited sphere for a limited time. One day it will be true of them all, as Kipling wrote of England's worldly glory and power:

"Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."

But Christ's kingly reign outclasses them all. It is universal, it is absolute, it is irresistible.

Christ's Reign Is Opposed By the World

Perhaps you may say, "But it doesn't look as if Christ is really reigning today. If Christ is reigning today, why is the world in such a terrible condition, with so much violence, strife, unrest and fear? Why are crime and wickedness permitted to continue? Why is not the Church more prosperous and successful?"

These are natural questions to ask. If Christ were a king like Caesar, he would crush his enemies instantly by his almighty power. But Christ is not a king like Caesar. His kingdom is just as real as Caesar's was, but his aims and his methods are entirely different. The fact is, that Christ's kingdom lets the kings and dictators and rulers of this world have their own way a good deal of the time, and yet uses them to accomplish Christ's divine purposes.

Christ's kingly reign today is not a reign like that of Solomon, but a reign like that of David. David was king first, and Solomon was king of Israel later. You will recall that when David wished to build a temple to God in Jerusalem, God would not permit him to do so. God said that David had shed much blood on the earth. David's reign had been one of strain and stress, of fighting against opposition, of coping with powerful enemies. David's reign was a reign of conflict, a reign of struggle, a reign of warfare. God said that David had shed much blood, therefore he could not build the temple. This does not mean that it was **wrong** for David to shed blood. David had fought his battles in the service of God. He had done **right**, not wrong, in shedding the blood of his enemies. But for all that, God said that Solomon, not David, should build the temple, because Solomon was to be a man of peace. His reign would enjoy peace and quiet, and not be troubled by conflict and warfare.

Now both David and Solomon were

types of Jesus Christ and of Christ's kingly reign. David was a type of Christ's kingly reign as it is today, a reign that is constantly opposed and resisted by enemies. Solomon, on the other hand, was a type of Christ's kingly reign as it will be in eternity, a reign of peace and glory, when all enemies shall have been put under his feet.

We should understand this distinction. Christ is a king today. But his reign today is like that of David, a kingly reign that is coping with enemies all the time. In eternity, on the other hand, Christ's kingly reign over his redeemed people will be like the reign of Solomon, a reign of perfect peace and serenity, without a ripple of conflict or a shadow of opposition.

It would be foolishness to affirm that Christ is a king like Solomon today, for everyone can see that wickedness is active on every hand. But to say that Christ is a king like David today is a very different matter. Whether Christ is a king today is one question. Whether the world likes the idea of Christ being a king is another question.

In the book of Revelation we find in one of the visions pictured there a portrayal of Christ as a rider on a white horse, and we read that a crown was given to him, and that he went forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6:2). Already crowned, yet entering upon a program of conquest over enemies. That is the status of Christ's kingly reign today. His kingdom today is not a kingdom in which all opposition has been put down, nor is it a kingdom in which a willing allegiance is yielded by all concerned. Rather, it is a kingdom in which a large part of the citizens are in a state of rebellion against the King. It is a kingdom in which most of the people are guilty of treason against the rightful ruler, as we see in Psalm 2:2,3, "The kings of the earth

set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." This is a picture of deliberate rebellion against the rightful ruler, the Lord's Anointed, the Lord Jesus Christ. But note what comes next in the Psalm (verse 4): "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:

Christ's Reign Is a Successful Reign

What is success? And what is failure? Many people are ready to pronounce Christ's present reign a failure, who ought to realize that Christ's present reign is not only a success, but a perfect, total success.

Is the Government of the United States a success? Well, we could hardly call it a **perfect** success, but certainly we would not call it a **failure**. We say that it is a success because it accomplishes the main functions of civil government.

Think back to the winter and spring of 1942, when General MacArthur fought the Japanese for many weary weeks on the Bataan peninsula of Luzon, and then after that on the island fortress of Corregidor in Manila Bay. Was that campaign a success? At first thought we might say, "No!" It was a success for the Japanese but a failure for the American and Philippine forces." But wait a minute. We were informed by the War Department that the battle of Bataan and Corregidor was a **delaying action**. It was not intended to be an offensive campaign. Its purpose was not to defeat the enemy and end the war. It was intended to hold the Japanese off for a certain length of time while we made necessary preparations for greater battles elsewhere. Now, was it a failure, or was it a success?

We all know that if it hadn't been for the battle of Bataan and Corregidor, there might never have been any battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. No, the Bataan and Corregidor campaign of 1942 was not a failure. It was a success for America, because it accomplished its intended purpose. It held the enemy off and gave us time to prepare. We see, then, that something is a success **if it accomplishes its intended purpose**, and a failure **if it fails to accomplish its intended purpose**.

Christ's kingly reign is a success today, because it is accomplishing its intended purpose. It is accomplishing just precisely what God wants it to accomplish. It is not God's purpose today to destroy his enemies instantly by a stroke of almighty power. It is not God's purpose to have Christ reign

the Lord shall have them in derision." As if the rebellion and wickedness and unbelief of the people and rulers of this world could cancel the reality of Christ's kingly reign over the nations! Why, the idea is ridiculous—even God in heaven finds the puny efforts of men to rebel against Jesus Christ laughable.

today as Solomon reigned. God's purpose is for Christ to reign today as David reigned—crowned and enthroned, surrounded by powerful enemies, yet coping with them all.

You may say, "Well, I think it would be much better if Christ would just destroy his enemies and put them out of business once for all. That is my idea of a successful kingly reign." Yes, that is **your** idea, perhaps; but you and I are just human beings, and your ideas and my ideas do not count for very much. The important thing is to find out what God's ideas on the subject are.

You may have read Daniel Defoe's famous story "Robinson Crusoe". Crusoe, marooned on his island, without human company, finally succeeded in catching a savage, whom he named Friday. Crusoe trained Friday in the ways of civilization, and among other things read and explained the Bible to him. One day as they were reading the Bible Friday asked a question: "Robinson Crusoe, which is stronger, God or the devil?" to which Crusoe replied, "Of course, God is much stronger than the devil." Friday then asked, "Well, if God is stronger than the devil, why doesn't God destroy the devil?" Crusoe replied, "God is going to destroy the devil someday." But Friday was not satisfied with this answer. He continued: "But why does not God destroy the devil right now?"

Robinson Crusoe had no answer for this last question, and you and I have no answer for it, either. Why doesn't God put an end to wickedness and rebellion right now? Why the delay? Well, God has not told us all the reasons for all the things that he has done and has not done. Since God has not told us, we cannot answer the question "Why not now?"

We can say something about it, though. The Bible does give us some light on the question. It says that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief

in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up" (2 Peter 3:9, 10).

Now if God should put an end to wickedness and rebellion right now, think what that would mean. It would mean that **the Judgment Day would come right now**. The day of grace would be ended. The day of opportunity for salvation would be forever past. The preaching of the Gospel would cease forever. Never again to all eternity would the joyful sound of the Gospel be heard inviting sinners to come to Christ for forgiveness and life. All this would come to an end. Judgment would crash down upon the world. Eternity would follow thereupon.

Now, do you really want that to happen right now? Do you really want this day of grace to end right away, and the Judgment Day to dawn, say tomorrow morning? God could do it; never forget that. As Robinson Crusoe told Friday, God is much stronger than the devil; and we may add, God is much stronger than the devil and his allies together, namely the world and the flesh. God has more power than all the devils and all the wicked men in the world put together. God could speak the word and use his divine power and the Judgment Day would be upon us without further delay. Rebellion and wickedness would be put down instantly—by force. No longer would men scoff at the crucified Son of God. No longer would men dare to take God's name in vain. No longer would men curse and blaspheme and break all God's commandments. Judgment would take place, with crashing power. The wicked would be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God. And then, as Jesus prophesied, the righteous would shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

It is coming. Remember that. That Judgment Day is coming, with the absolute certainty of the divine decree. Nor do we know when it will be. It is coming, as a thief in the night, to the people of this world. Coming. But do we really want it now? I think not. I am sure, if we stop to reflect a little on the matter, we will all admit that God's way is best after all. No, we don't want the Judgment Day yet. We want it in God's own appointed time, not before.

And meantime? Meantime, the nations and the people in this world, by reason of God's long-suffering and patience, have

an opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Meantime, people who are without God and without hope in the world have an opportunity to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Meantime, **the day of grace continues**.

Just because Jesus Christ does not set the thunder and lightning of the Judgment Day in operation right now, does not mean that he is letting his enemies "get away" with anything. Far from it! The truth is, that while he permits their wicked acts, he is really controlling and limiting all their actions, and finally overruling all their wickedness so that it accomplishes God's purposes in the end and brings benefits to God's elect people.

In Psalm 89 we read: "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." The nations of the world are like the raging of the troubled sea, always in motion, always troubled and restless. The sea is always in motion and sometimes it throws up some terrific waves. I remember a terrible storm on the coast of Manchuria when the ocean threw up roaring, crashing waves ten feet high onto the beach. It was truly awe-inspiring. Those waves would have destroyed a house or building in thirty seconds. The noise was deafening. And yet as I stood on higher ground a hundred feet away I was perfectly safe. God had set a bound to the waves. He had said, "Thus far, but no farther!" And the waves stayed within that bound. And Jesus Christ rules over the nations of the world just as truly and just as effectively as that today. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Hitler, Stalin, Tojo—none of the dictators and rulers of this world could so much as lift their little finger but their action is permitted and overruled by Jesus Christ. In spite of themselves, the rulers of this world only fulfill Christ's purposes. Even their wicked actions work out to fulfill God's plans.

Even Judas, in betraying Jesus, furthered God's purposes. Similarly, Joseph's brothers, in their hatred and their vengeful spirit, sold their brother to be a slave in Egypt. But even this wicked and heartless act of theirs only furthered God's plans and purposes.

When I say that the acts of Christ's enemies only further Christ's purposes, I do not mean by this that **the immediate and direct result** of what they do is to accomplish good. Far from it; the immediate and direct result is often terribly evil. But I mean that the result **in the end**, by the mysterious working out of divine providence, is

for the accomplishment of the Lord's purposes and the true welfare of the elect. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Christ both **restrains** and **overrules** his enemies. Sometimes he restrains them from doing wrong; at other times he lets them go their own preverse and stubborn way, but overrules their wickedness and makes it work out for good in the end. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). Of course this does not mean that **we** can always see how evil is overruled for good. Frequently we cannot see how this can be. God often delays the outward manifestation of his purposes for his people. But **by faith** we can believe and know that Christ is restraining and conquering all his and our enemies. By faith we can realize that all things do indeed work together for good to them that love God.

The foes of Jesus Christ are only bringing about their own ruin. It is no more possible successfully to oppose or resist Jesus Christ than it is possible to violate the law of gravity or any other law of nature. We may ignore the laws of nature, but we will only destroy ourselves in the process. Men may ignore or oppose Jesus Christ, but they will only destroy themselves in the process.

There is a saying of our Lord in Luke 20:17, 18, which is: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, **it will grind him to powder.**" Christ is that stone, the stone which men have rejected, but which God the Father has made the chief corner stone, the King of kings and Lord of lords. There are just two attitudes that men can take toward that stone. They can fall on that stone, or they can refuse to fall on that stone. If they fall on that stone, they will be broken. But if they refuse to fall on that stone, they will be ground to powder.

Do you know what those words mean? To "fall on that stone" means to come to Christ in repentance and faith, and receive him as Saviour and Lord. The person who does this will be broken. That is, all his sinful pride, rebellion and stubbornness will be broken up. He will have what the Bible calls "a broken and contrite heart". His proud unbelief will give way to faith; his self-will to self-surrender. That person or that nation will become a **Christian person** or a **Christian nation**. No person can

become a Christian without being broken, and no nation can become a Christian nation without being broken.

But those who fail, through stubbornness or neglect, to fall on that stone—what about them? By and by **the stone will fall on them**. The day of grace and salvation will pass. The opportunity for falling on that stone will pass away—for ever. The Judgment Day will come. The stone will fall on them. Then it will be too late. They will be ground to powder.

Christ is ruling in control over his enemies today. He restrains them. He overrules their actions. He does not destroy them right now. He does not put a stop to wickedness right now, because he wants to give men and nations **more time** — more time to fall on that stone, more time to repent, more time to believe and receive his salvation. But the people and the nations of the world pay but scant attention to Christ. He is the stone which the builders have rejected. The nations are deciding their own destiny today, and so far as can be observed they are electing to be ground to powder.

Do you believe that the terrible second World War which ended a few months ago will really be followed by permanent peace? It is a beautiful dream. But remember, Christ is still the stone which the builders rejected. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. There may indeed come an era of peace, but unless it is built on Christ, it will not endure. It will be followed by an even more terrible war and even more dreadful judgments. For the nations, by rejecting the chief corner stone, are saying that they would rather take their chances about being ground to powder, than fall upon that stone. Anything, anything, to keep from falling upon that stone. Anything to keep from being spiritually broken—even the risk of being ground to powder.

But really there is no "chance" about the matter. It is not chance. It is a certainty. The person or the nation that does not fall on that stone—Christ Jesus—is going to be ground to powder. Judgment will overtake that person and that nation as surely as night follows day. Christ's enemies cannot injure or destroy him. But they can and will destroy themselves.

Are you ashamed of being a Covenanter, a member of a rather small and unpopular church? Let me tell you that our little church has perhaps had more influence on the history of Britain and America than any other church. For our little church

has not been ashamed of the stone which the builders rejected. Our church has had its faults, certainly, and some of them have been bad ones. We have not done what we ought to have done. But at least we have tried to witness for the stone that the builders rejected. And we are trying to witness for it today. Of course it is no credit to us. It is only God's grace that has enabled us to do what we have done. The glory belongs to God, not to us.

But the fact remains that the Covenanter Church is the **only** church that has maintained a **practical** testimony for the kingly reign of Jesus Christ over the na-

tions of the world. Many others have a theoretical testimony for Christ's kingly reign over the nations, but we have a practical testimony. We not only **believe** that Christ is king today reigning over the nations; **we also want something done about it**, and we are trying to get it done.

Whether we have been successful is not the question. The question is whether we are going to be **faithful**. God will take care of questions of success in his own time and way. But our task is to hold up the banner of Christ's kingly reign where people can see it.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 27

For Week Beginning July 7, 1946

Q. 29. What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?

A. The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire forever.

Scripture References:

2 Thess. 1:9. Everlasting separation from the presence of God.

Mark 9:44-48. Grievous torments in soul and body.

Luke 16:24. The torment of hell-fire.

Revelation 14:9-12. The torments of hell without intermission.

Matthew 5:29, 30. Hell involves bodily suffering.

Matthew 25:41, 46. The punishment of hell equally eternal with the bliss of heaven.

Questions:

1. What three heresies deny the doctrine of eternal punishment for sin?

(a) **Annihilationism**, which teaches that in the case of the unsaved death ends their existence, or else that after suffering a certain duration of punishment for sin they will be annihilated and cease to exist.

(b) **Universalism**, which teaches that all human souls will finally be saved.

(c) **Restorationism**, which teaches that after death the wicked will have a "second

chance" to accept salvation, and thus will be saved.

2. How can we answer those who say that the word "eternal" in the New Testament means "age-long", and therefore eternal punishment does not really mean **for ever**?

Matthew 25:46 is a text which cannot be explained away. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal". In the Greek of this verse, **everlasting** and **eternal** are exactly the same word. Therefore if the punishment of hell is not really forever, then neither will the blessedness of heaven be forever. The same Greek adjective is used to describe one as the other. It is unfortunate that the King James Version uses two different words, "everlasting" and "eternal". The Revised Version translates this verse as follows: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

3. What is the main punishment of sin in the world to come?

Beyond question the main or chief punishment of sin in the world to come is "everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God". The presence of God is what will make heaven a place of blessedness, and separation from God is what will make hell a place of woe.

4. What parable told by Christ proves that memory of life on earth will continue to exist in hell?

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31, especially verse 25, "But Abraham said, Son **remember**, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

5. How can it be proved from Scripture that the punishments of hell include the body as well as the soul?

Matthew 5:29, 30, "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Revelation 20:13-15, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (The dead in the sea must mean men's bodies, not their souls). Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

6. How can we answer the argument that God is too good and loving to send any of his creatures to hell?

How do we know whether God is good and loving or not? The only way we know about God's goodness and his love is from his written Word, the Holy Bible. But according to the Bible, love is only one among God's attributes. God is love, but it does not follow that God is nothing but love. The Bible teaches that God is also a God of absolute justice. It is God's attribute of absolute justice that finds expression in the eternal punishment of sinners.

7. How should we answer the person who says that the doctrine of hell is contrary to "the spirit of Christ"?

We have no right to define "the spirit

of Christ" according to our own imaginations, ideas or preferences. The only way we can know anything about the teachings of Jesus Christ is from his sayings which are recorded in the New Testament. It has been observed that there is more about hell in the teachings of Jesus than in all the rest of the Bible taken together. The person who claims that "the spirit of Christ" is contrary to the doctrine of hell does not want to take **all** of the teachings of Christ as his standard (far less is he willing to take the whole Word of God as his guide); he wants to pick and choose among Christ's sayings, taking what appeals to him and omitting the rest. The result of this process is that Christ's teaching is warped and twisted to fit a person's own ideas and prejudices.

8. What feature do many false religions of the present day have in common?

The doctrine that **there is no hell**. There is nothing Satan would rather have men believe than this doctrine that there is no hell.

9. Is it a mistake to urge **the fear of hell on people** as a motive for believing on Christ as their Saviour?

Certainly fear of hell is not the only motive, nor the highest motive for being a Christian. But the Bible does present this motive over and over again, especially in the teachings of Jesus Christ himself. We conclude that this motive has its place. It is true that we read in I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love". But there is a stage in a person's Christian experience where the motive of fear has its place, and this motive may be used by the Holy Spirit to drive an unsaved person to Christ.

Lesson 28

For Week Beginning July 14, 1946

Q. 30. Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God doth not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Works; but of his mere love and mercy delivereth his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Grace.

Scripture References:

1 Thess. 5:9. God has appointed his elect to obtain salvation by Christ.

Galatians 3:10-12. Mankind in sin and

misery because of the breach of the Covenant of Works.

Titus 3:4-7. The elect are saved from sin by the kindness, love and mercy of God.

Galatians 3:21. There is no hope of salvation on the basis of our own works.

Romans 3:20-22. Salvation by works being impossible, God has provided another way, by the righteousness of a Substitute.

Questions:

1. What two names are given to the first covenant that God made with mankind?

(a) A Covenant of Life; (b) The Covenant of Works.

2. Why can the same covenant be called both a "Covenant of Life" and a "Covenant of Works"?

Because the first covenant was an arrangement made by God on the basis of which mankind could gain eternal life by works of obedience to God.

3 .Why did God not leave all men to perish in their sin and misery?

Because of his mere love and mercy; that is, God was not under any obligation to save any part of the human race; but as a matter of fact, because of his love and mercy, he wished and planned to save some.

4. What part of the human race does God save out of their sin and misery?

God saves **his elect**, that is, those whom he has chosen from all eternity to be the heirs of salvation and eternal life.

5. Is it unfair or unjust for God to save only his elect, and pass by the rest of the human race?

No. It is not unfair or unjust because God does not **owe** salvation to anyone. All have sinned against him, forfeiting all rights, and God owes them nothing but judgment. When God chooses to save some, this is not a matter of obligation, but a free gift. Certainly it is **unequal** for God to save some and pass by others; but it is not **unjust**, because God is under no obligation to save any of those who have sinned against him.

6. How can we know whether we are among the elect?

There is no shortcut to assurance that we are of the elect. We can never find out by trying to pry into God's secret plans and purposes which he has not revealed to us. The only way to find out is to believe on Jesus Christ as our Saviour, repent of our sins, and faithfully use the means of grace that God has appointed. In this way, sooner or later, we can come to a full assurance, or certainty, of our personal salvation, from which we can rightly conclude that we are indeed among the elect of God.

7. What is the name of the second covenant which God made with men?

The Covenant of Grace.

Q. 31. With whom was the Covenant of Grace made?

A. The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.

Scripture References:

Galatians 3:16. The Covenant of Grace made with Christ, Abraham's seed.

Romans 5:15-21. Christ the second Adam.

Isaiah 53:10, 11. The elect, as Christ's "seed", represented by Christ in the Covenant of Grace.

Questions:

1. Who were the parties of the Covenant of Works?

God was the party who made the covenant; the other party was Adam as the representative of all his descendants, or the whole human race.

2. Why is Christ called "the second Adam"?

Because in the Covenant of Grace, Christ takes the place that Adam had in the Covenant of Works.

3. Whom did Christ represent in the Covenant of Grace?

He represented "all the elect".

4. Why is it wrong to say that Christ represented the whole human race?

(a) Christ's own words contradict such a view of the matter, as we see, for example, in John 17:9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Here Christ speaks of a certain body of people as **given** to him by God the Father; he prayed for them, but he did not pray for the population of the world in general. (b) If Christ in the Covenant of Grace represented the whole human race, then the whole human race will be saved. But the Bible teaches that **only part** of the human race will be saved. So if we say that Christ represented **everybody**, then we will have to say that **Christ does not really save anybody**, but only gives everybody "a chance" to be saved, and it is "up to each person to take it or leave it". That is a very common belief today, but the Bible is against it. Christ did not suffer and die to give everybody, or anybody, a "chance" to be saved; he suffered and died to **accomplish** the salvation **of the elect**.

5. When was the Covenant of Grace made?

It was made in eternity, before the creation of the world, between God the Father and God the Son. Read Ephesians 1:4. The Covenant of Grace was **made before** the Covenant of Works, but it was **revealed** to mankind **after** the Covenant of Works had been broken.

6. When was the Covenant of Grace first revealed to the human race?

Lesson 29

Q. 32. How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?

A. The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces; and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of truth of their faith and thankfulness of God, and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.

Scripture References:

Genesis 3:15. A Redeemer from sin promised.

Isaiah 42:6. Christ promised "for a covenant of the people".

John 6:27. Christ appointed by God the Father to give men eternal life.

1 John 5:11, 12. Eternal life given in the Son of God.

John 3:16. Faith required as the condition of interest in Christ.

John 1:12. Faith in Christ needed to become children of God.

Proverbs 1:23. God's Holy Spirit promised to his elect.

2 Cor. 4:13. Faith wrought in the elect by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22, 23. Various graces wrought in the elect by the Spirit.

Ezekiel 36:27. The elect enabled unto obedience by the Holy Spirit.

James 2:18, 22. Good works of the elect an evidence of their faith.

2 Cor. 5:14, 15. By a good life the elect show their thankfulness to God.

Ephesians 2:10. The Christian's good works foreordained by God, that he should walk in them.

Immediately after the fall, in God's words to the serpent, Genesis 3:15, where God promised that "the seed of the woman", that is, Christ, would finally destroy the serpent, that is, Satan and Satan's kingdom.

For Week Beginning July 21, 1946

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "grace" when we speak of "the grace of God"?

God's grace means his love and favor given to those who deserve his wrath and curse because of sin.

2. How has God offered and provided a Mediator to his people?

God has **freely** offered and provided a Mediator; that is, as a **free gift**.

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

A Mediator is a person who reconciles two parties who are at enmity with each other.

4. Why was it necessary for sinners to have a Mediator in order to be saved?

A Mediator was necessary because sinners could not reconcile **themselves** to God.

5. What does Christ, our Mediator, provide?

He provides salvation from sin, and eternal life, to those who receive him.

6. What condition is attached to the Covenant of Grace?

The condition attached to the Covenant of Grace is **faith in Jesus Christ**.

7. What is the meaning of the word "interest" in this question?

The word "interest" here means making sure that they will share in the benefits provided by the Mediator.

8. How do we get faith in Jesus Christ?

Saving faith in Jesus Christ is a gift of God. We do not have it of ourselves, or by nature. No one can really believe on Christ unless God has given him the gift of faith.

9. How does God give us the gift of faith in Jesus Christ?

God gives us the gift of faith in Jesus Christ by the special work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

10. Since saving faith is a gift of God, do we need to try to believe on Christ, or should we just wait until God gives us the gift of faith?

Although it is true that saving faith is a gift of God, and we cannot get it of ourselves, still it is our duty to try to believe on Christ. If we really **want** to believe on Christ, that is a sign that God is giving us the gift of faith.

11. What other things does the Holy Spirit work in our hearts and lives besides faith?

He works "all other saving graces", including repentance, and sanctification with all that it includes.

12. What is the result of this work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts?

The result of this work of the Holy

Spirit in our hearts is that we are made able to obey the law of God, which we could not do of ourselves because of our sinful and helpless condition by nature.

13. Why should a Christian want to obey the law of God?

A Christian should want to obey the law of God as an evidence of the truth of his faith and thankfulness to God.

14. What other reason is there why a Christian should want to obey the law of God?

A Christian should want to obey the law of God because that is "the way which God hath appointed to salvation". This does not mean that obeying God's law is any part of the ground of our salvation, but that being saved from sin unto righteousness, obedience to the law is the way that God has appointed for a saved person to walk in, and the person who is really saved will want to forsake sin and follow righteousness more and more.

Lesson 30

For Week Beginning July 28, 1946

Q. 33. Was the Covenant of Grace always administered after one and the same manner?

A. The Covenant of Grace was not always administered after the same manner, but the administrations of it under the Old Testament were different from those under the New.

Scripture References:

2 Cor. 3:6-9. The old and new dispensations of the Covenant of Grace contrasted.

Questions:

1. When did the Covenant of Works come to an end as a way by which men could attain to eternal life?

The Covenant of Works, as a possible way of attaining eternal life, came to an end when our first parents ate the forbidden fruit. While the Covenant of Works is still in force today in that unsaved sinners are under the curse of the broken covenant, still no one can attain eternal life by the Covenant of Works today.

2. When did the Covenant of Grace begin to operate as the way for sinners to receive eternal life?

Immediately after the fall, when our

first parents were driven from Eden. Genesis 3:15.

3. Why is it wrong to say that the Covenant of Grace began when Christ was crucified?

Because the Bible clearly teaches that God's people in all ages after the fall were saved by grace and in no other way.

4. What error concerning this question is common today?

It is very common today to hold that the Jews were saved by works, but Christians are saved by grace. Those who hold this view say that the Covenant of Works, as a way of gaining eternal life, did not end until Calvary.

5. Over against this common error, what principle does the Catechism set forth?

The Catechism teaches the **unity** of the Old Testament and the New Testament in the one Covenant of Grace. According to the Catechism, since Adam's fall there has been only **one** way of salvation and that has been by the Covenant of Grace. It is entirely wrong and harmful to set the Old Testament and the New Testament over against each other as if they taught **different** ways of salvation. The truth is that both Testaments teach one and the same way of salvation.

