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# GENESIS

THE BOOK OF  
THE BEGINNINGS

Volume III

C. C. CRAWFORD, Ph.D., LL.D.

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**College Press, Joplin, Missouri**

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College Press



## COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

*art.*, article  
*cf.*, compare  
*ch.*, chapter  
*chs.*, chapters  
*edit.*, edition  
*e.g.*, for example  
*esp.*, especially  
*et al.*, and others  
*ff.*, following  
*fn.*, footnote  
*Gr.*, Greek  
*Heb.*, Hebrew  
*ibid.*, the same  
*i.e.*, that is  
*in loco*, in the proper place  
*l.*, line  
*ll.*, lines  
*Lt.*, latin  
*infra*, below  
*Intro.*, introduction  
*op. cit.*, in the work cited  
*p.*, page  
*pp.*, pages  
*par.*, paragraph  
*per se*, by or of itself  
*sect.*, section  
*supra*, above  
*s.v.*, under the word  
*trans.*, translated  
*v.*, verse  
*vv.*, verses  
*viz*, namely  
*vol.*, volume

## SPECIFIC ABBREVIATIONS (BIBLIOGRAPHICAL)

- ACB Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Twentieth American Edition (revised by Stevenson). (Funk and Wagnalls, New York).
- ACR Wilhelm Moeller, *Are the Critics Right?* Trans. by C. H. Irwin. (Revell, New York, 1899).
- AD J. W. McGarvey, *The Authorship of Deuteronomy*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1902).
- AOT Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- ARI W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1956).
- ASV, or ARV American Standard Edition of the Revised Version of the Bible (1901).
- AtD Gaalyahu Cornfeld (Editor), *From Adam to Daniel*. (Macmillan, New York, 1961).
- AV Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible
- BA J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BA Emil G. Kraeling, *Bible Atlas*. (Rand McNally, Chicago, 1956).
- BBA Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*. (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BC J. W. McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1910).
- BCOTP C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, Vol. I. Translated from the German by James Martin. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids).
- BE George Gamow, *Biography of the Earth*. (Mentor Book, New American Library, New York, 1948).
- BGJI Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation*. (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1927).
- BMBE Ashley S. Johnson, *The Busy Man's Bible Encyclopedia*. (College Press, Joplin).
- CC C. S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1943).
- CDHCG John Peter Lange, *Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical Commentary: Genesis*. Trans. from the German, with Comments, by Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman. (Scribners, New York, 1868).
- CEHS H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*. (Harper, New York, 1928).

- CG Adam Clarke, *Commentary: Genesis*. (Waugh and Mason, New York, 1832).
- CHB J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. (Macmillan, 1909, 1950).
- Conf. Augustine, *Confessions*. Pusey Translation. (Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1907).
- Cos J. A. McWilliams, S.J., *Cosmology*. (Macmillan, New York, 1939).
- Cr Arnold Guyot, *Creation*. (Scribners, 1884).
- CS A. Campbell, *Christian System*. (Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis, 1835).
- CU George Gamow, *The Creation of the Universe*. (Mentor Book).
- CVSS Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. (Eerdmans, 1954).
- CWB Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (in one volume). (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- DC James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*. (Scribners, 1939).
- DD H. W. Everest, *The Divine Demonstration*.
- DGL Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*. (Augustine's Treatise on Genesis).
- DG William Robinson, *The Devil and God*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, New York and Nashville, 1945).
- EA Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action*. (Mentor Book).
- EB Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasized Bible*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1959).
- EB Isaac Errett, *Evenings with the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati; now available from Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville).
- EBG Marcus Dods, *The Expositor's Bible: Genesis*. (Armstrong, New York, 1895).
- EHS Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scriptures: Genesis*. (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904, 1912).
- ELD William Smith and Theophilus D. Hall, *English-Latin Dictionary*. (American Book Company, and Harper, 1871).
- EM Gilbert K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*. (An Image Book, Doubleday, 1925).
- EOM Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*. (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944).
- ET Ernest C. Messenger, *Evolution and Theology*. (Macmillan, 1932).
- FBM O. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*. (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1943).

- FPOTC D. E. Sharp, *Franciscan Philosophy at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century*. (Oxford University Press, 1930).
- FSAC W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Second Edition. (A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1957).
- FYPR Hamlin Garland, *Forty Years of Psychic Research*. (Macmillan, 1936).
- GB Charles Shook, *The Gist of the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati).
- GBBD Charles F. Kraft, *Genesis: Beginnings of the Biblical Drama*. (Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1964).
- GEL Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. New Edition, Revised by Jones and McKenzie. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1843, 1948).
- GP C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*. (Victor Gollancz, London, and Dover Publications, New York, 1936).
- HC Robert Ulich, *The Human Career*. (Harper, 1955).
- HDT Jules Lebreton, S.J., *History of the Dogma of the Trinity*, Vol. I. Trans. by Algar Thorald from the Eighth Edition. (Benziger Brothers, 1939).
- HHH *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*. Trans. by Evelyn-White. (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1929).
- HSGP John Owen, *The Holy Spirit: His Gifts and Power*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- HHH H. I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*. (Wm. Jewell Press, Liberty, Missouri, 1949).
- HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. (Harper and Row, 1961).
- IBG Cuthbert A. Simpson, Walter Russell Bowie, *The Interpreter's Bible: Genesis*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952).
- ICCFTh James Everett Frame, *The International Critical Commentary: First Thessalonians*. (Scribners, 1953).
- ICCG John Skinner, *The International Critical Commentary: Genesis*. (Scribners, 1910).
- ICCH James Moffatt, *The International Critical Commentary: Hebrews*. (Scribners, 1924, 1952).
- IGOT Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, 1951).
- IH Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Third Revision, trans. by J. W. Harvey. (Oxford, 1925).
- IHR C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*. (Harvard University Press, 1924).
- ISBE *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. James Orr, editor. (Howard-Severance Co., Chicago, 1915).

- ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1955).
- JCHE Meade E. Dutt, *Jesus Christ in Human Experience*. (Standard, Cincinnati).
- Lang. Edward Sapir, *Language*. (Harvest Book: Harcourt, Brace, 1921, 1949).
- LAP Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*. (Princeton University Press, 1947).
- LCL Loeb Classical Library of the Greek and Latin writings, in the original and in English translation. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge).
- LD Harper's *Latin Dictionary*. Andrews's Freund, revised by Lewis and Short. (American Book Company; Harper, 1879; copyright, 1907, by Margaret Lewis).
- LIP Harold W. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*. Third Edition. (American Book Company, 1959).
- LOTB Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*. (Sunday School Times Co., 1907).
- LOT Julius A. Brewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, Third Edition. Revised by Emil G. Kraeling. (Columbia University Press, 1962).
- LP Alexander Campbell, *Lectures on the Pentateuch*. (H. S. Bosworth, Cincinnati, 1867).
- MC C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1952).
- MDNSA A Cressy Morrison, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*. (Revell, New York, 1944).
- MDCB Theodore Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*. (Scribner, Armstrong and Company, New York, 1874).
- ME George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*. (Mentor Book, 1951).
- MFJH Max Lerner, *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*. (Modern Library Edition, 1954).
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- MG Ralph H. Elliott, *The Message of Genesis*. (An Abbott Book, Bethany Press, St. Louis).
- MH Paul De Kruif, *Microbe Hunters*. (Pocket Books, Inc., 1940, 1959).
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- MS A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit*. (Revell, New York, 1895).
- MS Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*. (Doubleday Anchor Book. Yale University Press, 1946).
- MSH Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself*. (Norton, 1953).
- MU Alexis Carrell, *Man the Unknown*. (Harper, New York, 1935).
- MUB Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*. (Macmillan, 1924).
- NBG C. H. Mackintosh ("C.H.M."), *Notes on the Book of Genesis*. (Loizeaux Brothers, New York. First edition in 1880; twenty-sixth printing, 1959).
- NBS Sir James Jeans, *The New Background of Science*. (Macmillan, New York, ).
- NMG Oliver L. Reiser, *Nature, Man and God*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1951).
- NMR George P. Fisher, *The Nature and Method of Revelation*. (Scribners, 1890).
- NPW Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*. (Macmillan, 1933).
- NU Fred Hoyle, *The Nature of the Universe*. (Mentor Book, 1957).
- OG Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The One God*. Trans. by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B., S.T.D. (Herder, St. Louis, 1943).
- PBG Joseph Parker, *The People's Bible: Genesis*. (Hazell, Watson, and Viney, London, 1896).
- PC F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*. (Harcourt, Brace, 1937).
- PCG Thomas Whitelaw, Exposition, *The Pulpit Commentary: Genesis*. New Edition. (Funk and Wagnalls, London and New York).
- PCH J. Barmby and C. Jerdan, *Pulpit Commentary: Hebrews*.
- PCTH P. J. Cloag, *Pulpit Commentary: Thessalonians*.
- PE Timothy J. Brosnahan, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. (Fordham University Press, New York, 1941).
- PM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. (Harper Torchbook, 1961).
- PNK Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*. (Mentor Book, 1942).
- PPT Hocking, Blanshard, Hendel, Randall, Jr., *Preface to Philosophy: Textbook*. (Macmillan, 1947).
- PR Edgar S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*. (Prentice-Hall, New York, 1946).
- PR D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*. (Harper, 1957).

- PURT Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*. (Oxford, 1945).  
 RD Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*. (Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, New York, 1959).  
 RF L. P. Jacks, *Religious Foundations*. (Rufus M. Jones, Editor, Macmillan, 1923).  
 RI Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg. (University of Chicago Press, 1960).  
 RTOT Albert C. Knudson, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1918).  
 RS H. C. Christopher, *The Remedial System*.  
 RSFI W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. (Appleton, New York, 1889).  
 RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible.  
 SBG W. E. Powers, *Studies in the Book of Genesis*. (Christian Alliance Publishing Company, New York, 1928).  
 SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*. Trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston. (Knopf, 1956).  
 SMP *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, Richard McKeon, Editor. (Scribners, 1929).  
 SOTI Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. (Moody Press, Chicago, 1964).  
 SR Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*. (Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1868).  
 SRG James H. Jauncey, *Science Returns to God*. (Zondervan, 1961).  
 ST Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*. One-Volume Edition. (Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1907).  
 ST Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.  
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 SUW Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*. (Macmillan, 1930).  
 TMB J. W. Monser, *Types and Metaphors of the Bible*. (F. L. Rowe, Cincinnati, 1936).  
 TMV Sir James Jeans, *This Mysterious Universe*. New Revised Edition. (Macmillan, 1943).  
 TSMR Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Translated by Audra and Brereton. (Henry Holt, 1935).  
 TP Nathaniel Micklem, *The Theology of Politics*. (Oxford, 1941).

- UBG William Henry Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*. (Scribners, 1895).
- UDE Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*. (Sloane Associates, New York, 1948).
- VS George Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*. (Hodder and Stoughton, New Work).
- WLP E. V. Miller, *Within the Living Plant*. (Blakeston Company, Toronto, 1952).
- WMIA John Gillin, *The Ways of Men: An Introduction to Anthropology*. (Appleton-Century, 1948).
- WPNT A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. In six volumes. (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1930).



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- AC Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, trans. by Pierre Loving, Payson and Clarke Ltd., New York, 1928.
- ADB John W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. Originally published in 1874. Out of print.
- Anth. Alexander Goldenweiser, *Anthropology*. Crofts, 1946.
- BG Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*. Shield Bible Study Series, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1963.
- BMS Henry M. Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*. Moody Press, 1958.
- BS Godet, *Biblical Studies*. Out of print.
- BWR Hugh J. Schonfeld, *The Bible Was Right*. Signet Key Book, New American Library of World Literature, 1959.
- CAL Edw. F. Campbell, Jr., *The Chronology of the Amarna Letters*. Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1964.
- CBL Kitto, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*. Out of print.
- CDD G. K. Chesterton, *Chesterton Day by Day*, Second Edition. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, et al, 1912.
- CG F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *Christliche Glaube*.
- CR Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Romans*. Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1975.
- CR F. A. Filby, *Creation Revealed*. Revell, 1963.
- DBI Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*. Out of print.
- DEAM J. D. Thomas, *The Doctrine of Evolution and the Antiquity of Man*. Biblical Research Press, Abilene, Texas, 1963.
- DHS John Owen (1616-1683), *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Earlier issues undated. Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- DM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*. Paris, 1957.
- EE Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. by Galantieri and Philan. Pantheon Book, 1948. Image Book, 1957.
- EG H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 vols. Baker, 1942.
- EHS F. E. Marsh, *Emblems of the Holy Spirit*. Pickering and Inglis, London, 1888, 1923.
- Exst. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism*. Trans. by Frechtman, New York, 1947.
- FG John W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel*. Standard Publishing, Cincinnati.

- FI Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood*. Concordia, St. Louis, 1951.  
 FM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*. Trans. by Denny, Harper, 1964.  
 GEOTP Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press, 1949.  
 GF Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Genesis Flood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1966.  
 GP Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Trans. from the original Arabic by Friedlander. Dover, 1956.  
 GPE Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*. Trans. by Evans. Bruce, Milwaukee.  
 GPS T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*. Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1928.  
 HBD *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Sixth Edition. By Madeleine S. and J. Lane Miller. New York, 1959.  
 Herm. D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*. Standard, Cincinnati. Out of print.  
 HSHS W. E. Biederwolf, *A Help to the Study of the Holy Spirit*. Revell, New York, 1904.  
 HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. Trans. by Bartholomew. Harper, 1965.  
 ICR John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. by Battles. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 2 vols., 1960.  
 IHI William Jennings Bryan, *In His Image*. Revell, 1922.  
 ILSM Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *Introduction to Logic and the Scientific Method*. Harcourt, Brace, 1934.  
 IRP John Wild, *Introduction to a Realistic Philosophy*. Harper, 1948.  
 ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. Trans. from the German by Cleugh. Houghton Mifflin, 1956.  
 JB *The Jerusalem Bible*. Alexander Jones, Editor. Doubleday, 1966.  
 KV *Knowledge and Value*, edited by Sprague and Taylor. Harcourt, Brace, 1959.  
 LPh *Living Philosophies*. "A series of intimate credos." Simon and Schuster, 1931.  
 LS J. W. N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science*. Mentor Book, 1949.  
 MOT Abba Hillel Silver, *Moses and the Original Torah*. Macmillan, 1961.  
 MP Will Durant, *The Mansions of Philosophy*. Simon and Schuster, 1929.  
 NBD J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*. Eerdmans, 1962.  
 NG C. H. Mackintosh ("C.H.M."), *Notes on Genesis*. First Printing, 1880; Twenty-sixth Printing, 1959. Loizeaux Brothers, New York.  
 OBH B. S. Dean, *Outline of Bible History*. Standard, Cincinnati.  
 OK Glenn Negley, *The Organization of Knowledge*. Prentice-Hall, 1942.

- OTH William Smith and Wilbur Fields, et al, *Old Testament History*. College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 1967.
- PA Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Patriarchal Age*. Baker, 1961.
- PC William Henry Roberts, *The Problem of Choice*. Ginn, Chicago, 1941.
- PHD James R. Illingworth, *Personality: Human and Divine*. Bampton Lectures for 1894, Macmillan, London, 1923. A small book, now out of print, but a classic in its field.
- PLS John G. Kemeny, *A Philosopher Looks at Science*. Van Nostrand, 1959.
- PPI Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, Holt, 1937.
- RH *The Restoration Herald*, Cincinnati, Ohio
- RMNC M. M. Davis, *The Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century*. Standard, 1914.
- RSB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Ras Shamra and the Bible*. Baker, 1962.
- SBS Henry M. Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1966.
- SHS C. Gordon Brounville, *Symbols of the Holy Spirit*. Out of print.
- SIB *The Self-Interpreting Bible* (in four volumes), James W. Lee, Editor. N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, New York and St. Louis, 1896.
- SMP Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Scribner, 1936.
- STC R. M. MacIver, *Society: A Textbook of Sociology*. Farrar and Rinehart, 1937.
- TAB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Tell El Amarna and the Bible*. Baker, 1963.
- TBHB A. P. Weiss, *A Theoretical Basis of Human Behavior*, R. G. Adams Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1925.
- TP Robert E. Brennan, O.P., Ph.D., *Thomistic Philosophy*. Macmillan, 1941.
- TWC Edw. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*. University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- WSAE Robert T. Clark and James D. Bales, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*. Baker, 1966.
- YGOT Robert W. Gleason, S.J., *Yahweh: The God of the Old Testament*. Prentice-Hall, 1964.

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- AOTW John Gray, *Archaeology and the Old Testament World*. Harper Torchbook, 1962.
- BWDBA Charles Pfeiffer, Editor, *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966.
- CECG Robert Jamieson, *Critical and Experimental Commentary, Genesis*. Vol. I of the complete Commentary on the Bible by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.
- COTH G. F. Maclear, *A Classbook of Old Testament History*. Macmillan, London, 1881.
- COTP, or KDCOTP Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, translated from the German by James Martin. Reissued by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- DB John D. Davis, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Fourth Revised Edition. Reprinted by Baker, Grand Rapids, 1962.
- ELBT Samuel Noah Kramer, section "The World of Abraham," in *Everyday Life in Bible Times*. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 1967. A work which literally makes alive the story of the Patriarchal Age. Thoroughgoing, profoundly interesting, entertaining, and beautifully illustrated. A book for your permanent library.
- FBE Fairbairn's *Imperial Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Patrick. Art., Vol. III, p. 66, by Duncan H. Weir, on the names *Hebrew*, *Israelite*, etc. Complete work in six volumes, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1957.
- GL George M. Lamsa, *Gospel Light: Comments from the Aramaic and Unchanged Eastern Customs on the Teachings of Jesus*. A. J. Holman Company, Philadelphia, 1939.
- HEW John Owen, *Hebrews—The Epistle of Warning*, Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1955.
- HH Frank Sanders, *History of the Hebrews*, Scribners, 1914.
- HSB Harold Lindsell, Editor, *Harper Study Bible*. Harper and Row, New York, 1946, 1952, 1962, 1964. An excellent work.
- IOT Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Revised Edition, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964. An exhaustive refutation of the critical theories of the Old Testament books.
- JIBG Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *A Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Genesis*. Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1920.

- NG Frederick W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1877.
- NSB Orville J. Nave and Anna Semans Nave, *Nave's Study Bible*, 81st Edition. Moody Press, Chicago, 1907.
- NTCH R. Milligan, *New Testament Commentary: Hebrews*, Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1875.
- OHH J. Barton Payne, *Outline of Hebrew History*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- OOH Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942.
- OTS Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*. Harper and Row, 1960.
- PCJ *The Pulpit Commentary: Joshua*. Exposition by J. J. Lias. New Edition. Wilcox and Follett, Chicago.
- RS H. Christopher, *The Remedial System*. Transylvania Press, Lexington, Ky., 1876; John Burns, St. Louis, 1880.
- SC A Cohen, Editor, *The Soncino Chumash*. The Soncino Press Ltd., London, Sixth Edition, 1966.
- SHANE S. J. Schwantes, *Short History of the Ancient Near East*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1965.
- SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*. Knopf, New York, 1956.
- SJL Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *Studies in Jewish Literature*, Kohler Volume, George Reimer, Berlin, 1913.
- WNCD *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam, Springfield, Mass. 1949 Edition.

## EXPLANATORY

In presenting the material in Genesis covering the story of the Patriarchal Age we found so much more that is of great interest, not only exegetically but homiletically as well, that a further decision was made (see "Explanatory," Introduction, p. xvi., Vol. II) to close this volume on the Abrahamic Pilgrimage and Covenant. We trust that our readers will find this material interesting and helpful. It is now planned that, at some time in the future, a fourth (and final) volume will be issued covering the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. There is outstanding material for Bible students, and for ministers especially, in these chapters which make up almost one-half of the entire book.

C. C. Crawford

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# CHRONOLOGY OF PRE-MOSAIC AGES

(all dates are B.C. and approximate only)

<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine</i>	<i>Mesopotamia (Tigris-Euphrates)</i>	<i>Iran (Persia)</i>
6000 End of the Late Stone (Neolithic) Age			
4000 First Union ( <i>Heitopolis</i> )		Sumerians	
3500 Second Union, under Menes, <i>Memphis</i>		Ur I	
3400-2500 Pyramid Age	3000 Amorites	2500 Sumer-Akkad Dynasty of Sargon Ur II	2500 Elamites at <i>Susa</i> ( <i>Shushan</i> )
	2500 Mari clay tablets		
	2400 Hittites	2050 Ur III	
2200-1800 Fendal Age ( <i>Thebes</i> )	1900-1600 First Hittite Empire ( <i>Hattusas</i> )	Kassites	
		2000 Abraham leaves Ur	
1800-1680 The Hyksos	1500 Mitanni invaders	1700 Hammurabi at Babylon	
1680-1150 The Empire	Nuzi clay tablets		
1500 Thutmose III ( <i>Thebes</i> )			
1400 Amenhotep IV, (Ikhnaton)	1400-1200 Second Hittite Empire	1250 Rise of Assyria	
<i>Amyrna</i>	1400 Ugaritic tablets	1118-1078 Reign of Tiglath-Pileser (use of iron)	
1290-1224 Ramesses II. ( <i>Thebes</i> )			
1280 Exodus of Hebrews	1240-1020 Hebrew Conquest Period of the "Judges"	Temporary Decline of Assyria	
1100 End of Egyptian Empire	1020-900 Saul, David, Solomon		The Medes



# GENESIS

THE BOOK OF  
THE BEGINNINGS

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE  
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND  
Volume 100, Part 1, 1970

PART TWENTY-FIVE:  
THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH  
(Gen. 11:27-32)

*The Central Theme (Motif) of the Bible*

The Bible is not, was never intended to be, a book of science, or a book of philosophy (which is exclusively human speculation), or even a history of the human race. It is, rather, the history of a single genealogical Line, the Line that flowered and terminated in the story of Messiah, the Redeemer. It is, therefore, preeminently the Book of Redemption: its content is the story of the progressive unfolding (actualization) of the divine Plan of Redemption. It is in fact the record of the actualization of God's Cosmic Plan in its fulness, in which Redemption is revealed as the final phase of the Creation. As it is made clear in Biblical teaching throughout, our God, the living and true God, "declares the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:9-11). It is His Will, His Eternal Purpose (Eph. 2:8-12) that the Cosmic Process, which began when He first spoke the Word, "Light, be!" shall attain fulfilment in the Last Judgment, at which time His saints, the Sheep of His Pasture (Psa. 79:13; 100:3) shall be presented as "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:28-20) "clothed in glory and honor and incorruption" (Rom. 2:2-7; cf. Acts 17:31, Matt. 25:31-46, Rev. 20:11-15, 21:1-8, 22:1-5). As any plan is to be evaluated by its end product, the Divine Plan will be so evaluated in that last great Day, the "time of the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) by its end-product, the glorified saint. And even if it should turn out that only one redeemed soul, only one "overcomer" (Rev. 3:5, 12, 21, etc.), will be presented as having ultimately "attained" (Phil. 2:10-15), the Cosmic Plan will be joyously acclaimed by all existing intelligences as victorious, indeed worth all it has cost Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not on the basis of the number redeemed, but on the ground of the ineffable quality of the redemption

that shall be disclosed (Rom. 8:23, 1 Thess. 5:23). We are assured, however, by the word of our God that the number of the glorified shall not be small, but shall come "out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9-10); and this is the Word that stands sure and stedfast (1 Pet. 1:25, 2 Pet. 1:19, 2 Tim. 2:9, Luke 21:33, etc.). These, we are told, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), shall constitute the glorious citizenry of the City of God, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).

We must never lose sight of the awesome truth that *eternity is timelessness*: it has been rightly said that time is the narrow vale between the mountain-peaks of two eternities. It follows, therefore, although our poor minds are unable to grasp it, that God does not, in the strict sense of the term, *foreknow*: rather, *He simply knows*. The whole temporal process is but His single Thought. In God essence IS existence: the essence of our God is *to be*: He dwells always in the present tense; with Him it is always NOW (2 Cor. 6:2, Luke 14:17; Isa. 49:8, 55:6; 2 Pet. 3:8); hence, the great and incommunicable Name of our God is I AM, HE WHO IS (Exo. 3:13-14). He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6, 22:13; cf. Isa. 41:4), the Beginning and the End, *only in the sense that He is without beginning or end*. This is not only the testimony of Scripture; it is that of reason as well. There must be back of all being, the very Creator and Preserver of it all, a Power that is without beginning or end; else our only alternative is the belief that sometime, somewhere, nothing created this vast something which we call the world, the cosmos, with its multifarious living creatures. Such a notion, however, is inconceivable: even the ancients were wise enough to know that *ex nihilo, nihil fit*. (Incidentally, the most ardent evolutionist, whether he admits it or not, cannot escape the fact that his theory is, after all, a theory of *creation*.)

## THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH 11:27-32

As Arthur Holly Compton, the eminent physicist and Nobel prize winner, once put it: "A God who can control a universe like this is mighty beyond imagination."

All this boils down to the fact which we emphasize here, that God's Cosmic Plan which had its beginning in the Paradise Lost of Genesis will have its fulfilment—by His own Eternal Purpose and Design—in the Paradise Regained so wondrously portrayed for us in the book of Revelation. The essence of this Plan is the redemption of the Faithful—the Overcomers (cf. Rev. 2:7, 17, etc.; 1 Cor. 15:58, Matt. 25:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:2, 4:7)—in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). We find the first intimations of it in the opening chapters of Genesis. Thus we emphasize the fact again that the Bible as a whole, primarily—it would not be amiss to say, it is exclusively—the Story of Redemption; and, as we shall now see, the motif of this entire story is set for us in the mysterious oracle of Genesis 3:15.

### *The Seed of the Woman*

Gen. 3:15. The matter of supreme importance here is that of understanding what is implied in the phrase, the Woman's Seed. Here we are told that, in the spiritual conflict of the ages, the Old Serpent's seed shall bruise the *heel* of the Woman's Seed, signifying a mean, insidious, vicious, generally unsuccessful warfare (the heel is not a particularly important part of the anatomy), a kind of "guerilla warfare," let us say, whereas the Woman's Seed shall ultimately *crush* the Serpent-seed's *head* (the ruling part of the person and personality), signifying, as we know in the light of the New Testament fulfilment, the complete victory of Messiah (Christ) over all evil (Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 15:25-26, Phil. 2:9-11, Matt. 25:31-46, Rom. 2:4-11, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 2 Pet. 3:1-13, Jude 6, Rev. 20:7-10, etc.). (See my *Genesis*, II, 150-156).

The story of this age-old conflict is presented in Scripture in a series of progressive limitations of the mean-

ing of the phrase, the Seed of the Woman, first from her generic seed, the whole human race as descended from Eve, "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20), to her divinely selected *ethnic* seed, the fleshly seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the Children of Israel) to become the Old Covenant people of God. Little by little, however, as we read on through the testimony of the Hebrew prophets, the divinely intended limitation becomes clearer and clearer, until we finally realize that the Seed specifically designed to thwart, and ultimately to completely rout, Satan and his rebel host, is not a race nor a people, but a Person, *the* Person, Jesus, Messiah, Christ, God's Only Begotten (John 3:16). (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Phil. 2:7-10, Heb. 2:14-15). Moreover, because the Bible gives us the History of Redemption, it also identifies the genealogical Line through which this Plan of Redemption is effectuated, that is, the Line that culminates in Jesus the Messiah, commonly designated the Messianic Line. (Cf. Matt. 16:16, John 19:30, Heb. 1:1-4). It should be recalled here that God literally separated the Hebrew people, the Children of Israel, from the rest of mankind and put them into the pulpit of the world to do five things: (1) to preserve the knowledge of the living and true God, (2) to preserve the knowledge of the moral law, Gal. 3:19, (3) to prepare the world for the advent and ministry of the Messiah, and (4) to build up a system of metaphor, type, allegory, and prophecy to identify Messiah at His appearance in the flesh, and (5) actually to give the Messiah—Prophet, Priest and King—to the world.

Again, the progression of the spiritual conflict—the Great Controversy—which has been waged throughout time between the forces of evil, led by the Old Serpent, the Devil, and the forces of righteousness (redemption) under the leadership of the Seed of the Woman, the Son of God, has, generally speaking, paralleled the successive delimitations of the meaning of the phrase under considera-

## THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH 11:27-32

tion here. The oracle of Gen. 3:15 surely pointed forward to the successive phases of this Controversy, that is, the conflict (1) between the Devil and the whole human race (John 14:30, 2 Cor. 4:4); (2) between the Devil and God's Old Covenant people, the fleshly seed of Abraham (Job, chs. 1, 2; I Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1-5); (3) between the Devil and the Messiah Himself (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 22:39-46, John 8:44, Heb. 2:14-16); (4) and finally, between the Devil and the New Covenant elect, the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16-19, 3:27-29; Eph. 3:8-11, 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

In the book of Genesis the Story of Redemption is carried forward in the following prophetic references to Messiah, as follows: (1) He would be the Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:14-15, Matt. 1:18-23, Luke 1:26-28, Gal. 4:4-5); (2) He would ultimately triumph over the Old Serpent, the Devil (Gen. 3:14-15, Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 12:10-12, 20:7-10); (3) He would be of the Seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:24; Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 11:17-18); (4) He would be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Psalms 2:6-9, 60:7; Heb. 7:14, Rev. 5:5). The very heart of the Abrahamic Promise was the promise of the Reign of Messiah, the Redeemer.

### "Generations"

We have noted previously (Vol. I, pp. 46-47) that the book of Genesis divides readily into ten sections, each introduced by the word *toledoth*, translated "generations." (It must be recalled that this introductory term "generations," refers always to that which follows and never to that which precedes, in time.) These are as follows: (1) the generations of the heavens and of the earth (chs. 2:4—4:26); (2) the generations of Adam (chs. 5:1—6-8); (3) the generations of Noah (chs. 6:9—9:29); (4) the generations of the sons of Noah (chs. 10:1—11:9); (5)

the generations of Shem (ch. 11:10-26); (6) the generations of Terah (chs. 11:27—25:11); (7) the generations of Ishmael (ch. 25:12-18); (8) the generations of Isaac (chs. 25:19—35:29); (9) the generations of Esau (ch. 36); (10) the generations of Jacob (chs. 37:2—50:26). It will be noted that according to this schema the story is carried forward to the account of the death and burial of Abraham. The reason for this is, no doubt, the fact that Abraham is the chief character throughout: all that is told us about Terah, Nahor, Haran, Lot (the son of Haran), and Rebekah (the granddaughter of Nahor), is recorded only as the events in which these persons were involved are of significance in relation to the life of Abraham. It should be noted that the genealogical progression here follows the pattern set for the Generations of Noah (6:10), namely, that as the latter began with the naming of his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, so the Generations of Terah are introduced by the names of his three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. There is a kind of symmetry about these genealogical tables that is most interesting. Furthermore, the Call of Abraham (12:1) is related to the prophetic promise regarding Shem (9:26); indeed it is the beginning of the fulfilment of that promise.

#### *The Progeny of Eber*

This name becomes rather important in relation to the Semitic genealogical table. Eber is presented therein as the great-grandson of Shem, who at the age of thirty-four became the father of Peleg (Gen. 11:16, cf. 1 Chron. 1:18), and later of other sons and daughters, one of whom was Joktan (10:21, 25). His total life span was 464 years (11:16). It seems that Eber was the progenitor of a large segment of the Arabs of Arabia through Joktan (present-day Arabian tribes insist that pure Arabs descended from Joktan, and many are still known as "children of Joktan"), and of the Hebrews through Peleg (as the Table expressly asserts).



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There can be little doubt, however, that some correlation exists between the name Eber and the word *Hebrew*. Eber means "one who passes over." It is interesting to note that the name *Habiru* or *Hapiru* ("those who cross over") is used, apparently, throughout the archeological archives of the ancient Near East to designate Semitic nomads. (Note that the name *Arab* apparently is a dialectical variant for *Eber*, and hence may have come to distinguish the wandering tribes who descended through Joktan from those who descended through Peleg and who lived semi-sedentary lives on irrigated lands). These Habiru or Hapiru appeared in various parts of the Fertile Crescent in the second millenium B.C. They appeared at Larsa, Babylon, Mari, Alalakh, Nuzi, Boghazkoy, Ugarit, and even at Amarna in Egypt. In these records they are almost uniformly described as restless nomadic people. At Mari they operated as bands of semi-nomads. In the Amarna letters they are portrayed as lawless gangs who were joined by oppressed urban peoples in attacks on the established cities. Some hold that the name Habiru may have designated a social caste rather than an ethnic group.