6. How can we account for the many obvious differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

The one way of salvation, or the Covenant of Grace, was **administered in different ways** under the two Testaments. We might illustrate this by the history of the United States. Through our national existence we have had one and the same Constitution, but that one constitution has been administered sometimes by one party and sometimes by another. A Democratic administration differs in some respects from a Republican administration, yet the constitution that is being administered is one and the same.

Q. 34. How was the Covenant of Grace administered under the Old Testament?

A. The Covenant of Grace was administered under the Old Testament, by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all fore-signify Christ then to come, and were for that time sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they then had full remission of sin, and eternal salvation.

Scripture References:

Romans 15:8. Christ a minister of the Old Testament dispensation.

Acts 3:20, 24. Christ the true message of the Old Testament.

Hebrews 10:1. The law had a shadow of good things to come.

Romans 4:11. Abraham saved by imputed righteousness received by faith.

1 Cor. 5:7. Christ the true meaning of the passover.

Hebrews 11:13. The Old Testament saints, from "afar off", saw and embraced the promises of the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 3:7-9, 14. The gospel preached of old unto Abraham; his faith essentially the same as the faith of New Testament believers.

Questions:

1. What is the first recorded promise of a Redeemer in the Old Testament? Genesis 3:15.

2. Give examples of other promises or prophecies of a coming Redeemer (a) From the Books of Moses; (b) From the Psalms; (c) From the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

(a) Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Deut-

eronomy 18:15. (b) Psalms 2, 22, 45, 110. (c) Isaiah 9:6, 7; Isaiah 11:1-5; Zechariah 9:9, 10; Malachi 3:1. (The student will easily be able to give a great many more such prophecies).

3. How did the Passover and other sacrifices point forward to Christ?

By the slaying of the lamb, and shedding its blood, they taught the people the truth that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, and that the coming Redeemer must suffer and die as a substitute for sinners.

4. What is meant by the word "types"?

A "type" means a kind of specimen or sample of something, given beforehand, in a smaller way or on a lower plane. Thus we may say that David is a type of Christ the conquering King; Solomon is a type of Christ reigning in eternal peace; Melchizedek is a type of Christ as High Priest; Moses is a type of Christ as Prophet, and so on.

5. What is the difference between a "type" and a "symbol"?

A symbol is an arbitrary sign used to denote something else. Thus we say that in the anointing ceremony of the Old Testament, the **oil** is a symbol of the Holy Spirit; in the Lord's Supper, the **bread** and **wine** are symbols of Christ's body and blood; after the Flood, the **rainbow** was a symbol of God's covenant promise; often in the Bible, the number **seven** is used as a symbol for perfection, and the number **ten** as a symbol for completeness; in Revelation 13 the number **666** is a symbol for the Beast. A **type** differs from a symbol in that a type is not **arbitrarily** used to denote something else; there is a real and more or less obvious similarity or connection between the **type** and the **antitype** (the fulfillment of the type). Thus there is an obvious resemblance between Melchizedek and Christ, and between Moses and Christ, in the matters typified. But there is no obvious similarity between oil and the Holy Spirit, nor between the rainbow and God's promise not to destroy the earth again by a flood.

6. What was the purpose of the sacrifices, types, ordinances, etc., of the Old Testament?

The purpose of all of them was to point forward to Christ, the coming Redeemer. This does not mean that every ordinance, etc., pointed directly to Christ himself. Rather, it means that all the types, ordinances, etc., pointed forward to some aspect of **the way of salvation through Christ**.

For example, the disease of leprosy is plainly treated in the Old Testament as a symbol of **sin**. Thus the various rules and regulations concerning the disease of leprosy, its uncleanness, etc., were intended to emphasize the vileness and sinfulness of sin, and to show people their need of divine deliverance from it. In this way the rules about leprosy pointed forward to Christ.

7. What was the **effectiveness** of the Old Testament promises, prophecies, types, sacrifices and other ordinances?

These were sufficient, **for that time**, to build up the elect in faith in the promised Redeemer. We might compare these Old Testament ordinances to school-books prepared for children. Such books are usually full of pictures, because children readily grasp the meaning of pictures when it is hard for them to understand written descriptions or abstract discussions. But when the child has grown up, the pictures are no longer needed, and ordinary books are then suitable. In the Old Testament period God's people were treated as children, for that was their spiritual condition. God provided "pictures"—that is, the truths of redemption were portrayed before their eyes by a multitude of oft-repeated sacrifices, or-

dinances and symbols. These served to prop up their faith, we may say, until the coming of the Redeemer in person. When he came, the "pictures" were no longer needed.

8. What benefits did Old Testament believers receive from Christ?

They had full remission of sin, and eternal life, **right then**. It is an error to teach, as some do, that the Old Testament saints did not receive **full** remission of sin until Christ was crucified. Hebrews 11:39, 40 teaches that the Old Testament saints did not receive the full completion of their redemption, that is, **the resurrection of the body**, in their own times, for they must wait for that until the end of the world, when Old and New Testament believers will receive it together at one and the same time. But in the matter of **remission of sins** they were not left waiting. They received **full** remission of sins **when they believed**. This does not mean that they necessarily received the same degree of **assurance in their own minds** as New Testament believers receive. Remission of sins, in God's sight, is one thing; assurance of remission, in the believer's own mind, is another matter.

Lesson 31

For Week Beginning August 4, 1946

Q. 35. How is the Covenant of Grace administered under the New Testament?

A. Under the New Testament, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the same covenant of grace was and still is to be administered in the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; in which grace and salvation are held forth in more fulness, evidence, and efficacy, to all nations.

Scripture References:

Mark 16:15. Matthew 28:19, 20. Under the New Testament, the Covenant of Grace is to be administered throughout all nations, with baptism in the name of the Triune God.

1 Cor. 11:23-25. The Lord's Supper a New Testament ordinance of the Covenant of Grace.

2 Cor. 3:6-9. How the New Testament administration excels the Old Testament administration of the Covenant of Grace.

Hebrews 8:6, 10, 11. The superiority of the New Testament administration over the Old Testament administration of the Covenant of Grace.

Questions:

1. What other name is used for "The New Testament"?

The "New Covenant". The same Greek word may be translated either "Testament" or "Covenant", depending on the context in which it is used.

2. What is the relation of the New Testament or New Covenant to the Covenant of Grace?

The "New Testament" or "New Covenant" is the **new dispensation** of the Covenant of Grace. It is the second dispensation under which the Covenant of Grace has been administered. The first dispensation began immediately after our first parents sinned against God, and ended when Christ was crucified. The second dispensation began at Calvary and will continue until the end of the world. It will be terminated by the Judgment Day.

3. What three meanings does the phrase "The New Testament" have?

(a) This phrase is used to denote a **period of time** in sacred history, from the crucifixion of Christ to the Judgment Day or end of the world. This same period of time

is sometimes called **the age of the gospel**. (b) The same phrase is used to denote an **arrangement of religious operations and ordinances**, under which God administers the Covenant of Grace. (c) The same phrase, "The New Testament", is used to describe a portion of the Bible, namely, the 27 books written **after** the coming of Christ, which describe the nature and establishment of "The New Covenant".

4. Why does the Catechism speak of Christ as "the substance"?

This expression is used in contrast to the "promises, prophecies, sacrifices, types, ordinances", etc., by which Christ and his salvation were **pictured** in the Old Testament period. Christ is the **substance**, or the reality, while the Old Testament types, sacrifices, etc., were only **shadows** pointing forward to Christ.

5. What are the main differences between the ordinances of the New Testament and those of the Old Testament?

(a) The ordinances of the New Testament are **fewer in number** than those of the Old Testament. Chiefly they are simply the preaching of the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper; whereas in the Old Testament there were a large number of ordinances.

(b) The ordinances of the New Testament are **simpler in nature** than those of the Old Testament. Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word are all very simple in their nature, whereas the ordinances of the Old Testament were very complicated, and far more difficult and inconvenient to observe, than the ordinances of the New Testament. For example, think of the elaborate ritual of the Passover; of the complicated ceremonies of the Day of Atonement; of all the detailed ceremonial laws concerning uncleanness, concerning foods, concerning sacrifices and offerings. For us who live under the New Testament, God has greatly **simplified** the administration of the Covenant of Grace.

(c) The ordinances of the New Testament are **more spiritual** than those of the Old Testament. Under the Old Testament there was much that appealed to the senses of sight and hearing, and even the burning of sweet incense which appealed to the sense of smell. The tabernacle, and later the temple, were magnificent and glorious structures, with a great appeal to the senses. All of this outward display was well suited to the childish spiritual condition of God's people in those days. The people of Israel, spiritually considered, were children, and

God taught them, we may say, by "picture books." But under the New Testament the people of God have come to adult age or maturity, and so God has provided a more spiritual administration of the Covenant of Grace. As Jesus said to the woman at the well of Samaria, "The hour cometh, and now is, when neither in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:21, 23).

(d) The ordinances of the New Testament are **more effectual** than those of the Old Testament. The ordinances of the Old Testament were effectual, of course, to worshippers who had **faith**; but the ordinances of the New Testament are **more effectual**, for in them "grace and salvation are held forth in more fullness, evidence, and efficacy".

(e) The ordinances of the New Testament are **more universal** than those of the Old Testament. The ordinances of the Old Testament were limited to the one nation of Israel; under the New Testament, the gospel is to be preached, and the Covenant of Grace administered, among "all nations", that is, to the human race regardless of national boundaries.

6. What is the main point of similarity between the ordinances of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament?

The main point of similarity is that **both Testaments are dispensations or administrations of one and the same Covenant of Grace**. Both hold forth and one and the same "grace and salvation." The essential meaning of both is exactly the same; they differ only in external details and appearances; the real meaning and nature of both is identical. King David worshipped God by types and sacrifices, but he received exactly the same salvation (though not necessarily the same assurance and comfort in his own mind) as we receive through the preaching of the Word and the use of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

7. How many dispensations are there in the Bible?

The popular "Scofield Reference Bible" teaches that God's dealings with the human race are divided into **seven distinct and different dispensations**. This is certainly wrong if we define a "dispensation" as the Scofield Bible defines it, as a period of time during which God's dealings with the human race are characterized by some specific principle. At most there are **three**

dispensations, one of the Covenant of Works and two of the Covenant of Grace. Thus the first dispensation (the Covenant of Works) was from the creation of man until Adam fell into sin; the second dispen-

sation (the Old Testament) was from the fall of man until the crucifixion of Christ; the third dispensation (the New Testament) is from the crucifixion of Christ until the end of the world.

Lesson 32

For Week Beginning August 11, 1946

Q. 36. Who is the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace?

A. The only Mediator of the Covenant of Grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fulness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire and distinct natures, and one person, for ever.

Scripture References:

1 Timothy 2:5. Christ the only Mediator between God and men.

John 1:1. The eternal and true deity of Christ.

John 1:14. John 10:30. Phil. 2:6. Christ equal with God the Father.

Galatians 4:4. In the fulness of time the Son of God became man.

Luke 1:35. Romans 9:5. Colossians 2:9. Christ's divine and human natures united in one divine person.

Hebrews 7:24, 25. Christ will continue as God and man forever.

Questions:

1. How many mediators are there between God and men?

There is one only.

2. How does the Roman Catholic Church practically deny this truth of the Bible?

By regarding Mary and the saints as mediators, praying to them, and hoping for their intercession with God on behalf of sinners.

3. What is meant by affirming that Christ is the **eternal** Son of God?

By affirming that Christ is the **eternal** Son of God, we mean that he has **always** been the Son of God, the second person of the divine Trinity, from all eternity. He did not become the Son of God when he became man, nor at any time in the history of the created universe.

4. What is meant by affirming that Christ is **of one substance** with the Father?

By affirming that Christ is **of one sub-**

stance with the Father, we mean that there is only one God, and Jesus Christ is this one God just as truly as the Father is this one God. As Christians we do not believe in **three** Gods, but in **one** God who exists in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is therefore not **like** God; he **is** God, the only God that there is. In him dwells, not a part of the fulness of the Godhead bodily, but **all** the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

5. What is meant by affirming that Christ is **equal** with the Father?

By affirming that Christ is **equal with** the Father, we mean that so far as his nature is concerned, Christ is not subordinate to the Father in any way. By reason of his self-humiliation, during his life on earth, he was subordinate to the Father in **position**, for he took upon him the form of a servant. But **in nature**, even during his life on earth, he was, and is today, fully equal with God the Father.

6. How is the doctrine of the **deity of Christ** denied today?

(a) The doctrine of the **deity of Christ** is denied by those who say that Christ is divine because all men are divine. If all men are divine, then for Christ to be divine is nothing out of the ordinary. (b) The doctrine of the deity of Christ is denied by those who, while calling Christ "the Son of God", still refuse to say that he is of one substance and equal with the Father. Such people consider it a sin to worship Jesus Christ. (c) The doctrine of the deity of Christ is denied by those who accept his deity **only as a "limiting concept"**; that is, when they speak of Christ as divine, or call him "the Son of God", they do not mean that this is really the absolute truth about Christ; they only mean that Christ's "deity" is a convenient label for classifying Christ for the time being; in calling Christ "God" they do not mean that he really and truly is God, but only that he is "God" for us human beings—that he may occupy the place of God in our human thinking at the present time. It is obvious that the idea of Christ's deity as a "limiting concept" is something very different from the faith of orthodox historic Christianity in Christ's deity.

7. When did the eternal Son of God become man?

At a point in human history called by the Scriptures "the fulness of time" or "the fulness of the time", that is, the time appointed by God in the counsels of eternity, which was also the time when all the age-long preparations for Christ's incarnation had been completed.

8. How long will the Son of God continue to be man?

Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man at the time of his incarnation, was man as well as God throughout his life on earth, is man as well as God now in heaven, and will continue to be man as well as God for ever, to all eternity. The idea that Christ was human only during his earthly life is contrary to the teachings of the Bible on this subject. Revelation 5:6, for example, teaches that not only Christ's human nature but even the evidences of his crucifixion continue in heaven. Christ's heavenly high priestly ministry also depends on his possessing a true human nature in heaven: Hebrews 7:25; 5:1-5.

9. What is the importance of the word "entire" in this answer of the Catechism?

The word "entire" emphasizes the truth that Christ is not only truly but **fully** God and **fully** man both on earth and in heaven. There is no element lacking from either his deity or his humanity. With respect to his human nature, Christ possesses both a human body and a human soul, in addition to his divine Spirit. This is often overlooked, and Christ is wrongly represented as composed of a divine Spirit and a human body. Such a Christ would not be **fully human**. Because of his divine nature, Christ must not be thought of as less than **fully God**, nor in any sense subordinate to God the Father except **positionally**, by reason of his voluntarily assumed position of a servant while he was here on earth.

10. What is the importance of the word "distinct" in this answer of the Catechism?

The word "distinct" teaches the truth that Christ's two natures, divine and human, while they were and are mysteriously

united in one divine person, still are not in any way mixed, blended or confused. Each remains distinct and retains its separate identity. Christ's divine nature always remains his divine nature; his human nature always remains his human nature; these two cannot be mixed in any way. Christ is not a being halfway between God and man; he is a person who is both God and man at the same time; he is as truly God as if he were not man at all; and he is as truly man as if he were not God at all. In the record of our Lord's life on earth, at one point his deity shines forth, as when he said "Before Abraham was, I am"; at another point his humanity is disclosed, as when he said "I thirst." But the two are never mixed or confused in any way.

11. What is the importance of the statement that Christ is "one person"?

This statement avoids the error of those who have thought of Christ as a divine person united to a human person, so that Christ had a double personality. We should realize that according to the teachings of the Scriptures, Christ, while he possessed **two natures**, was **only one person**. It follows from this that **Christ, while a human being, is not a human person**. From all eternity he has been a **divine person**. At a certain point in history, this divine person took to himself, not a human person, but a **person nature** which lacked personality. Christ therefore was and is a divine person with a human nature. We should realize that **human nature** is that which all members of the human race have in common (namely, a human body and a human soul), whereas **personality** is that which distinguishes one member of the human race from all others. In the matter of human nature, all human beings are exactly alike; in the matter of personality, of all the people that have ever lived, there have never been two alike; each individual is different from all others. We should always be careful to avoid the common error and popular misconception which regards Christ as a **human person**. If Christ were a human person, then certainly it would be idolatry to worship him. But because he is a divine person, even though possessed of a human nature, it is not idolatry to worship him as the Christian Church always has done.

Lesson 33

For Week Beginning August 18, 1946

Q. 37. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reas-

onable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her, yet without sin.

Scripture References:

John 1:14. The Son of God became man, with a human body.

Matthew 26:38. Christ possessed a human soul, capable of sorrow.

Luke 1:27, 31, 42. Galatians 4:4. Christ born of the Virgin Mary.

Hebrews 4:15; 7:26. Christ was and is without sin.

Questions:

1. What are the parts or elements of which our human nature is composed?

Our human nature consists of two parts or elements, namely **body** and **soul**. The body is made of material substance, that is, of chemical elements such as oxygen, hydrogen, calcium, carbon, etc. The soul, which is also called the **spirit**, is entirely different from the body, because it is not made of material substance. The soul and body are mysteriously joined together in one individual **personality**. Christ, however, was not a human person; his human body and soul together were united to his divine person.

2. What does the Bible teach about Christ's human body?

The Bible teaches that Christ's human body was and is **real**; it was not a mere illusion or appearance, but a real body made of material substance, just as our body is.

3. What error was held by some people in the ancient Church concerning Christ's body?

Some people held that Christ's body was not real, but only imaginary, or an illusion. They admitted that he **seemed** to have a human body, but they denied that it could be **real**.

4. Besides his human body, what element of human nature did Christ take to himself?

As explained in the previous lesson, besides his human body, he took to himself a human soul, without which he could not be a truly **human** being.

5. What is meant by saying that Christ took to himself a **reasonable** soul?

In this statement the word "reasonable" means **rational**, or having the power to think and reason.

6. In addition to Christ's human soul, what spiritual nature does he have?

In addition to his human soul, he is a

divine Spirit, God the Son, the second Person of the divine Trinity.

7. In what way was Christ's birth an exception to the ordinary birth of human beings?

Christ had **no human father**. He was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. Thus the Holy Spirit's power wrought a **supernatural** work, and Jesus, contrary to the laws of nature, was born of a virgin, without a human father.

8. What false belief is very commonly held today concerning Christ's birth?

It is very common today to say that Joseph was the real father of Jesus.

9. What should we think of such a belief?

To say that Joseph was the real father of Jesus is **blasphemous**, because (a) it implies that Mary, Jesus' mother, was an immoral person; (b) it implies that the Scripture accounts of the virgin birth of Jesus are false, and therefore that the Word of God is an unreliable mixture of truth and error.

10. How should we answer those who say that the virgin birth of Christ is taught in only two of the four Gospels, and therefore we need not believe it?

(a) If it were taught in only **one verse of one Gospel**, we would be bound to believe it on the authority of God's Word. (b) As a matter of fact Matthew and Luke, the only Gospels that record Jesus' **birth**, both affirm that he was born of the Virgin Mary. Since the other two Gospels, Mark and John, do not speak of Jesus' birth, infancy or childhood at all, of course we cannot expect them to present the truth that he was born of the Virgin Mary.

11. Although Jesus partook of human nature the same as our own, composed of body and soul, what great difference existed between his human nature and ours?

Our human nature is **sinful**. We are born in trespasses and sins, with a sinful heart and a tendency to commit sin. But Jesus was born, by the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit, with a **sinless** human nature (Note Luke 1:35, "that holy thing, which shall be born of thee . . ."). He was born without the stain or original sin and he never committed actual transgressions.

12. Since Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a sinner like other people, how could

Jesus, her Son, be born with a **sinless** human nature?

This was a special miracle, accomplished by the almighty power of God. We cannot doubt that Mary was sinful, although saved by divine grace. By nature she had a sinful heart as we all do. Only by the supernatural power of God could her child Jesus be born with a perfectly sinless heart and nature.

13. What is the importance of the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus today?

Lesson 34

For Week Beginning August 25, 1946

Q. 38. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favor, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

Scripture References:

Acts 2:24, 25. Romans 1:4 compared with Romans 4:25. Hebrews 9:14. The Mediator must be God in order that he might keep the human nature from sinking under the wrath of God and power of death.

Acts 20:28. Hebrews 9:14. Hebrews 7:25-28. The Mediator must be God in order to give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience and intercession.

Romans 3:24-26. The Mediator must be God in order to satisfy God's justice.

Ephesians 1:6. Matthew 3:17. The Mediator must be God in order to procure God's favor.

Titus 2:13, 14. The Mediator must be God in order to purchase a peculiar people.

Galatians 4:6. The Mediator must be God in order to give his Spirit to his purchased people.

Luke 1:68, 69, 71, 74. The Mediator must be God in order to conquer all the enemies of his purchased people.

Hebrews 5:8, 9. Hebrews 9:11-15. The Mediator must be God in order to bring his purchased people to everlasting salvation.

Questions:

1. Why could not an ordinary human being, such as Moses, David or Paul, act as

This doctrine is an outstanding landmark in the controversy between modernism and orthodox Christianity. Perhaps no other single doctrine of the Christian faith has been subjected to so much ridicule and scoffing. Where the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is given up, belief in the full inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures goes with it, and it is usually not long until most of the other doctrines of Christianity are given up too.

Mediator and save the human race from sin?

All ordinary human beings are themselves sinners, and therefore would be disqualified for the work of saving others from sin. Those who are themselves in need of salvation cannot accomplish the salvation of others.

2. Why could not God, by a miracle, provide a **sinless** human being, such as Adam was before the fall, to act as Mediator and reconcile us to God?

Even a sinless human being, if merely human, would not have been able to endure the wrath and curse of God as Christ did. It was necessary that the Mediator be God in order to sustain and support his human nature in its temptations and sufferings.

3. How could Jesus Christ, who was only **one** person. "give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) and bear the penalty for the sins of **many** people?

If Jesus Christ had been only a human being—even a sinless human being—at most he could have acted as substitute **for only one other person**. Then there would have to be as many Saviours as there were sinners. One life could, perhaps, if God were willing to consent to such an arrangement, be substituted for one life. But because Jesus Christ was not only a human being, but also truly divine, it was possible for him to "give his life a ransom for many", becoming the true substitute of all the people of God. His divine nature gave an infinite value to his human nature, so that he could suffer and die for many people at the same time.

4. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, was it possible for him to commit sin?

Since Jesus Christ was truly God, we must conclude that it was actually **impossible** for him to commit sin. Still the Bible teaches that he experienced a real tempta-

tion. How the temptation could be real, while at the same time it was impossible for him to commit sin, is a mystery which we cannot hope to understand.

5. How does the fact that Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is truly God, guarantee the success of the plan of salvation?

If Jesus Christ were only a human being—even a perfect human being—it would have been possible for him to fail in his work, by yielding to temptation and falling into sin. In that case the Second Adam would have been a failure just as the first Adam was, by disobeying the will of God. But because Jesus Christ was not only human, but also truly divine, he was and is **almighty**. Therefore his success is a certainty, since he can neither fail in his work, nor fall into sin.

Q. 39. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 2:16. Christ took not the nature of angels but human nature.

Galatians 4:4. The Mediator must be man in order that he might be under the law.

Hebrews 2:14. Hebrews 7:24, 25. The Mediator must be man in order that he might suffer and make intercession for us in our nature.

Hebrews 4:15. The Mediator must be man in order that he might experience a fellow-feeling of our infirmities.

Galatians 4:5. The Mediator must be man in order that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Hebrews 4:16. The Mediator must be man in order that we might have access to the throne of grace.

Questions:

1. Why could the angel Gabriel or some other angel not have become a Mediator to save the human race from sin?

The angels are not members of the human race; they do not possess human nature; therefore none of them could be qual-

ified to become the Second Adam to undo the wrong done by the first Adam.

2. Why was it necessary that the Mediator “partake of flesh and blood”, that is, possess a human nature?

Because to redeem the human race, the Mediator must act as the **representative** of human beings, and in order to be a representative of human beings, he must first of all be a **member of the human race**. Even in ordinary human organizations, a person cannot be an officer until he is first a member. Christ could not be the Redeemer of the human race unless he was first of all a member of the human race. Since sin and ruin came by man, redemption must come by man too (1 Cor. 15:21, “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead”).

3. Why must the Mediator perform obedience to the law?

Adam and all his posterity had broken the law of God and lived in violation of that law. It was necessary that the Second Adam keep the law of God perfectly. God himself is not under the law; he is the **Law-giver**. Jesus Christ had to be truly human so that he could be truly under the law of God, and thus succeed where Adam failed, in meeting the condition of the Covenant of works, namely a perfect obedience to the law of God.

4. Why was it necessary for the Mediator to be truly human in order to be our High Priest?

A true priest, according to God’s appointment, must be chosen from among men and must be able to **sympathize** with the sufferings and troubles of human beings because he has experienced suffering and trouble himself. Read Hebrews 5:1, 2, and note that these verses do not speak especially concerning Christ; they only set forth the nature of the priestly office in general—the qualifications of **any** priest. Since Jesus Christ was to be our High Priest, he must meet these qualifications too.

5. But cannot God himself sympathize with our human sufferings?

God knows all about our human sufferings, and has pity or compassion on them. We may say that God has sympathy **for** but not **with** our human sufferings. The word **sympathize** literally means “to suffer with” someone. Since God is an infinite Being, and suffering implies limitation, God himself, in his own nature, cannot suffer, and therefore he cannot really sympathize **with**

our sufferings. Many people speak carelessly about God "suffering" who should realize that this is contrary to the truth that God is **infinite** and **unchangeable**. Suffering by its very nature implies limitation and change; therefore an infinite and unchangeable being cannot suffer. God knows all about our sufferings, for he knows all

things, but he cannot experience them in his own nature. The only way that God could experience our human sufferings was by becoming human, as he did. The Son of God, a divine person, took to himself a human nature; and thus God experienced human sufferings, not in his own nature, but in his adopted human nature.

Lesson 35

For Week Beginning September 1, 1946

Q. 40. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one person?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and man, and this in one person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole person.

Scripture References:

Matthew 1:21, 23. The Mediator both God and man in one person.

Matthew 3:17. Hebrews 9:14. The works of each of the Mediator's two natures accepted by God for us as the works of the whole person.

1 Peter 2:6. The Mediator and his work, as a whole, to be relied on by us for our salvation.

Questions:

1. Why could not God provide two Mediators, one divine and the other human, to accomplish the salvation of his people from sin?

Because the relation between the works of each of the two natures required that these two natures be united in one person. A divine Mediator could not experience suffering except through a human nature; a human Mediator could not endure the required suffering, except as sustained by a divine nature. Therefore it was necessary, not only that the Mediator be God and that he be man but that both natures be united in one person, that his work might be a unity.

2. What work of Christ's divine nature does Scripture speak of as part of the work of accomplishing our salvation?

Hebrews 9:14. It was **through the eternal Spirit** that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God for our sins. This may be translated "through **his** eternal Spirit" (see American Revised Version, margin). In any case, the meaning is probably not "through the Holy Spirit", but rather "through his

own divine nature"; that is, it was through his divine nature that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people; his divine nature gave value and efficacy to the sacrifice and sufferings of his human nature.

3. What work of Christ's human nature does Scripture speak of as a part of the work of accomplishing our salvation?

Scripture speaks of Christ's obedience to the law, and of all his sufferings, and especially of his death, all of which were works of his human nature, as essential parts of the work of accomplishing our salvation.

4. How can we explain Scripture texts in which what is proper to one of Christ's natures is referred to the other nature?

The **unity of Christ's person** affords the true explanation of such texts. For example, Acts 20:28, "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood". Here we find **blood**, which was a part of Christ's human nature, associated with the name **God**, which belongs to his divine nature. John 6:62, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" Here a title associated with Christ's human nature, the title "Son of man," is used in connection with a fact concerning Christ's divine nature, namely his eternal pre-existence in heaven, before his incarnation in this world. In these and many similar Scripture passages the explanation is that the unity of Christ's person permits reference to either of his natures in terms which strictly apply to the other nature.

Q. 41. Why was our Mediator called Jesus?

A. Our Mediator was called Jesus, because he saveth his people from their sins.

Scripture Reference:

Matthew 1:21. The divine command to name the child of Mary "Jesus," and the reason for this name.

Questions:

1. What is the literal meaning of the name "Jesus"?

The name "Jesus" is a Greek form corresponding to the Hebrew name "Joshua" or "Jehoshua", meaning "Jehovah is salvation".

2. Who decided that our Saviour should be named "Jesus"?

This decision was made by God himself, and was announced to Joseph by an angel of the Lord who appeared to him in a dream.

3. What great truths of our faith are involved in the statement "he shall save his people from their sins"?

The following great truths of our faith are involved in this majestic statement revealed to Joseph by an angel of the Lord: (a) Salvation from sin is accomplished by the divinely-provided Redeemer, and is not something which we can do ourselves; (b) Our Redeemer **actually saves** his people from their sins; he does not merely give them "a chance" of salvation, or an "offer" of salvation; he actually and fully saves them, which includes his doing all that is necessary to guarantee that they shall be finally saved; (c) Our Redeemer saves a particular body of human beings, the elect of God, spoken of in this text as "his people". He was not sent into the world to save everybody, nor to try to save everybody but to save "his people".

4. Is "Jesus" a personal name or a title?

Jesus is the personal name of our Saviour.

Q. 42. Why was our Mediator called Christ?

A. Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; and so set apart and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his Church, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.

Scripture References:

John 3:34. The Holy Spirit given to our Saviour above measure.

Psalm 45:7. Our Saviour given the Holy Spirit above his fellows.

John 6:27. Our Saviour "sealed" by God the Father, that is, set apart for his redemptive work.

Matthew 28:18-20. Our Saviour furnished by God the Father with all authority and ability to carry out his appointed work to the end.

Acts 3:21, 22. Our Saviour raised up by God the Father to be a prophet.

Luke 4:18, 21. The work of Christ as a prophet.

Hebrews 5:5-7. Hebrews 4:14, 15. Our Saviour called by the Father to be a high priest; and his priestly work for his people.

Psalms 2:6. Matthew 21:5. Isaiah 9:6, 7. Our Saviour made a king by God the Father; and the glories of his kingly office.

Phil. 2:8-11. Christ executes his offices both in his estate of humiliation and in his estate of exaltation.

Questions:

1. Is "Christ" a name or a title?

"Christ" is not a name, but a title which accompanies the personal name "Jesus". This is brought out by the use of the definite article with "Christ" which occurs in some places, such as Matthew 16:16. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

2. What is the literal meaning of the word "Christ"?

"Christ" is the English form of the Greek word **Christos** which means **Anointed**. This Greek word **Christos** is a translation of the Hebrew word **Messiah** which also means **Anointed**. Thus whether we say that Jesus is **the Christ, the Messiah, or the Anointed One** is a matter of language and not of meaning. These terms all mean the same. In passages of the Old Testament where the word "anointed" occurs with reference to the coming Redeemer, such as Psalm 2:2, "the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed . . .", the Hebrew word "Messiah" could equally correctly be translated by the word **Christ**, for the meaning is the same.

3. What is the basic idea involved in the title "Christ"?

The basic idea involved in the title "Christ" is the idea of **anointing**. In the Old Testament period kings and priests were anointed with oil to set them apart to their special offices. This oil of anointing was a symbol of the Holy Spirit who would enter their hearts and equip them with ability and wisdom for their duties as kings or priests. So we see that the idea of anointing in the Old Testament was setting a person apart to a special office, with a symbol of the Holy Spirit's work in that person's life. All the Old Testament kings and

priests, however, were only types or shadows pointing forward to Jesus, the true and final king and priest. Jesus is the one who above all others has been anointed by the Holy Spirit to fit him to be our prophet, priest and king. Instead of being anointed with oil, as in the Old Testament period, Jesus received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove which abode upon him (Matthew 3:16).

4. Why did Jesus receive the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove?

While no certain answer can be given to this question, it has been suggested that the form of a dove represented the **totality** of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus received the Spirit without measure. At Pentecost believers received the Spirit in the form of

tongues of fire, something divisible, of which each person present received a share; but in the case of Jesus, the form of a dove may suggest the idea of totality or indivisibility (See Genesis 15:10, "the birds divided he not").

5. When does Christ execute the offices of prophet, priest and king?

Christ, our Saviour, executes the offices of prophet, priest and king both in his estate of humiliation (that is, during his life on earth), and in his estate of exaltation (that is, since his resurrection, and especially in his life of glory in heaven). This means that Christ was a prophet, a priest and a king when he was on earth, and that he is a prophet, a priest and a king in heaven today.

Lesson 36

For Week Beginning September 8, 1946

Q. 43. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executeth the office of a prophet in his revealing to the church in all ages, by his Spirit and word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation.

Scripture References:

John 1:18. Christ as prophet is the great revealer of the Father.

1 Peter 1:10-12. The Spirit of Christ revealed divine truth to the Old Testament prophets.

Hebrews 1:1, 2. Christ as prophet brings the final revelation of God to men.

John 15:15. Christ revealed truth from the Father to the apostles.

Acts 20:32. The edifying nature of Christ's prophetic work.

Ephesians 4:11-13. Christ's prophetic work edifies or builds up his body, the Church.

John 20:31. Christ's words recorded in Scripture in order that by his work as prophet men might believe and have life.

Questions:

1. What is the true meaning of the word "prophet"?

A prophet is God's representative in speaking to men, God's spokesman, God's mouthpiece.

2. Why do we usually think of a prophet as one who foretells the future?

Because many of the prophets, especially in the Old Testament, received revelations from God which contained predictions of future events. There are so many predictions of future events in the prophetic books of the Old Testament that we have come to think of a "prophet" as a "predictor of the future". However many of the messages of the prophets concerned their own times and the real meaning of the word "prophet" is not a foreteller of the future, but a man who delivers a message from God to the people.

3. In what period of history did Christ execute the office of a prophet?

"In all ages".

4. How did Christ execute the office of a prophet during the Old Testament period?

During the Old Testament period Christ executed the office of a prophet by his Spirit, revealing his truth through the various prophets, Psalmists and other writers of the Old Testament Scriptures.

5. How did Christ execute the office of a prophet during his earthly ministry?

During his earthly ministry Christ executed the office of a prophet: (a) by preaching to the people of the Jews; (b) By teaching and preaching to his own followers, or disciples, who believed on him; (c) By training and instructing the twelve Apostles, who would be his official witnesses after his ascension to heaven.

6. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet today?

Christ executes the office of a prophet today: (a) through his written Word, the Holy Bible; (b) by his Holy Spirit, whom he has sent, who illuminates our hearts and minds so that we can receive and understand the truth revealed in the Scriptures.

7. In executing the office of a prophet, what message has Christ revealed to his Church?

He has revealed a complete message, containing the whole will of God in all things concerning our edification and salvation.

Q. 44. How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?

A. Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of his people; and in making continual intercession for them.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 9:14. Christ executes the office of a priest in offering himself as a sacrifice to God.

Hebrews 9:28. Christ offered once for the sins of many.

Hebrews 2:17. Christ offered himself in order to reconcile his people to God.

Hebrews 7:25. Christ as priest makes continual intercession for his people.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between a prophet and a priest?

A prophet is God's representative in speaking to men; a priest is men's representative in approaching God.

2. What are the qualifications for the office of priesthood?

These are found in Hebrews 5:1, 2, and are as follows: (a) The priest must be a member of the human race, that is, chosen from among men. An angel could not act as priest to represent men in approaching God. (b) The priest must be able to sympathize with the ignorant and erring, because he himself is "compassed with infirmity". (c) The priest must not take the office on himself, but must be called to it by God, as Aaron was (Heb. 5:4).

3. What are the functions of the office of priesthood?

These are also found in Hebrews 5:1-4 and are as follows: (a) A priest must represent men in things pertaining to God. (b)

A priest must offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (c) A priest must make intercession for the people (Hebrews 7:25).

4. What book of the Bible most fully discusses Christ's priestly office?

While the **functions** of Christ's priestly office are discussed in many books of the Bible with great fulness, his priestly office **as such** is discussed most fully in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Old Testament, Psalm 110:4 is perhaps the most direct statement of Christ's priestly office.

5. How did Christ possess the qualifications for the priestly office?

(a) By his Incarnation, or taking to himself a human nature, he became a human being; thus becoming a member of the human race, he was qualified to be chosen from among men for the priestly office. (b) Because he was "compassed with infirmity", and underwent the miseries and sufferings of human life as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief", he was able to sympathize with the ignorant and erring. (c) He did not take the priestly office upon himself, but was called by God, as Aaron had been (Hebrews 5:4, 5).

6. How does Christ exercise the functions of the priestly office?

(a) As the Second Adam, the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, Christ is the representative of all the elect people of God; thus he acts as the representative of men in things pertaining to God. (b) He laid down his own life on Calvary as a sacrifice for the sins of his people; thus he fulfilled the **sacrificial** function of the priestly office. (c) He made intercession for his people while still on earth (John 17) and he continues to make intercession for his people as he ministers at the right hand of God the Father in heaven.

7. What is the relative importance of Christ's priestly office?

Christ's priestly office is the central and supremely important one of his three offices of prophet, priest and king. While we must regard the whole of Christ's saving work as a unity, and should realize that no part of it is non-essential, still his work as priest is the very heart and center of his work as our Redeemer.

8. What error concerning Christ's offices is common in modern "liberalism"?

Modern "liberalism" seeks to retain the doctrine of Christ's kingly office while either abandoning or denaturing the doctrine of

his priestly office. Thus widely known and popular "liberal" teachers never weary of speaking about "the kingdom of God," although they either deny or explain away the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Of course these "liberal" teachers put their own ideas into such a term as "the kingdom of God"; they do not mean by such an expression what historic orthodox Christianity has always meant by it. But they try to

retain some kind of belief in Christ's kingly office while giving up or by-passing his priestly office. We should realize that Christ's work is a unity and none of his three offices can be retained in our theology without the other two. The Scriptures know only a Christ who is a **prophet and a priest and a king**. This is the only **real** Christ; all partial Christs are only the products of human ideas.

Lesson 37

For Week Beginning September 15, 1946

Q. 45. How doth Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.

Scripture References:

Acts 15:14-16. Isaiah 55:4-5. Genesis 49:10. Psalm 110:3. Christ executes the office of a king in calling out of the world a people to himself.

Ephesians 4:11, 12. 1 Cor. 12:28. Christ executes the office of a king in giving his people officers.

Isaiah 33:22. Christ executes the office of a king in giving his people laws.

Matthew 18:17, 18. 1 Cor. 5:4, 5. Christ executes the office of a king in giving his people the censures of church discipline.

Acts 5:31. Christ executes the office of a king in bestowing saving grace upon his elect.

Rev. 22:12. Rev. 2:10. Christ executes the office of a king in rewarding his elect for their obedience.

Rev. 3:19. Christ executes the office of a king in correcting his elect for their sins.

Isaiah 63:9. Christ executes the office of a king in supporting his people in their temptations and sufferings.

1 Cor. 15:25. Psalm 110:1, 2. Christ executes the office of a king in restraining and overcoming the enemies of his people.

Romans 14:10, 11. Christ executes the

office of a king by powerfully ordering all things for his own glory.

Romans 8:28. Christ executes the office of a king by powerfully ordering all things for the good of his elect.

2 Thess. 1:8, 9. Psalm 2:8, 9. Christ executes the office of a king in taking vengeance on his enemies, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.

Questions:

1. Into what three spheres does the Catechism divide the exercise of Christ's kingly office?

(a) The sphere of the visible Church. (b) The sphere of the invisible Church. (c) The sphere of the world.

2. Which is the most important of these three spheres in which Christ's kingly office is exercised?

The sphere of the invisible Church, or the body of the elect, is the most important, for it is for the benefit of the invisible Church that Christ exercises his kingly office (a) in the visible Church, and (b) in the world or universe.

3. What elements are included in Christ's kingly rule in the visible Church?

(a) Calling out of the world a people who shall be members of the visible Church. (b) Giving them officers, as appointed in the Scriptures, and as realized in actual life. (c) Giving them laws and censures, by which he visibly governs them, that is, by means of the structure of church government and discipline.

4. What elements are included in Christ's kingly rule in the invisible Church?

(a) Bestowing saving grace upon his elect, by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives, resulting in their being united to Christ in their effectual calling. (b) Rewarding the obedience of his people, both now by his providence, and at the Judgment Day by supernatural power;

and correcting his people for their sins, in his providential discipline during the present life. (c) Preserving and supporting his elect under all their temptations and sufferings, so that they are never overwhelmed with troubles, but are always kept from despair.

5. What elements are included in Christ's kingly rule in the world or the universe?

(a) Restraining and overcoming all the enemies of his elect. (b) Powerfully ordering all things to his own glory, and his people's good, so that even the evil deeds of wicked men are made to work out for the true benefit of the elect. (c) Taking vengeance on the wicked, who know not God, nor obey the gospel. This vengeance is partly during the present life, by Christ's providential dispensations; and chiefly at the Judgment Day at the end of the world.

6. In which sphere is Christ's kingly reign over the nations included?

Christ's kingly reign over the nations is included in the third sphere, namely, the exercise of his kingly office in the world or universe.

7. Is Christ a king today?

Certainly Christ is a king today. The Bible teaches that he was a king when on earth, is a king today, and will be a king for ever and ever.

8. Is Christ reigning over the nations of the world today?

Yes. While it is true that the nations of the world are living in neglect of, or in rebellion against, Christ's kingly reign, still he is reigning over them and accomplishing his purposes in spite of their neglect and rebellion.

(Note: — For a fuller discussion of Christ's kingly reign over the universe, the student is referred to the sermon entitled "The Kingly Office of Jesus Christ" in this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life").

Lesson 38

For Week Beginning September 22, 1946

Q. 46. What was the estate of Christ's humiliation?

A. The estate of Christ's humiliation was that low condition, wherein he, for our sakes, emptying himself of his glory, took upon him the form of a servant, in his conception and birth, life, death, and after his death, until his resurrection.

Scripture References:

Phil. 2:6-8. Christ's voluntary self-humiliation.

Luke 1:31. Christ's humiliation in his birth as a human being.

2 Cor. 8:9. Christ's self-humiliation in giving up the enjoyment of riches in heaven for a life of poverty on earth.

Acts 2:24. Christ's resurrection the termination of his humiliation.

Questions:

1. In carrying out the Plan of Salvation, what kind of condition did Christ take upon himself?

A low condition.

2. Why did Christ take on himself a low condition?

For our sakes.

3. What was Christ's condition before he came to this world?

A state of infinite divine glory, described in the Bible as "being rich".

4. How may the expression "made himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7) also be translated?

This expression literally means "he emptied himself".

5. Of what did Christ "empty himself" when he became man?

He emptied himself of the enjoyment of his heavenly glory.

6. What serious error has been held concerning Christ's "emptying himself"?

Some have held that this expression in the Greek text of Phil. 2:7 means that Christ emptied himself of his deity. According to this interpretation, Christ was divine when he was in heaven, but cast his deity aside, and was only a man when he was on earth. Since many texts of the New Testament teach that Christ was truly and fully God while he was on earth, the above interpretation cannot be correct. The true meaning is that Christ emptied himself of the enjoyment of his divine glory, taking "the form of a servant" instead. His nature was still the same, but his position was different.

7. What was Christ's position during his earthly life?

The "form" or position of a servant.

8. What chapter of the Old Testament prophesied that the Redeemer would be "the Servant of the Lord"?

Isaiah 53. The whole chapter tells of Christ's estate of humiliation. Verse 11 calls him "my righteous servant".

Q. 47. How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth?

A. Christ humbled himself in his conception and birth, in that, being from all eternity the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, he was pleased in the fulness of time to become the son of man, made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.

Scripture References:

John 1:14, 18. Christ, who became man, was from all eternity the Son of God.

Galatians 4:4. Christ in the fulness of time became man and was born as an infant.

Luke 2:7. Our Saviour was born of a woman of low estate, and with circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.

Questions:

1. How long had Christ been the Son of God?

From all eternity.

2. What is the meaning of the statement that Christ was "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18)?

This means that Christ, the eternal Son, is **one God with the Father**.

Lesson 39

For Week Beginning September 29, 1946

Q. 4.8 How did Christ humble himself in his life?

A. Christ humbled himself in his life, by subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled; and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh, whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that his low condition.

Scripture References:

Galatians 4:4. Christ was born under the law.

Matthew 5:17. Romans 5:18. Christ perfectly fulfilled the law of God.

Psalms 22:6. Hebrews 12:2, 3. Christ conflicted with the indignities of the world.

The Father and the Son are **the same in substance**, though they are distinct persons of the Trinity.

3. Why does the Catechism say that Christ "**was pleased**" to become the son of man?

This expression implies that Christ became man voluntarily, of his own free will, not because he was compelled to do so.

4. When did Christ become man?

When the fulness of the time was come. Galatians 4:4.

5. What is the meaning of this expression, "when the fulness of the time was come"?

This means the time appointed by God from all eternity for Christ to be born as a human being; also the time when all the age-long preparations had been completed, and the prophecies were about to be fulfilled.

6. Why is Mary, the mother of Jesus, referred to as "a woman of low estate"?

This is based on Mary's own words as found in Luke 1:48. It refers not to her character, but to her economic and social position among the Jews of that day.

7. What "circumstances of more than ordinary abasement" attended the birth and infancy of Jesus Christ?

He was born in a stable, because there was no room in the inn. It was necessary to take him suddenly to a foreign country to escape Herod's plot to murder him.

Matthew 4:1-12. Luke 4:13. Christ conflicted with the temptations of Satan.

Hebrews 2:17, 18. Hebrews 4:5. Isaiah 52:13, 14. Christ conflicted with infirmities in his flesh, either common to humanity, or specially involved in his low condition.

Questions:

1. Why was it necessary that our Saviour be subject to the law of God?

It was necessary that our Saviour be subject to the law of God, in order that he might fulfill the law as our representative, rendering a perfect obedience to the will of God, which Adam had failed to do in the Covenant of Works. Christ, the Second Adam, must accomplish this successfully in

order that his righteousness could be reckoned to our account.

2. How did our Saviour become subject to the law of God?

Our Saviour became subject to the law of God by his own voluntary decision to become man, according to the stipulated terms of the Covenant of Grace entered into between him and the Father in eternity before the creation of the world.

3. To what law did our Saviour become subject?

He became subject to the whole law of God, both the moral law and the ceremonial law.

4 How did Christ fulfill the law of God?

Christ fulfilled the law of God **perfectly**. His obedience to the law was both positive and negative. He never broke any of the law's commands, and he fully performed all that the law required.

5 Why was becoming subject to the law a matter of Christ **humbling himself**?

Because as God he was by nature above the law. By nature he was not under the law, but **the Author** of the law. In becoming man, he laid aside his heavenly glory, and took the form of a servant, under the law.

6. Why were the indignities of the world a humiliation to our Saviour?

Because the indignities of the world were contrary to his holy nature, and because they were contrary to the peace, order and reverence of heaven, whence he had come.

7. Why were the temptations of Satan a humiliation to our Saviour?

Because it was an insult to his holy character to be tempted by Satan, who is not only deceitful and wicked, but in rebellion against God's authority. The Lord of glory was approached and tempted by the vilest and most lawless rebel in the universe.

8. What were some of the "infirmities in his flesh" which our Saviour suffered during his life on earth?

Weariness, hunger, thirst, poverty, "no place to lay his head", being misunderstood and reproached by near relations, etc.

9. What should be our attitude in view of the way in which our Saviour humbled himself during his life on earth?

(a) We should be filled with the deepest gratitude to him who endured such afflictions and privations for our sakes. (b) We should resist the temptation to yield to discouragement and despair when we are faced with troubles and hardships in our earthly pilgrimage, remembering that our Saviour, the Lord of glory, endured much more grievous troubles and hardships in his great love for us.

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:

(a) Is it proper for a Covenanter, in a state which gives communities the privilege of "local option" concerning the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquor, to sign a petition addressed to the county commissioners requesting that this issue be placed on the ballot for submission to the voters? (b) It is proper for a Covenanter to register as a member of a political party in order to be able to vote on such a question? (c) Is it proper for a Covenanter to go to the polls and cast a ballot provided he marks only that portion of the ballot dealing with the liquor issue?

Answer:

The answer to these questions is fur-

nished by the following deliverances of the Synod:

"The general rule for guidance is, That participation in acts of civil administration is not in itself wrong and sinful, but becomes so when any sinful condition, in the way of an immoral oath is involved, or when the service itself is sinful in its nature." (Minutes of Synod, 1875; Reaffirmed, Minutes of Synod, 1917, page 129).

"The law of the Church permits Covenanters to vote on moral questions." (Minutes of Synod, 1915, page 77).

"It is in accord with the law and order of the Church to vote on amendments and measures, which do not involve the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. It follows, therefore, that there can be no objection to registration necessary to the exercise of the franchise unless an oath

to the Constitution is required." (Minutes of Synod, 1931, page 72).

"Local option" concerning the sale of intoxicating liquor clearly raises a moral issue. If it be permissible for Covenanters to give their Christian testimony by voting on a moral question, when not required to give the oath of allegiance to the Constitution, then it must be permissible for them to petition the proper authorities for the opportunity of doing so. F. D. F.

Question:

In the account of King Saul consulting the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28): (a) Did the woman tell the truth about Samuel's presence in that situation? (b) Were the alleged words of Samuel (verse 15) truly Samuel's words, or did they come from some Satanic agency?

Answer:

Four views have been held concerning this matter, which are as follows: (a) The traditional interpretation, which holds that the spirit of Samuel really appeared and spoke through the woman of Endor; (b) The interpretation which holds that the woman was a clever deceiver and succeeded in convincing Saul of the reality of Samuel's appearance, although she herself well knew that Samuel had not appeared; (c) The interpretation that the woman was self-deceived, or a victim of hallucinations, and really believed that Samuel had appeared, although as a matter of fact he did not appear; (d) The interpretation which holds that an appearance of Samuel was simulated by a demon or evil spirit, who pretended to be the deceased prophet and thus deceived both the woman of Endor and king Saul.

The real question is not which of these four views is inherently the more probable, but which is most in accord with the statements of the passage of Scripture that is involved.

Beyond question the Scripture passage represents Samuel as actually present and speaking: Verse 14, "And Saul perceived that it was Samuel"; verse 15, "And Samuel said to Saul . . ."; verse 16, "Then said Samuel . . ."; verse 20, "Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth . . . because of the words of Samuel . . .". There is no suggestion that Saul was mistaken when he "perceived that it was Samuel", nor is there any reason to interpret the words of verses 15, 16 and 20 otherwise than in their plain, literal meaning. In view of these considerations, the traditional interpretation is pref-

erable to the other views that have been held of this passage.

The objection is often raised to the traditional interpretation, that witchcraft, dealing with familiar spirits, etc., being strictly forbidden in the law of God as revealed in the Old Testament, it is unthinkable that God would permit the departed Samuel to return to this world in order to speak to Saul, as this would be contrary to God's own prohibition of spiritism. This objection is wholly without weight as it rests upon a confusion between **what God has commanded** and **what God permits in his providence**. The fact that God in his law had forbidden attempts to communicate with the dead, does not prove that God in his providence might not permit, for his own special reasons, such communication to take place in a particular situation. God's providential permission for something to take place of course does not at all imply any divine sanction of it from the standpoint of God's moral law. A partial parallel may be found in John 13:26, 27, "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." The last phrase, "That thou doest, do quickly," of course referred to Judas going out to meet with the priests in order to betray Jesus into their hands. In other words, it was complicity in the wickedest murder of history that Jesus referred to. Jesus' saying to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly," must not be taken as in any sense sanctioning or approving his intended action. Here as in many other passages of Scripture, that which was forbidden by God's moral law was permitted by God's providence and so actually took place. See, for example, Acts 2:23. We may conclude, therefore, that God in his mysterious providence, for special reasons, permitted the spirit of Samuel to return to this world and to communicate with King Saul. This does not imply, of course, that such an event has ever been repeated or could happen in our own time. The practice of spiritism is one of the great evils of our time, and Christian people should maintain the strictest separation from everything connected with it.

Question:

In Ephesians 4:4 we read, "There is . . . one Spirit . . .". Why, then, do Spirit-filled men who have given their all for Christ arrive at different conclusions in their in-

terpretation of Scripture? Surely the Spirit is not divided against Himself.

Answer:

(a) Spirit-filled men do not arrive at **totally** different conclusions in their interpretation of Scripture; all who possess the Holy Spirit will arrive at the same conclusions about the **most** important facts and doctrines of the Christian faith. For example, with respect to the deity of Jesus Christ, his substitutionary atonement, his bodily resurrection, ascension and coming again, and many other truths, there is virtually total agreement, among those who give evidence of being regenerate Christians, as to the truth of these facts and doctrines. To doubt or deny one of these basic truths is certainly an evidence that the doubter or denier is **not** a "Spirit-filled" Christian.