Be this as it may, the consensus is, overwhelmingly, that from the eponym Eber came the name *Hebrew* as used in the Bible as a patronymic for Abraham and his seed. In this connection an excellent discussion of the name *Hebrew* and its relation to the name *Israelite* may be found in Fairbairn's *Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 66. The article is by Duncan H. Weir. It goes substantially as follows: Herbrew, according to this writer, was a name of wider import at least in its earlier use. Every Israelite was a Hebrew, but every Hebrew was not an Israelite. In Genesis 15:13 Abraham the Hebrew is mentioned along with Mamre the Amorite. In Gen. 39:14, 40:15, and 41:12 Joseph is spoken of as a Hebrew and the land of Palestine as the land of the Hebrews. In Gen. 10:21, Shem is called "the father of all the children of Eber" or

Hebrews. In Num. 24:24, it is not probable that by Eber, who is mentioned along with Asshur, the children of Israel, and they only, are meant. After the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites the name *Hebrew* was no longer used with its original latitude. When it is used in preference to *Israelite*, there is always a reference to the foreign relations of Israel. It is used (1) by foreigners (Exo. 1:16, 2:7; 1 Sam. 4:6-9, 14:11, etc.); (2) by Israelites when addressing foreigners (Exo. 2:7, 3:18; Jonah 1:9); (3) when Israelites are opposed to foreign nations (Gen. 40:15, 43:32; Exo. 2:11, 21:2; Deut. 15:12; Jer. 34:9, 14). (1 Sam. 13:3 seems to be an exception). "*Hebrew* was the international designation, *Israelite* the local and domestic name, the family name, if we may so speak, surrounded with all the sacredness of home associations, and thus having attached to it a spiritual import which never was and never could be associated with the name *Hebrew*. Greek and Roman writers seem to have known nothing of the name *Israelite*. *Hebrew* and *Jew* are the names they employed." The name *Hebrew* is comparatively rare, even in the Old Testament, being found there only 32 times. The word never occurs in what we call Hebrew poetry. No Hebrew prophet ever prophesies of the Hebrews. (Found only in the story of Jonah 1:9 and in Jer. 34:9, 14, where the Pentateuch is quoted. *Hebrew* is not met with after the accession of David. "The reason is obvious: *Hebrew* is the name which linked the descendants of Jacob with the nations; *Israel* the name which separated them from the nations." In latter times, about the beginning of the Christian era, the use of the name *Hebrew* as an ancient and venerable name was revived (Acts 6:2, 2 Cor. 11:22, Phil. 3:5). There is disparity of this opinion—this author goes on to say—regarding the origin of the name *Hebrew*, whether as patronymic from Eber or Heber, or as an appellation from the term *Hebrew* as designating an immigrant "from beyond," that is, from beyond the river Eu-

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phrases. The two opinions are not necessarily incompatible. Indeed the name may have been prophetic, thus including a pre-intimation of the migratory tendencies and life of his (Eber's) posterity.

Perhaps it should be noted here that the name *Jew* came to be used to designate an inhabitant of the kingdom and land of Judah. It seems to have originated during and after the Captivity. It was commonly used by non-Jews to refer to the Hebrews, or descendants of Abraham in general. In Jeremiah 34:9, "Jew" is used to explain "Hebrew." (See Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel). It is also used to describe the local Semitic dialect spoken in Judah ("Jews' language," 2 Ki. 18:26, 28; Isa. 36:11, 13; Neh. 13:24). Similarly, in the A.V., "Jewry" stands for Judah (Dan. 5:13, Luke 23:5, John 7:1). By New Testament times the plural form "Jews" had become a familiar term for all Israelites. Note the feminine "Jewess" in 1 Chron. 4:18; Acts 16:1, 24:24; also the adjective "Jewish" in Gal. 2:14 (Gr.), Tit. 1:14.

### *The Patriarchal Dispensation*

The name "patriarch" (from the Greek *patriarches*, "father rule") occurs only in the New Testament, and is given only to the heads or princes of the family group, with reference particularly to those who lived before the time of Moses. The family included, as a rule, some three or four generations, and with increase in number gradually developed into the *tribe*. (The Apostle's reference to "the patriarch David" (Acts 2:29) seems to be a recognition of David's primacy as the head of the monarchy. The Davidic reign was always held by the people of Israel to be the most glorious period of their history. The city of Jerusalem is repeatedly designated "the city of David" in the Old Testament historical books: cf. 2 Sam. 6:10, I Ki. 2:10, 1 Chron. 11:7, 2 Chron. 9:31, etc., cf. Luke 2:4, 11. Note also Ps. 48:2 and the Messianic prophecy, Isa. 9:6-7; also the words of Jesus, Matt. 5:35, "nor by Jerusalem, for

it is the city of the great King.”) (Note that “Abraham, the patriarch” is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek, Heb. 7:4; also that “the twelve patriarchs” of Stephen’s *apologia*, were the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Jacob or Israel, Acts 7:8-9.)

The New Testament word “dispensation” (Gr. *oikonomia*, “household management,” whence our English term, “economy”) may also be rendered “stewardship.” (Eph. 1:10, 3:2; Col. 1:25). In these Scriptures it is God Himself who is regarded as Steward. Steward of *what*? Of the gracious favors which he bestows upon His people, the sheep of His pasture. (In 1 Cor. 9:17, the Apostle Paul, in defending his apostleship, declares Himself to have been entrusted with this Divine stewardship, the stewardship of the Gospel: cf. 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 1:6-17). The *modus operandi* (system) of this Divine stewardship has been actualized and revealed in three successive Dispensations. Hence, in harmony with the essential elements of Biblical religion (altar, sacrifice, and priesthood) it will be noted that Dispensations changed as the successive priesthoods were changed. The Patriarchal Dispensation, extending, from Adam to Moses, was the period in which the father acted as priest (mediator) for his entire household (his living progeny). Throughout this Dispensation, God revealed His laws, established His institutions, and dispensed the benefits and blessings of His grace, through the fathers or heads of families, who were known as patriarchs. When the respective families had grown into tribes, this Dispensation gave way to the Mosaic or Jewish Dispensation. This occurred with the giving of the Law at Sinai through the mediatorship of Moses. Here the Abrahamic Covenant was enlarged into the Sinaitic Covenant, the Patriarchal priesthood was abrogated and the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was instituted. This, which was essentially a national covenant with a national priesthood, continued in force to the death of Christ at Calvary. By the shedding of His

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blood, He abrogated the Old Covenant and its Dispensations, and at the same time ratified the New Covenant and instituted the Christian Dispensation. At this time the old Levitical national priesthood gave way to the universal priesthood of the saints. Under this New Covenant all Christians are priests unto God and Christ Himself is their sole Mediator and High Priest. (Cf. Exo. chs. 28, 29, 30; Lev. chs. 8, 9; Heb. chs. 7, 8, 9, 10; Rom. 12:1, Heb. 13:15, 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 22:17, etc.) The Patriarchal Dispensation was essentially the age of the Father, the Jewish Dispensation the age of the Son, and the present Christian Dispensation is the age of the Spirit who came on Pentecost to incorporate the Body of Christ and to dwell therein unto the time of the Glorious Consummation (John 7:39, 14:16-17, 15:26-27, 16:7-12, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, Phil. 2:5-11, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, etc.)

### *The Generations of Terah (Gen. 11:27-32)*

Let us keep in mind the fact that this introductory term, *toledoth*, "generations," refers always to that which follows, and never to that which precedes, in time.

*"27 Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, Nabor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 29 And Abram and Nabor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nabor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah, 30 and Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. 32 And the days of Terah*

were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

*The Migration From Ur to Haran*

(1) Having traced the descendants of Eber down to Nahor, now the Messianic genealogy is narrowed down specifically from the *generic* to the *ethnic* ("chosen") seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), namely the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exo. 3:6, 15:16; Matt. 22:32, Mark 12:26, Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13, 7:32). (Note Terah's name in the Lineage as given by Luke (3:34). Note also that Matthew introduces the Line with Abraham, obviously because Matthew's primary objective was to present Jesus as Messiah identified by Old Testament prophecy, hence his oft-recurring clause, "that it might be fulfilled," as first used in Matt. 1:22-23). (2) It should be noted, too, that the Line is given in more detail at this point with the view to introducing the two parents, Abram and Sarai whose names are changed later to Abraham and Sarah (17:5, 15—from Abram, "exalted father," to Abraham, "father of a multitude"; from Sarai, "my princess," to Sarah, "princess": according to Gesenius, whereas formerly she was Abram's princess only, she was now to become princess in a more exalted sense, princess of a people: the name indicates she was a woman of some social standing). EG, Vol. I, 399: "'Sarai,' according to its root, cannot be the same as *Sharra* and so related to *Sharratu*, the goddess of Charran, the wife of the moon-god Sin. Such efforts to make historical personages identical with mythological figures degrade Biblical history." (3) This section also introduces Nahor (cf. 1 Chron. 1:26), Rebekah's grandfather (24:24), and Lot, the ancestor of the Moabites and the Ammonites (19:30-31). (4) Note also Abraham's explanation (Gen. 20:12) that Sarah was his half-sister (his father's daughter, but not the daughter of his mother). Despite some fantastic conjectures as to the

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meaning of this statement, the most likely explanation is that of the text itself, meaning that she was Terah's daughter by another wife than Abraham's mother. It should be noted that Milcah, the wife of Nahor and mother of Bethuel, was Nahor's *niece* (Gen. 11:29, 22:20-23; 24:15, 24, 47). Again, if Sarai was daughter of the father of whom Abram was son, she could not have been identified with Iscah for the simple reason that Iscah's father, we are told expressly, was Haran. Marriage with a half-sister or niece was forbidden later by the Mosaic Code (Lev. 18:6-18). Leupold (EG, I, 399): "We dare not judge relations such as these—which would now be properly termed incestuous—according to the standards of the present time. As long as it pleased God to let the human race descend from one pair, it must be conceded that for a time marriage between brothers and sisters was a necessity. It may well have taken quite a time before a sense of the impropriety of such a relation arose" (cf. Acts 17:30). (Father-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister sexual relationships are radically different from the type of affection on which the conjugal union is based, and hence can hardly become the bases on which domestic society is constructed. The overwhelming testimony of anthropology is that incest was frowned upon very early in the history of man, or even prohibited outright, by human societies generally, whether primitive, prehistoric, or historic.) *It should be noted here that Iscah never appears again in the Biblical story.*

(5) It is most significant that to Sarah's barrenness, which was to figure prominently in the story of the chosen seed, attention is drawn emphatically at this point, by the parallel statement, "she had no children." This is the first intimation of the birth of the Child of Promise, which, like the conception and birth of Jesus from the virgin womb of Mary, was surely an event outside the course of what we call the operations of "nature."

(6) "Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." The order of the sons' names as given here parallels that of the sons of Noah (Gen. 6:10). It is prophetic in the sense that it is not the order in time, but in the relative eminence to be accorded them in the history of redemption. From this latter point of view, the name of Abram necessarily came first because it was at this point that all facets of the Biblical motif converged upon him. That Haran was the eldest of the three sons seems evident from the fact that Nahor married his daughter. That Abram was the youngest seems equally obvious from the rather clear indication that he was born sixty years after the date given for the actualization of Terah's paternity (70 years), and that he was seventy-five years old when his father died in Haran at the age of 205. (Cf. 11:26, 11:32, 12:4). The problem involved here is that of determining whether Abram was born when Terah was 70 years old or when he was 130 years old.

(7) The first stage of the migration—the pilgrimage to the Promised Land—is described in the section quoted above (11:27-32). This was the journey from Ur in Lower Mesopotamia, near the head of the Persian Gulf, northward about 600 miles through the Fertile Crescent to Haran (also known as Charran) in Northwest Mesopotamia, in the heart of what was at a later time the kingdom of the Mitanni (of the Hurrians or Biblical Horites, Gen. 14:6, 36:30). Haran was the chief city of the region which came to be known as Padan-Aram, "the field of Aram" (Gen. 25:20). Aram was the old name of Syria and Mesopotamia; sometimes, however, the name was used for Syria alone (cf. Gen. 25:20, 28:5, 31:20, 24; Deut. 26:5; in all these passages the word "Syrian" as used in KJV and ASV is "Aramean" in the Hebrew, and is so rendered in the RSV). Cornfeld (AtD, 49): "The general location of Haran has never been lost and a town by this name still exists on the Balikh, a tributary of the



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Euphrates. . . . Hebrew tradition considered Abram's kinsmen in Mesopotamia as nomadic Arameans. This is how they are called in the subsequent stories of Genesis and in Deut. 26:5."

(8) The chronological problem here is rather involved. Thus writes Speiser (ABG, 79): "The Samaritan version gives Terah a total of only 145 years (cf. Acts 7:4). On this reckoning the year of Terah's death would be the same as that of Abraham's departure from Haran (cf. Gen. 12:4)." Whitelaw presents the case with considerable clarity as follows (PCG, 175-176): "'*And they came into Haran . . . and dwelt there.*' Probably in consequence of the growing infirmity of Terah, the period of their sojourn being differently computed according as Abram is regarded as having been born in Terah's 70th or 130th year. . . . '*And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years.*' So that if Abram was born in Terah's 70th year, Terah must have been 145 when Abram left Haran, and must have survived that departure sixty years (Kalisch, Dykes); whereas if Abram was born in his father's 130th year, then Terah must have died before his son's departure from Haran, which agrees with Acts 7:4"). Cf. Jamieson (CECG, 127): "It appears that Terah did not acquire the paternal character till he reached the age of seventy, and that although in the enumeration of his sons, Abram, like Shem (ch. 5:32, 6:10, 7:13), is, from his great eminence, mentioned first, he was not the eldest of the family. That honor belonged not to him, but to Haran (v. 29); and Abram, who seems to have been the youngest son, was not born till sixty years after: for by comparing v. 32 with ch. 12:4, and subtracting 75 from 205, Terah must have been one hundred and thirty years old at Abram's birth. This is the explanation given by *Chrysostom* amongst the Fathers, *Calvin* and *Musculus* amongst the Reformers, *Usher*, *Clinton*, and others in later times, of a very perplexing difficulty; and it seems to be in accordance with

the Scripture (see on v. 32), although it makes Abram's exclamation of surprise (ch. 17:17) at the announcement of his own paternity at a less advanced age than Terah's not a little remarkable." Again, on v. 32, Jamieson says: "This has long been regarded as a difficulty, for the solution of which various explanations have been offered, but all of them are unsatisfactory; and certainly it would be an insuperable difficulty if Abram were the eldest son, born in his father's seventieth year; for adding 70 to 75, Abram's age on his departure 'out of Haran,' would make Terah's age only one hundred and forty-five years, the number assigned for it in the Samaritan Pentateuch. But according to the exposition given above of v. 26, together with the asserted brevity of the sojourn at Haran, which, though an hypothesis, meets all the conditions of the narrative, all difficulties are removed: for 130 plus 75 equals 205 years, Terah's age when he died." J. W. Charley (NBD, 1253): "Terah emigrated from Ur of the Chaldees and settled in Haran, where he died long after Abram's departure (Acts 7:4 is an oral slip)." (To the present author, this appears to be a very dogmatic statement and one without any supporting evidence: as a matter of fact, Stephen's testimony in Acts 7:4 is not to be dismissed so lightly, for the simple reason that the teaching of the Bible as a whole, on any controverted question, is to be preferred—on the ground of its greater reliability—above the exegesis of any particular section per se.) Again, as a matter of fact, *Why should not the names of Shem and Abram appear first in these enumerations? Did they not play pre-eminent roles in the actualization of the Messianic Development, and hence of the Plan of Redemption? And is not this Development the over-all theme of the Bible from the beginning to the end?* Note this comment from JB, p. 27, on v. 32, as to Terah's age at death: "Only 145 according to the Samaritan Pentateuch; this would mean that Abraham left Haran only when his father died

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(cf. 11:26, 12:4, and Acts 7:4).” Note this final summation to Haley (ADB, 392-393): “In the twenty-sixth verse Abraham may be mentioned first, simply on account of his *theocratic* importance; as Moses is usually named before Aaron, who was the elder. So that Abraham may have been the *youngest* son, born when Terah was 130 years old. It would then follow that Abraham left Haran at the age of 75, his father having previously died at the age of 205 years. This removes the difficulty. Some Jewish interpreters, however, think that Abraham actually left Haran sixty years *before* his father’s death. On this theory, Stephen, in asserting that Abraham left *after* his father’s death, simply followed the then commonly received, though inaccurate, chronology. So Ewald, Keil, Kurtz, Lange, Murphy, and others.” The Graf-Wellhausen (Composite, Documentary) Theory of the Pentateuch would have us try to find the solution of these troublesome problems of time and place in the history of ancient Israel by attributing the verses and parts of verses involved to alleged different sources (Codes), intervening redactors, etc. Unfortunately, the result is what might properly be designated analytical chaos, a rather common phenomenon of the Teutonic mentality. The simple fact is that the “critics” are unable to reach any notable measure of agreement among themselves as to the identity and proper allocation of these alleged sources. This entire complex theory depends on *internal* evidence alone; it lacks any convincing measure of support by *external* evidence of any kind, and in the final analysis must be labeled a crazy quilt of academic conjecture.