(b) That earnest, consecrated and faithful Christians do arrive at different conclusions, even about important questions of doctrine, in their interpretation of the Scriptures, cannot be denied. Similarly, it must be admitted that earnest, consecrated and faithful Christians do commit sin, breaking the commandments of God daily in thought, word and deed. In each case, the explanation is the same; the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is not an instantaneous act but a process. It is true that regeneration, or the new birth, is an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit on the human spirit; but this instantaneous act, while it imparts new life, does not instantly and totally remove the effects of sin. The "old man" remains, along with the "new man" received in regeneration. This "old man" or "old nature" consists of the sum-total of the remaining effects of the fall in the Christian. These effects of the fall which remain, even in the regenerate Christian, are of various kinds, as **moral** effects, **intellectual** effects and **physical** effects. The moral effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian, result in his sinning against God daily. The intellectual effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian, result in his being involved in a certain amount of error in his interpretation of the Scriptures. Thy physical effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian, result in his liability to pain, sickness, weariness, and death itself.

The moral effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian are removed by a gradual process which is called **Sanctification**. By this process the Christian is enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness, but the ideal of absolute holiness is not attained in

this present life, but only at death, when the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.

The intellectual effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian are removed by a gradual process which is called **Illumination** or **Enlightenment**. (See Ephesians 1:18). By this process the Christian is enabled more and more to grasp the true meaning of God's special revelation, the Holy Scriptures. He is enabled more and more to overcome his old prejudices and false ideas, and to approach closer and closer to the ideal of **perfect or complete knowledge**. But as in the case of holiness, so also in the case of knowledge, the ideal of perfection is not attained in this present life (See 1 Corinthians 13:8-12). It follows from this that **there is no such thing in this present life as complete orthodoxy**, just as there is no such thing in this present life as complete holiness. Every Christian in the world is more or less unorthodox. The best that can be attained in the present life is a closer and closer approach to the ideal of complete orthodoxy, or complete correctness in understanding of God's revelation, the Scriptures.

Just because God's Holy Spirit is working a gradual process of change in sin-corrupted hearts and also working a gradual process of change in error-prejudiced minds, it is not at all surprising that Christians not only commit sin, but also differ from one another in their interpretation of the Bible. When the Holy Spirit's work has been completed, neither sin nor error will remain. Then all Christians will be perfectly holy, and all will be totally in agreement about God's truth, for all will have attained the ideal of perfection in holiness and knowledge. Meantime, doctrinal variation is inevitable, and it is no disparagement of the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts and minds of Christians to admit that that work is a process and not yet completed. This does not imply, of course, that error may be tolerated, nor that we may have a complacent attitude concerning error, any more than that we may have a complacent attitude concerning sin. Both in the pursuit of holiness and in the pursuit of truth we are commanded to press on toward perfection.

It may be added that the physical effects of the fall which remain in the regenerate Christian will be removed instantaneously by a miracle wrought by the supernatural power of God at the resurrection of the body. Those Christians still living at that time will be "changed" without dying.

This will be the final stage of the removal of the effects of the fall from the lives of God's people (See 1 Cor. 15:51-57).

Question:

On what portions of Scripture, or other authority, does the Roman Catholic Church base its claim that its priests have the power to forgive sins?

Answer:

A common Roman Catholic Catechism cites John 20:22, 23 as evidence that Jesus Christ granted to the priests of his Church the power of absolving from sins committed after Baptism. Those verses in the Authorized Version read as follows: ". . . Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." A related passage is Matthew 16:19, where Jesus says to Peter, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". A similar passage is Matthew 18:18, which is addressed not to Peter but to the disciples as a group, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Church of Rome is committed to a **sacerdotal** conception of Christianity, and therefore Rome interprets such Scriptures as those cited above in a sacerdotal sense. The word "sacerdotal" means literally "priestly". A sacerdotal view of Christianity is a view which holds that in saving men, God deals with them, not directly, but strictly and solely through an institution, the Church, and the ministrations of its official priests. According to the Roman Catholic view, salvation comes to men through the sacraments, which are entrusted to the Church and administered by its priests. The Church of Rome teaches that there are seven sacraments, one of which is Penance, in which the priest absolves the person who confesses his sin.

Opposed to the sacerdotal view of Christianity is the **evangelical** view. An evangelical view of Christianity is a view which holds that in saving men, God deals with each individual person directly, with no Church or priest to come between the individual soul and God. According to the evangelical conception of Christianity, the Church and its ministers are important, for they publish the gospel and invite sinners to come to Christ, and declare the whole

counsel of God to men; the sacraments are important, for they are appointed means of grace. But neither Church, ministers nor sacraments are absolutely necessary for salvation, for in the real work of salvation, God deals with the soul directly, by the direct work of his Holy Spirit. While the Church of Rome teaches that regeneration is **effected by Baptism**, evangelical Churches teach that regeneration, or the new birth, is effected by the work of the Holy Spirit, and is signified and sealed by Baptism.

Believing as we do that the evangelical conception of Christianity is true, and the sacerdotal conception a perversion of the truth, we cannot accept the Catholic interpretation of such Scriptures as John 20:22, 23, for that interpretation depends for its validity on the truth of the sacerdotal view of Christianity. We believe that the Scriptures provide abundant evidence to prove that in saving men God deals with the soul directly rather than through the official ministrations of a priestly institution. Catholics, of course, do not claim to base their doctrines exclusively on the Bible; they have a double standard of authority in religion, namely, the Scriptures plus ecclesiastical traditions as interpreted by the Church. For this reason it is impossible to discuss religion with Catholics on the basis of the Bible alone, for they are unwilling to accept that basis. They view the authority of the Bible as subordinate to that of the Church, rather than the other way around.

With respect to the question of the true interpretation of such texts as have been cited, it may be said that evangelical interpreters hold that these texts refer to a **declarative** rather than a **Judicial** pronouncement of forgiveness of sins. In the Catholic Church the priest acts as a **judge** in giving absolution for sins. According to the evangelical view, the ministers of Christ, and the courts of the Church, have been given authority by Christ, the Head of the Church, to make **declarative** pronouncements of the forgiveness of sins. That is, a minister in a public church service may announce to the people the terms on which God will forgive their sins, and state authoritatively that all who truly repent and sincerely believe in Christ will be and are forgiven, while those who are impenitent or unbelieving are still under the wrath and curse of God because of their sins. This still leaves the question of the **actual** forgiveness as a matter between the individual soul and God. In the case of a person being under the censures of Church discipline because of particular offenses, where there is satisfactory evidence of repentance, the Church courts (such as Ses-

sion, Presbytery, Synod), may remove the censures that have been imposed (such as suspension or excommunication), at the same time declaring that if the person is **truly** repentant (which only God can know with certainty) the decision of the Church court will be ratified by God in heaven.

To summarize: Catholics believe that the priest, as a judge, has the power to decide whether the person's sins shall be forgiven or not; evangelical Christians believe that ministers and Church courts have the authority to announce God's terms of forgiveness to men, but no authority actually to decide whether the person's sins shall be forgiven or not. That is between the person and God. We may freely admit that there are some difficulties involved in the interpretation of these passages of Scripture. But in spite of these difficulties we have the best of reasons for being **very sure** that the sacerdotal interpretation cannot be the correct one.

Question:

Why do we insist on singing only the inspired Psalms in worship even though we have to admit that the tunes are not inspired?

Answer:

It is true that the Psalms of the Bible are inspired, and that the tunes we use in singing them are not inspired. There is no inconsistency involved in this matter, however, though there may appear to be an inconsistency when the principle that is involved is not accurately formulated. This principle is often inaccurately formulated thus: "In worship whatever is not commanded is forbidden". This is an oversimplification of the matter which, if taken strictly, would rule out not only our Psalm tunes, but several other customary matters such as making announcements from the pulpit during a Church service. The correct formulation of the principle is as follows: "Every **element** of worship must be commanded in the Word of God, and any element not so commanded is forbidden, but in addition to the elements of worship there are some **circumstances** concerning the worship of God, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed" (See the Confession of Faith, Chapter I, Section 6).

The **matter of praise**, that is, what songs we are to sing in worshipping God, is an **element** of worship, and therefore must be decided strictly according to God's appoint-

ment in Scripture. We are commanded to sing the Psalms; we are not commanded to sing uninspired hymns; therefore the former are to be used, and the latter are forbidden. **The tunes to be used**, on the other hand, are not an element of worship but a **circumstance** concerning worship, and therefore may be decided according to the light of nature and Christian prudence, etc. Once we admit that we are commanded to sing Psalms in the worship of God, it is obvious that tunes are necessary. If a regular tune-book were not provided by the Church, the precentor would have to select suitable tunes. If he failed to do this, and every member sang a different tune at the same time, this would contravene the general rule of the Word that **all things must be done decently and in order** (I Cor. 14:40). This general rule requires that the Church as a body adopt some suitable common practice with respect to the **circumstance** that singing by a congregation requires the use of tunes.

Question:

Is it wrong to tell lies for a good purpose?

Answer:

Yes. The notion that "the end justifies the means" is false. The purpose in view has nothing to do with the moral quality of untruthfulness. Scripture teaches that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8; compare 22:15). This means, of course, all liars who do not repent of their sin. The popular distinction between "white lies" and "black lies" is without foundation in the Bible. All untruthfulness is sinful because contrary to the character of God, who is Truth.

Question:

Is the practice of family worship commanded in the Bible, and if so, where?

Answer:

Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 is often regarded as a command to practice family worship: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." These verses, however, hardly constitute a definite command for the **formal** observance of family worship; rather, they require that parents instruct their children in the Word of God, and that God's people engage in conversation on divine truth both at home and

abroad. The practice of family worship is Scriptural, however, even though a specific command for it, in so many words, cannot be found in the Bible. The warrant for it is derived by inference from other truths of the Scriptures: (a) The family is a divine institution (Genesis 2:23,24) and as such is a moral person with a responsibility to God; (b) The Christian family is a basic unit in the administration of the Covenant of Grace (Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39; Ephesians 52:1 to 6:4; etc.); (c) Therefore Christian families should practice family worship to acknowledge their responsibility, as families, to God, and to express their thanks to God, as families, for the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and to seek his help, as families, in living up to their high calling and obligations under the Covenant of Grace.

Question:

Can the Jews be saved without believing on Jesus Christ as their Saviour?

Answer:

No. Neither the Jews, nor anyone else, can be saved in any other way than through the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. Acts 4:12 is as true today as when the apostle Peter uttered the words nineteen centuries ago: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Question:

In our Terms of Communion and Queries for Ordination we profess to accept the subordinate standards of the Church, including the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Testimony, Covenant, etc. Yet The Testimony has been amended from time to time. If we accept it before an amendment is adopted which modifies its meaning in any respect, how can we then also profess to accept it **after** this change?

Answer:

In our Terms of Communion we acknowledge that **the system of doctrine** contained in the subordinate standards is agreeable unto, and founded upon, the Scriptures. In the Queries for Ordination candidates

are called upon to state that they "believe in and accept **the system of doctrine**" set forth in the subordinate standards "as agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures". The phrase "the system of doctrine" cannot legitimately be understood to mean **every detail of doctrine**, or every individual proposition, of the subordinate standards. For if the phrase "the system of doctrine" is understood to mean "every detail of doctrine", this would amount to a claim that the subordinate standards are **infallible**, or wholly without error. Such a claim cannot be admitted, for the standards themselves say that "all synods and councils since the apostles' times . . . may err, and many have erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both." (Confession of Faith, XXXI. 4). "All synods and councils since the apostles' times" must include the Westminster Assembly and the courts that adopted the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony. Therefore the standards produced and adopted by these bodies cannot be regarded as **infallible**. If not infallible, then it is possible that they may contain some errors. Then the Church has no moral right to require of her members and officers an absolute acceptance of every detail of doctrine contained in them. As a matter of fact the phrase "the system of doctrine" has a definite meaning. The system of doctrine set forth in our Confession of Faith, Testimony, etc., is precisely **Calvinism**, or the **Reformed Faith**, in distinction from contrary systems of doctrine which are set forth in other creeds of the post-Reformation era. These contrary systems of doctrine are Lutheranism, Arminianism, Socinianism and Romanism. While our Testimony has been amended from time to time, it has never been changed in such a way as to alter **the system of doctrine** which it sets forth. That system of doctrine, in the case of all our subordinate standards, is unquestionably pure and undiluted Calvinism. To profess acceptance of the Testimony both before and after a change which does not alter the system of doctrine, is in no way dishonest or wrong. Once admit that the subordinate standards are not infallible, and we must hold that they may be amended from time to time as the Church gains clearer light on the truths of the Scriptures.



**BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE**

VOLUME 1

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1946

NUMBER 8

“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.4.

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.

Subscription \$1.50 per year postpaid anywhere.

J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

THE COVENANT BANNER

By GEORGE PAULIN

Blow softly, ye breezes, by mountain and moor,
O'er the graves of the Covenant men;
By the muirland and flood that were red with their blood,
Can ye waft the old watchwords again?
"For Scotland and Christ" the breezes of old
O'er the wilds of the Westland bore,
From the Lugar and Nith to the Lothian Frith,
And the German Ocean's shore.
And where'er they blew, a prayer was breathed,
And a holy Psalm was sung;
And hands were clasped and the banner grasped,
When the Covenant watchword rung.
O for the brave true hearts of old,
That bled when the banner perished!
O for the Faith that was strong in death—
The Faith that our fathers cherished!
The banner might fall, but the spirit lived,
And liveth for evermore;
And Scotland claims, as her noblest names,
The Covenant men of yore.

FROM "LAYS OF THE KIRK AND COVENANT"

By HARRIET S. MENTEATH

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.
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All its thorns in thy true sight,
Transfigured into beams of light!"

"Blessed whoso loveth Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee.
For he alone loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him who
cannot be lost."—Augustine.

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1946

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Sketches From Our History

THE CHURCH'S CONFLICT UNDER THE CAESARS

Roman Emperors With Dates of Their Reigns

Constantine, 323-337 A. D.

Julian, 361-363 A. D.

Constantius, 337-361 A. D.

Jovianus, 363-364 A. D.

Chapter 8

Julian the Apostate

Upon the death of the Emperor Constantine in the year 337 his empire was divided among his three sons. One of the brothers died in 340 and another in 350, leaving the third brother, Constantius, the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. While Constantine's sons had adopted a policy of trying to suppress heathen religion by force, this policy was not successful. In the eastern regions of the empire Christianity was far stronger than paganism, but in the western part paganism still possessed much vitality and there was still a great deal of opposition to the Christian religion. This spirit of opposition to the Christian faith finally came to a focal point of activity in the person of Julian, who was proclaimed emperor by the Roman army on the death of Constantius in the year 361.

Julian was a nephew of the emperor Constantine. Constantius apparently feared that Julian might try to seize power, so when the latter was only a lad of fourteen or fifteen years Constantius had him imprisoned in a fortress in Cappadocia, with a heavy guard, and under the care of Christian teachers. This situation naturally embittered Julian against the Christian faith. Probably he never did come to know the true meaning of Christianity. The compulsory religious training to which he was subjected only caused him to hate the name of Jesus Christ. But Julian was clever enough to conceal his real feelings and never betrayed his attitude toward Christianity in his words or deeds. He even

came to hold a minor office in the Church and attained a reputation for piety.

At the same time, however, Julian managed to meet with pagan religious teachers secretly. Finally Constantius permitted him to return to the capital of the Empire, Nicomedia, in order to pursue the study of philosophy and public speaking. Julian had to promise that he would not listen to the lectures of a man named Libanius who was at that time the most important pagan philosopher in Nicomedia. Having made this promise, he proceeded to read books which Libanius had written. Julian began to carry on an active correspondence with various philosophical leaders, and in the course of time he became a believer in the system of philosophy which was called "Neo-Platonism." Later at Athens, in Greece, at a secret meeting he formally gave up his Christian faith and became a convert to the pagan religion.

Soon after this a turn of events called Julian away from the study of philosophy to the more practical matters of life. Along the northern borders of the Roman Empire in Europe the Germanic tribes were exerting heavy pressure and something had to be done to protect the frontiers against invasion. Constantius gave Julian the rank of Caesar and sent him to fight the Franks and Alamanni in Europe, while Constantius himself tried to resist the Persians in the eastern part of the Empire. During this campaign Julian became extremely popular

with the rank and file of the Roman army. Realizing that Julian was gaining in popularity, Constantius sent orders for the best of the legions to be sent to the eastern regions to fight the Persians. Julian's troops answered this summons by proclaiming Julian as Emperor, although Julian himself did not assume the imperial title until he learned of the death of Constantius in 361. Once he knew that Constantius was dead, Julian threw off all pretense of being a Christian, and entered the city of Constantinople as a pagan emperor. After more than half a century of rule by Christian emperors, a professed pagan was again on the throne.

Julian now made it his policy to try to restore the pagan faith to its former prestige and honor. In Constantinople Julian issued a decree providing for the free exercise of all religions, but at the same time he declared that for himself he preferred the old pagan faith. Little by little the favorable standing of the Christian Church and its officers was reduced and the financial and moral support of the church went to the pagan religion and its temples rather than to Christianity.

Pagan emblems now took the place of the cross in the insignia of the Roman army. Many Christians who held offices in the government were removed. But all this opposition to Christianity really accomplished very little. Julian was trying to set the clock of history back, and he must have come to realize that the public opinion

of the Empire was not supporting his policy.

In 362 as Julian was making preparations in Asia Minor for a military campaign against the Persians, he was shocked to find the pagan temples everywhere neglected and their rites unattended. Although he reproved the population of the region for their "impiety", and gave orders for the temple of the Greek god Apollo to be restored magnificently, the people showed no enthusiasm for his program and there were even public demonstrations against his policy.

Julian's campaign against the Persians proved disappointing for he was unable to contact the Persian army in force. Finally the Roman forces had to retreat and during this retreat Julian was wounded by an arrow shot by an enemy soldier, and died within a few hours (363 A.D.).

There are various accounts of the exclamation uttered by Julian when he realized he was wounded. The common tradition is that he shouted "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean." According to another tradition he addressed the sun-god, saying "Sun, thou hast deceived me!" Julian's death marks the end of paganism's power in the Roman Empire. Upon his death the Roman soldiers raised the Christian Jovianus to the imperial throne.

Note: This completes our study of "The Church's Conflict under the Caesars". The editor hopes to present additional studies of the early Church at some future time.

THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

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

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF THE COVENANTERS

Chapter I

The Background Of The Covenanting Movement: An Outline Of The First Reformation In Scotland, 1560-1567

1. Antecedents of the Reformation.

The Church of Rome held control of the religious life of Scotland for a comparatively short period. Scotland early received Christianity in its Celtic, non-Roman form. It was not until the time of Queen Margaret, in the latter part of the eleventh century, that Celtic Christianity finally gave way to Roman Catholicism. From that time until

the middle of the sixteenth century Scotland was a land of dense spiritual darkness, a land of many priests but very few witnesses for Jesus Christ, a land of many Churches but very little gospel.

Soon after the dawn of the Reformation in Germany, the doctrines of Protestantism began to reach Scotland. Probably the first Protestant witness in Scotland was Patrick Hamilton, a youth of noble lineage who had visited Luther in Germany in 1526. Hamilton hastened to return to Scotland that he might proclaim the good tidings there. It was not long until the Catholic clergy became aware of Hamilton's activities and determined to take action against him. In this movement James Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, took the lead. Hamilton was condemned to death and burned at the stake on February 28, 1528, the first martyr

of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland. Before going to his death he gave his outer garments to his servant, saying "This stuff will not help me in the fire, and will profit thee. After this you can receive from me no more good, but the example of my death, which, I pray thee, keep in mind; for, albeit it be bitter to the flesh, and fearful in man's judgment, yet it is the entrance into eternal life, which none shall possess that denies Christ Jesus before this wicked generation." After Hamilton's death, the news of this cruel deed spread rapidly, and some one warned Beaton that if he intended to burn any more, he should do it in cellars, "for the reek of Mr. Patrick Hamilton hath infected as many as it blew upon."

In 1534 Beaton and his accomplices succeeded in obtaining the condemnation and execution by burning of three more Protestant witnesses, Norman Gourley, David Straiton and Henry Forest. In 1538 five Protestants were burned in one fire at Edinburgh, four of them being former Roman Catholic ecclesiastics. In the same year two Protestants, one of whom had been a friar, were burned at Glasgow. James Beaton persecuted the Protestants as long as he could, but he was soon called to give an account of his deeds, for he died in 1539. His nephew, David Beaton, had served the Pope well in negotiating a marriage between King James of Scotland and Mary of Guise, and the Pope rewarded him by making him a Cardinal. Upon the death of James Beaton in 1539, David Beaton was made Archbishop of St. Andrews.

In 1543 Cardinal Beaton procured the condemnation for heresy of five men and one woman, at Perth. The men were hanged and the woman drowned. After this others were persecuted and some put to death in various places in Scotland.

In 1546 another notable martyrdom, that of George Wishart, took place. Wishart had ventured to teach the Greek language in Scotland, which displeased the Bishop of Brechin. Wishart was called to answer for his deeds, but went to England, after which he was excommunicated and outlawed. He resided for a time at the University of Cambridge. In 1544 Wishart returned to Scotland and began to preach Protestant doctrines. Cardinal Beaton soon learned of this and instituted process against him. Wishart was accused of heresy listed under eighteen heads, all of which he answered with Scripture proofs, but in spite of this he was unanimously condemned by the Catholic clergy and sentenced to be executed by burning the following day. Cardinal Beaton sat in a window seat to observe

the sufferings of the martyr. In spite of these persecutions, perhaps even because of them, Protestantism continued to spread in Scotland and the day was hastening when Scotland would throw off the spiritual tyranny of the Church of Rome.

2. John Knox, the leader of the Reformation.

At the time of the martyrdom of George Wishart, John Knox had been attending Wishart and wearing a sword in his defense. Knox wished to accompany Wishart to his trial, but Wishart refused to permit him to do so, saying, "Go back to your pupils; one is sufficient for one sacrifice".

In the spring of 1547, a party of Protestant noblemen and gentlemen took the castle of St. Andrews and intrenched themselves in it as a protection from the power of the Catholic clergy. Early in April of that year, Knox entered the castle, influenced, no doubt, by sympathy toward those in the castle as well as by prudence which caused him to seek to escape the hostility of the hierarchy. Soon after Knox's arrival, those gathered there gave him a solemn call to be their minister. As Calvin when importuned by Farel to remain and help in the work at Geneva was reluctant to comply, so Knox was overwhelmed with the thought of the responsibility involved in such a call, yet he did not dare refuse, and so he entered upon his work as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was not long before Knox made a bold attack on the Church of Rome. Before this, much of the controversy between Catholicism and Protestantism had been about details such as forms and ceremonies. Knox went to the heart of the matter and boldly proclaimed that the Church of Rome was no true Church, but Antichrist. He would allow no appeal to any standard but the Word of God, and proposed nothing less than the entire reconstruction of the whole doctrinal and ecclesiastical system of Scotland on the basis of Scripture and of Scripture only.

The Catholic party obtained help from France and attacked the castle of St. Andrews by land and by sea, and forced its surrender on July 31, 1547. According to the terms of the surrender, the defenders of the castle were guaranteed their lives and liberty, but after the surrender of the castle, these terms were violated by the Catholics, and the prisoners, Knox among them, were sent to France and there compelled to serve as galley slaves. When Knox was finally released, he went to England, where he was offered the position of Bishop

of Rochester. This, however, he refused, and he went to the Continent, and for a time ministered to a Protestant Church at Frankfort; later he went to Geneva, and remained there until 1555 when he returned to Scotland.

After his return to Scotland, Knox again took up his work of reformation. He sought out members of the nobility known to be favorable to Protestantism and conferred with them. Soon the Catholic clergy attacked him, and he was summoned to appear before them at Edinburgh on May 15, 1556. When the day came, Knox appeared, but well supported by his numerous friends; the Catholic clergy were alarmed, and so no trial was held. Knox took advantage of the opportunity to preach the gospel publicly at Edinburgh. In July, 1556, he returned to Geneva. On May 2, 1559, Knox returned to Scotland for the last time. We may be sure that the Catholic clergy did not rejoice at his return. There is a tradition, which is probably not authentic, that a Catholic council which was about to try a number of Protestants dispersed on hearing the news of Knox's arrival in Scotland. On the 16th of June Knox preached at St. Andrews although he was aware of a plot to assassinate him there. To those who were fearful for his safety he said, "As for the fear of danger that may come to me, let no man be solicitous; for my life is in the custody of him whose glory I seek. I desire the hand and weapon of no man to defend me. I only crave audience; which, if it be denied here unto me at this time, I must seek further where I may have it." For four days Knox preached at St. Andrews against Popery, and so convincing were his words that the magistrates and people of the place determined to set up Protestant worship in the town, and at once removed the images and pictures from the Church, and destroyed the monasteries. The Archbishop of St. Andrews rushed to the Queen-regent with this news.

Everything that is known of Knox shows that he was both a fearless man and a hater of compromise. When the General Assembly convened in 1561, Maitland of Lethington objected to the meeting, arguing that it was illegal to hold such a meeting without the Queen's consent. Knox replied, "Take from us the liberty of assemblies, and take from us the gospel. If the liberty of the Church must depend upon her allowance or disallowance, we shall want not only assemblies, but the preaching of the gospel". These words spoken by Knox at that early date, show his strong opposition to Erastian control of the Church by the State. Much of the later history of the

Church of Scotland was a struggle to obtain and maintain the liberty claimed by Knox as an inherent right of the Church.

In 1563 Knox outspokenly denounced the idea that the Queen of Scotland should be permitted by the nobility to marry a Catholic. Knox was summoned to appear before the Queen in Council, and an argument took place between him and the Queen. Queen Mary tried threatening and also tears but Knox was unmoved by both, and stood his ground with great courage. At this time the nobility persuaded the Queen not to prosecute Knox. Later Knox was tried by a special court because of a letter which he had written and which was alleged to be treasonable; at the trial Knox defended himself ably. The principal charges were that he had illegally convoked the Queen's lieges and that he had charged the Queen with cruelty. After the hearing of the case, Knox was ordered to retire until the next day, while the tribunal voted on the matter. He was acquitted by a large majority, and this acquittal was a great victory for the cause of the Reformation in Scotland.

John Knox died on November 24th, 1572, and his funeral was held on the 26th. As the body was lowered into the grave, Morton, the Regent, looked into the open grave and said, "There lies he who never feared the face of man". Knox was a great man, a great patriot, and a great Christian.

3. The legal abolition of Roman Catholicism.

The first legal enactment looking toward the Reformation in Scotland took place in 1542, when the Scottish Parliament, on the recommendation of Robert, Lord Maxwell, enacted over the protest of the Catholic clergy, that "it is lawful for the lieges to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue". This act did not make it lawful to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue, in the sense of conferring a privilege which the State may confer or withhold; it simply recognized a right already existing, and thus made it impossible for the Catholic hierarchy to prosecute any person for simply reading a vernacular version of the Bible.