(9) Eminent Jewish authorities inform us that tribal movements southward into Babylonia have always occurred annually and continue to do so in our own time. It is quite probable that Abraham’s patriarchal ancestors followed the nomadic life and were themselves accustomed to making these migrations. Kraeling, for example, writes

(BA, 55-56): "Where the migration account begins in 11:31 f., we find Terah in the territory of Ur of the Chaldees or Chaldeans. Since all the family names point to Mesopotamia we may imagine Terah and his sons as nomads who had previously traveled to Chaldea from their northern home before the story of their further migrations opens. Such a southward movement of tribesmen from Mesopotamia to Babylonia takes place annually to this day. Mesopotamian winters are hard, and so the Bedouin go down to pasture their flocks in the Babylonian area during that season . . . In times when there was no strong government these nomads were wont to rob the farming population en route or levy on it at will." Again: "The Terah clan was certainly only a sojourner in the Ur vicinity, lingering there by treaty or agreement with the local authorities. Their sheep or goats would not have been permitted to invade these well-irrigated, fertile lands on which the life of Ur depended. From afar these shepherds, however, could see the mighty ziggurat or tower of the city—today the best-preserved ziggurat of Babylonia—like a great landmark (cf. Gen. 11:3), and it may have made them feel at home that the god Nannar or Sin, the moon-god who was so prominently worshiped at Haran, was revered there also."

(10) What prompted Terah to make the movement northward? (a) Was it just the customary return to the north characteristic of the nomads? If so, it was only a return to familiar territory. Religiously both Ur and Haran had much in common, especially in the fact that both were centers of the worship of the moon-god Sin. It is significant, it would seem, that the descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother, elected to settle permanently in Haran; that to this region Abraham later sent his servant Eliezer to seek a bride for his son Isaac; that here Jacob married Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Laban "the Aramean," and that from this region he fled to escape the

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wrath of his brother Esau. (b) Or, was it the death of Haran in the territory of Ur that provided the impetus for this migration? (c) Or, was the first move made with the ultimate goal in mind of the journey all the way to the Land of Promise? This suggestion would necessarily imply that Terah was cognizant of the Call of Abram, and that this was the first step in the projected Abrahamic pilgrimage. Some authorities hold that Terah sought to make the long trek to the Promised Land in the anticipation of sharing the inheritance which had been promised to Abram and his seed: a point not beyond the range of probability. At any rate, the journey was interrupted for a time by the "stop-over" at Haran. As noted above, some authorities think that Terah died in Haran long after Abram's departure.

(11) The influence of paganism seems already to have corrupted Abram's ancestry. It is explicitly stated, on Divine authority, in Joshua's farewell address, that the "fathers"—and Terah is mentioned specifically—"served other gods" (Josh. 24:2). This fact is corroborated by the evidence that Laban was wont to make some ritual or magical use of *teraphim* (Gen. 31:19, 30-32). This passage indicates that these were small objects (figurines), but First Sam. 19:13-16 suggests a life-size figure or bust (perhaps, however, Michal in this instance placed the *teraphim* *beside* rather than in the bed). (Corruption with paganism is also indicated by the pairing of the ephod and the *teraphim* in the idolatrous cult of Micah (Judg. 18:14-20). At any rate, when these objects are mentioned they are always condemned (cf. Judg., chs. 17, 18; 1 Sam. 15:23, 19:13-16; 2 Ki. 23:24 [in this passage they are categorized as "abominations"]; Hos. 3:4). They are frequently directly associated with divination (by chance drawing from a quiver of arrows, *belomanteia*, or by hepatoscopy: see Ezek. 21:21, Zech. 10:2, 2 Ki. 23:24). Considering the environment in which they had been sojourning, one might

well say, for centuries, no great difficulty is encountered in accepting as true the fact that Abram's ancestral family had drifted into the corruption of their original faith (monotheism) with pagan superstitions. History testifies to the fact that this deterioration of original idealism has repeated itself again and again on contact with degrading social pressures. It is a prime characteristic of our common human depravity. The wonder of it all is that out of the depth of this environmental background there emerged one who was destined to prove himself to be the Friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7, Isa. 41:8, Jas. 2:23) and the Father of the Faithful (Gal. 3:9, 27-29; Rom. 5:16). (It should be noted here that sorcery—defined as the attempt to influence events and people by occult means—was punishable by stoning to death under the Old Covenant (Exo. 22:18; Lev. 20:6, 20:27; Deut. 18:10; cf. Exo. 7:11, 1 Sam. 28:3-19, Jer. 27:9-10: under the New Covenant it is a sin that will damn the soul [1 Cor. 10:19-23, Gal. 5:20, Rev. 21:8, 22:15; cf. Luke 16:27-31; Acts 13:8-12, 16:16-18]. In fact, throughout the Bible, all forms of occultism are regarded as of *diabolical* origin.) This drift into pagan idolatry by Abram's ancestry becomes all the more understandable when we take into consideration the fact, abundantly proved by archeological discoveries, that both Haran and Ur were the prominent centers of the worship of the moon-god Sin. Simpson (IBG, 568): "In the pantheon of Haran, Sharratu was the title of the moon-goddess, the consort of Sin, Malkatu a title of Ishtar, also worshiped there." Under "Ur," Wiseman writes (NBD, 1305): "The history and economy of the city is well known from thousands of inscribed tablets and the many buildings found at the site. The principal deity was Nannar (Semitic Sin or Su'en), who was also worshiped at Harran." Smith-Fields (OTH, 64) on Ur: "While its culture was amazing, its religion had degenerated into the deepest idolatry and superstition. It was necessary that the chosen family should

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separate themselves from this contaminating environment until God's provisions for the salvation of the whole world were ready to be proclaimed." To what extent Abram himself was affected by this pagan environment, and by the tendency of his forebears to yield to it, partially at least, we do not know. We feel justified, however, from the story of the life of Abraham as a whole, in believing that to this great man of faith it must have been irksome probably to the point of utter disgust.

(12) *The Cult of Fertility.* The *teraphim* mentioned above are said to have been small objects (figurines), probably images of gods or goddesses undoubtedly suggestive of the Cult of Fertility which dominated the "religious" theory and ritual of the ancient pagan world. This Cult was characterized by ritual prostitution, phallic worship, and all kinds of sex perversion. Nearly all of the non-Hebrew peoples made a fetish of any object that might represent the reproductive powers of living things. Permeating this Cult was the motif—on the basis of sympathetic (homeopathic) magic—that human coition of male and female enhanced the fertility of the soil. (This explains why many of these practices are categorized as "vegetative" or "agricultural" rites and festivals). Hence the veneration given to bulls and snakes (species reputedly noted for their powers of procreation) in many areas, particularly in Crete. In recent times archaeologists have dug up in Mediterranean lands, and in Crete in particular, which seems to have been one of the chief centers of diffusion of this Fertility Cult, hundreds of so-called "Venus figurines," figurines or idols of pregnant women. The most prominent feature of this Cult was the worship of the Earth-Mother, along with that of the Sun-Father: this practice seems to have been nearly universal, except of course among the Hebrews who were constantly exposed to it and finally in some measure succumbed to it. In Babylonia, *Terra Mater* was known as Ishtar; in Egypt,

her name was Isis; in Syria, Atargatis; in Phrygia, Cybele; among the Germanic tribes, Oestra; in Phoenicia, Astarte; in Canaan, Ashtoreth, etc. The Sun-Father in Egypt was at first the great god Re (at Heliopolis), and later Aton of the reformatory effort of the Pharaoh Ikhnaton; in the Sanskrit, he was known as Dyaus Pitar, that is, "father of light"; in Greece he became Zeus pater, and in Rome, Iuppiter. In every instance ritual prostitution in the name of "religion" was a prominent phase of the worship of these "goddesses": in their temples thousands of priestesses were dedicated to this form of "sanctified harlotry." Phallic worship (veneration of icons of the male reproductive organs) was equally widespread; in various localities, it was an integral part of the worship of Apollo, Artemis (the Roman Diana), Demeter, and especially of that of Dionysos (Bacchus, in Latin). In most of the festivals of ancient Greece, including even those of the athletic games, there was this undercurrent of eroticism present. Replicas of the phallus, even as late as the so-called "Enlightenment," were carried through the streets of many of the Greek cities in solemn processions. As Dr. Will Durant has written: "The phallus, symbol of fertility, was frankly honored by crowds of men and women." It is interesting to note also that, at the same time, homosexuality was rampant, in all circles of society. So-called "orgiastic" religion was invariably characterized by wanton dances, gross erotic practices, and all forms of sex perversion. (See the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Incidentally, this correlation of "orgiastic" religious frenzy with sexual excess is the element of truth in Sinclair Lewis' novel, *Elmer Gantry*; otherwise, the book is an utter travesty in its implied treatment of Biblical evangelism.) This Cult of Fertility became a prominent phase of the Roman state "religion," with the coming in of the Empire: indeed the Saturnalia was a time of generally uninhibited sexual promiscuity. (Cf. Paul's enumeration of the vices and sins of the Gen-



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tile world, in Romans 1:18-32; also the Old Testament story of the conflict between Jezebel and the prophet Elijah, in 1 Kings, chs. 18, 19, 21, and 2 Kings, ch. 9:30-37; cf. Rev. 2:20). (A word of caution at this point: as an established custom the year round there is no evidence that any people, primitive, prehistoric, or historic, ever practised complete sexual promiscuity.)

(13) *Ur of the Chaldees* (11:28, 31). The text clearly indicates that the first stage of the migration was from Ur to Haran. It was in Haran that Terah died, and from Haran that Abraham went forth on his divinely commissioned pilgrimage ("he went out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. 11:8). It was in Haran that Nahor settled, influenced probably by the fertility of the land and exercising the prerogative of a first choice (cf. again Gen. 31:19, 30-32). And, as noted above, from Gen. 31:19, 30-32, we must conclude that his descendants perpetuated some of the idolatry to which Terah and his generation had become addicted (cf. Josh. 24:2). On Josh. 24:2, Lias (PCS, 349) comments as follows: "The Rabbinic tradition has great probability in it, that Abraham was driven out of his native country for refusing to worship idols. . . . No doubt his great and pure soul had learned to abhor the idolatrous and cruel worship of his countrymen. By inward struggles, perhaps by the vague survival of the simpler and truer faith which has been held to underlie every polytheistic system, he had 'reached a purer air,' and learned to adore the One True God. His family were led to embrace his doctrines, and they left their native land with him. But Haran, with its star-worship, was no resting-place for him. So he journeyed on westward, leaving the society of man, and preserving himself from temptation by his nomad life. No wandering Bedouin, as some would have us believe, but a prince, on equal terms with Abimelech and Pharaoh, and capable of overthrowing the mighty conqueror of Elam. Such an example might well

be brought to the memory of his descendants [that is, through Joshua], who were now to be sojourners in the land promised to their father. Guided by conscience alone, with every external influence against him, he had worshiped the true God in that land. No better argument could be offered to his descendants, when settled in that same land, and about to be bereft of that valuable support which they had derived from the life and influence of Joshua."

(14) *Is there a time problem here, that is, in relation to the Mosaic authorship?* It is said that "the ancient and renowned city of Ur is never ascribed expressly, in the many thousands of cuneiform records from that site, to the Chaldean branch of the Aramean group," that, moreover, "the Chaldeans were late arrivals in Mesopotamia, and could not possibly be dated before the end of the second millenium." (But, cf. Acts 7:4, Neh. 9:7, Gen. 15:7—in this last-named reference it is Jehovah Himself who is represented as reemphasizing the fact, to Abraham, that He had brought the patriarch out of "Ur of the Chaldees.") As a matter of fact, no one seems to know precisely when the Aramean peoples began to penetrate the Mesopotamian region. The question here is: Had the Chaldean branch come to be known as dwelling in the vicinity of Ur as far back as in the time of Moses. The best archaeological evidence seems to indicate that they were in possession of some parts of the land known as Lower Mesopotamia as early as 1200 or 1100 B.C., a date but little later than that indicated for the time of Moses. Moreover, the chronology of both the third and second milleniums of Mesopotamian history can hardly be described as more than approximate: its lack of preciseness certainly does not permit dogmatic conclusions. On this subject, Speiser writes as follows (ABG, 80-81): "How then did such an anachronism originate? Any explanation is bound to be tenuous and purely conjectural. With these reservations, the following possibility may be hazarded.

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Both Ur and Haran were centers of moon worship, unrivaled in this respect by any other Mesopotamian city. It is remotely possible, therefore, that this religious distinction, which was peculiar to Ur and Haran, caused the two cities to be bracketed together, and then to be telescoped in later versions, at a time when the Chaldeans had already gained prominence. At all events, the correction required affects only incidental passages that are not more than marginal footnotes to the history of the Patriarchs. That history starts at Haran (12:5) as is evident from its very first episode." Murphy (MG, 256) writes as follows: "*In Ur of the Kasdim.* The Kasdim, Cardi, Kurds, or Chaldees are not to be found in the table of nations. They have been generally supposed to be Shemites. This is favored by the residence of Abram among them, by the name Kesed, being a family name among his kindred (Gen. 22:22), and by the language commonly called Chaldee, which is a species of Aramaic. . . . The Chaldees were spread over a great extent of surface; but their most celebrated seat was Chaldea proper, or the land of Shinar. The inhabitants of the country seem to have been of mixed descent, being bound together by political rather than family ties. Nimrod, their centre of union, was a despot rather than a patriarch. The tongue of the Kaldees, whether pure or mixed, and whether Shemitic or not, is possibly distinct from the Aramaic, in which they addressed Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Daniel (1:4, 2:4). The Kaldin at length lost their nationality, and merged into the caste or class of learned men or astrologers, into which a man might be admitted, not merely by being a Kaldai by birth, but by acquiring the language and learning of the Kasdim (Dan. 1:4, v:11)." Cf. also Adam Clarke (CG, 39): "The Chaldees mentioned here, had not this name in the *time of which Moses speaks*, but they were called so in the *time in which Moses wrote*. Chesed was the son of Nahor, the son of Terah, ch. 22:22. From

Chesed descended the *Chasdim*, whose language was the same as that of the *Amorites*, Dan. 1:4, 2:4. These *Chasdim*; whence the *Chaldaioi* (Gr.); Chaldeans of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and all later versions, afterward settled on the south of the Euphrates. Those who dwelt in Ur were either priests or astronomers, Dan. 2:10, and also idolaters (Josh. 24:2, 3, 14, 15. And because they were much addicted to astronomy, and probably to judicial astrology, hence all astrologers were, in process of time, called Chaldeans (Dan. 2:2-5).” There are others who think that the name *Chaldea* or *Chaldee* was applied to a people who were of a nomadic race originally, occupying the mountains where the Kurds are now found, and that the name was altered, through the interchange of letters, which was a common occurrence, into *Chaldaioi* by the Greeks. Rawlinson and others derive the name from *Khaldi* which in the old Armenian tongue denotes moon-worshippers. Ur of the Chaldees, then, they argue, was so named as a city dedicated to the moon (cf. Job 31:26-28), in conformity with the Zabian idolatry that early prevailed in Chaldea.

It should be recalled, in this connection, that Mosaic authorship of Genesis—and of the entire Pentateuch—does not necessarily exclude (1) the use of both oral tradition and written sources by the great Lawgiver Himself (cf. Acts 7:22, Num. 21:14-15, Josh. 10:13, 2 Sam. 1:18); (2) explanatory names, words, and phrases (“interpolations”) inserted by later scribes. To accept these statements as facts is not to downgrade in any respect the fundamental Mosaic origin and authority. It can hardly be denied that Moses was the one man of his own time most surely qualified to give us the greatest book of his time, that which we now recognize as the part of the Hebrew Scriptures which is designated the Torah. Nor is any necessity laid upon anyone to resort to a highly complex conjectural theory of Composite authorship, plus

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an undetermined number of unidentified and unidentifiable "redactors" to provide a solution for these problems. The problems themselves are relatively trivial, of the kind that usually attach to documents of historical interest extending into the ancient past. Cornfeld (AtD, 49) comments on this problem interestingly, as follows: "Hebrew tradition does not ascribe a written record to Abraham but to Moses (we use the term 'tradition' in the sense of 'what was handed down'). It is fairly certain that the patriarchal narratives, for the most part, derive from oral traditions, many of which were written after the time of Moses. But such oral traditions of pre-literary times are not to be spurned. The reliability of transmission was assured by the incredible memories of the Orientals. Hermann Gunkel remarks that these traditions in Genesis break up into separate tales, each unit characterized by a few participants and the affairs of a few families, simple descriptions, laconic speech, all welded into big bold strokes of narration with artful use of suspense. This colorful and memorable mode of narration is a vehicle for family and tribal traditions especially suited to oral transmission. The extraordinary feature is that Hebrew memory had preserved such pre-literary traditions for more than a thousand years and set them down in writing so faithfully." (It will be noted that any special inspiration of the Spirit of God in the preservation and presentation of these "traditions" in the Old Testament Scriptures, is carefully ignored in the foregoing statements, even though repeatedly affirmed for these Scriptures by the Bible writers themselves; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 2 Pet. 1:21, 2 Sam. 23:2, Acts 3:22-25). The whole Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch rests upon the basic assumption that the cultural background disclosed in the Biblical accounts of the Patriarchal Age reflect a milieu that would be appropriate only to a much later period, probably as much later as that of the Exile: as Wellhausen himself puts it: "We attain to no historical

knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about them arose in the Israelite people; this latter age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and in its outward features, into hoary antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified image." This view is today thoroughly exploded by archeological evidence. For example, Muilenburg (IBG, 296) writes: "Archaeology has revealed an extraordinary correspondence between the general social and cultural conditions portrayed in Genesis and those exposed by excavations. Discoveries from such sites as Nuzi, Mari, and elsewhere, provide the geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious background against which the stories of the patriarchs are laid." (See my *Genesis*, Vol. I, pp. 55-70).

*The Patriarchal Narratives.*

We have already taken note of Cornfeld's suggestions as to the relation between "the oral traditions of pre-literary times" and the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. Several fantastic theories, conjectural to the point of absurdity, have been put forward in recent times as to the character of these narratives. Leupold (EG, 405-409) has stated these views, and pointed up the fallacies in them with great clarity, as follows: 'Unfortunately, much confusion has been introduced into the subject of the lives of the patriarchs by certain untenable theories on the basis of which far-reaching reconstructions have been attempted. We shall list the major of these theories and indicate briefly how they do violence to the available evidence. . . . One more general mode of approach is that which roughly classifies all the historical material of Genesis as *purely legendary*. Dillman gives a somewhat naive statement of the case when he says: 'Nowadays, of course, everyone quite takes it for granted that all these tales about the fathers do not belong into the realm of strict history but into that of legend.' Aside from the presumption which regards all the opponents of this view as nobodies, the

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assumption prevails that Israel must in all respects be like other nations. If other nations had tales from their early history which were purely legendary, so must Israel's record be. Aside from being a begging of the principle, critics of this stripe are ready to concede Israel's distinct superiority in the matter of religion. Why cannot the rest of the life of this people furnish material superior to that found in other nations.

"One of the most popular methods of dealing with patriarchal history is to approach it on the basis of the so-called *tribal theory* (*Stammtheorie*). This theory assumes that the patriarchs were not actual historical characters but fictitious characters which are to serve to explain the origin of certain tribes. When Abram goes to Egypt, the tribe in reality went in its earlier days, etc. The patriarchs are eponymous characters to whom is ascribed what befell the tribe. The grain of truth involved in this theory is that, in reality, certain of the names mentioned in the Table of Nations, chapter ten, are tribal names and not names of persons. However, in such cases (10:13, 14, 16, 17, 18) tribal names are used ("Amorite, Girgashite," etc.), and no attempt is made to make them appear as individuals. The claim by which the tribal theory is chiefly supported is that ethnology has no instances on record where nations descended from an individual, as, for example, Israel from Abram. However, on this score the Biblical records happen to have preserved facts which ethnology no longer has available. But how a nation may descend from an individual is traced step by step in the Biblical record.

"Besides, the Genesis records in their detailed accounts bear too much of the stamp of records concerning characters of flesh and blood as we have it. Dillmann may make light of this fact and say: 'We need nowadays no longer prove that the wealth of picturesque details of the narrative is not in itself a proof of the historicity of the things

narrated, but is, on the contrary, a characteristic mark of the legend.' But though legends do usually abound in picturesque details, the things narrated in Genesis very evidently bear the stamp of sober truth. Christ and the apostles recognized the patriarchs as historical characters; cf. such remarks as John 8:56 and the almost two dozen references of Christ to Abraham alone.

"More farfetched than either of the two theories described thus far is the *astral-myth theory*. Briefly stated, it amounts to this: even as Greek mythology had certain tales by way of explanation of the origin of the signs of the zodiac, so did the Babylonians, and so, of necessity, must Israel. An illustration: Sarah's going down into Egypt as a sterile woman is the Israelitish way of stating the Babylonian myth of the descent of the goddess Ishtar into the underworld to receive the boon of fertility. Even though the story primarily tells of Abram's going into Egypt, and though Egypt has to be taken to signify the underworld—a thing utterly without parallel in the Scriptures—and even though Sarai must be interpreted to be an adaptation of the name of the Babylonian goddess *Sharratu*, the wife of the moon god, in spite of all these forms of unwarranted treatment of the text, the adherents of this theory fail to see its folly. We cannot but label such a theory as an attempt to discredit Scripture.

"A fourth mode of misinterpreting the sacred narrative is the attempt to account for it on the basis of what we might term *the Beduin-ideal theory*. Briefly, this involves the notion that the writer or the writers of the patriarchal history were in reality setting forth the type of Beduin life as found in patriarchal times as an ideal for a later more civilized and more degenerate age. The writer is supposed to be enthusiastic for the Beduin type of life and to see in it the cure for the social ills of his time. So the Beduin religion is also set forth as an ideal of monotheistic religion. Incidentally, that utter simplicity sup-



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posed to be set forth by this type of life is hardly characteristic of the patriarchs, for already men like Abram are in possession of much goods and great wealth and are in a position to give rich gifts such as jewels to close friends or prospective wives.

"In reading how Gunkel, an ardent advocate of the purely legendary or mythical theory, manipulates his theory, one is tempted to speak of still another theory, namely the theory which glorifies the clever pranks of the patriarchs. For in writing particularly of the devices employed by Jacob in taking advantage of Esau or of Laban, he writes as if the readers of these tales gloated over them as a humorous glorification of a crafty ancestor. On other occasions he writes with pitying disdain of the very crude and elementary conceptions of the deity held by these early writers. Again the effort to deflate the conception of the Scriptures is manifest, and a Biblical book is reduced to the level of a collection of amusing anecdotes."

*(See my Genesis, Vol. I, pp. 57-62, for a more detailed account of this academic nit-picking indulged by the "analytical critics" in their treatment of all ancient writings. As a matter of fact, archeology already has exploded these fabulous creations—myths, if you please—of the seminarian mentality.)*

Leupold goes on to discuss briefly erroneous conceptions of the patriarchal religion. He writes: "Parallel with these faulty theories runs the erroneous conception of the patriarchal religion. Here again we may refer to prevalent theories. We shall do no more, however, than to list briefly the erroneous conceptions we are referring to. Prominent among these is the attitude which describes the early religion of Israel as *totemism*. This endeavors to prove that certain types of creatures were deemed sacred and were worshiped by certain tribes. Proof for this view is deduced, for example, in the case of Terah from the fact that his name may signify a type of mountain goat. This proof

grows very top-heavy, when so elaborate a conclusion is built upon an accidental possibility.

"A second equally grievous misconception is that which describes the religion of the patriarchs as *ancestor worship*. In proof of this, mention is made, for example, of the fact that certain graves are mentioned, like that of Deborah (Gen. 35:8) in connection with which an "oak of weeping" is referred to, or where it is asserted, sacrifices to the dead were made. Nowhere are the statements found, however, that would actually prove that the spirits of the dead were thought of as gods. The whole conception is as shallow and as unscientific as it can be.

"Then even *fetishism* has been attributed to the patriarchs. Israel's religion is supposed to give indication that holy hills were revered as a fetish; so, too, fountains, trees, and stones. Yet even the unlearned will be able to detect quite readily that these strange reconstructions of the text must be read into the text in a manner which does violence to all sober and honest interpretation of the text. The thought lying behind all such attempts is, of course, this: since such lower levels of religion are seen on the part of many other nations, therefore they must be characteristic of Israel's religion in its earlier stages—a faulty style of argument."

We may summarize all this, and refute forever the implications involved, by affirming the fact which the Biblical content emphasizes from beginning to end, namely, that God called the fleshly seed of Abraham out of the nations and put them in the pulpit of the world for the specific twofold purpose of preserving the knowledge of the living and true God and preparing mankind for the advent and ministry of His Son, Messiah. And even though they yielded at times to the temptation to adopt the coarse notions and licentious practices of their pagan neighbors, it must be admitted that they did accomplish the dual task to which God called them. Christians must

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never lose sight of the fact that their God—the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—is the very God who revealed Himself to Moses in the Sinai desert, and that for their knowledge of this God—the one true God—they are forever indebted to His ancient people, the Children of Israel. (Cf. Exo. 3:14, Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5, 46:9-11; Matt. 16:16; John 3:16, 5:23; Eph. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, etc.).

### *The Problem of Ur versus Haran*

The fact has been emphasized in all three volumes of the present textbook on Genesis that any Scripture text must be interpreted, not only in relation to its immediate context, *but also in its relation to the teaching of the Bible as a whole*. Let it be emphasized again, at this point, that this is a norm which must be followed in order for one to arrive at any correct understanding of any segment of Scripture. In no area of the Biblical content is the application of this norm more necessary than in resolving the difficulty which commentators seem to manifest in trying to determine whether God's call came to Abraham in Ur or in Haran: indeed some speculate that two calls may have been involved. Of course, the *modus operandi* of the "analytical critics" is to resort to the unproved hypothesis of separate Documentary sources. To the present writer, this seems wholly unnecessary, for the simple reason that other Scriptures alluding to the event resolve the apparent uncertainty. Clearly the Mosaic narrative does not even intimate the possibility of a call prior to that which is specified in Gen. 12:1. The entire Scripture tradition concurs in reporting that this first call came to Abraham in Ur. The language of Gen. 15:7 and Neh. 9:7 might be construed to be somewhat indefinite; however, all these passages certainly involve no disagreement with the positive statement of Stephen in Acts 7:2 to the effect that God's first call to Abram came to him in Ur "before he dwelt in Haran," and that pursuant to this call Abram "came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt

in Haran, and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell," that is, Canaan. It must be admitted that Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin bears the stamp of accuracy throughout. Of course there could have been a repetition of the Divine call in Haran after Terah's death, but any positive evidence of this is lacking in the Scripture story. It would seem that immediately after the death of Terah, Abram set forth on his long pilgrimage with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. The Divine call as stated in Gen. 12:1 was definitely a call to Abram to separate himself from his "kindred," which may have had reference to Nahor or other members of Terah's household. Terah may well have had other offspring who are not mentioned because they had no subsequent interrelationships with Nahor, Bethuel and Laban, all three of whom are mentioned later in the patriarchal narratives (Gen. 22:20-23, 24:15, 25:20, 28:1-2). The Divine call was much more than a call to Abram to separate himself from his kindred—it was a Divine call to separate himself from the idolatrous tendencies which had developed in Terah's household.

We may safely conclude, I think, that the Call to Abram for his pilgrimage of Faith was first made to him in Ur; that his father Terah and brother Nahor and their households, for whatever reason or reasons that may seem possible, accompanied him to Haran; that Abram lingered there until Terah died, at which time Nahor elected to remain in that region, but Abram set out for the Land of Promise with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. We are told explicitly that Abram was 75 years old when he entered upon this pilgrimage.

This was the second landmark in the progressive actualization of God's Eternal Purpose, the first having been the pronouncement of the mysterious oracle of Gen. 3:15 *in re* the Seed of the Woman. It has been rightly stated that Abram's journey to the Promised Land was "no

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routine expedition of several hundred miles," but "the start of an epic voyage," of "a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history." The third landmark in this actualization, as we know well, was the organization of the Israelite Theocracy at Sinai through the mediatorship of Moses (John 1:17, Gal. 3:24-25, Col. 2:14, 2 Cor. 3:2-15, etc.).

## REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-FIVE

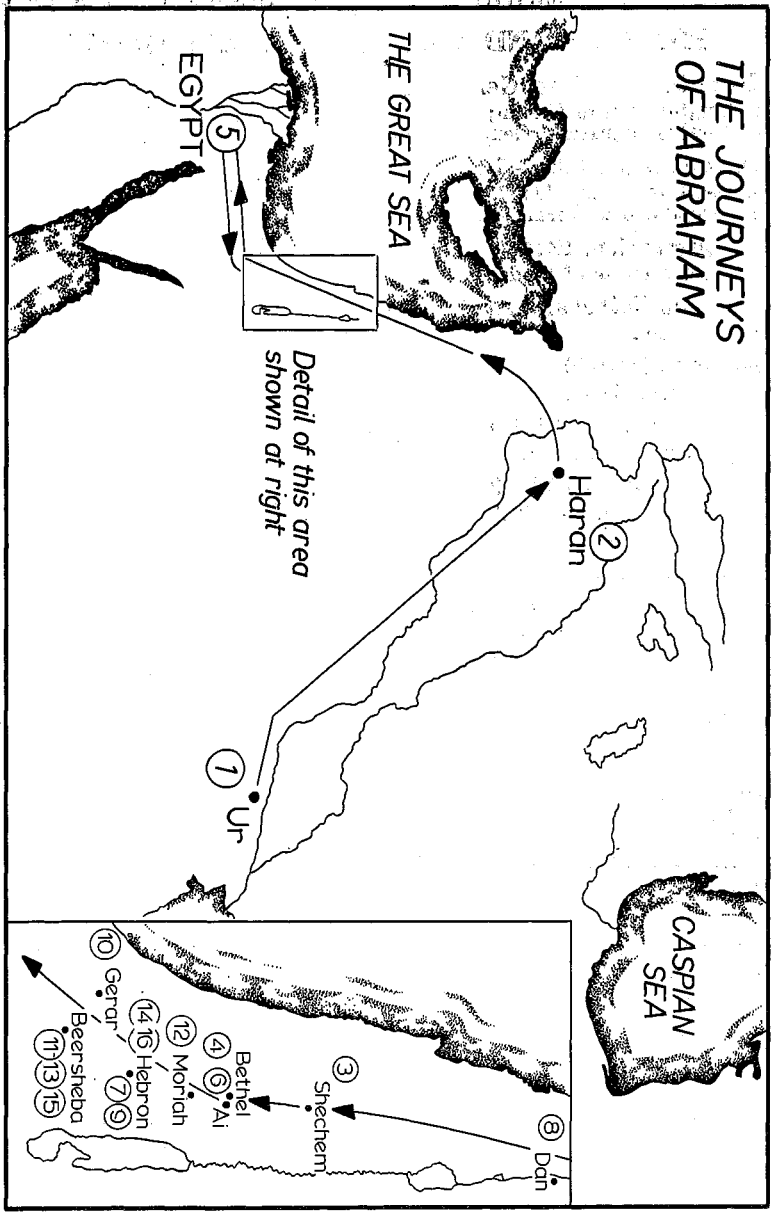
1. What is the central theme of the Bible?
2. How is redemption related to God's Cosmic Plan?
3. How and when will this Cosmic Plan be consummated?
4. What is the purpose of the Last Judgment?
5. State the probable explanation of I Cor. 6:2-3.
6. Explain in what sense Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.
7. What do we mean by saying that God does not *foreknow*, but simply *knows*?
8. Explain the mysterious oracle of Gen. 3:15.
9. Show how the Scripture content is the record of the successive limitations of the meaning of the phrase, "The Seed of the Woman."
10. In whom is it finally and fully actualized?
11. What significant role does the word "generations" have in the story of the patriarchs?
12. What relation does this word have to the text material which follows it? What does it have to that which precedes it?
13. What are the suggested origins of the word "Hebrew"?
14. What are the suggested uses of the terms "Hebrew" and "Israelite"?
15. What difference developed in the use of these terms in the later history of the Jews?
16. How and when did the name "Jew" originate?