The Scottish Parliament met August 8 to 27, 1560 and took up the legal part of the work of Reformation in earnest. At the request of this Parliament, the Scots Confession of Faith was prepared by "the six Johns": Knox, Spottiswoode, Willock, Row, Douglas and Winram. This remarkable document was drawn up in four days, while the Parliament was in session, and contains a preface, twenty-five articles, and a con-

clusion. It is a good statement of Reformed doctrine, though of course not as complete and precise as the later Reformed confessions. The Confession was ratified by Parliament, 1560, and continued to be the recognized doctrinal standard of the Church of Scotland for more than eighty years, until the Westminster Confession of Faith was adopted in 1647.

The same Parliament on August 24th adopted an "Act for abolishing the Pope and his usurped authority in Scotland" and an "Act against the Mass and the Sayers and Hearers Thereof", and also an act repealing all former Acts of Parliament contrary to the Word of God, that is, all former pro-Catholic and anti-Protestant legislation. This body of legislation was then sent to France for the approval of the King and Queen; this, however, was refused. The Protestants in Scotland held the acts to be valid without the royal consent. This legislation abolished Roman Catholicism in Scotland and cleared the way for the Reformation.

The next important legislation affecting the Reformation was enacted in 1567. On April 19th Parliament passed an act securing to Protestant subjects immunity from civil injury. On December 15th, Parliament ratified all the acts which had been passed in 1560 against Catholicism and in favor of the Reformation. Now legislation was enacted providing that in time to come no prince should be admitted to authority in Scotland without taking an oath to maintain the Protestant religion, and that all offices except those that were hereditary or were held for life, could be held by Protestants only. The Reformation thus affected not only the Church but the State as well. It was purposed not only that the Church of Scotland should be a Reformed Church, but that the nation should be a Reformed nation.

4. The Character of the Reformed Church of Scotland, 1560—1567.

The first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was constituted at Edinburgh, December 20, 1560. The Assembly consisted of forty-two members, of whom only six were ministers. At that time there were but twelve Protestant ministers in all Scotland. The Assembly met by its own inherent authority, based on Scripture, and without any warrant or permission from the civil magistrate. During the following twenty years no less than forty Assemblies met without the presence of a commissioner appointed to represent the sovereign.

An important act of the First General

Assembly was the adoption of the First Book of Discipline. This document was prepared by "the six Johns" who had prepared the Scots Confession of Faith for the Parliament. The First Book of Discipline was approved in 1561 by a meeting of nobles and burgesses, but it never received legal sanction from the civil magistrate. However, it was regarded as an accepted standard of the Church.

The Reformation spread rapidly throughout Scotland, and though in 1560 there were but twelve ministers in the kingdom, in 1567 there were 252 ministers, as well as 467 readers and 154 exhorters. The seven years from 1560 to 1567 had been a period of struggle for the Protestant party in the State and the Reformed Church, against a government determined to undermine the Church by craft. During this period the Church had a double task—to provide for the evangelization and spiritual nurture of the nation, and to defend itself against the plots and attacks of Rome. By 1567 the Church of Scotland had the situation well in hand, and its General Assembly possessed great prestige in the kingdom.

5. The Relation between Church and State, 1560-1567.

On December 25th, 1567, the General Assembly met and appointed commissioners to meet with six members of Parliament for the determination of Church matters and the jurisdiction of the Church. For seven years the Church of Scotland had been independent of the State, and now it became "established" in a certain sense. The Church of Scotland did not derive its existence from any act of Parliament, but was recognized by the Parliament as possessing and exercising inherent and pre-existent powers and jurisdiction. The authority of the Church was derived, not from Parliament or the civil magistrate, but from Christ, the Head and King of the Church. The recognition of the Church by the State had the effect of ratifying and confirming the authority of the Church, and of protecting the Church from the assaults of its enemies. This might be compared to the diplomatic recognition which one nation extends to another; such recognition does not create or originate the authority of the state that is recognized; it merely takes cognizance of a fact and gives formal and public recognition to that fact. Unlike the Church of England, the Church of Scotland was not a creature of the State, but a spiritual authority co-ordinate with the State and sovereign in its own sphere. During the first seven years of its existence, the Church of Scotland exercised supreme

administrative and judicial powers, erected Synods, gave existence to presbyteries and sessions, and sanctioned the office of ruling elder, all by virtue of its own inherent authority derived not from the civil magistrate but from Christ alone.

In 1567 Parliament ordained that the Church had the sole power of examination and admission of ministers, although the right of presentation of lay patronages was

reserved to the ancient patrons. Commissioners were appointed by Parliament to determine more exactly what causes came within the sphere of the judgment of the Assemblies of the Church. The Church, while recognized by the State, and established as the only legally recognized Church in Scotland, exhibited a spirit of freedom and self-determination quite different from the attitude of the Protestant Churches in those countries of Europe where Erastian establishments prevailed.

The River Of Salvation

Ezekiel 47:1-12

Ezekiel and His Visions

Ezekiel was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. He lived about 600 years before Christ. He was born and grew up while Jeremiah was active as a prophet. His home was near Jerusalem, and he was a member of a priestly family. Eight years after Daniel was carried away captive,

Ezekiel was carried away from Judah to Babylonia with king Jehoiachin. He began to prophesy in Babylon at the age of thirty years. Seven years after this, when Ezekiel was 37 years old, the Temple of God at Jerusalem was destroyed by king Nebuchadnezzar.

Divisions of the Book of Ezekiel

Chapters 1-24. Prophecies before the capture of Jerusalem, foretelling its destruction on account of its sins.

Chapters 25-32. Prophecies of divine judgment against the surrounding heathen nations—Ammon, Moab, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt.

Chapters 33-48. Prophecies delivered after Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, foretelling the restoration of Israel, and chiefly fulfilled in the gospel

of Christ. These last chapters are symbolic in character, and more or less closely related to the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. The great theme of this last section of Ezekiel is **the spiritually reborn Zion, that is, the Church.**

We shall now study the first twelve verses of chapter 47 of Ezekiel under the theme "The River of Salvation." This river which Ezekiel saw in his vision symbolizes, in brief, the abundant salvation which God has provided for his people in Jesus Christ.

I. The Source of the River of Salvation. Verses 1, 2

"The door of the house" means the door of the temple. As the literal temple in Jerusalem had already been destroyed, this verse refers to a temple seen in a vision by Ezekiel. The temple faces the east, and the waters come forth from beneath the temple, and, we read, at the south side of the altar.

This, then, is no ordinary river. Its source is not from natural springs fed by ordinary rainfall. It is a miracle river, a supernatural river. It originates and flows from beneath a building, the temple, and from there it flows on in an ever-widening stream until it reaches distant places, even the shores of the Dead Sea many miles away. The river is described as having a

rapid growth from a small stream to a mighty flood of water, and this not by tributary streams joining its channel, but by its own inherent expansion or growth—certainly a miracle river, for no such river is known to geography.

The river flows from the **door** of the house. Christ is the door. Christ is also the temple. So the meaning of this is that the saving river flows from Christ. Not from human reason, human efforts, human works, but from Christ and from Christ alone. But not only is the temple mentioned, but also the **altar**. The altar is that on which the sacrifices were offered. It represents the shedding of blood for the remission of sin. When the altar is mentioned, we rightly

understand this to mean symbolically **the cross of Christ**.

It is from the altar that saving power flows out to the peoples of the world. It is from the cross of Jesus Christ, from his atonement, from his shed blood, from his sufferings and death as our Substitute, that salvation proceeds. Without the atonement there is no gospel; without the cross there is no Christianity.

Now the tendency today is to regard the life of Jesus as much more important than his death. But in truth it is the death of Jesus that is of supreme importance. For the death of Jesus Christ was the transaction for which he came into this world in the first place. "For this cause came I unto this hour." He was born in Bethlehem, not so much in order that he might live, as in order that he might suffer and die. Without the altar there would be no temple, and without the altar there would be no river of salvation. Everything that follows in this vision depends on the altar which is mentioned in the first verse.

Now we should consider seriously, what does the altar mean to us? What does the cross of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, mean to you and me? The answer to this question will determine what our religion is—whether it is Christianity or moralism.

II. The Depth of the River of Salvation. Verses 3-5

One thousand cubits equals about 1500 feet or 500 yards, roughly a quarter of a mile. At this distance from the temple, the waters were ankle-deep. After another quarter mile, the waters were waist-deep. And after still another quarter mile, the waters were too deep for wading, "a river that could not be passed over, waters to swim in". Here we see the varying depths of the river. In this we may see symbolized the **simplicity** and at the same time the **profundity** of the gospel. It is at once the simplest of all religious systems, and yet the most profound and mysterious. It is both ankle-deep, and also so deep that it cannot be crossed, and a person must swim in it.

The gospel way of salvation is so simple that a little child can grasp its essential meaning, easily wading in the waters and not overwhelmed by things beyond his depth; and yet it is so profound that the wisest and most learned men must stand in wonder and amazement at the mysteries of God that are revealed in the gospel.

When we first become Christians, we

We have today the true river of salvation in the world, and also any number of counterfeit and rival rivers. The true river of salvation originates at the altar. It flows from the cross of Calvary. But there are false rivers, imitation rivers, that flow from Mount Sinai: the gospel of keeping the Ten Commandments; that flow from Athens: the gospel of education, civilization and culture; that flow from ancient Rome: the gospel of legislation and organization. All of these spurious rivers will fail and run dry at the critical moment. None of them can be depended on for the deepest needs and crises of life.

But there is the true river of salvation that flows from Calvary. It is not the gospel of good works, nor the gospel of education, nor the gospel of organization, but the gospel of **salvation**, the river of divine grace through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

It is tremendously important that we keep our eyes open and our minds functioning actively, so that we will not be deceived into confusing the false rivers with the true river. We need to discern and discriminate, for the false rivers are most wonderfully camouflaged and decorated to make them resemble the true river. But their **source** is different, and in the end it will appear that their effect is utterly different, too.

find the waters only ankle-deep. We know, only the more simple truths of Christianity, such as our own sin and Christ's power to save sinners. Then as we go on in Christian experience we also increase both in knowledge and in Christian character, and soon we find the waters knee-deep; we find that there is much more in the Christian religion than at first appeared; there are more truths on beyond.

As time passes, we continue to make progress, and by and by we find the waters waist-deep. There are truths that are hard to understand. The Word of God presents not only milk for babes, but also solid food for mature Christians. We learn to use the solid food. We pass on from the simple gospel story and take up some of the deeper doctrinal lessons of the Epistles of Paul and the other New Testament writers. We learn to wade through the waist-deep waters.

Now there are always some Christians who always prefer to wade in the ankle-deep water and never want to go beyond that. Any thing beyond ankle-depth they immediately pronounce "too deep." So be-

ing terribly afraid of water that is even knee-deep, they remain spiritual infants all their days. They are Christians, to be sure. But such people are really cases of arrested spiritual development. They never go on to the deeper parts of the river. They never learn anything new from the Word of God. Their little stock of religious ideas is limited to the few simple truths that they knew when they first came to be believers in Christ. They tend to think of the Christian religion as a matter of inspiration rather than of information. Someone has aptly remarked that inspiration without information is like a jack-o-lantern—a little light in an empty head. What a pity it is that so many Christians are content, even determined, to remain in the ankle-deep waters all their life!

The river finally becomes so deep that no person can longer wade through it; it has

III. The Saving Power of the River of Salvation. Verses 6-12

We are informed here that this miracle river from the altar reaches the Dead Sea and transforms it into a region of the most marvelous fertility and beauty. Now what is the Dead Sea? It is the lake at the end of the Jordan River. It is famous especially for two things. First, it is the lowest depression on the land surface of the globe, the surface of its waters being 1292 feet below sea level. Then, the Dead Sea is noted for its extremely large content of salt. The water of the ocean contains about six pounds of salt to 100 pounds of water. But the Dead Sea contains 20 pounds of salt to 100 pounds of water, and in some places as much as 28 pounds of salt to 100 pounds of water.

It is about 47 miles long, from north to south, and averages a little less than ten miles wide. The deepest water is about 1300 feet deep. The Dead Sea is surrounded by steep cliffs, which at some points rise to the height of 1950 feet above the water. The Dead Sea is rightly called "dead" for its waters are so salty that nothing can live in them. A few fish have been found at the southern tip of the Dead Sea, however.

Now in this prophecy the Dead Sea symbolizes the sinful and lost condition of the human race. Humanity is dead in trespasses and sins, in an abnormal condition, sinful, depraved, corrupted, guilty, alienated from God, enslaved to evil, spiritually dead, barren, desolate, without hope of life in itself—and on the brink of eternal death, the second death.

Now the river of salvation flows from

become waters to swim in. Thus the Christian religion finally brings us to the brink of unfathomable mysteries. Think, for example, of the mystery of a self-existing, infinite, eternal, unchangeable God; the mystery of the Trinity; the mystery of the two natures and one Person of Christ; the mystery of God's foreordination and of his providential government of the world and all that comes to pass—these are but a few of the unfathomable mysteries that are presented in the Scriptures.

Waters to swim in. We cannot measure them. But we can swim in them. That many Christians are reluctant to do so is a great pity. That many prefer rather to remain spiritually in the kindergarten stage is a great calamity. Truly the gospel is simple enough for a child, and too profound for all the learned men in the world together to comprehend.

the altar and reaches the shores of the Dead Sea. En-ge-di is one of the places mentioned, on the west bank of the Dead Sea, one of the places where David hid away from King Saul. Humanity is indeed in a hopeless condition. But not hopeless to the grace of God, for with God all things are possible. When the river of God's salvation flows, life begins to take the place of death. Salvation takes the place of sin and doom. The barren dead sea of humanity is redeemed, changed, converted, released, saved.

From verse 7 we learn of many trees on the bank of the river, and we think of the words of the first Psalm: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." We think of the saved Christian, the man who has been justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ. All along the bank of the river are such people, thriving and filled with spiritual life and power, not because of themselves, but because they are planted beside the river of salvation and draw water from the river. These are people who have been regenerated, born again, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, "trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified".

"The waters shall be healed . . . and everything shall live where the river cometh" (verses 8,9). Here we see the healing power of the river. There is no sin so great that grace cannot cure it. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". Now what is meant by "healing" the waters of the Dead Sea? It means **humanity reconciled to God**. It was separation from God

that was the trouble in the first place, sin against God. What sinners need most of all is to be restored to the favor of God. This the river of salvation does.

We read here of "a very great multitude of fish" . . . "as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many". Great multitudes shall be converted to Christ. This came to pass on the day of Pentecost when at Peter's preaching of the gospel three thousand were added to the Church. And it has been going on ever since, and will continue until the second coming of Christ, until there shall be a great multitude, whom no man can number, of every people, and tribe, and kindred, and tongue, and nation, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and stand before the throne of God in eternal life and glory.

Verse 12 presents the inexhaustable nature of the river: "whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed". There is always enough grace for the need of every one of God's children, and there is always just as much left as there was before, for the supplies that feed the river are infinite. This miracle river streams forth from the resources of the infinite God himself. All through our life in this world we shall find the products of the river sufficient for our needs, and always there will be more beyond.

"The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (verse 12).

The Infallible Bible, our Authority for Faith and Life

"The Scripture cannot be broken"
John 10:35

If we are to be religious at all, we must have some authority in religion. Among those who claim to be Christians, there have been three different answers to the question, "What is our authority in religion?"

One answer is, "The voice of the Church is our authority for faith and life". This is the answer given by Roman Catholics, and it is coming to be the answer given by many Protestants.

Another answer is, "The voice that speaks inside of us is our authority for faith and life." This answer takes various forms—conscience, the "inner light", the human reason, the "Christian consciousness"—

Here are supplies for two kinds of spiritual needs—food and medicine. Ordinarily we need food for our bodies much more than we need medicine. But on the other hand there are times when we need medicine much more than food, and cannot take food at all, but must have medicine. Food is what supplies normal sustenance and growth. Medicine is what takes care of the emergencies and crises of our bodily life. In the spiritual life it is so, too. The river of salvation will provide spiritual nourishment for the ordinary, normal, day-to-day progress and spiritual growth of the Christian. But there are also times of crisis in the Christian life; there are times of special needs and special difficulties and special problems and perils. Those are the times when we need spiritual medicine. But the river of salvation supplies that, too.

In conclusion, we should note the exception to the healing effect of the river of salvation. Not all will be saved, even by this miracle river. Some places reached by the river will remain barren and lifeless; "they shall be given to salt". What a tragedy that multitudes show no interest in the river of salvation, and let it pass them by. The result? They are given to salt. They shall perish. They are lost. For them there remains no hope. For God has no other way of salvation, just as he has no other Son except Jesus. Which class are we in? Does the river of salvation flow by us unwanted and unused?

but they all make the authority for faith and life something **inside** of us, not something **outside** of us.

The third answer is, "The Bible is our authority for faith and life". This is and always has been the answer of orthodox Christianity, from its beginning to the present day. Not the voice of the Church, not reason or conscience, but the Bible, the written Word of God, is the authority for faith and life. Thus our authority is objective and external; it is something wholly outside of us, something entirely independent of our ideas, reactions or experiences; something to which we are to submit, regardless of our own ideas and preferences and feelings, simply and solely because it is the Word of God.

To Be Completely Trustworthy the Bible Must Be Infallible

By "infallible" we mean that the Bible is wholly true, and **cannot** contain any

errors or mistakes. Another term often used is **inerrant**, which means that the

Bible **does not** contain any errors or mistakes. Our Church, along with all other truly orthodox Protestant churches, has always held, and holds today, that the Bible is both inerrant and infallible, that is, that there neither are nor can be any errors in the Bible.

This statement should not be misunderstood. There are some things that it does not at all imply. To say that there can be no errors in the Bible does not mean that there may not be some printer's mistakes in the Bible you may be holding in your hands. Almost every printed Bible contains a few such typographical or printer's errors. The men who set the type for printing the Bible are only men; they are careful workers, but once in a while they make a mistake. Such mistakes can easily be detected and corrected, of course, by comparison with another Bible or several other Bibles.

Nor do we mean, when we say that the Bible is infallible, that there have not been any mistakes in the work of translation from the Hebrew and Greek into English. There never has been and there never will be a translation that is 100% accurate in giving the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek in English or any other language. After all, the translators are only men, and none of them have been inspired in their work of translation. It is unavoidable that even the most scholarly and careful translators make some mistakes, in spite of themselves; very slight ones, no doubt, but still, some mistakes in translation.

Mistakes in translation can be corrected, of course, and in the process of time most of them are corrected, by a more accurate and careful translation from the original languages. But we will never have a translation in English or any other modern language that is totally true to the Hebrew and Greek. Inevitably in the process of translation something is lost. This is why our Church insists that candidates for the office of the gospel ministry must study both Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Scriptures. They must be able to have a first-hand knowledge of the actual text of the Bible. Reading the Bible in English only cannot give that first-hand knowledge.

Nor do we mean, when we say that the Bible is infallible, that there have not been any mistakes made in copying the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts through the centuries. For hundreds of years, until the art of printing was invented about 500 years ago, the manuscripts of the Bible were

copied by hand. This work was done by the Jewish scribes and the Catholic monks of the Middle Ages. Marvelously careful and accurate these patient workers were, and amazingly accurate has been the product of their labors. Amazingly accurate, but for **infallibly** accurate. In the wearisome process of copying by hand, it was inevitable that some errors should creep into some manuscripts of the Scriptures.

But these errors can be detected and corrected by a careful comparison of different manuscripts. Where one manuscript has an error, other manuscripts will have the true text. By comparison and study according to sound principles, the genuine text can be ascertained. One of the greatest New Testament scholars has estimated that by such methods the authentic text of the Greek New Testament has been determined in 999/1000 of the contents of the New Testament. There remains, in other words, only 1/10 of 1% of the words about which there is the slightest question as to whether we have the genuine text or not. And in **no** case do the words which are involved in this infinitesimal remaining fraction affect even a single doctrine of the Christian faith. We have an equally authentic text of the Old Testament.

When we affirm that the Bible is infallible, then, we do not mean that it is wholly free from printers' errors, nor do we mean that it is wholly free from translators' errors, nor do we mean that it is wholly free from copyists' errors. We are speaking only about **the genuine text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures**. And of that genuine text we assert that it is infallible, that it is impossible for it to contain errors of any kind whatever. By this we mean that no errors of any kind have ever been found in it and that none ever will or can be found in it.

This is the belief of orthodox Christianity. It is a very important belief, too. I do not mean to assert that Christianity **could not exist at all** without an infallible Bible, nor that a person who denies the infallibility of the Bible cannot be a Christian. Such statements would be extreme and unwarrantable. Certainly it is conceivable that God could have left the knowledge of the way of salvation to be transmitted through the ages by ordinary uninspired human historical records. Such a method would involve great dangers; the knowledge of the way of salvation would be in danger of being diluted and corrupted with a mixture of human error. But it would not be absolutely impossible for the Christian religion to exist and be propagated without

an infallible Bible, if God had planned matters that way. But as a matter of fact God did not plan matters that way. He has given us an inspired Bible to be our authority for faith and life, and only if that Bible is truly infallible can it be completely trustworthy.

You may ask why this is so. Well, suppose that the Bible is **not** infallible. Suppose that it may contain some errors. Then when you or I go to the Bible for information about what we are to believe and how we ought to live, we will have to say to ourselves, "I must be careful. This book, the Bible, is not entirely reliable. Like other human books, it may, and very likely does, contain some things that are not true. I must examine its statements very carefully to decide whether they are true or not. I must decide for myself which are true and which are false, which are to be accepted as my authority for faith and life and which are to be rejected as errors."

Now if we take such an attitude, what have we done to the Bible? We have reduced it to the level of ordinary human history books. No longer can we regard it as necessarily completely trustworthy because it is the Word of God. We have decided that we must sit in judgment on the contents of the Bible, instead of accepting the Bible as a unit and subjecting our own ideas to its authority. Inevitably we begin to pick and choose in the Bible, ac-

cepting one thing and rejecting another, not on the authority of the Bible, but according to our own judgment of what is plausible, probable or acceptable.

Not only is this logically the result, but it actually happens that way. Those who have given up belief in the infallibility of the Bible often tend to give up various other doctrines of the Christian faith as well. It is not unknown for such people to reject some of the recorded sayings of our Lord with the remark, "I just don't feel that Jesus would have said a thing like that", or "Jesus wouldn't have said that because it is contrary to his spirit". Thus, in many cases at least, a person's own idea of Jesus prevails over the idea of Jesus set forth in the Bible.

When you go to the Bible for information, for comfort, or for hope, or for instruction, you want an authoritative message. You want something fully dependable, something with the authority of God back of it. You want the absolute assurance of a "Thus saith the Lord!" instead of an assortment of truth and possible errors to pick and choose from. A Bible that is not infallible will not give you very much comfort when death draws near. A Bible that is not infallible will not bring very much solace to your soul when sorrow overwhelms your spirit. In the crises of life you want a rock, not a bundle of straw, to cling to. You want an infallible Bible, not a Bible that contains a mixture of truth and error.

To Be Infallible, the Bible Must Be Verbally Inspired

There is only one way that the Bible can be really infallible, and that is for its actual words to be the words of God. Thought is expressed in words, and without words, thought cannot be accurately expressed.

The Bible itself teaches not only that it is an inspired book, but that it is a **verbally** inspired book. That is, not only are the general ideas of the Bible from God, but also the actual words of the Bible are from God and are themselves the real word of God.

I shall now present some evidence—only a small portion out of a great deal that exists—to show that the Bible represents itself as a verbally inspired book, that it regards its actual words as infallible and the real word of God.

In Matthew 22:29-32 we find Jesus answering the Sadducees, who brought him an argument intended to prove that there is no resurrection of the dead. Jesus said to

them first, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures . . .". Then he said, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Here the whole argument used by Jesus turns on the exact words used: "I **am** the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". Even after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead, God was still their God and could still say, as he did to Moses, "I **am** the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". Since God was still their God, they could not remain dead, but must surely rise again. Here in this wonderful argument Jesus plainly regards the very words of Scripture as the inspired word of God.

In Galatians 3:16 the apostle Paul writes: "Now to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He saith not,

And to **seeds**, as of many; but as of one, And to thy **seed**, which is Christ". Here the apostle Paul makes his argument turn on the distinction between the singular and the plural of a word in the Hebrew Old Testament. The meaning of the Old Testament text, according to Paul, depends on whether the Hebrew text said "seed" or "seeds". Paul explains that it was intended to be singular because it referred not to all of Abraham's descendants, but to one particular person descended from Abraham, namely Jesus Christ. Now if the apostle Paul did not regard the text and the very words and letters of the Old Testament as inspired, he could not place all this emphasis on the difference of two or three letters that is involved in the distinction between the singular and the plural forms of a Hebrew word. We may truly say that Paul regarded every individual word of the Scriptures as divinely and infallibly inspired; not merely the ideas, but the actual written words.

Again, we find Jesus saying to the Jews, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). In fact Jesus lays this down as an axiom or unquestionable truth or principle, which both they and he alike accepted without question: "The Scripture cannot be broken". The word "Scripture", of course, means **that which is written**. It refers, not to the general ideas, but to the written words as they stand in ink on paper. Jesus says that the Scripture cannot be broken. Why not? Because, in its written form, it is the inspired word of God, and therefore infallible.

But if the actual words of the Bible are not inspired, then of course the Scripture **can** be broken. For if the actual words are not inspired, then there can and must be some admixture of chaff with the wheat, some error along with the truth of God which the Scripture contains.

To be infallible, the Bible must be inspired in its very words. Take away the words, and you have only blank paper left. Change the words, and you change the ideas which they convey. Deny the infallibility of the words, and you nullify the reliability of the Scriptures. We have either a verbally inspired Bible, or else we have a fallible Bible, a Bible that contains mistakes, a Bible that we cannot really trust, a Bible that is not in any true sense the real Word of God.

We should guard against some misunderstandings of this idea of verbal inspiration, however. We do not mean to affirm that God necessarily dictated the

words of the Bible, and the sacred writers only wrote them down. It is not as if the sacred penmen, Moses, Matthew, Paul and so forth, were a mere typewriter keyboard on which the Spirit of God operated to produce the Bible. Such a view of the matter is often charged against orthodox Christians, with a good deal of ridicule and reproach, but no Christian who has an intelligent understanding of the matter will hold such a view as that.

The human writers of the different books all used their human powers and personality and education in writing what they wrote. This is quite obvious from the difference in literary style and language in the different books of the Bible. The Book of Judges is very different in style from the Book of Job, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is very different in style from the Gospel of Mark. The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the various writers, did not suppress their personality. Their human traits and personality are easily discernible in their various writings.