17. Name the three Dispensations of Biblical history, and state the extent of each chronologically.
18. By what were the changes of Dispensation determined?
19. What is the meaning of the word "dispensation"?
20. Summarize the "generations of Terah" as given in Gen. 11:27-32.
21. How and when did the change from the generic seed to the ethnic seed of the Woman take place?
22. What was the first stage of the pilgrimage to the Land of Promise?
23. What type of pagan "religion" prevailed both in Ur and in Haran?
24. What evidences do we have that Terah's house had become corrupted by pagan idolatry?
25. What are our reasons for believing that Abram was Terah's youngest son?
26. When and where did Haran die, in relation to the migrations of Terah and Abram?
27. What members of Terah's household remained in Haran and settled there?
28. What was the region designated Padan-aram in Genesis?
29. What subsequent events related in Genesis indicate continued intercourse between Abraham in Palestine and his relatives in the region of Haran?
30. What kind of life did the members of Terah's house apparently live? Why are we justified in thinking that these patriarchs were accustomed to frequent migrations between Northern and Southern Mesopotamia?
31. Explain the chief features of the ancient pagan Cult of Fertility.
32. Where are the practices of this Cult alluded to especially in the New Testament?
33. What was the name of the Earth-Mother in Babylon? In Phoenicia? In Syria? In Palestine? In Egypt?

## THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH 11:27-32

34. What was the principle of imitative magic which characterized this Cult?
35. Explain the following practices: ritual prostitution, phallic worship, orgiastic religion, ecstatic religion.
36. What was the Roman Saturnalia?
37. What was the essential character of these ancient "agricultural" or "fertility" rites and festivals?
38. What evidence do we have from archaeology that the cultural background portrayed in the book of Genesis, in the patriarchal narratives, is historically correct?
39. Review the critical theories of the patriarchal narratives as given by Leupold and the objections to each of them.
40. Discuss the chronological problem of the Abrahamic Pilgrimage in relation to the Mosaic authorship of the Torah. How may the problem be resolved?
41. State clearly the problem of Ur and Haran in relation to the Call of Abram.
42. For what especially are all Christians indebted to the ancient Children of Israel?
43. How account for the fact that Children of Israel succeeded in large measure in resisting the inroads of the pagan Cult of Fertility?
44. How old was Abram when he left Haran for the Land of Promise. Whom did he take with him?

# THE JOURNEYS OF ABRAHAM



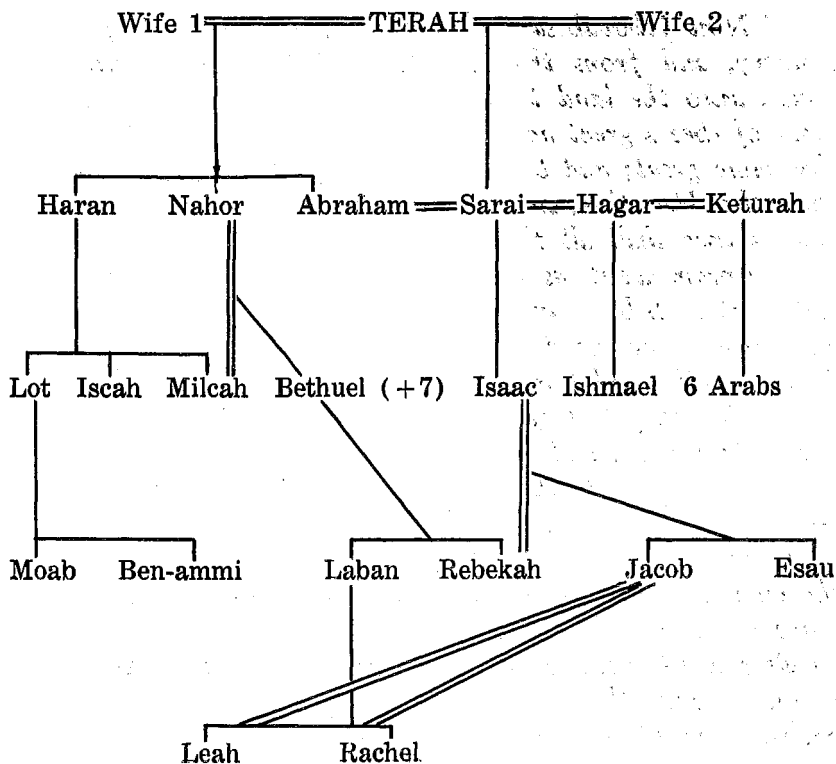


## PATRIARCHAL PERIOD—LIFE OF ABRAHAM TO AGE 99

### THE LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF ABRAHAM

1. *Ur* of the Chaldees; Gen. 11:27-31.
  - a. Original call to Abram; Acts 7:2-3.
  - b. Terah's migration; Gen. 11:27-31.
2. *Haran*; Gen. 11:32—12:3.
  - a. Death of Terah; 11:32.
  - b. Second call to Abram; 12:1-3.
3. *Shechem*; Gen. 12:4-7.
  - a. First promise of land.
4. Between *Bethel* and *Ai*; 12:8-9.
  - a. Altar built.
5. *Egypt*; 12:10-20.
  - a. Lie about Sarai.
6. Back at *Bethel*; 13:1-17.
  - a. Separation from Lot.
7. *Hebron*; 13:18—14:12.
  - a. Invasion from the East.
8. *Dan*; 14:13-16.
  - a. Rescue of Lot.
9. Returning to *Hebron* and at Hebron; 14:17—19:38.
  - a. Meeting with King Sodom and Melchizedek; 14:17-24.
  - b. God's covenant with Abram; Ch. 15.
  - c. Hagar and Ishmael; Ch. 16.
  - d. Covenant of circumcision; 17:1-14.
  - e. Promise of Isaac; 17:15-21.
  - f. Circumcision of household; 17:22-27.
  - g. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; Chs. 18-19.
10. *Gerar*; Gen. 20:1—21:20.
  - a. Lie about Sarah to Abimelech; Ch. 20.
  - b. Birth of Isaac; 21:1-7.
  - c. Removal of Hagar and Ishmael; 21:8-21.
11. *Beersheba*; 21:22-34.
  - a. Covenant of Abraham and Abimelech.
12. Land of *Moriah*; 22:1-18.
  - a. Offering of Isaac.
13. *Beersheba*; 22:19-24.
  - a. Abraham learns of Nahor's family.
14. *Hebron*; Ch. 23.
  - a. Death and burial of Sarah.
15. *Beersheba*; 24:1—25:8.
  - a. Wife for Isaac; Ch. 24.
  - b. Marriage to Keturah; 25:1-4.
  - c. Last days of Abraham; 25:5-8.
16. *Hebron*; 25:9-10.
  - a. Burial of Abraham.

# FAMILY OF TERAH



## NOTES—

a. The above information is taken from Gen. 11:27, 28; 19:37-38; 20:12; 22:20-28; 24:15; 28:2, 5.

b. A double line indicates a marriage.

c. Gen. 20:12 indicates that Sarai was half-sister to Abram. The language of this verse could indicate that she was Abram's niece, but the fact that there was but ten years difference between his age and hers (Gen. 17:17) renders this hypothesis less probable.

d. Tradition has identified Iscah with Sarai, Abram's wife, but there is no real basis for such a supposition.

## PART TWENTY-SIX

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

(Genesis, ch. 12; cf. Hebrews 11:8-19)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account*

1 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee:* 2 *and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:* 3 *and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* 5. So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. 6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, *Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.* 8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. 9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was sore in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, *Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:* 12 *and it will come to pass, when the Egyptians*

*shall see thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee. 14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. 15 And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And he dealt well with Abram for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels. 17 And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19 why saidst thou, She is my sister, so that I took her to be my wife? now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20 And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him: and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.*

## *2. Ur of the Chaldees*

It should be noted that the earliest civilizations—those with which the actual *history* of man begins—flourished, as a rule, in relation geographically to the great river systems. This location was due to the fact that the various peoples learned to provide for a more abundant (temporal) life by the development of irrigation to enhance the fertility of the soil. Moreover, with the early invention of the sailboat water became the chief means of transportation. Most of the big cities of the ancient world were built on these waterways, e.g., the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates, the Indus, and (probably) the Hwang-Ho and Wei. Those which were established later on large bodies of water (gulfs and seas) were, according to Thucydides, the Greek historian, built some thirty to fifty miles inland

for protection against pirates. Each of these inland cities, therefore, had its harbor port, e.g., Rome and Ostia, Athens and the Piraeus, and Miletus, which served as a harbor port for several inland cities (cf. Acts 20:17).

Early in the history of the Near East the Tigris-Euphrates valley was made a very fertile area by irrigation. This area is commonly known in history by the name of Mesopotamia, a word meaning "between the rivers." In Egypt, of course, the annual inundations of the Nile provided the necessary ingredients for fertilization on both sides of the river.

When the curtain first goes up on the stage of human history we find wave after wave of nomadic peoples pouring into the Near East both from the western desert and from the northern area around the Caspian Sea. As far back as the fourth millenium before Christ the central area of Mesopotamia was known as Akkad or Accad (cf. Gen. 10:10, "the land of Shinar"; Isa. 11:11, Dan. 1:2), and the southern part, just above the Persian Gulf, as Sumer: hence the Accadians and Sumerians. From the first the peoples who occupied the territory now known generally as the Near East were of Semitic origin. Beyond the Mesopotamian area, that is, to the east of it, Indo-European (Aryan) peoples began to take over; among these were the Medes and the Elamites, some of whom evidently pushed into the Indus Valley; these were followed later by the Kassites. The earliest prevailing language among these peoples was the Sanskrit.

Inscriptions indicate that an early Semitic dynasty flourished, founded by Sargon, who built a new capital, Akade, the exact location of which is unknown today. Sargon established his hegemony over Akkad, Sumer, Elam, Syria and Anatolia (the early name for what is known today as Asia Minor). After an interval of some twenty-five years, Sargon's grandson, Naramsin, succeeded to the hegemony and proved himself to be another very strong

ruler. This Empire came to be known as the Akkadian Empire and survived for about two centuries (c. 2350-2150 B.C.). Later, when Babylon rose to pre-eminence in the area, the name Akkad came to be used to designate the whole of northern Babylonia. Prior to the Early Dynastic Period initiated by Sargon's conquests, Lower Mesopotamia had been only a cluster of city-states constantly at war among themselves—Ur, Eridu, Babylon (Babel), Larsa, Erech, Kish, Lagash, Nippur, etc. (cf. again Gen. 10:10).

Later, toward the end of the third millenium, the Amurr ("westerners")—the Biblical Amorites, Gen. 15:16, 48:22; Deut. 20:17, etc.—a new wave of Semites began pouring into Mesopotamia from the West. Included in this folk movement, apparently of several closely related ethnic groups, must have been the early Arameans. It seems evident that these western Semites also occupied Palestine about the beginning of the second millenium. Some of these peoples who occupied the Palestinian area took over northern Canaan (note archaeological discoveries at Ugarit) and Syria as far as its southern coast. These people entrenched themselves at Mari on the Euphrates in Upper Mesopotamia (see archaeological discoveries there also). The zenith of Amorite political power was reached in the First Dynasty of Babylon in the days of the great king and lawgiver, Hammurabi (c. 1728-1686 B.C.). (It is intriguing to note that various records at Mari and elsewhere in Mesopotamia, mention another troublesome group, the "Apiru" or "Habiru"—a name that is thought by many scholars to be equivalent to the name "Hebrews.")

Following the strong Semitic Dynasty of Agade (2350-2150 B.C.), the Second Dynasty Ur (of which little seems to be known), and a subsequent cultural eclipse under the Gutians (2150-2070), the Third Dynasty of Ur (2070-1960) was ushered in, in which a succession of strong rulers led in a Sumerian renaissance. The population of Ur is estimated to have been more than half a million souls

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH 12:1-20

during this period. The mightiest building project of the time was the great ziggurat erected by Ur-Nammu and his son, Shulgi. This powerful Dynasty came to an end when the Amorites of Mari and the Elamites from the east took over southern Mesopotamia. The city was later brought under the control of Hammurabi and was destroyed by his son, when it rebelled against Amorite power. The whole area was further ravished by the barbarian Kassites, and the city of Ur went into total eclipse until the rebuilding of it was undertaken by the Chaldeans Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus. Further improvements were made later by the Persians under Cyrus.

Folk movements became more numerous in the early part of the second millenium before Christ. Other ethnic peoples came into the picture. Among these were the Hittites of Asia Minor, the partially Semitic Hyksos who had imposed their rule on Egypt from about 1700 to 1570 B.C., and the most puzzling of all, the Hurrians.

The Hurrians (Biblical Horites: cf. Gen. 14:6, 36:30; Deut. 2:12) poured into the Fertile Crescent in a steady stream: as Cornfeld puts it, "and into the political vacuum created by the downfall of the Sumerian (Third) Dynasty of Ur." They evidently originated from the Caucasian and Armenian mountains and infiltrated the whole Tigris-Euphrates area. They were not strictly a warlike people: hence they penetrated every section of Western Asia, including Syria and Palestine. They seem to have been under the leadership of an Aryan upper class. They gave much attention to horse-breeding, and in battle they used the horse and the chariot. They attained their greatest prominence in the kingdom of the Mitanni (1470-1350) which extended from east of the upper Tigris valley to the north Syrian coast. One of the best known Hurrian sites is Nuzi (or Nuzu), where thousands of documents were discovered by a Harvard University expedition from 1925 to 1931 under the direction of Edward Chiera. More than

20,000 cuneiform tablets from the second millenium, brought to light at Nuzi, constitute a primary source of information concerning life in northern Mesopotamia, the district (Haran) where the Biblical patriarchs lived for a time and to which they sent to find suitable wives for their sons.

By 2000 B.C. various groups of Indo-European origin had infiltrated Asia Minor. These were organized into a complex of city-states. The most influential of these groups became known as the Hittites. The capital of the ancient Hittite Empire was Hattusas (modern Boghazkoy), ninety miles east of modern Ankara, on the great bend of the Halys River. Excavations began at this site in 1906, and have brought to light the story of a once powerful empire, as evidenced by the fact that one of their kings, Mursilis, captured Aleppo in 1530, then thrust across Hurrian territories, raided northern Mesopotamia, and sacked Babylon. A peace treaty between the Hittite king, Hattusilis III (c. 1275-1250), and the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses II is the oldest such treaty known to students of ancient history, and indicates that the Hittites were powerful enough to stop the Egyptian army in its tracks in a battle at Kadesh (c. 1296 B.C.) Beleaguered, however, by Hurrian aggressiveness and inner political conflicts, the Hittites finally withdrew into Asia Minor where their influences are felt even down to our own time. The Hittite kingdom came to an end when overrun by the so-called "Sea peoples" from the eastern Mediterranean, many of whom seem to have been of Cretan origin (e.g., the Philistines). The Hittites flourished at about the dawn of the Iron Age. (Iron was discovered about 1500 B.C. somewhere in the area around the Black Sea.) The Hittite monopoly on iron gave them formidable power for a time, but this power declined as other peoples began to make use of iron weapons. Outposts of Hittite culture survived in northern Syria: these Hittite principalities were those to



## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH 12:1-20

which the Old Testament continued to refer for several centuries. (Cf. Gen. 15:20, Num. 13:29, Josh. 3:10, 1 Ki. 11:1, 2 Ki. 7:6, 2 Chron. 1:17).

The Hyksos have been described as a motley horde bent solely on conquest and looting. They invaded Egypt about 1800 (or 1700?) B.C. and kept control of the country until about 1570 B.C., when they were driven out and chased into Palestine by the Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty. Several of the Palestinian cities were destroyed during the sixteenth century, and the Hyksos type of fortifications which have been excavated at Megiddo, Shechem, and Lachish, furnish evidence of the savage intensity of these campaigns.

The last great empires of the Fertile Crescent were, of course, those which followed the migrations described in the foregoing paragraphs; hence, their history does not have too much relevance to that of the Patriarchal Age. These were, in the order named, the Assyrian, Chaldean (late Babylonian), Persian, and Macedonian (the short-lived empire of Alexander the Great). The Roman Empire was the last and most extensive and most powerful, having extended its rule over the entire Fertile Crescent, including North Africa, Egypt, and the whole of the Near East and Mesopotamia.