Nor do we mean that everything in the Bible was revealed directly by God. The writers used ordinary sources of information as they worked. For example, Luke in the opening verses of his Gospel tells us that he had obtained his knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ by consulting persons who had been eye-witnesses of the events. He used the testimony of eye-witnesses. Yet we believe that when he wrote his Gospel, he was infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit so that the product of his writing was not only the word of Luke, but also really the Word of God—every word and letter being of God as well as of man, and the whole free from errors of whatever kind.

Nor do we mean that the Bible writers were free from sin and error in their own personal lives. Paul had to reprove Peter to his face at Antioch because Peter was involved in a serious error of faith and practice. But in Peter's **writings**, that is, his two Epistles in the New Testament, there are no errors, for these are inspired of God. Inspiration concerns **the writing of the books of the Bible**, not all the facts of the lives of the writers.

When we affirm that the Bible is "verbally inspired", this implies nothing concerning the **manner** of inspiration, the **way** in which the Spirit of God worked. Of that we know very little. In fact, for the most part, it is a deep mystery. But the term "verbal inspiration" refers to **the finished product**. The books as written and

completed, are the work of God as well as the work of men. God the Holy Spirit is their true Author, back of and in and

through all the human authors, and therefore the Scriptures are infallible in their actual words.

How the Infallibility of the Bible is Denied Today

This doctrine of the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible is very much the storm center of controversy today, and those old-fashioned Christians who hold it are made the butt of a good deal of scoffing and ridicule. Their belief is misrepresented and then held up to ridicule, and they are accused of believing things that they do not actually believe. For example, when someone claims to believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, some of these modern geniuses are likely to say: "Indeed! So you actually believe that God dictated every word of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and the writers just wrote the words down!" It is very easy to hold up a belief to ridicule, especially by presenting an absurd caricature of it, but that sort of thing does not affect the real question at issue.

How, then, is the infallibility of the Bible being denied today?

First of all, it is being denied by those who say that **only part** of the Bible is infallibly inspired. This is an attempt to confine inspiration and infallibility to matters of religion and morals. It seeks to leave out questions of history, science, etc. Of course it does not stop with that but goes on until hardly any of the Bible is held to be infallibly inspired. And of course every person must decide for himself which part is infallibly inspired and which is not, and the net result is that the trustworthiness of the Bible as our authority for faith and life is destroyed.

In the second place, there is a denial that **any** of the Bible is **wholly** inspired and infallible. I have already referred to one form of this view, the notion that the ideas are inspired but the words are not, the ideas are of God but the words are merely of men. This also, of course, yields a fallible Bible, an unreliable book, not an authority for faith and life which is **completely** trustworthy.

The newest and by far the most subtle form of denial of the infallibility of the Bible is called **Barthianism**. It is also known as the "Theology of Crisis" or the "Dialectical Theology". Barthianism, while it professes to believe in the "verbal inspiration" of the Bible, yet teaches that **the Bible and the Word of God** are not exactly the same thing, that the written words of the Bible **contain** the Word of God but they are not actually the Word of God. This theory holds that every verse in the Bible contains a Word of God, but no verse of the Bible, in its actual written form, really is **the** Word of God. While using the term "verbal inspiration", this theory nevertheless destroys the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and gives us a Bible whose very words are something less than the actual Word of God.

These various forms of denial of the infallibility of the Bible may appear very mild, innocent and harmless at first sight. They do not appear to be anything very dangerous. But we should be on our guard. To trifle with any of them is a step away from the Bible as our infallible authority for faith and life. If the actual words of the Bible are not really the Word of God, then the Bible is not verbally inspired in the true meaning of that term. If not verbally inspired, then the Bible cannot be infallible; and if not infallible, then the Bible cannot be completely trustworthy as our sole and real authority for faith and life. Of course there are Christian people who doubt or deny the infallibility of the Bible who have not followed this chain of logic through to its conclusion, and who do not realize whither the trail they have embarked on really leads. But that logical conclusion will inevitably be reached once the verbal inspiration of the Bible is rejected. In the end the unique character of the Bible as our completely trustworthy authority for faith and life will have to be given up.

Rest for the Weary and Heavy Laden

Matthew 11:27-30

In verse 25 of this chapter our Saviour gives thanks to the Father that certain things have been concealed from "the wise and prudent" and revealed to "babes".

These are God's arrangements for the salvation of men, saving the humble and penitent, and condemning the proud and self-righteous sinners. The way of salva-

tion is concealed from the worldly-wise, because they are not willing to become as little children; they want to face religious questions with their intellect alone, whereas such matters require spiritual discernment. Following this prayer Jesus makes a state-

ment, which we find in verse 27. And these words, which are as simple as they are profound, tell us who it is that is issuing this invitation to the weary and heavy laden to come and receive rest.

Who Issues This Invitation? Verse 27

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father”. This calls to mind the words of Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”. Here, then, is an invitation issued by the King of kings and Lord of lords, the supreme Ruler of all creation.

“No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son . . .”. This is the **infinite** Christ, the Christ who possesses a unique reciprocal knowledge of God the Father, the Christ who is truly God—a shoreless ocean, of whom no human being, but only God the Father, has ever seen the other side.

“And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”. Christ is the great Revealer of the Father. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (revealed) him” (John 1:18). Christ can

reveal the Father because he is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:2).

That Christ is altogether unique is shown also by the nature of the invitation, “Come unto me!” Not just “Come”, but “Come **unto me**”. No other religious teacher or founder of any of the world’s religions ever spoke like that. In fact no mere man would have any right to speak in that way. Jesus says “Come unto me”—not just “accept my advice”, or “imitate my example”, or “follow my way of life”, but “**Come unto me**”. Here we see emphasized not just the “principles” of Christ, or the “ideals” of Christ, or the “spiritual values” of Christ, but **Christ himself, the person of Christ**. “Come—unto me!” To issue such an invitation was either the rankest egotism, or else Christ is truly God, the Lord of all. Either God, or not good; either God, or not worthy of our faith and obedience.

Who are the Persons Invited? Verse 28

The persons invited are all who labor and are heavy laden. The labors and the burdens of life are both great and many. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22). But here in Matthew chapter 11 the burden spoken of by our Lord is not primarily a physical burden but a **spiritual** one, as shown by the kind of relief promised in verse 29, “ye shall find rest **unto your souls**”—a spiritual rest. Christ promises relief, therefore, from spiritual burdens.

The burden spoken of here is certainly **the burden of sin**. More specifically, it is the burden of **the guilt** of our sins, the weight and burden of our guilt before God. And if the burden is sin, the **labor** is our efforts to cope with the burden, our efforts to bear the burden with our own strength, our futile human attempts to get rid of the burden by striving, by our own efforts. In a word, our endeavors to attain peace with God by legal efforts and obedience to the moral law.

A story is told of an aged Jew who lay on his death bed. Calling for someone to bring the Book of the Law, he said, “Bring it, that I may see if there is any command-

ment that I have not kept all my life long”. To attempt to achieve peace with God and eternal life by such a method is to labor at the impossible.

All have this burden, unless they have been released from it by Jesus Christ. All have the burden, but not all realize it, not all are conscious of it. Those who are aware of the burden, whose conscience has been aroused and awakened, will realize themselves to be **heavy laden**, and so will struggle and labor for relief.

Note that the burden is a heavy one. It is not a light burden as represented by the Pollyanna theology of modern Liberalism. To those whose consciences have been aroused by the Holy Spirit, to talk of sin as “a light burden” is a hollow mockery. Yet that is what Liberalism does when it represents sin as an evil, but not a great enough evil to alienate man from God. No, sin is a heavy burden. Sinners are heavy laden. Christ’s invitation is addressed to those who are consciously sinful and needy, who have sought relief by their own human efforts, but in vain; who have sought relief, but have not found it; who have become weary

in their efforts, their helpless efforts, to cope with the burden of sin.

The burden represents sin. But what is sin? Let us recall the incident of the paralytic let down through the roof to the place where Jesus was. He needed bodily healing badly, but he needed one thing even more, healing of the soul. He needed forgiveness most of all. So our Saviour said to him first, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee".

Sin is the worst of all evils, and forgiveness is the greatest of all our needs.

What is Promised to those who Accept the Invitation.

Verses 28, 29

"I will give you rest". In the Greek it is literally, "I will rest you", or "I will put you at rest". Now **spiritual rest** is the first thing needful before we can live a Christian life, or please God, or serve in God's kingdom, or do anything right in the religious sense. First we must be reconciled to God, we must have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as a state of war exists between ourselves and God, we can do nothing that will please God and we can receive no spiritual blessings from God. The necessary primary foundation is peace between God and us. Christ provides this. He promises it here: "I will give you rest". We must get that first. All else will come with it and after it, in the proper time and sequence. But first we must get rest unto our souls, peace with God.

We come to Christ in repentance and faith, and receive rest unto our souls instantly, peace with God in a moment of time. But that is certainly not the end of the matter. Rather, it is only the beginning, only the first step of our Christian life. After it comes a life-long growth in Christian experience and knowledge. So Jesus not only says "Come unto me", but also adds "take my yoke upon you" and "learn of me".

Note that Christ does not promise freedom from yokes and burdens here and now. We are not promised a care-free, trouble-free life of total bliss here on this earth. Far from it. We are promised rest unto our

Sin is the transgression of the law. There is little faith in Christ today because there is little sense of sin. Modern thought has undermined the Bible doctrine of sin.

But those who are conscious of this burden of sin will labor for relief. The desire to be rid of the burden is right, certainly, but human methods will not avail. The "Golden Rule" religion that is so popular today is worthless as a way of getting rid of the burden of sin. Only Christ can take that burden away. Only Christ can set the guilty, troubled conscience at rest. If we know and confess our sins, then Christ's invitation is addressed to us, too.

souls, peace with God; but our Lord also said "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Jesus has not promised us **immunity to yokes and burdens**. Rather, he has promised a **different kind of yoke and burden**. No longer will it be the intolerable yoke and burden of sin, but instead we will have the yoke of Christian service and the burden of suffering for Christ's sake in this world.

"Learn of me"—from Christ's teaching, and from Christ's example. Liberalism errs greatly in making Christ nothing but a teacher and an example. Even the atonement is often represented as merely a pattern of self-denial for us to imitate. While rejecting this error of Liberalism, we should at the same time remember that after all Christ **is** our example and our teacher; we must not only accept him as our Saviour, but also as our teacher, our example, our pattern for living. We must not only "come unto him" to "find rest unto our souls", but also "take his yoke upon us" and "learn of him".

He is meek and lowly in heart. Therefore if we are proud, haughty and self-righteous, we cannot be on the right track. We cannot be following his example and learning of him. Human pride and prejudice keep many away from Christ, today as in times past. The person who truly comes to Christ will throw away his pride and prejudices and will seek to become like Christ, meek and lowly in heart.

Why Christ's Yoke is Easy and His Burden Light. Verse 30

Jesus adds a promise: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light". Compared with the world's yoke and the world's burden, the yoke and burden of sin, of a guilty con-

science, of dark despair—compared with these, Christ's yoke and burden are **easy and light**. We may consider some reasons why this is so.

1. The Christian enjoys the approval of his own conscience. If he suffers, at least he knows it is not because he is at war with God. The Christian knows God is for him; no one that really matters can be against him. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Years ago a Manchurian Christian, faced with the possibility of suffering imprisonment and torture for Christ's sake, said in my hearing: "We can endure these sufferings because we know God and we receive special grace and help from God in time of need. But what about these Japanese who are afflicting and persecuting us Christians? When their time comes, and the day of reckoning finally dawns on them, what can they do? They not only have no earthly friends left, but they cannot obtain any help from God, for they do not know God and cannot call on God for help. What will they do in that day when they can find no help from any source, not even from God?" That is the world's yoke and burden, the yoke and burden of sin. It ends in utter, black despair. But the Christian has help from God and even when he suffers he can enjoy an approving conscience.

2. The Christian enjoys the light of God's countenance and the assurance of God's favor. The Holy Spirit works in his heart and enables him to say "Abba, Father".

3. The Christian's suffering is only temporary. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". The world's burden goes on into eternal ruin and anguish and loss unspeakable. But Christ's yoke and burden, which the Christian bears, issues out into eternal light and glory. As viewed by the world, the Christian's life is precarious. But the Christian dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and under the shadow of the Almighty. Like his Lord and Saviour, the Christian is often despised and rejected of men. But it will not always be so. A new day is going to dawn when conditions will be reversed. We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Take **my** yoke upon you—Christ's own yoke. He has borne it before us. It led him to the cross of Calvary. Now Jesus says, "Take **my** yoke upon you." Christ's own

yoke is easy, and yet it involves a cross in our case, as it did in his case. Christ's yoke is easy to our new nature, but a cross to "the flesh", to our old sinful nature. As Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Jesus said that no one who is not willing to take up his cross can be his disciple.

Christ's cross differs from our cross in its purpose. His cross was for the purpose of a substitutionary atonement. He suffered and died on the cross as a substitute for the sins of others, so that their sins might be forgiven. In our case the cross we are to bear has nothing whatever to do with the forgiveness of sins, whether our own or other people's. It concerns rather our service to Christ and our progress in the Christian life. But in our own case as well as in Christ's case, **the cross is an instrument of death. It had no other use, meaning or purpose.**

Now what does it mean for a Christian to take up his cross? To take up one's cross means to be willing **to be faithful unto death if the Lord wills that for us.** It means that you and I undertake to live for Christ and hold ourselves ready to die for his sake if called upon to do so.

Do you think Christ's yoke too hard, his burden too heavy? Then what will you do with the world's yoke and the world's burden? The real question is not "Do I dare to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?" but "Do I dare not to be one?"

This portion of Scripture contains a wonderful invitation. It is an invitation given by a wonderful Saviour, the very Son of the living God. Such an invitation is certainly not to be regarded lightly. For it is more than an invitation: it is a **command**, the command of God's own Son, who is higher than the kings of the earth. This invitation itself, and the promise attached to it, are part of the "all things" delivered by the Father to the Son. Let us then think seriously whether we have accepted this invitation and come to Christ and found rest unto our souls, and taken his yoke upon us and are learning of him. When is the time to come to Christ? Now. Always the present. Never the future. Come to him immediately, without delay.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 40

For Week Beginning October 6, 1946

Q. How did Christ humble himself in his death?

A. Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors: having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid down his life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.

Scripture References:

Matthew 27:4. Christ betrayed by Judas.

Matthew 26:56. Christ forsaken by his disciples.

Isaiah 53:2,3. Christ scorned and rejected by the world.

Matthew 27:26-50. John 19:34. Christ condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors.

Luke 22:44. Matthew 27:46. Christ's conflict with the terrors of death and powers of darkness, and his experience of the weight of God's wrath.

Isaiah 53:10. Christ's life laid down by himself as an offering for sin.

Philippians 2:8. Hebrews 12:2. Galatians 3:13. The painful, shameful and cursed death of the cross.

Questions:

1. Why was being betrayed by Judas an especially grievous humiliation for our Saviour?

Because Judas was not a stranger, or professed enemy, but a person who had been admitted to special privileges and friendship with Jesus in the circle of the twelve disciples.

2. Why was being forsaken by his disciples hard for Jesus to bear?

Because the conduct of the disciples showed that, for the time being at least, they were much more concerned about their personal safety than about loyalty to their Lord. Personal fear was a stronger motive in their minds than love to Christ.

3. Why was being scorned and rejected by the world a humiliation to Christ?

Because he was the Creator and Lord of all the world, and the world ought to

have received him with reverence and joy. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

4. Why was being condemned by Pilate a special humiliation to Christ?

Because his condemnation was **contrary to justice**. Pilate, the Roman governor, sat as a judge, the official representative of a divine institution in human society, namely, the State. Pilate, who was appointed to administer justice, condemned Christ **unjustly**, that is, contrary to the evidence in the case.

5. How was Christ tormented by his persecutors?

Read Matthew 27:26-50.

6. When did Jesus engage in conflict with the terrors of death and powers of darkness?

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified.

7. When did Jesus feel the weight of God's wrath?

Jesus felt and bore the weight of God's wrath against human sin during the whole of his life on earth, but especially at the end of his earthly life, in the Garden of Gethsemane and most of all during the three hours of darkness while he hung on the cross, from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, ending with his cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

8. What was the character of our Saviour's death?

Our Saviour offered his own life as a sacrifice to God to atone for the sins of men. Therefore his death was unique and unlike that of other men. Jesus died, not of sickness, accident or old age; not simply as a victim of injustice and oppression; not merely as a martyr for a great cause; but as **an offering for sin**, a substitute for sinners.

9. Why was death by crucifixion a particularly bitter death?

Death by crucifixion was a particularly bitter death because it was painful, shameful and accursed.

10. Why was death by crucifixion a painful death?

Because no vital organ of the body was

directly injured; therefore the victims of crucifixion often lingered and suffered for many hours and even days before death came; also the loss of blood and exposure to the hot sun would cause extreme exhaustion and thirst.

11. Why was death by crucifixion a shameful and cursed death?

In the Roman Empire, death by crucifixion was reserved for slaves and the lowest criminals. Even more important is the fact that God's Word had pronounced this mode of death to be accursed: Galatians 3:13; Deut. 21:23, "He that is hanged is accursed of God".

12. How did our Saviour finally die?

Our Saviour finally **voluntarily laid down his life**, at the appointed moment, as we learn from the following facts in the record: (a) "Jesus . . . yielded up the ghost", Matt. 27:50. (b) In John 19:28 we are told that "Jesus **knowing that all things were now accomplished . . . saith, I thirst**"; that

is, he required a drink of water to clear his brain for his final act on the cross, which followed immediately: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost**". (c) In John 10:17, 18 Jesus said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (d) Jesus died after being on the cross about six hours. The two thieves were still alive at the end of that time. In Mark 15:44 we read that "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead". Thus the evidence indicates that Jesus finally yielded up his life by an act of his own will, and not because the limit of his physical endurance had been reached.

13. What is the importance of the death of Jesus Christ?

The death of Jesus Christ is the center of the Bible, the focal point of the world's history, the central fact in the gospel message, and the foundation of our hope for eternal life.

Lesson 41

For Week Beginning October 13, 1946

Q. 50. Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death?

A. Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, **He descended into hell**.

Scripture References:

1 Corinthians 15:3,4. Christ's burial a necessary fact of the gospel.

Psalms 16:10 compared with Acts 2:24-31. Christ's continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, till the third day.

Romans 6:9. Matthew 12:40. The power of death over Christ's body only temporary, limited to three days.

Questions:

1. Where was Christ's soul during the time his body was in the tomb?

In heaven or paradise, as shown by Luke 23:43.

2. Why was it a humiliation to Christ for his body to be buried and to continue under the power of death for a time?

Because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Christ was "the holy One of God"; he had no **personal** sin. Death

would have had no power over him at all except for the fact that **our** sins were laid upon him, and he died, and was buried, as our Sin-bearer and Substitute. Because his being buried was a part of the wages of sin, it was an element in our Saviour's humiliation.

3. Why could Christ's body be kept under the power of death for a short time only?

Because the penalty for sin had been **fully paid**, and the guilt of his people's sins wholly canceled. If Christ's body had remained permanently under the power of death, it would have indicated that the penalty for sin had not been fully paid.

4. What is meant by the expression of "The Apostles' Creed" which says "He descended into hell"?

This expression has been understood in various ways. Some hold that Christ literally descended into hell, not the hell of the devil and the wicked angels, but a place where the Old Testament saints were waiting. There he preached to these spirits and opened the way for them to enter heaven. This interpretation, which is held by the Roman Catholic Church and by some Protestants, is unsound and is based on a misunderstanding of I Peter 3:18-20. Some Protestants hold that the words "He descended into hell" refer to Christ's suffer-

ings on the cross, that is, that he descended into hell, not as a place, but as an experience of suffering. While this idea is doctrinally sound, it is historically unwarranted, because the word translated "hell" in the "Apostles' Creed" is not **Gehenna** (the place of punishment) but **Hades** (the realm of death.) Our Catechism teaches that the words "He descended into hell" refer to Christ's being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time, the word "hell" being understood as "the realm of the power of death".

Q. 51. What was the estate of Christ's Exaltation?

A. The estate of Christ's exaltation comprehendeth his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and his coming again to judge the world.

Scripture References:

I Corinthians 15:4. Christ's resurrection.

Mark 16:19. Christ's ascension to heaven.

Ephesians 1:20. Christ's sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Acts 1:11; 17:31. Christ's coming again to judge the world.

Questions:

1. What four elements are included in Christ's estate of exaltation?

(a) His resurrection. (b) His ascension to heaven. (c) His sitting at the right hand of God the Father. (d) His coming again to judge the world.

2. Which of these four elements are past, which present, and which still future?

Two are past, his resurrection and ascension. One is present, his sitting at the right hand of God the Father. One is still future, his coming again to judge the world.

Q. 52. How was Christ exalted in his resurrection?

A. Christ was exalted in his resurrection, in that, not having seen corruption in death, (of which it was not possible for him to be held), and having the very same body in which he suffered, with the essential properties thereof, (but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life,) really united to his soul, he rose again from the dead the third day by his own power; whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God, to have satisfied divine justice, to have vanquished death, and him that had the power of it, and to be the Lord of quick and dead: all which he did

as a public person, the head of his Church, for their justification, quickening in grace, support against enemies, and to assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.

Scripture References:

Acts 2:24,27. Christ's body was not subject to decay while in the grave.

Luke 24:39. Christ rose again in the identical body in which he suffered.

Romans 6:9. Revelation 1:18. Christ's resurrection body immortal.

John 10:18. Christ rose again by his own power.

Romans 1:4. Christ declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection.

Romans 8:34. Christ, by his resurrection, declared to have satisfied God's justice.

Hebrews 2:14. Christ, by his resurrection, declared to have conquered death and Satan, who had the power of death.

Romans 14:9. Christ, by his resurrection, shown to be the Lord of living and dead.

I Corinthians 15:21,22. In his resurrection Christ acted as "a public person".

Ephesians 1:20 - 23. Colossians 1:18. Christ, in his resurrection, acted as the Head of his Church.

Romans 4:25. Christ raised from the dead for our justification.

Ephesians 2:1,5,6. Colossians 2:12. Christ raised from the dead for his people's quickening in grace.

I Corinthians 15:25 - 27. Christ raised from the dead to conquer his people's enemies.

I Corinthians 15:20. Christ raised from the dead to guarantee that his people will rise from the dead too.

Questions:

1. How do we know that Christ's body did not suffer decay while it was in the tomb?

Psalm 16:10 compared with Acts 2:27.

2. Why was it not possible for Christ to be held permanently under the power of death?

(a) Because of his deity; being the Son of God, he could not remain under the power of death. (b) Because the penalty for sin had been completely paid and canceled;

therefore death had lost its claim on him.

3. With what body did Christ rise again on the third day?

With the identical body in which he suffered, but glorified.

4. What is the meaning of the expression "essential properties thereof"?

This means the properties or characteristics which identified it as Christ's true human body. See Luke 24:39.

5. What was the difference between Christ's glorified body and his body before he was crucified?

His glorified body is "without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life".

6. What was the difference between Christ's resurrection and the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead which is recorded in John chapter 11?

(a) Christ rose by his own power; Lazarus was raised by the power of another.

(b) Christ rose immortal, never to die again; Lazarus was raised mortal, and finally did die again.

7. What five great truths were demonstrated by Christ's resurrection?

(a) That he is the Son of God. (b) That he had fully satisfied God's justice on account of the sins of his people. (c) That he had conquered death. (d) That he had conquered Satan, the devil. (e) That he is the Lord of the living and the dead.

8. What is the meaning of the words "quick" and "quicken"?

"Quick" is an old word which means "alive" or "living"; "quicken" means "making alive".

9. What is meant by the expression "a public person"?

This means someone who acts, not for himself personally, but as an official representative of a body of people. It is the opposite of "a private citizen" or "private person". Christ's great redemptive acts were of an official nature.

10. As a public person, whom did Christ represent?

He represented his people, his Church, of which he is the Head.

11. What benefits come to the Church from Christ's resurrection?

(a) Justification. (b) Quickening in grace. (c) Support against enemies. (d) Assurance of our own resurrection at the last day.

Lesson 42

For Week Beginning October 20, 1946

Q. 53. How was Christ exalted in his ascension?

A. Christ was exalted in his ascension, in that having after his resurrection often appeared unto and conversed with his apostles, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and giving them commission to preach the gospel to all nations, forty days after his resurrection, he in our nature, and as our head, triumphing over enemies, visibly went up into the highest heavens, there to receive gifts for men, and to raise up our affections thither, and to prepare a place for us, where himself is, and shall continue till his second coming at the end of the world.

Scripture References:

Acts 1:3,4. Christ's appearing to his apostles after his resurrection.

Matthew 28: 19,20. The Great Commission to preach the gospel to all nations.

Hebrews 6:20. Christ ascended to heaven as our Head.

Ephesians 4:8. Christ ascended triumphing over enemies.

Acts 1:9-11. Ephesians 4:10. Psalm 68:18. The record of Christ's ascension; his purpose in ascending to receive gifts for men.

Colossians 3:1,2. Christ's purpose in ascending to raise our affections heavenward.

John 14:3. Christ has ascended to heaven to prepare a place for his people.

Acts 32:1. Christ must remain in heaven until his second coming.

Questions:

1. How long was the interval between Christ's resurrection and his ascension?

Forty days.

2. How did Christ associate with his disciples during this interval?

He did not remain with them constantly, but appeared to them repeatedly.

3. What great command did Christ give to his people during this interval?

The "Great Commission" to preach the gospel to all nations, recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8.

4. Why is the phrase "in our nature" used to describe Christ's ascension?

Because it was not merely as **God** that he ascended into heaven, but as a human being, with a human body and a human soul. Christ's **human** nature left this earth and entered the realm within the veil.

5. Why is the phrase "as our head" used to describe Christ's ascension?

Because his ascension was an **official** act, in which he functioned as our representative, the second Adam, the head of the redeemed human race. In heaven today Jesus Christ the God-man is the representative or head of the people of God.

6. How did Christ triumph over enemies in his ascension?

His enemies had rejected and crucified him, but now in spite of their hatred and opposition he ascended into heaven to be proclaimed King of kings and Lord of lords.

7. How do we know that our Saviour ascended **visibly**?

Acts 1:9-11, "And when he had spoken these things, **while they beheld**, he was taken up; and a cloud received him **out of their sight**. And, **while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up**, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye **gazing up into heaven?** this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as **ye have seen him go into heaven.**"

8. Why is the **visibility** of Christ's ascension so strongly emphasized in the account in Acts 1:9-11?

Doubtless the reason for the strong emphasis on visibility is to avoid the idea that Christ's ascension was only a vision or hallucination or only a **spiritual** ascension. The record leaves no doubt that the disciples were wide awake and actually saw Christ's human form rise up and leave this earth.