The departure of Abram from Ur is correlated in time with the Third Dynasty (the most powerful) of that city. The exact location of the original site has long been a matter of debate. The Moslems traditionally have identified it with Urfa, a city in Upper Mesopotamia near Haran (the Greeks called it Edessa). The location which commonly has been identified with Abram's Ur is in Southern Mesopotamia some 160 miles from the present head of the Persian Gulf. This identification originated in the late nineteenth century when so many references to Ur were found in the inscriptions which were numerous and widespread throughout the Mesopotamian area. The discoveries

made by the joint expedition of the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, under Charles Leonard Woolley (1922-1934), set forth voluminously in official reports, seem to verify the Southern Mesopotamian identification. However, the debate has been revived in recent years by C. H. Gordon and other archaeologists who conclude that the original Ur was not Urffa, but Ura, another town near Haran, which was under the control of the Hittites. DBA, 602: "Gordon treats Abraham as a merchant-prince or *Tamkarum* from the realm of the Hittites. His three main arguments are: (1) There is strong tradition connecting Ur of the Chaldees with Northern Mesopotamia. (2) The picture of the patriarchs as city-merchants fits known facts. (3) The term 'Chaldees' can be adequately applied to Northern Mesopotamia." The consensus of archeological scholarship, however, still runs preponderantly in favor of the traditional Sumerian Ur as Abram's point of departure on his pilgrimage to the Land of Promise.

Excavations at Sumerian Ur indicate that a highly advanced culture flourished there at a very early age. It is the Ur of Abram's time, however, in which we are particularly interested here. Like all these cities of Mesopotamia, Ur had its sacred enclosure with its complex of temples and shrines. The ruins of the great temple-tower (ziggurat, which, we are told, once rose from the plain along the Euphrates to a height of seventy feet), built by Ur-Nammu, founder of the prosperous and powerful Third Dynasty, still dominate the site. Throughout the history of Babylonia down to the middle of the first millenium B.C., this sacred area with its ziggurat was the most important temple area in Mesopotamia: indeed, it was the place to which the devout made pilgrimages and which they sought for a place of burial. Openings in the outer city walls which were oval in shape allowed boats to enter the city itself. It could be said of the people of Ur, as

said later by the Apostle on the Hill of Ares, of the Athenian people and their philosophers, that they were indeed "very religious" (or "superstitious," Acts 17:22). The ruling deity at Ur was Nanna (known among the Semites as "Sin"). The city abounded in many other temples and shrines dedicated to other gods. There were also many public chapels, wayside shrines, household chapels, and other evidences that idolatry flourished throughout the city, including terra cotta figurines indicative of the Cult of the Earth-Mother, which was often the most debased form of pagan "religious" ritual. The following note (HSB, 21) is important: "Abraham has often been conceived of as an ignorant nomad, an illiterate and uneducated ancient. This is not so. Archaeological discoveries have shown that Ur of the Chaldees was a center of advanced culture. There were libraries in the schools and temples. The people used grammars, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and reference works along with textbooks on mathematics, religion, and politics. What was true for Babylonia was also true for Egypt where more than a thousand years before Abraham's time, writing was well established. It is quite possible, therefore, that Abraham left written records which were incorporated in the Pentateuch." (For a study of the archeological discoveries relevant to the Patriarchal Age, at Ugarit, Hattusas, Mari, Nuzi, Larsa, Nippur, Lagash, Uruk (Erech), etc., *The Biblical World*, edited by Pfeiffer, published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, is highly recommended.)

### 3. *The Call of Abram* (12:1-3)

(CECG, 129) *in re* Gen. 12:1-5, as follows: "An attentive consideration will suffice to show, from the close resemblance of the phraseology in this passage and in Acts 7:2-3, that Moses refers to one and the same call with Stephen; and that he now only resumes, in his characteristic manner, the subject of Abram's departure from his native land, which had been briefly related in ch. 11:31, in order

to furnish some important details. In fact the narrative in the first five verses of this chapter is merely an expansion of the short notice in the preceding one; and therefore our translators have properly rendered the verb in the Pluperfect tense, 'had said.' This revelation is not to be accounted for by representing it, as one writer has recently done, to be only 'the newly increased light of his inner consciousness,' or by saying, with another, that the 'Lord' of Abram 'was as much a creature of human imagination as a Jupiter or an Apollo.' In whatever way it was made to him—whether in a dream, by a vision, or by a visible manifestation (the language of Stephen, Acts 7:2, implies that it was some glorious theophany, perhaps like the supernatural light and words that suddenly converted Paul—a miracle well adapted to the conceptions of a Zebian idolater)—Abram was thoroughly persuaded that it was a divine communication; and it was probably accompanied by such special instructions as to the being and character of 'the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth,' as carried conviction to his understanding and heart." (It is impossible for me to accept the view that Abram had drifted away from the knowledge of the true God so far as to share the idolatry of some of the members of his family: the Scripture story does not intimate such a notion, and *surely Abram's subsequent walk of faith invalidates it.* C.C.).

Whitelaw (PCG, 117) writes: "Designed to trace the outward development of God's kingdom on the earth, the narrative now concentrates its attention on one of the foregoing Terachites, whose remarkable career it sketches with considerable minuteness of detail, from the period of his emigration from Chaldea to his death at Hebron in the land of Canaan. Distinguished as a man of undoubted superiority both of character and mind, the head at least of two powerful and important races, and standing, as one might say, on the threshold of the historical era, it is yet

chiefly as his life and fortunes connect with the Divine purpose of salvation that they find a place in the inspired record. The progress of infidelity during the four centuries that had elapsed since the Flood, the almost universal corruption of even the Shemite portion of the human family, had conclusively demonstrated the necessity of a second Divine interposition, if the knowledge of salvation were not to be completely banished from the earth. Accordingly, the son of Terah was selected to be the founder of a new nation, in which the light of gospel truth might be deposited for preservation until the fulness of the times, and through which the promise of the Gospel might be conducted forward to its ultimate realization in the manifestation of the woman's seed. Partly to prepare him for the high destiny of being the progenitor of the chosen nation, and partly to illustrate the character of that gospel with which he was to be entrusted, he was summoned to renounce his native country and kinsmen in Chaldea, and venture forth upon an untried journey in obedience to the call of heaven, to a land which he should afterward receive for an inheritance. In a series of successive theophanies or Divine manifestations, around which the various incidents of his life are grouped—in Ur of the Chaldees (Acts 7:2), at Moreh in Canaan (Gen. 12:7), near Bethel (*ibid.* 13), at Mamre (*ibid.* 15, 17); and on Moriah (*ibid.* 22)—he is distinctly promised three things—a land, a seed, and a blessing—as the reward of his compliance with the heavenly invitation; and the confident persuasion both of the reality of these gracious promises and of the Divine ability and willingness to fulfill them forms the animating spirit and guiding principle of his being, in every situation of life, whether of trial or of difficulty, in which he is subsequently placed."

Murphy (MG, 261) writes to the point, in these statements: "The narrative now takes leave of the rest of the Shemites, as well as the other branches of the human

family, and confines itself to Abram. It is no part of the design of Scripture to trace the development of worldiness. It marks its source, and indicates the law of its downward tendency; but then it turns away from the dark detail, to devote its attention to the way by which light from heaven may again pierce the gloom of the fallen heart. Here, then, we have the starting of a new spring of spiritual life in the human race."

Note the following also (SIBG, 230): "V. 1. While Abram was in Ur of the Chaldees, God appeared to him, probably in human shape, Acts 7:2, as He did at least eight times afterward (Gen. 12:6-7, 13:3-4, 15:1, 17:1, 18:1, 21:12, 22:1, 15), and called him to leave his country and his father's house, which, for some time past, had been infected with idolatry (Josh. 24:2, 2 Cor. 6:17, Rev. 18:4, Isa. 41:2, Neh. 9:7). He, readily surrendering all for the sake of Christ, (Psa. 45:10-11, Luke 14:26), in obedience to the divine command, and relying on His direction and protection, went forth, not knowing whither the Lord intended to lead him (Heb. 11:8). But as they had stopped too long in Haran, I suppose the call here mentioned was one which he received anew after the death of his father." (This last view, of course, has always been a matter of controversy.) Payne (OHH, 36): "Abraham grew up in Ur just before the rise of Dyn. III and the Sumerian renaissance. Here, in a center for the worship of the moon god Sin, God called Abraham to a life of pilgrimage to the celestial city (Heb. 11:13-16). Gen. 15:7 (cf. Neh. 9:7) notes that God was responsible for Abram's movement from Ur; but there is no information in the O.T. on the precise form of the call. Acts 7:2-4 reveals, however, that God appeared to him there and told him to move out. It was by faith (Heb. 11:8), the destination not yet given. (This verse must apply to the call in Ur, for by Haran he knew where he was going, Gen. 12:5); and Abram obeyed. He seems to have persuaded

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his father, for Terah led the party (Gen. 11:31), which included Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot; Nahor's family stayed but followed to Haran later (24:10, 27:43)."

*Note the Call and the Fulfillment.* V. 2—Abraham was made a *great nation*. His posterity by Ishmael, by the sons of Keturah, and by Esau, were exceedingly numerous (16:10, 17:20, 21:13, 25:1-18; ch. 36; Num., ch. 31; Judg., chs. 6, 7). His seed of promise, by Jacob, were as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth in multitude (13:16, 15:5, 22:17, 28:3, 14; 32:12; Num., ch. 1, also 23:10; Heb. 11:12; 1 Chron., ch. 21; 1 Ki. 4:20; 2 Chron., ch. 17; Jer. 33:22). His spiritual seed, followers of his faith and obedience, are still more numerous, a multitude which no man can number (Psa. 2:8-9, 22:27-30; also Psalms 62, 88; Isa., chs. 52, 59, 60; Rev. 7:4-9, 11:15). All the spiritual children of Jesus, his *eminent seed*, are included herein (Isa. 53:10-12, Gal. 3:26-29). God *blessed* Abram (1) with the numerous seed mentioned, (2) with Canaan, as the future property of part of them, (3) with Christ, as his *eminent seed* (Gal. 3:16), with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Gal. 3:14, Eph. 1:3). Abram was a blessing (1) to his friends and servants, who were instructed by him (Gen. 14:14, 18:19), (2) to his posterity, who were blessed for his sake (Exo. 3:6-8, Lev. 26:42, Gen. 17:20), (3) to the world, as an eminent pattern of faith and holiness (Rom., ch. 4), and as the progenitor of Christ the Savior (Gal. 3:13, 16). God did and will remarkably befriend and prosper the friends of Abram and his natural seed, but especially of Jesus Christ and his spiritual seed; and did and will remarkably punish their enemies (Josh. 2:9, Gen. 15:13-14, Exo. 17:8-16; Matt. 10:42, 25:41-46). All the *families of the earth are blessed* in Abram. He was of great service to the Canaanites, in imparting revelation to some of them, or in setting before them all an engaging example of virtue. His seed of promise, and especially his spiritual seed, are useful on that account, and have been

and are still the means of the prosperity or protection of nations (Isa. 6:13, 10:24-25, Matt. 24:22). But it is properly in his seed (Christ) that men are blessed. Multitudes of nations receive much outward happiness, and the dispensation of gospel ordinances, in consequence of his undertaking for his people (Matt. 24:24, Isa., chs. 35, 49, 50, also 6:13). And believers, gathered out of all nations, are blessed in him with temporal, spiritual and eternal blessings (Gal. 3:16, Acts 3:25-26, Eph. 1:3, Psal. 72:17-19, Isa. 45:17-25). It is easy to see, that the subsequent promises and threatenings, nay, the doctrines and laws, mentioned in Scripture, are but an enlarged exposition of these two verses; and the whole fate of the Jewish and gospel church, nay, of the saints in heaven and the lost in hell, are but one continued fulfillment thereof. *Verse 3*—The command given to Abraham involved great personal sacrifices—country, kindred, and home; and also great faith—he knew not where he was going. But the blessing promised was most cheering and comprehensive. It embraced himself, all who favored and honored him, the whole nation that was to spring from him, and all the families of the earth. Abraham by faith saw in this last promise the most glorious and blessed of all truths—the atoning work of the Messiah (Acts 3:25, Gal. 3:8). (See SIBG, p. 230). Note that in calling the fleshly seed of Abram, God did not abandon the other “families of the earth,” but was in fact making provision for their future spiritual welfare also.

Murphy (MG, 263): “In all God’s teachings the near and the sensible come before the far and the conceivable, the present and the earthly before the eternal and the heavenly. Thus Abram’s immediate acts of self-denial are his leaving his country, his birthplace, his home. The promise to him is to be made a great nation, be blessed, and have a great name in the new land which the Lord would show him. This is unspeakably enhanced by his



being made a blessing to all nations. God pursues this mode of teaching for several important reasons. *First*, the sensible and the present are intelligible to those who are taught. The Great Teacher begins with the known, and leads the mind forward to the unknown. If he had begun with things too high, too deep, or too far from the range of Abram's mental vision, he would not have come into relation with Abram's mind. It is superfluous to say that he might have enlarged Abram's view in proportion to the grandeur of the conceptions to be revealed. On the same principle he might have made Abram cognizant of all present and all developed truth. On the same principle he might have developed all things in an instant of time, and so have had done with creation and providence at once. *Secondly*, the present and the sensible are the types of the future and the conceivable; the land is the type of the better land; the nation of the spiritual nation; the temporal blessing of the eternal blessing; the earthly greatness of the name of the heavenly. And let us not suppose that we are arrived at the end of all knowledge. We pique ourselves on our advance in spiritual knowledge beyond the age of Abram. But even we may be in the very infancy of mental development. There may be a land, a nation, a blessing, a great name, of which our present realizations or conceptions are but the types. Any other supposition would be a large abatement from the sweetness of hope's overflowing cup. *Thirdly*, those things which God now promises are the immediate form of his bounty, the very gifts he begins at the moment to bestow. God has his gift to Abram ready in his hand in a tangible form. He points to it and says, This is what thou presently needest; this I give thee, with my blessing and favor. But, *fourthly*, these are the earnest and the germ of all temporal and eternal blessing. Man is a growing thing, whether as an individual or a race. God graduates his benefits according to the condition and capacity of the recipients. In the first

boon of his good-will is the earnest of what he will continue to bestow on those who continue to walk in his ways. And as the present is the womb of the future, so is the external the symbol of the internal, the material the shadow of the spiritual, in the order of the divine blessing. And as events unfold themselves in the history of man and conceptions in his soul within, so are doctrines gradually opened up in the Word of God, and progressively revealed to the soul by the Spirit of God." (Cf. Isa. 28:9-10, Mark 4:28, 1 Cor. 15:42-49, Heb. 10:1, Eph. 1:13-14, Col. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-11, 3:18).

The Abrahamic Covenant, which is mentioned several times in Genesis (cf. 12:2, 3, 7; 13:14-17; chs. 15, 17; ch. 18; 21:12-13; 22:9-18) was essentially a *covenant of promise*; the only requirement was that Abram should respond in faith and trust to God's calling him away from his land and his family. And, although subsequent ramifications of the covenant occur in Genesis, the two basic features remain constant throughout. These are *the land* and *the descendants*. "The progeny of Abraham was to be a blessing to all and Abraham was guaranteed a son through whom his line would be perpetuated." This son, Isaac, therefore, came to be known as *the child of promise*, and the land to which Abram journeyed became designated *the land of promise*. (Exo. 12:25, Deut. 19:8-10, Josh. 23:5, Acts 7:4-5, Gal. 4:22-31; Gen. 17:15-19; Heb. 11:9-12, 17-19, etc.). Green (UBG, 163): "In the original promise and in the renewal of it upon two occasions of unusual solemnity, one when the Lord signified his approval of Abraham's unfaltering faith by coming as his guest in human form, and again as a reward of his most signal act of obedience, the blessing is set before him in its most ample sweep. But during all the intervening period of long expectancy of his promised child the divine communications made to him from time to time were designed to keep alive his faith in that particular promise,

whose fulfillment was so long delayed; hence, mention is merely made of his numerous seed, and of the land which they were to occupy, alike in 13:14-17, 15:5-7, 18, which the critics assign to J, and in 17:4-8, which they give to P." There is no occasion here for the assumption of different sources.