9. What is the modern view of Christ's ascension?

Modern religious Liberalism, since it does not believe in bodily resurrection of Christ, of course cannot believe in a literal ascension either. Modernism disbelieves both of these great gospel facts, and explains them away as myths or legends.

10. Is it hard to believe that Christ, in his human body, literally ascended out of this earth to heaven?

It all depends on what kind of Christ we believe in. If Jesus Christ was **merely** a human being, it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to believe that he really ascended to heaven. But if we believe in the Christ of the Scriptures, who came down from heaven in the first place, it is not at all difficult to believe that when his work on earth was accomplished he ascended to heaven again. For if he did not ascend to heaven, then he must still be visibly present somewhere in this world (since he rose from the dead). It is of course perfectly obvious that the risen Christ is not now present in bodily form anywhere in this world; therefore we conclude that the Scripture account of his ascension is entirely reasonable and credible, and the only possible view, once his literal resurrection from the dead is granted.

11. What is meant by saying that Christ ascended to heaven in order to receive gifts for men?

"To receive gifts for men" is an expression taken from Psalm 68:18, and quoted in Ephesians 4:8. The kind of gifts meant can be discovered from Ephesians 4:11,12, namely various kinds of official functions in the Church, such as the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The purpose of these various gifts is stated in verse 12, namely, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

12. Why should Christ's ascension raise our affections heavenward?

The fact that our Saviour is in heaven should make us think of heaven and value it more highly than all our possessions in this world. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also".

13. What is Christ doing in heaven at the present time?

Among other things which the Bible mentions, he is preparing a place for his people in heavenly glory, to be their eternal home. John 14:1-3.

14. How do we know that heaven is a **place** and not just a spiritual state or condition?

Christ's human body is there, therefore it must be a place. Moreover his own promise in John 14:3, "I go to prepare a place for you", certainly implies that heaven is a place. We should resist all tendency to

“spiritualize” or explain away the plain, simple meaning of Christ’s promise, and should adhere to the unsophisticated realism of the Scriptures. We do not know

where heaven is, but we do know that it is a real place. The doctrine of the bodily resurrection implies and requires belief in heaven as a place.

Lesson 43

For Week Beginning October 27, 1946

Q. 54. How is Christ exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God?

A. Christ is exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God in that as God-man he is advanced to the highest favor with God the Father, with all fullness of joy, glory, and power over all things in heaven and earth; and doth gather and defend his church, and subdue their enemies, furnisheth his ministers and people with gifts and graces, and maketh intercession for them.

Scripture References:

Philippians 2:9. Christ exalted by God the Father.

Psalms 16:11 compared with Acts 2:28. Christ given all fulness of joy by God the Father.

John 17:5. Christ given glory by God the Father.

Ephesians 1:22. I Peter 3:22. Christ given supreme power by God the Father.

Ephesians 4:10-12. Psalm 110:1,2. Christ, at the Father’s right hand, gathers and defends his church, subdues their enemies, and furnishes his ministers and people with gifts and graces.

Romans 8:34. Christ, at the Father’s right hand, makes intercession for his people.

Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that Christ sits at the right hand of God in heaven?

This is of course figurative language. Since God is a spirit and has no body, he does not have a literal right hand. The meaning is that Christ as Mediator, being God and man in one person, occupies the highest place in heaven next to God the Father. As God, Christ is fully equal to the Father in all things; as God-man, he is exalted to the highest place in heaven next to God.

2. Why was Christ exalted to the right hand of God in heaven?

This honor was given him as a reward for his obedience, sufferings and death, according to the terms of the Covenant of Grace. Read Philippians 2:8-11.

3. What power does Christ exercise at the right hand of God in heaven?

“All power in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). “He hath put all things under his feet” (I Corinthians 15:27). “. . . he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet . . .” (Ephesians 1:20-22). The power committed to Christ is absolutely universal and includes the entire created universe. I Corinthians 15:27,28 shows that only God the Father is excepted from Christ’s dominion.

4. How long will Christ’s dominion over the entire created universe continue?

It will continue throughout the present age and until Christ’s second coming at the end of the world. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Corinthians 15:25,26). At that time, when death, the last enemy, has been destroyed by the resurrection of the dead, Christ will give up his dominion **over the universe**, as shown by I Cor. 15:24, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power”, and verse 28, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” However Christ will never give up his kingly office **as head of the redeemed human race**, as shown by Luke 1:33, “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

5. What is the purpose or aim of Christ’s dominion over the entire universe?

The purpose or aim of Christ’s dominion over the entire universe is **the benefit of his Church**, as shown by Ephesians 1:22, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church.” This text is often misunderstood, as if it said “head over all things in the church”, that is, as if it meant simply that Christ is **the head of the Church**. But we should note that the text says “head over all things to the church”, that is, **head over the entire universe for the benefit of the church**.

6. How does Christ's universal dominion benefit his Church?

(a) By gathering his elect people into his Church. (b) By defending his Church against enemies. (c) By perfecting his Church, bestowing gifts and graces on ministers and people. (d) By making intercession for his people.

7. What error is common today concerning Christ's kingly dominion?

A very common false teaching asserts that Christ is not a king today, and will not exercise kingly power until after his second coming when, it is alleged, he will reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem. 1 Cor. 15:23-28 certainly teaches that Christ is reigning **now** (verse 25), and that his second coming will mark the **end**, not the beginning, of his dominion over the entire universe (verses 23,24).

Lesson 44

For Week Beginning November 3, 1946

Q. 55. How doth Christ make intercession?

A. Christ maketh intercession by his appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth, declaring his will to have it applied to all believers: answering all accusations against them, and procuring for them quiet of conscience, notwithstanding daily failings, access with boldness to the throne of grace, and acceptance of their persons and services.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 9:12,24. Christ appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

Hebrews 1:3. Christ's heavenly intercession based on the merit of his sacrifice and obedience on earth.

John 3:16. John 17: 9,20,24. It is Christ's will that the merit of his obedience and sacrifice be applied to all believers.

Romans 8:33,34. Christ in his heavenly intercession answers all accusations against his people.

Romans 5:1,2. I John 2:1,2. Christ by his heavenly intercession procures quiet of conscience for his people, in spite of their daily failings.

Hebrews 4:16. Christ obtains access to the throne of grace for his people.

Ephesians 1:6. Christ procures for his people the acceptance of their persons.

1 Peter 2:5. Christ procures for his people the acceptance of their services.

Hebrews 7:25. Christ makes intercession for his people continually, saving them "to the uttermost".

Questions:

1. To which of Christ's three offices does his work of intercession belong?

To the office of a priest. Hebrews 7:24, 25.

2. What book of the Bible tells us most about the priesthood of Christ?

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

3. In what chapter of the Bible is Christ's great "High Priestly Prayer" found?

John chapter 17.

4. To whom does Christ make intercession for his people?

To God the Father.

5. On what basis, or by what right, does Christ intercede for his people?

"In the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth"; that is, in his heavenly intercession Christ presents his obedience and sacrifice on earth as a sufficient reason why his people's sins should be forgiven, blessings given to them, their services accepted, etc.

6. According to the will and purpose of Christ, to whom is the merit of his obedience and sacrifice to be applied?

To all believers.

7. In the Bible, who is represented as making accusations against God's children?

Satan, or the devil. Read Job 1:9-11; 2:4,5. Revelation 12:9,10. Zechariah 3:1,2.

8. Of what might Satan accuse God's people?

Of being unworthy of God's blessings and favor, because of their sins.

9. How can Christ answer Satan's accusations against believers?

By showing that, although God's people are themselves sinful and unworthy, yet since Christ himself suffered the penalty due to their sins, and also provided a perfect righteousness which is reckoned to their account, Satan has no ground for making charges against them. For every sin that Satan can accuse a Christian of, Christ can say "My blood was shed to take

away that sin." Thus Satan is left without any standing ground for accusing believers.

10. What in the life of Christian people would tend to cause an uneasy conscience?

Daily failings in thought, word and deed.

11. How can we enjoy real peace of conscience in spite of daily failings?

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Christ's atonement and righteousness, which he pleads on our behalf, are greater than all our sins and failures. Therefore, because of his heavenly intercession, peace of conscience is given to Christian believers. This does not mean that the Christian may be satisfied to commit sin daily; on the contrary, he must fight against it continually. But the Christian can have assurance that his sins are forgiven and cannot bring him into condemnation. "There is therefore

now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

12. How can we, with all our sins and failures, have boldness to come to God's throne of grace in prayer?

Of ourselves alone we could not have such boldness, for God is holy and we are sinful. But through Christ's heavenly intercession, because he is our Mediator and High Priest, we can come to God in prayer with confidence, as children to a father. Read Hebrews 4:15, 16.

13. Why are the services or "good works" of Christian people acceptable to God?

Not because of ourselves, for we are sinful by nature; nor because of the quality or character of our "good works", for they are very imperfect and marred by sin; but only because of the heavenly intercession of Christ our Mediator.

Lesson 45

For Week Beginning November 10, 1946

Q. 56. How is Christ to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world?

A. Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

Scripture References:

Acts 3:14,15. Christ was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men.

Matthew 24:30. Christ shall come again visibly in the clouds, with power and glory.

Luke 9:26. Matthew 25:31. Christ shall come again in his own glory, and the Father's glory, and with all the holy angels.

1 Thess. 4:16. Christ shall come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.

Acts 17:31. At his second coming, Christ shall judge the world in righteousness.

Acts 1:10,11. Christ's second coming a definite, visible event.

Revelation 1:7. When Christ comes, "every eye shall see him".

Daniel 7:13. Christ shall come on the clouds of heaven.

Revelation 20:11,12. The great judgment at the Last Day.

Questions:

1. What great event will take place immediately after Christ's second coming?

The Judgment.

2. When will Christ's second coming take place?

At the end of the world, or the last day.

3. When will the end of the world, or the last day, come?

This question cannot really be answered, as the information has not been revealed in the Word of God. Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man . . .". All attempts to calculate the date of Christ's second coming are useless and unscriptural. We should be on guard against being deceived by those who claim to know "that day and hour" in advance. At the same time we must remember that Christ's second coming is a definite event which will take place at a definite time, that is, a particular year, month, day and hour. On a definite calendar day, known only to God, human history will suddenly come to a conclusion with the second coming of Christ and the judgment.

4. Can we know whether the second coming of Christ is approaching or drawing near?

Yes. Although it is impossible to calculate the date of our Lord's return, still

it is possible to know whether that blessed event is drawing near. Certain signs have been prophesied as preceding the Lord's return. The appearance of all these signs will show that his return is **near**. Matthew 24:33, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors". The American Revised Version translates this verse as follows: "Even so ye also, when ye shall see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors".

5. What preparation should we as Christians make for the second coming of Christ?

Matthew 24:44, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh". Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh". Read also Luke 12:35-40.

6. What should be our attitude toward the second coming of Christ and the judgment day?

We should look forward to these great redemptive events with eager and joyful anticipation, realizing that they will bring about the completion of our redemption—our complete and permanent deliverance from sin, death and all their consequences. Titus 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Luke 21:28, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Revelation 22:20, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

7. What will be the manner of Christ's second coming?

Many questions may arise in our minds which cannot be answered. We should always remember that the Bible was given to meet our needs, not to satisfy our curiosity. We should not allow our imagination to wander beyond what is plainly revealed in the Scriptures. Concerning the **manner** of Christ's second coming, the Word of God teaches clearly the following facts: (a) Christ's second coming will be a **personal** coming; Acts 1:11, "**This same Jesus . . .**". (b) Christ's second coming will be a **visible** coming; Acts 1:11, "**. . . in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven**"; Rev. 1:7, "**Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him**". (c) Christ's second coming will be a miraculous or **supernatural**

coming, which will crash through the order of nature with the almighty power of God; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Thess. 4:16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .**". Matthew 24:27, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (d) Christ's second coming will be a **sudden** coming, at a definite and particular time, which is referred to as "the day and the hour"; see also 1 Cor. 15:52, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye", etc.

8. How will Christ judge the world at his second coming?

In righteousness, that is, according to the righteous law of God. For the first time in human history, **absolute justice** is going to be dispensed to the human race.

9. Who will be judged at Christ's second coming?

Revelation 20:11-15 shows that the great judgment will include all the dead who have ever lived; and also all persons still living when Christ returns will be judged.

10. Will Christian people be judged at Christ's second coming?

They will be judged, but not condemned. In their case, the sentence will be one of acquittal because of Christ's blood and righteousness which are imputed or reckoned to their account. 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . .", Romans 14:10, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"; Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . .".

11. How will the heathen, who lived and died without the light of Scripture, be judged?

They will be judged according to the law of nature, which was written in their heart and conscience. Read Romans 2:12-16 where the apostle Paul explains this matter.

12. What does the Larger Catechism say about a Millennium?

Nothing whatever. None of the Westminster Standards mentions a "millennium" or thousand year reign of Christ.

13. What has been the prevalent attitude of orthodox churches, in recent years, toward the doctrine of the second coming of Christ?

This doctrine, which beyond question is clearly revealed in the Scriptures as one

of the great truths of the Christian faith, and which has always been held to be an essential doctrine of Christianity, has been greatly neglected in orthodox churches, so much so that many ministers seldom, if ever, preach on it, and many people know almost nothing about it. The result of this widespread neglect has been that certain denominations and sects have taken up this doctrine and carried it to absurd and fanatical extremes, far beyond what a sober study

of the Scriptures would warrant. We should deplore these fanciful studies of "prophecy", but at the same time we should avoid the opposite extreme of forgetting and neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second coming. We can believe thoroughly in the real, visible, supernatural second coming of Christ, without accepting the fantastic ideas of the so-called "experts on prophecy" who are so popular today.

Lesson 46

For Week Beginning November 17, 1946

Q. 57. What benefits hath Christ procured by his mediation?

A. Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the Covenant of Grace.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 9:12. Christ has obtained redemption for his people with his own blood.

Mark 10:45. Christ's life laid down as a ransom-price.

1 Timothy 2:6. Christ gave himself a ransom for all.

Job 19:25. Long ago Job looked forward to Christ as his Redeemer.

Romans 3:24. We are justified on the basis of redemption through Christ.

1 Cor. 1:30. Christ is made redemption to his people.

Ephesians 1:7. Redemption is through Christ's blood.

Colossians 1:14. Forgiveness of sins is based on redemption through Christ's blood.

2 Cor. 1:20. All benefits of the Covenant of Grace come to the believer through Christ.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "mediation"?

It means to act as a **Mediator** or go-between in reconciling parties who were at enmity with each other.

2. What is the basic meaning of the word "redemption"?

It means to recover possession by the payment of a purchase or ransom price.

3. What is the principal meaning of the word "redemption" in the New Testament?

It means Christ's reclaiming sinners from sin and death, and gaining salvation

and life for them by the payment of his precious blood as the ransom price for them.

4. What other usage of the word "redemption" is found in the New Testament?

It is also used to refer to **the resurrection of the body**, because this is the final instalment of the benefits of redemption. See Romans 8:23, Ephesians 1:14, Luke 21:28.

5. Why was it necessary for Christ to pay a ransom price for our redemption?

Because the whole human race was guilty before God, and according to God's righteous judgment deserved eternal death.

6. To whom did Christ pay the ransom price ?

He paid the ransom price to **God**. The notion that the ransom price was paid to **Satan** is a very old error, which reappears from time to time, but it is without foundation in the Word of God. Christ came to destroy the works of Satan, it is true, but not by paying a ransom price to Satan. He destroyed the works of Satan by paying the ransom price to God.

7. If God is love, as the Bible says, why could he not forgive sinners without the payment of a ransom price?

The Bible teaches us that God is love, but it also teaches us that he is a God of righteousness and holiness, and that he cannot deny himself. If God were simply to forgive sin without an atonement, he would deny his own righteousness. The penalty of sin must be borne by a Substitute; otherwise God could not forgive our sins.

8. In addition to redemption, or suffering and dying as a ransom for our sins, what other benefits of the Covenant of Grace has Christ procured for his people?

Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them, including assurance of God's love, peace of

conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; also those benefits which come to the believer at death and at the resurrection. See **The Shorter Catechism**, Nos. 32, 36, 37, 38.

Q. 58. How do we come to be made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured?

A. We are made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured, by the application of them to us, which is the work especially of God the Holy Ghost.

Scripture References:

John 1:11,12. Christ's benefits applied to us.

Titus 3:5,6. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit essential to salvation.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit?

Christ has **obtained redemption for us**; the Holy Spirit **applies redemption to us**, so that we actually experience the benefit of it.

2. Why is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to apply Christ's redemption to us?

Because of ourselves we are so sinful that we could never get the benefit of

Christ's redemption if we were left to ourselves; only by the almighty work of the Holy Spirit, changing our hearts and leading us to repent and believe, can we actually receive the benefit of what Christ has done for us.

3. Is it true that in the end our salvation depends entirely on our human free will, by which we either accept the Gospel or reject it?

This kind of statement is only part of the truth and is very liable to misunderstanding. We might express the whole matter this way: 1. Our salvation depends on whether we accept or reject the Gospel. 2. In accepting or rejecting the Gospel, we always act according to our free will. 3. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, everyone's free will would lead him to **reject** the Gospel. 4. When a person's heart is changed by the Holy Spirit, his free will leads him to accept the Gospel. 5. Therefore **in the end** it depends on the work of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts.

4. Is the work of the Holy Spirit, in applying Christ's redemption, subject to human control?

No. It is a sovereign work of God. He is the Potter; we are the clay. His work is not subject to our control; but this does not mean that the Holy Spirit does not work in answer to the prayers of Christian people; He does.

Lesson 47

For Week Beginning November 24, 1946

Q. 59. Who are made partakers of redemption through Christ?

A. Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are in time by the Holy Ghost enabled to believe in Christ according to the gospel.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:13, 14. John 6:37, 39. John 10:15, 16. Redemption effectually communicated to those for whom Christ purchased it.

Ephesians 2:8. 2 Cor. 4:13. Those for whom Christ purchased redemption, are in time enabled to believe in him according to the gospel.

John 17:9. Christ prays for those for whom he purchased redemption,

John 17:20. Christ's intercession for all believers in him.

Acts 2:47. Those for whom redemption was purchased are in due time added to the Church.

Acts 16:14. For a person to be saved by the gospel, the heart must be "opened" by the Lord.

Acts 18:9-11. God knows exactly who his elect are, for whom redemption has been purchased, and to whom in due time it is to be applied.

Questions:

1. For whom did Christ purchase redemption?

For a body of people described in Scripture by such terms as "His people", "His sheep", "His Church", "His Body", "The Elect", "Those whom he foreknew", etc.

2. How many people are included in the body for whom redemption was purchased?

"A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . .", Revelation 7:9. Scripture teaches that the elect are, 1. A definite number of particular people, not the entire human race, but a part. 2. A very great number, passing human ability to count. 3. A number unknown to men, but

known to God, and determined before the creation of the world.

3. Did not Christ purchase redemption for everybody?

Although this is the popular idea today, we believe it is contrary to what the Bible teaches, and that our Confession of Faith and Catechisms are right in rejecting it. The Bible teaches, rather, that Christ purchased redemption for "his own", "his sheep", "his people", etc.

4. How can we explain the Scripture texts which say that Christ died for all?

When the Bible says that "Christ died for all" this does not mean for **all men**; it means for **all Christians** or **all the elect**. Some of the similar texts mean that Christ died for sinners regardless of race or nation-

ality, whether Jews or Gentiles: 1 John 2:2. In the Bible such terms as "all", "the world", etc., do not mean **every individual person in the world**, as will be seen by looking up Luke 2:1, Acts 19:27, Luke 19:48, Mark 11:32, Mark 11:81, Acts 4:21, John 12:19.

5. Is it right to say: God gives everybody a **chance** to be saved, and we can take it or leave it?

There is no such thing as **chance** in the Plan of Salvation revealed in the Bible. Christ's redemption is **certainly and effectually** applied to all those for whom it was intended.

6. How does the Holy Spirit apply Christ's redemption to the elect?

By enabling them, at a particular time in their life, to believe in Christ according to the Gospel.

Lesson 48

For Week Beginning December 1, 1946

Q. 60. Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature?

A. They who having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of his body the Church.

Scripture References:

Romans 10:14. The gospel message necessary for salvation.

2 Thess. 1:8, 9. Ephesians 2:12. John 1:10-12. Those who do not know Jesus Christ are under divine condemnation because of their sin.

John 8:24. Mark 16:16. Faith in Jesus Christ necessary for salvation.

1 Cor. 1:20-24. There is no real knowledge of God, or salvation, apart from the preaching of the cross of Christ.

John 4:22. Romans 9:31, 32. Philippians 3:4-9. Careful living according to the light of nature, or any religious system which a person may profess, not sufficient for salvation.

Acts 4:12. There is no salvation except in Christ.

Ephesians 5:23. Christ is the Saviour only of his body, the Church.

Questions:

1. Why will the heathen, who have never heard the gospel, be condemned at the judgment day?

Not because of failure to believe in Christ, but simply because of their sins. Read Romans 2:12.

2. Why cannot the heathen be saved by being diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature?

Because the entire human race is in a state of sin, and everyone is born with a sinful heart which inclines him to do evil. Therefore all people have fallen short, even of what they knew to be right by the light of nature. Since the wages of sin is death, those who have sinned are under the sentence of death.

3. Why cannot the heathen be saved by being diligent to frame their lives according to the laws of that religion which they profess?

Because the heathen religions are predominantly false. Although they all contain some elements of truth, of course, nevertheless **as systems** they are false. None of them contains the truth which sinners need—the truth about the way of salvation from sin by a divine-human Mediator. Therefore no matter how much zeal the heathen may have for the duties of their own religion, this cannot save them. If Paul's extreme zeal as a Pharisee could not save him, how much less could the zeal or earnestness of the heathen bring about their salvation!

4. If the heathen are sincere in their heathen belief, will they not be saved because of their sincerity?

Modern sentiment inclines people to think so, no doubt, but the verdict of Scripture is to the contrary. Read Acts 4:12. **Sincerity is of no value apart from truth.** The more sincere a person is in following a false religion, the more surely he is on the way to ruin. Beyond question the Japanese sincerely believed that their emperor was divine, but that did not make him divine, nor absolve them of guilt.

5. It is not unfair for God to condemn those who have never heard the gospel?

If God **owed** salvation, or "a chance of salvation", to everybody (or anybody), then it would be unjust to condemn those who have never heard the gospel. But as a matter of fact God does not owe "a chance of salvation" to anyone. He is under no obligation to provide salvation, or an offer of salvation, to anyone at all. Therefore there is no injustice involved in his saving some and passing by others.

6. But if God condemns those who have never heard the gospel, does not this amount to partiality in dealing with the human race?

It certainly does amount to **partiality**, that is, God gives to some what he, in his divine providence, withholds from others. The same is true with respect to God's bestowal of health, intelligence, prosperity and all the ordinary blessings of life. In his providence God gives to some what he withholds from others; certainly this is partiality. God does not treat all people alike. But this is not injustice, because God owes nobody any blessings at all; nor it is respect of persons, because whatever God's reasons for his actions may be, they are not based on the character or righteousness of the persons who receive salvation. Rather, it is a matter of pure, undeserved grace that the elect are saved from sin unto eternal life.

7. What hope is there for the salvation of the heathen?

The gospel of Christ, published throughout the world by missionaries, is the message of salvation full and free to everyone that believeth.

8. Apart from faith in the gospel message, what hope may we have for the salvation of a part of the heathen world?

Although it cannot be actually proved from the Bible, many orthodox Bible students have held as a matter of opinion the hope that all infants dying in infancy are saved. In this connection the student is referred to the Confession of Faith, Chapter X, Section 3, first sentence. It should be carefully noted that the Confession of Faith makes no statement as to whether or not there are any **non-elect infants**. It speaks only of "elect infants dying in infancy". The implied contrast is not to "non-elect infants dying in infancy", but to "elect infants **not** dying in infancy", that is, a contrast is implied between **elect infants who die in infancy** and **elect infants who live to grow up to years of discretion**.

9. What further hope may we have for the salvation of some of the heathen?

See the Confession of Faith, Chapter X, Section 3, second sentence, which refers to "other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word". This refers to the insane and persons who are mentally deficient. It is certainly possible that some or all of such will be among the saved, though they are incapable of believing the gospel.

10. What should we think of the doctrine of Universalism, or the belief that all human beings will finally be saved?

(a) It is clearly contradicted by many passages of Scripture. (b) It is founded on the false idea that God is nothing but love. (c) It completely cuts the nerve of both foreign missions and evangelism. If everybody is going to be saved anyway, then why preach the gospel, either at home or on the foreign field?

Lesson 49

For Week Beginning December 8, 1946

Q. 61. Are all saved who hear the gospel, and live in the Church?

A. All that hear the gospel, and live in the visible Church, are not saved; but they only who are true members of the church invisible.

Scripture References:

John 12:38-40. Romans 9:6. Matthew 7:

21. Romans 11:7. There is a distinction between the external body of the people of God, who profess the true religion, and the body of those who truly know God and are really saved.

Questions:

1. Why is hearing the gospel, and membership in the visible Church, not sufficient to ensure our salvation?

We are saved by means of a personal faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour; but it is possible for a person to hear the gospel, and join a Church, without having a personal faith in Christ as his Saviour.

2. What two classes of people are found in the membership of the visible Church?

(a) Those who are truly saved because they have a real faith in Christ. (b) Those who are not truly saved, because they have only a formal possession of Christianity, without the spiritual power and reality of it.

3. Who can determine with certainty which members of the visible Church are really saved and which are merely formal professors of Christianity?

Only God can know this with certainty in every case. However it is possible for a person to attain absolute assurance concerning **his own** salvation. But we can never speak **with absolute certainty** about the salvation or non-salvation of other people who make a profession of faith in Christ.

4. What is the ideal condition of the visible Church?

The ideal condition is a membership which is entirely composed of truly saved persons. While this is certainly the ideal, it can never be really attained in this world. Just as there was a Judas among the twelve disciples, so there will always be some unsaved persons in the membership of the visible Church in this world. Ministers and elders are not to blame for this unless it is the result of their neglect of their duties. It is their duty to exclude from the visible Church such as are ignorant or scandalous, that is, such as do not make a proper profession of faith, or whose lives make it impossible to accept their profession at face

value. But apart from the obviously ignorant and scandalous, there are many professing Christians who may be members of the visible Church without being really saved. This is an unavoidable condition, which must be recognized, even though it is to be deplored. The attempt, which has sometimes been made, to remove from the visible Church all members judged to be "unconverted", has always led to even greater evils than it was intended to remedy.

5. Must an applicant for membership in the visible Church prove to the officers of the Church that he is born again?

Certainly not. Church officers are to take an applicant's profession at face value in the absence of evidence that the profession is not credible. It is no duty of ministers and elders to try to examine into people's hearts to see if they are born again or not. Membership in the visible Church is based on a **credible profession of faith and obedience**, not on **demonstration of regeneration**. The acceptance of an applicant for membership is based on **presumption**, not on **proof**. He does not have to **prove** that he is converted. It is **presumed** that he knows what he is talking about and is telling the truth when he makes a profession of faith, unless there is evidence which makes such a presumption impossible. See the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter XXI, Section 2; Chapter XXII, Sections 1 and 2, and Error 3.

6. What should be the personal aim of every member of the visible Church?

Every member of the visible Church should make it his aim to attain full assurance that he is not only a member of the visible Church, but also truly saved by personal faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Lesson 50

For Week Beginning December 15, 1946

Q. 62. What is the visible Church?

A. The visible Church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children.

Scripture References:

1 Cor. 1:2. 1 Cor. 12:13. Romans 15:9-12. Revelation 7:9. Psalm 2:8. Psalm 22:27-31. Psalm 45:17. Matthew 28:18-20. Isaiah 59:21. The visible Church consists of those, of all times and places, who profess the true religion.

1 Cor. 7:14. Acts 2:39. Romans 11:16. Genesis 17:7. The children of those who profess the true religion are members of the

visible Church along with their parents, because they are included with their parents in the covenant promises of God.

Questions:

1. Why is the visible Church called "visible"?

Because it is possible to see who belongs to it. We cannot see how many people in a community are born again, or truly saved; but it is possible to see how many are members of the Church. It is possible, for example, to see and know that a particular congregation has 100 members, or 150 members. But it is not possible to see how many

of these people are truly Christians in their hearts; that is known only to God.

2. How many visible Churches are there in the world?

There is one only, which, however, includes many branches, or denominations, and a very large number of particular congregations. We should note that the Catechism does not say that "The visible Church is an organization . . .", but rather says "The visible Church is a society . . .". It is one society, though it includes many organizations.

3. What denomination is the true visible Church?

No one denomination has the right to claim to be the true visible Church. Every denomination which is loyal to the truth of the gospel according to the Word of God is a **branch** of the visible Church. When any one denomination claims to be **the** true visible Church, this necessarily implies that others are false. Such a claim is presumptuous and sinful. We should realize that the true visible Church is greater than any one denomination. While we believe that our own denomination holds a broader and more consistent testimony for the truth than others (which is our proper reason for being members of it), we should freely recognize that the visible Church includes many branches which hold the gospel with a greater or less degree of consistency.

4. What is the scope of the visible Church with respect to time?

It includes believers of all ages of the world's history, from the time of Adam and Eve to the end of the world. All people of every age who professed faith in the true religion are included in the visible Church.

5. What is the scope of the visible Church with respect to place?

It includes people in all places of the world, wherever the light of the gospel has penetrated the world's darkness and some people have professed the true religion.

6. What makes a person a member of the visible Church?

A public profession of the true religion, that is, a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him.

7. What is the badge of entrance into the visible Church?

The sacrament of Baptism.

8. What is the highest privilege of mem-

bership in a particular congregation of the visible Church?

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

9. Are there unconverted people or hypocrites in the membership of the visible Church?

Yes. Nowhere does Scripture promise that there can be such a thing, in this world, as a perfectly pure visible Church, in whose membership there can never be any unconverted persons. Even the twelve disciples had a Judas among them. Similarly it would appear from the Book of Acts and the New Testament Epistles that there were hypocrites or unconverted persons in the early churches established by the apostles. Some of them were finally suspended or excommunicated by church discipline.

10. Can we have a perfectly pure and holy visible Church by putting out those members who are not born again?

This has been tried at various times by certain sects, and always with disastrous results. The truth is that only God knows certainly who the regenerate are. A person may attain full assurance about **his own** salvation, but not about other people's. We may be able in some cases to say that **probably** a certain person is born again, or not born again, but we can never be sure. Since only God can really know who the hypocrites are, it is obviously impossible to purify the Church by casting them out. The visible Church is not a society of those who **can prove that they are born again**; it is a society of those who **profess the true religion**.

11. In addition to those who profess the true religion, what other class of persons is included in the membership of the visible Church?

The infant or minor children of those who profess the true religion.

12. What denominations deny that children of believers are members of the visible Church?

The Baptists and others who hold the same doctrines. These hold that children of Christian people are not members of the visible Church until they reach the age of discretion and make a public profession of faith and are baptized.

13. What is the badge or sign that the children of Christian people are members of the visible Church?

Infant baptism.

14. When children of Christian parents,

who have been baptized in their infancy, reach years of discretion, what is their duty with respect to membership in the Church?

It is their duty to make a public profession of faith and seek admission to the Lord's Table.

Lesson 51

For Week Beginning December 22, 1946

Q. 63. What are the special privileges of the visible Church?

A. The visible Church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come to him.

Scripture References:

Isaiah 4:5, 6. I Timothy 4:10. The visible Church is under God's special care and government.

Psalms 115:1, 2. Isaiah 31:4, 5. Zechariah 12:2-9. The visible Church is protected and preserved by God in all ages, in spite of the opposition of enemies.

Acts 2:39, 42. The visible Church enjoys the communion of saints, and ordinary means of salvation.

Psalms 147:19, 20. Romans 9:4. Ephesians 4:11, 12. Mark 16:15, 16. The visible Church enjoys the offers of the gospel.

John 6:37. The ministry of the gospel, in the visible Church, excludes none that will come to Christ.

Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that the visible Church is **under God's special care and government**?

By this we mean that in addition to God's ordinary providence which controls all things that come to pass, God provides for the safety and welfare of his Church in a special way, making various circumstances and acts of men work together for the benefit of his Church.

2. What promise has our Saviour given concerning the protection and permanence of his Church?

Matthew 16:18, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". This implies that there shall be a true visible Church of

15. Why is it incorrect to speak of such young people as "joining the Church"?

Because they are already members by birth, as recognized by their baptism.

Christ in the world until his second coming.

3. How has this promise of protection and preservation been fulfilled in past ages?

We can think of many examples. First, the early Church was preserved from the wrath of the Jews, who would have extinguished the light of the Gospel if it had been in their power to do so. God used the power of the Roman Empire to protect the early Church against Jewish persecution. The destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A. D. marked the end of the power of the Jews anywhere in the world to persecute Christianity. This was followed by the Roman persecution, which lasted for some 250 years, until the Emperor Constantine issued his Edict of Toleration in the year 313 A. D. During these 250 years of persecution, God protected and preserved his Church chiefly in three ways: (1) The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church; the more Christians were killed, the greater the number of Christians became. (2) There were intervals of peace and quiet when the Church was free from persecution and could carry on its work without danger; except for those breathing spells, the Church could hardly have survived. (3) In most cases there were places free from persecution to which Christians could flee for refuge. This gave them some relief and prevented the complete extinction of Christianity. It would be a long story to tell of God's special care of his Church during the Middle Ages, the period of the Reformation, and modern times. In every age God's special providence has been at work for the benefit of the Church.

4. How has this promise of special protection and defense been fulfilled in our own time?

By the destruction of the power of the totalitarian states. Japan, Germany and Italy, which constituted a threat to Christianity as great, if not even greater, than that of the ancient Roman Empire.

5. What is meant by saying that the visible Church enjoys the communion of saints?

This means that the members of the

visible Church receive encouragement and spiritual benefit from the fellowship that they have with one another. It is extremely difficult to live a Christian life in isolation from other Christian people. But with the friendship, encouragement and support of other Christians, it becomes much easier.

6. What are "the ordinary means of salvation" which the visible Church enjoys?

The preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, church discipline, public worship and pastoral care and oversight of the members.

7. What is the chief responsibility of the visible Church?

The offer of grace by Christ in the ministry of the gospel, which offer is made continually to all members of the visible Church, including children who are not yet communicant members, and also made to all adherents and other persons who attend services or otherwise come under the influence of the visible Church.

8. How broad is the gospel invitation which is entrusted to the visible Church?

It is universal; it includes all persons who can be reached with the message; it announces that whosoever believes in

Christ shall be saved; it excludes none that desire to come to Christ.

9. Are home and foreign missions properly the work of the visible Church, or should they be carried on by voluntary associations outside the Church?

Certainly home and foreign missions are properly the work of the visible Church. In our day a great deal of foreign missionary work is carried on by non-church organizations. The China Inland Mission, with over a thousand missionaries, for example, is not a Church but a voluntary association of Christian people. We believe that this is a wrong tendency and that private voluntary associations should not take up the work which God has committed to the Church. However under exceptional circumstances, or when the Church neglects or refuses to carry on missionary work, voluntary associations may rightly undertake the task.

10. What is the importance of the visible Church?

Beyond question it is of very great importance. There are three divine institutions in this world, the Church, the State and the Family. Each of these is supremely important in its own sphere. We should support the visible Church faithfully because it is a divine institution, not merely a human organization.

Lesson 52

For Week Beginning December 29, 1946

Q. 64. What is the invisible Church?

A. The invisible Church is the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:10, 22, 23. John 10:16. John 11:52. The invisible Church consists of all the elect of God, including all truly saved persons of past, present and future.

Acts 18:9, 10. Elect persons who have not yet come to Christ are part of the invisible Church.

John 17:20. Christ, in his High Priestly prayer, made intercession for future believers in himself, thus recognizing them as part of the invisible Church.

Questions:

1. Why is the invisible Church called "invisible"?

Because we cannot see exactly who, or how many persons, are members of it. Only

God knows the number, and exactly who they are.

2. When the invisible Church is completed, at the end of the world, will the number of its members be great or small?

Read Revelation 7:9-10.

3. Where are the members of the invisible Church at the present time?

Those who have passed away from this earth are in heaven with Christ. The ones who are still living are in this world.

4. In addition to those in heaven and those now living in this world, what group of persons must be included in the invisible Church?

Those now living in this world who are not yet Christians, but will believe in Christ before their death; and also those not yet born, who in their own time will believe in Christ and receive salvation.

5. What name is sometimes given to that portion of the invisible Church that is now with Christ in heaven?

The Church Triumphant.

6. What name is sometimes given to that portion of the invisible Church that is now on this earth?

The Church Militant, so called because it is engaged in a struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

7. Are the Old Testament saints who died in faith, from Abel to the time of Christ, members of the invisible Church?

Yes. Christ has only one spiritual body, and the redeemed of all ages, both Jews and Gentiles, are members of it.

8. Is it possible for a person to be a member of the invisible Church while not a member of a particular branch of the visible church?

Certainly this is possible, but it is an irregular condition. For example, a convict serving a prison term is converted to Christ while in prison. He is a member of the invisible Church, but it may be impossible for him to unite with a particular branch of the visible Church. It is the duty of every Christian, unless providentially prevented, to unite with a particular branch of the visible Church.

9. Is it possible for a person to be a member of the visible Church without being a member of the invisible Church?

Unfortunately it **is** possible, and the deplorable fact is that there have been many such, though only God can know with certainty who they are. Beyond question many people have had their names on church membership rolls whose names were not written in the Book of Life.

10. How can we illustrate the relation between the invisible Church and the visible Church?

One illustration that has been suggested is the analogy of the soul and the body. A more adequate illustration is afforded by drawing a diagram of two circles which partly overlap. One circle stands for the visible Church, those who profess faith in Christ. The other circle stands for the invisible Church, those who are really redeemed and truly united to Christ. The part where the two circles overlap stands for those who are members of both the visible and the invisible Church; that is, they are included in **both** circles, for they both profess faith in Christ and also are truly united to him.

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:

In I Corinthians 7:12 we read: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord . . ." Does this mean that what follows is not the Word of God but only Paul's human opinion? If so, how can the following verses be regarded as inspired?

Answer:

The apostle Paul is not contrasting divine revelation with his own human opinion, nor is he contrasting inspired Scripture with uninspired human writings. He is contrasting words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ when he was on earth, on the one hand, with statements made by himself as an official representative of Christ, on the other hand. In verse 10 he says, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband." This command proceeded not merely from Paul's authority as an apostle of Christ, but was covered by a saying of Jesus Christ himself during his earthly

ministry, just as Paul tells us in I Cor. 11:23 that he received the instructions about the Lord's supper "of the Lord." In I Cor. 7:12 and following verses he is going on to deal with matters not covered by the teaching of Christ during his earthly ministry; in other words, verses 12 and following are the official teaching of Paul as an apostle, but they are not based on recorded sayings of Jesus Christ. Of course the teaching of Christ through his officially appointed apostles is just as authoritative as the teaching of Christ when he was on earth in the flesh. All of Paul's epistles are inspired Scripture, regardless of whether or not he is referring to the earthly teachings of Jesus Christ.

Question:

Please explain the name "Reformed Presbyterian Church". When did the Covenanters decide that the Presbyterian Church needed to be reformed?

Answer:

This query reveals a common misunderstanding of the name "Reformed Presbyterian Church", which takes this name as meaning **Presbyterian Church reformed**,

that is, Presbyterian Church changed or improved in some way. Such is not the meaning of the term.

In the name "Reformed Presbyterian Church, **Reformed** and **Presbyterian** are coordinate adjectives modifying **Church**. **Reformed** does not modify **Presbyterian** as the above query wrongly assumes. The Church which is being described is a **Reformed Church** and it is also a **Presbyterian Church**. The adjective **Reformed** refers to **doctrine**, and is equivalent to **Calvinistic**. It is that system of Christian doctrine which, at the time of the Reformation 400 years ago, came to be called **Reformed** to distinguish it from the Lutheran, Socinian and Roman Catholic systems of doctrine.

Presbyterian is an adjective which refers to a system of church government, namely that system which provides that the Church be governed by ministers and ruling elders in a series of graded courts. The adjective **Presbyterian** distinguishes this system of church government from the papal, episcopal and congregational systems of church government.

The adjective **Presbyterian** is a part of the official name of about fifteen different denominations in the United States of America, and forms a part of the official name of various bodies of Christian people in Canada, the British Isles, Australia and various other countries.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America did not originate in a separation from any other denomination. It was established in this country about 150 years ago by the help of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Nor did the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland originate in a separation from any other Protestant denomination. It originated in a separation from the Roman Catholic Church in 1560. At that time it was known simply as **The Church of Scotland**. After the restoration of Charles II to the throne of Scotland in 1660 the government forced the Episcopal system of government and worship on the Church of Scotland. True Presbyterianism could be practiced only in dissenting conventicles and unofficial society meetings until the Revolution of 1688. After 1688 Presbyterianism was restored by law, but on a somewhat different basis from what had existed before 1660. The Covenanters, in spite of persecution, had kept up their fellowship and worship for 28 years as an "underground" movement. When the Church of Scotland was re-established as a Presbyterian Church in 1688, the Covenanters saw that the basis and character of the Church had been changed, and therefore

they declined to participate in the reorganized Presbyterian Church. As the Covenanters were still standing on their original platform and principles, and only declined to enter a Church which would not accept those principles, they cannot be accused of "separating" from the Church of Scotland. When the Covenanters finally got on their feet again as an organized denomination in 1743 they called the highest court of their Church "The Reformed Presbytery", and their Church came to be called **The Reformed Presbyterian Church**.

Question:

Since the doctrine of God's foreordination or predestination is liable to be misunderstood, would it not be better to speak of God's **foreknowledge** instead?

Answer:

Foreordination is one thing; foreknowledge is another thing. These terms do not mean the same thing. If we mean foreordination, we should say foreordination; if we mean foreknowledge, we should say foreknowledge. If we try to avoid misunderstanding by using the term "foreknowledge" in place of "foreordination" we will only occasion even greater misunderstanding.

Foreordination is a term which connotes **God's decree determining, from all eternity, whatsoever comes to pass**. **Foreknowledge** is a term which connotes **God's total knowledge, from all eternity, of all things that will ever come to pass**. Thus God's **foreknowledge** is subordinate to his **foreordination**. From all eternity he **knows** all things that will ever come to pass, precisely because from all eternity he **has decreed** all things that will ever come to pass.

The popular idea which makes God's foreordination depend on his foreknowledge, holding that he foreordains that which he knows in advance will come to pass, is without support in the Bible, nullifies the sovereignty of God, and reduces God's foreordination to a rubber-stamp acceptance of the decisions of his creatures. This is the error of those who say that "God elects those who elect themselves" and "God foreordains to eternal life those whom he foresees will accept the gospel." This takes human salvation, at the crucial point, out of the hands of God and places it in the hands of men.

Question:

Why did the Christian Church totally abandon missionary work for hundreds of years during the "dark ages?"

Answer:

The idea that the Christian Church totally abandoned missionary work for a period of centuries during the Middle Ages seems to be common in Protestant circles, but it is contrary to the facts. Missionary work had its ebbs and flows in the Middle Ages, but it was never completely abandoned. Indeed it is remarkable, considering the difficulties of travel in those days, how much missionary work was carried on by the Church in the centuries before the Reformation, especially the 13th and 14th centuries. Raymond, head of the Dominican order, interested the great theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in writing a refutation of Mohammedanism, and asked the kings of Aragon and Castile in Spain to found schools for missionaries, in which oriental languages could be taught. In 1245-46 John of Plan-Carpine travelled overland all the way from Europe to the Mongol capital of Karakorum in Outer Mongolia, in the interest of Christian missions. In 1314 Raymond Lull, having learned to speak Arabic fluently, was stoned to death by the Mohammedans whose conversion he sought. In the 14th century many missionaries went to Mongolia and China and their work there was quite successful. By the year 1304 there were five thousand baptized Christians in Peking, with two churches established. The New Testament and the Psalter were translated into Mongolian and presented to the Great Khan who ruled most of Asia. The real drawback to missionary work in the Middle Ages was not lack of zeal so much as lack of a pure gospel to take to the non-Christian world. The pure gospel of God's plan of salvation had become so obscured by errors and superstitions that it was but a feebly flickering light of Christian truth that these earnest and self-sacrificing missionaries carried to the heathen world.

Question:

Why were not Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers more enthusiastic about foreign missions?

Answer:

If your house is on fire, your first concern will be to put the fire out, even if you have to neglect attending missionary meetings to do it. Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Romanism. It was a question of the survival of the real gospel of Christ in Europe. This conflict absorbed all their energies. If they had turned aside from the urgent work of the Reformation to supervise foreign missionary enterprises, the Re-

formation might have been a failure instead of a success. For the time being, all available manpower was needed to spread the light of the gospel through the medieval spiritual darkness of Europe. This did not bring the gospel to the heathen world immediately, but it gave the Church a pure gospel which made foreign missions wonderfully successful in the period which followed. Instead of finding fault with the Reformers because they could not do everything at the same time, we should gratefully acknowledge our debt to them for clearing away the debris of the "dark ages" and calling the Church back to the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question:

Why does Paul say that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28) whereas James declares that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24)? Are not these texts contradictory?

Answer:

These two texts are not contradictory if rightly understood. In Romans 3:28 the apostle Paul is discussing the **ground** of justification. He shows that the ground of our justification is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ (verses 24-26). Human works, or the deeds of the law, form no part of the ground of our justification; they are in no sense the reason why God can declare us to be righteous persons in his sight. We are justified **by means of faith, on the ground** of Christ's righteousness, without doing anything to save ourselves by "the deeds of the law".

James, on the other hand, is not discussing the ground of justification. He is discussing the difference between a true faith and a counterfeit faith, the difference between a **dead faith** and a **living faith**: verse 26, "faith without works is dead". A dead faith, that is, a mere technical belief or assent, which produces no change in a person's life, is not saving faith as set forth in the Bible. True saving faith produces fruits. It evidences itself by good works. These good works form no part of the **ground** of our justification; rather, they are the fruits the results, the evidence of our salvation.

When James asserts that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only", this must not be taken to mean: "On the ground of works a man is justified before God". Note that James does not say we are not justified by faith; he says "not by faith **only**" —that is, not by a **mere** or

bare faith. but by such a faith as produces good fruits in the person's life. Someone has summed this matter up as follows: "We are not saved by good works, but we are not saved **without** them. We are saved by faith alone, but the kind of faith that saves is never found alone, but always leads to and is accompanied by good works in the person's life."

Question:

Why do the Standards of our Church teach that Christ died only for the elect, when the Bible says plainly that "one died for all" (2 Cor. 5:14) and that Christ came to "taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9)?

Answer:

(a) While it is true that there are quite a number of texts which seem to speak of Christ dying "for all", "for the world", "for every man", etc., we should realize that there are also many texts which speak of Christ dying for "his people", "his sheep", etc. In deciding what the Bible teaches on this subject, we must take **all** the texts that bear on the matter into consideration. (b) The real question concerning the extent of Christ's atonement is not whether it was **sufficient** for every individual person in the world but whether it was **intended** for every person in the world or not. As to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, we may without hesitation affirm that it would be sufficient for an infinite number of people, since its value and efficacy depend on Christ's divine nature, which is infinite. That is, it would be sufficient for all the people in the world, **if that had been its intended purpose.** (c) If the intended purpose of Christ's atonement was to save every person in the world, then every person in the world will surely be saved, because God's intended purposes do not and cannot fail. Since the Bible plainly teaches that **not** all men will be saved, we can only conclude that Christ's atonement was not intended to save all men, but only the elect, whom it really does save. (d) Those who hold that Christ's atonement was intended for all men avoid this difficulty by saying that it was not intended to **save** all men, but only to give all men **a chance** for salvation, and it now depends on men's free-will whether they will take it or leave it. According to this idea Christ's atonement gives everybody "a chance" for salvation but does **not actually save anybody,** and a large part of those for whom Christ died will spend eternity in hell. This scheme broadens the atonement to include everybody, but reduces its efficacy to zero, so that it really saves nobody. (e) In many of

the texts which speak of Christ dying "for all", "for the world", etc., these expressions do not mean **all men, but all the elect, all the people of God, the world regardless of distinctions of race, nationality, etc.** An examination of Mark 11:18, 32, Luke 2:1, 19:48, John 12:19, Acts 4:21, 19:47 and many other texts of Scripture will show that in the Bible such terms as "all", "the world", etc., do not mean **every individual person in the world.** (f) In 2 Cor. 5:14 the context shows that Paul's meaning is "all the elect" or "all Christians", rather than "all human beings". (g) In Hebrews 2:9 the word "man" has been added by the translators. The Greek text of this verse does not have the word "man"; it only says that Christ tasted death "for every" (huper pantos). English idiom requires that a word be added, so as to read "for every man", "for every person", etc. But as this verse stands in the Greek it involves no implication that Christ died for every person in the world. It may equally well be taken as meaning "for every one of his people". When Paul said that the Jews were "contrary to all men" (1 Thess. 2:15) he obviously did not mean to affirm that they were contrary to the Eskimos in Greenland with whom they had absolutely no contact, nor that they were contrary to themselves and their own leaders, as his words would imply if "all men" were held to mean every person in the world.

Question:

Why do Covenanters, including ministers, speak of young people of Christian families, who were baptized in infancy, as "joining the Church" when they make a public profession of faith and are admitted to the Lord's Supper? Is this manner of speaking Scripturally correct?

Answer:

(a) The situation alleged in this query is undoubtedly true and widespread. (b) A possible explanation may be the influence on Covenanters of the Baptist viewpoint which is more or less dominant in conservative American Protestantism. This Baptist viewpoint is highly individualistic and leaves no room for the inclusion of children with their parents in the Covenant of Grace as set forth in our Church Standards. (c) This manner of speaking is certainly **not** Scripturally correct, for it implies that such young people were not previously members of the Church. Obviously a person cannot **join** a Church if he is already a member of it. Baptism is the badge of Church membership, and every person, including infants, who is baptized in a Covenanter con-

gregation is recognized, by the fact of Baptism, as a member of that congregation. Those baptized in infancy, when they come to years of discretion should make a personal profession of faith and thereupon be admitted to the Lord's Table and other privileges of communicant Church membership. To speak of such persons as "joining the Church" is to nullify the meaning of infant baptism. However, this notion of the young people of Christian families "joining the Church" seems to be so firmly established that only a real change in our theological thinking could uproot and replace it with Scriptural terminology.

Question:

Does God speak to people directly today as he did in Bible times? Is it correct to say that in prayer we not only talk to God but also pause and listen to his voice?

Answer:

(a) God does **not** speak to people directly today as he did in Bible times. Apart from the general revelation of God in nature and in the human heart and conscience, the **only** way God speaks to people today is by his written Word, the Holy Bible. If modern Christians receive revelations from God as Moses, Daniel and Paul did, then why should not these revelations be incorporated in the Bible as those men's were? (b) God speaks to us by the Bible; we speak to God by prayer. The idea that prayer is a two-way conversation with God is without support in the Bible. The idea of pausing in prayer to listen to God's voice is a **mystical** idea which cannot be justified from the Bible. It may be well in prayer to **pause and think**, but we should beware of identifying our own thoughts with direct messages from God. (c) We sometimes say that God speaks to men by his providence, by events, etc. As God's providence includes all that comes to pass, we may learn some lessons from God's providence, for example concerning God's will for our lives. If a person is deaf and dumb, he may rightly infer that it is not God's will for him to be

a preacher; if God's providence absolutely bars the way for a person to go to Africa as a missionary, he may well conclude that God has not called him to that particular form of service. This kind of divine guidance, however, is not to be thought of as **direct messages from God**, for this guidance does not come directly, but through the operation of the laws of nature, and it conveys no message of truth concerning matters of faith and life. God's providence answers no questions about what we ought to believe or how we ought to live, but only about what we ought to do in particular situations which are not matters of right and wrong. God's providence may indicate that it is not God's will for me to go to Africa as a missionary, but God's providence can never tell me whether it is right or wrong to worship idols, take God's name in vain or bear false witness. For truth about faith and life, we must go to God's written Word, the Holy Bible.

Question:

Do we become children of God by adoption, or by being born again?

Answer:

Both. These are two facts of salvation which are distinct but which always accompany each other. John 1:12, 13 shows that we become the children of God by being born of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 4:5 shows that we become children of God by adoption into his family (see also Ephesians 1:5). Regeneration, or the new birth, is a **vital** change, by which a new life is imparted by the Holy Spirit, and the person who was dead in trespasses and sins becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Adoption is a change in **personal status**, by which the person who was an alien and a stranger is received into, and recognized and treated as a member of, the family of God. Justification is a change in **legal status**, by which the person who was guilty is pronounced righteous and becomes a citizen of the kingdom of God. All of these are distinct facts of salvation, but they all take place in the same person.