Note, in this connection, JB (29): "As a result of God's call and promise of posterity Abraham cuts off all earthly ties and with his childless wife, 11:30, sets out for an unknown land. It is Abraham's first act of faith; it will be renewed when the promise is repeated, 15:5-6, and put to the test when God asks for the surrender of Isaac who was the fruit of that promise, ch. 22. To Abraham's unquestioning acts of faith the chosen people owes its existence and destiny, Heb. 11:8-19. Not only Abraham's physical descendants, but all who, in virtue of the same faith, become his sons, will have their share in that destiny, as the Apostle shows, Rom. 4, Gal. 3:7."

Although the emphasis in the Abrahamic promise is on the *land* and the *seed*, in its fullness the promise is a seven-fold one, as follows: (1) "I will make of thee a great nation." The phrase, "great nation," of course, implies infinitely more than great in number. "Since the greatness is of God's making, it involves true greatness in every sense. If ever there was a great nation, it was Israel." Israel achieved true greatness in her preservation of the knowledge of the living and true God, and Israel was great, inconceivably great, in her presentation to the world of the Messiah, the world's Redeemer. (2) "I will bless thee." This statement refers to Abram himself. "A man is blessed when due to the gracious working of God all goes well with him (cf. 39:5); the things that he undertakes thrives; and true success crowns all his endeavors." (3) "I will make thy name great." Note the various names given to him: "the father of a multitude" (17:5), a prince of God (23:6); the man in God's confidence

(18:17-19); a prophet (20:7); the servant of God (Psa. 105:6); and the friend of God (Jas. 2:23). (4) "And be thou a blessing." This expresses something that God does. "God is the one who in the last analysis makes Abram to be a true blessing unto others. But at the same time, a moral responsibility of Abram's is involved: He should do his part that he may become a blessing to others. Consequently the imperative, 'be thou a blessing.'" (5) "I will bless them that bless thee," "So intimately is God concerned in having men take the proper attitude toward this prophet and servant of His that whoever wishes Abram well, to him will God do good." (6) "And him that curseth thee will I curse." "The deeper reason behind all this is that Abram will be so closely identified with the good work of God, that to curse him comes to be almost the equivalent of cursing God." (7) "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "This word reaches back to the divided 'families' (10:5, 20, 31) of the earth, divided by their sins, as well as to the curse of 3:17 which is now to be replaced by a blessing. A blessing so great that its effect shall extend to 'all the families of the earth' can be thought of only in connection with the promised Savior. The word, therefore, is definitely Messianic and determines that the Messiah is to emerge from the line of Abram." Quotes from Leupold (EG, I, 411, 412). (Note the parallels of this sevenfold promise in Gen. 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14).

#### 4. *The Promised Land*

V. 1—"unto the land that I will show thee." (Cf. 11:31, 12:5). Haley (ADB, 364): "At first the *name* of the country was not revealed to him. It is designated simply as a 'land that I will show thee' (12:1). Even if the name 'Canaan' had been mentioned to Abraham at the outset, it might still be true that he went forth 'not knowing whither he went.' For, in those days of slow transit, imperfect intercommunication, and meager geographical

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knowledge, the mere name of a country several hundred miles distant would convey almost *no* idea of the country itself. In our own time, even, of how many an emigrant on his way to America it might well be said, 'He knows not whither he is going.'" (Cf. Heb. 11:8). Again: "Gen. 11:31 merely shows that Abraham's destination was known to Moses writing at a later date." The same is true of 12:5.

McClellan (COTH, 28:31): "This country, the future home of the great nation destined to spring from Abram's loins, was in many respects eminently adapted for its special mission in the history of the world. In extent, indeed, it was but a narrow strip of country, but a little larger than the six northern counties of England, being nearly 180 miles in length, and 75 miles in breadth, and having an area of about 13,600 English square miles. Bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the north by the mountains of Lebanon, on the east by the Syrian desert, on the south by the wilderness of Arabia, it was situated at the meeting-point of the two continents of Asia and Africa, 'on the very outpost, on the extremest western edge of the East.' It was a secluded land. A wilderness encompassed it on the east and south, mountains shut it in on the north, and the 'Great Sea' which washed its western shore was the terror rather than the thoroughfare of ancient nations. Unlike the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, it had no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, but one small port—that of Joppa—with which to tempt the mariner from the west. But while thus eminently adapted to be the 'silent and retired nursery of the Kingdom of God,' it was in the very centre of the activity of the ancient world, *in the midst of the nations, and the countries that were round about it* (Ezek. 5:5). On the south was the great empire of Egypt, on the northeast the rising kingdom of Assyria. Neither of these great nations could communicate with the other without passing through Palestine, and so learning some-

thing of its peculiar institutions and religion; and when the *fullness of time* was come no country was better suited, from its position at the extremest verge of the Eastern World, to be the starting-point whence the glad tidings of Redemption might be proclaimed to all nations. Moreover, narrow as were its limits, and secluded as was its position, it yet presented a greater variety of surface, scenery and temperature than is to be found in any other part of the world, and needed not to depend on other countries for anything that either the luxuries or actual wants of its inhabitants required. Four broadly marked longitudinal regions divided its surface. (1) First, there was the *low plain* of the western seacoast, broad toward the south, and gradually narrowing toward the north, famous for the Shephelah (*the low country*) with its waving grain-fields, and the vale of Sharon (*level country*), the garden of Palestine. From this was an ascent to (2) *a strip of table-land*, every part of which was more or less undulating, but increasing in elevation from north to south, and broken only by the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon. To this succeeded a rapid descent into (3) *a deep fissure or valley*, through which the Jordan (*the descender*), the only river of importance in the country, rushes from its source at the base of Hermon into the Dead Sea, the surface of which is no less than 1316 feet below that of the Mediterranean. Hence was a second ascent to (4) *a strip of table-land* on the east similar to that on the west, and seeming with its range of purple-tinted mountains to overhang Jerusalem itself. Crowned by the forests and upland pastures of Gilead and Bashan, this eastern table-land gradually melted into the desert which rolled between it and Mesopotamia. Thus within a very small space were crowded the most diverse features of natural scenery, and the most varied products. It was *a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land flowing with milk and honey*

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(Exo. 3:8, 17; Exo. 13:5; Deut. 8:7-9, 11:8-12; Josh. 5:6, Jer. 11:5, Ezek. 20:6, 15; Num. 13:27). The low plains yielded luxuriant crops of wheat and barley, of rye and millet; on the table-lands with their equable and moderate climate grew the vine, the olive, the fig, the almond, the pomegranate; in the tropical neighborhood of Jericho flourished the palm-tree and the balsam; while the noble cedar waved on the mountains of Lebanon." *What a role this land has played in the history of the world! and what a role it is still playing in our day!*

### 5. Abram's Response to God's Call (12:1-6).

V. 4—"So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." This statement gives us the key to Abram's motivation throughout his entire life. When God spoke, Abram acted accordingly (cf. Paul, Acts 22:10, 26:19). This complete dedication to the will of God in all things, as manifested by Abraham throughout his life, surely negates the notion that he had become contaminated by the idolatrous tendencies of his kinsmen. It was this very commitment that caused his name to go down in the sacred records as the Friend of God and the Father of the Faithful (Isa. 41:8, 2 Chron. 20:7, Jas. 2:21-24, John 8:39-40; Rom. 4:4, 4:16-17; Gal. 3:5-9, Heb. 11:8-10, esp. John 15:14). This fact also tends to negate the view of some commentators that two divine calls were necessary to move Abram toward his ultimate destination. The record of Abram's life surely proves that it was not his custom to delay obedience when God called, any longer than circumstances might necessitate. The Scripture record clearly indicates that the place of his nativity was Ur, where he lived with his father Terah, his brothers Nahor and Haran, and where he married Sarai; that on the death of Haran, he migrated with his father, his wife, and his nephew Lot (son of Haran) to the geographical Haran in Upper Mesopotamia (11:26-32); and that on the death of his father he (Abram, now 75 years old) left Haran with

Sarai and Lot and moved by stages via Shechem and Bethel into the land of Canaan (12:1-9). We might compare the language of Stephen (Acts 7:2-4): here we read that the call from "the God of glory" came to Abraham "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran"; that "he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran; and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell." This language would seem to indicate that he was under God's direction from the very first, and continued to be under this Divine direction throughout his entire pilgrimage. Murphy (MG, 264, 265): "*Abram took*. He is now the leader of the little colony, as Terah was, before his death. Sarai, as well as Lot, is now named. *The gaining they had gained* during the five years of residence in Haran. If Jacob became comparatively rich in six years (Gen, 30:43), so might Abram, with the divine blessing, in five. *The souls they had gotten*—the bondservants they had acquired. Where there is a large stock of cattle, there must be a corresponding number of servants to attend to them. Abram and Lot entered the land of promise as men of substance. They are in a position of independence. The Lord is realizing to Abram the blessing promised. They start for the land of Kanaan, and at length arrive there. This event is made as important as it ought to be in our minds by the mode in which it is stated."

However, it would be well, I think, for the student to be acquainted with A. Gosman's theory of the two divine calls (CDHCG, 392, n.) as follows: "There is no discrepancy between Moses and St. Stephen. Stephen's design was, when he pleaded before the Jewish Sanhedrin, to show that God's revelations were not limited to Jerusalem and Judea, but, that He had first spoken to the father of Abram in an *idolatrous* land, Ur of the Chaldees. But Moses dwells specially on Abram's call from Haran, because Abram's obedience to *that* call was the proof of his faith (Words-



worth).’ There is no improbability in the supposition that the call was repeated. And this supposition would not only reconcile the words of Stephen and Moses, but may explain the fifth verse: ‘And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.’ Abram had left his home in obedience to the original call of God, but had not reached the land in which he was to dwell. Now, upon the second call, he not only sets forth, but continues in his migrations until he reaches Canaan, to which he was directed.”

The fact that stands out here, the one especially to be remembered, is that *Abram went first from Ur to Haran, and thence to Canaan*. Special mention is made of the fact that in both departures (first from Ur, and then from Haran) Abram was accompanied by his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. In mentioning Sarai the foundation is laid for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promise (Covenant) in the progressive revelation of the Messianic genealogy and its ultimate consummation in Christ Jesus, Messiah Himself, and (2) for other subsequent events of secular history, as, for example, the never-ending conflict between the progeny of Isaac and that of Ishmael (Gen. 16:7-14), a conflict that still rages today. In mentioning Lot, the foundation is laid for the subsequent accounts of (1) the theophany vouchsafed Abraham in the vicinity of Hebron, (2) the subsequent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (chs. 18, 19), and (3) the incestuous origin of the Moabites and Ammonites (19:30-38).

We are told that men bound from Ur to Haran would set out before the coming of the nine dry months “which would strip every blade of grass from the land.” The distance was some 600 miles. Some writers think that Terah and his clan followed the west bank of the Euphrates. Hence when they passed through Central Mesopotamia, they would have seen the walls and towers of Babylon on the other side of the river, including the famous eight-

storied ziggurat (cf. Gen. 10:10; 11:1-9). Other writers think they followed the Tigris rather than the Euphrates. Thus Kraeling writes (BA, 57): "Terah is said to have started his renewed trek with a more distant objective in mind—to go to the land of Canaan. . . . But since he goes to Haran, we may imagine him as taking the familiar migration route back to the home area. Perhaps his herds had not crossed the Euphrates at all to the southern shore of which Ur lay, for the river was certainly a formidable obstacle. In returning he would have gone up the west side of the Tigris. We may imagine him as passing mighty Asshur, the capital of Assyria, and eighty miles beyond he would have seen Nineveh across the river, a city of yet lesser consequence, but destined to become the seat of an empire that was to trample his descendants under its feet. Leaving the Tigris, Terah would have taken the westward track to Nisibis, and crossing the headwaters of the Khabur River would soon have come to Haran on the upper *Balikh* River, another tributary of the Euphrates." Significant archeological discoveries were made at Haran in the nineteen-fifties under the direction of D. S. Rice. From these discoveries it seems evident that the moon-temple of Haran lay at the site occupied by the later great mosque. Kraeling (*ibid.*): "We here stand on the spot to which Joshua refers when he says to the assembled tribes that their fathers lived of old beyond the river and served other gods (Josh. 24:2). First among these gods was Sin of Haran. It was near here that the divine revelation calling Abraham to a land of promise was given. Truly at Haran one stands at the source of the River of Life."

Payne (OHH, 36, 37): "Haran, Gen. 11:31—12:4. Terah knew the destination was Canaan, 11:31; but he settled in Haran, which was likewise a center for the worship of Sin, and permeated with Hurrian customs, where he died. This was a tragedy: lost faith? Relapse into idolatry? God then called Abram again, this time to

leave the father's house' as well, 12:1. It was to 'the land I will show thee (in detail)'; he knew it was Canaan (v. 5). With this call came promises: (1) personal election, divine discrimination, for 'salvation is of the Jews,' John 4:22. God had previously associated Himself with groups, Noah, and Shem (9:26), but with antecedent ethical distinction; Abram's only plea was faith, Heb. 11:6. Election proves God's control of history and keeps the recipient in humility. He promised Abram posterity, blessing, and fame; and Abram's whole subsequent life demonstrated divine monergism; in his own power he had no seed, no land, no property, 14:23. (2) universality, 12:3, for all nations were to be blessed in him. He was an example of faith, Gal. 3:8; and the Gentiles are blessed with faithful Abraham, for Gen. 12:3 is not strictly as Messianic a prophecy as 22:18, where his 'seed' is specified, cf. Acts 3:25." (1) The student will again note the disagreement among eminent authorities as to whether Abram was the recipient of one or two divine calls. There seems to be no way of resolving this problem conclusively. Note however, our own conclusion, and the reasons for it, in preceding paragraphs. (2) The student must also keep in mind that the history of the cities of Asshur and Nineveh extends far back into that of Mesopotamia, as far back indeed as the fourth millenium B.C. (Gen. 10:10-12). This great antiquity is well confirmed by archaeology. These cities did not attain pre-eminence, however, until the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The First or Old Assyrian kingdom had its beginning about 1750 B.C., soon after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur.)

Lange (CDHCG, 393): "The calling of Abram: 1. In its requisitions; 2. in its promises; 3. in its motives. (a) The grace of God. The election of Abram. The choice of God reflects itself in the dispositions of men, the gifts of believers. As every people has its peculiar disposition, so the race of Abram, and especially the

father of it, had the religious disposition in the highest measure. (b) The great necessity of the world. It appeared about to sink into heathenism; the faith must be saved in Abram. Faith should proceed from one believer to all, just as salvation should proceed from one Savior to all. The whole messianic prophecy was not embraced in Abram." A. Gosman (CDHCG, 396): "The promise receives its first fulfillment in Abram, then in the Jews, more perfectly when the Son of God became incarnate, *the seed of Abram*, then further in the church and the preaching of the gospel, but finally and fully when Christ shall complete his church, and come to take her unto himself." Again (*ibid.*): "The object of the writer is not Abram's glorification, but the glorification of Jehovah." Again (*ibid.*): "Abram is also an illustrious example to all who hear the call of God. His obedience is prompt and submissive. He neither delays nor questions, but went out not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11:8."

Speiser (ABG, 88: "Abraham's journey to the Promised Land was thus no routine expedition of several hundred miles. Instead, it was the start of an epic voyage in search of spiritual truths, a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history."

#### 6. *Through the Land of Promise (12:5-9).*

Leaving Mesopotamia, Abram and his retinue crossed the Great River, the Euphrates (Josh. 24:2). Smith-Fields (OTH, 68): "This separated him entirely from his old home, and possibly accounts for the title *Hebrew* which he came to wear (Gen. 14:13). While some think that the name Hebrew came from the patriarch Eber (Gen. 11:16), it may come from the Hebrew verb meaning to 'cross over.'" Evidently the caravan then made its way across the great Syrian desert. Although the route is not specifically indicated in the Biblical account, tradition has it that Abram tarried at Damascus. (Josephus, for example, informs us that the patriarch remained there for

some time, "being come with an army from the land of the Chaldeans (Antiq. I, 1). It should be noted, too, that Damascus was the native place of Eliezer, Abram's household steward, Gen. 15:2). No doubt the caravan then crossed the Jordan, where the first stopping-place was Shechem, in the valley of the same name, lying between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.

V. 5. "And into the land of Canaan they came." (No doubt a prolepsis, as in 11:31). This was a distance of some 300 miles from Haran. Cf. v. 6—"And the Canaanite was then in the land." The territory originally occupied by the Canaanites as a separate ethnic group is clearly described in Gen. 10:19. A wider use of the term is also encountered in Scripture and in early external sources as including the inhabitants generally of the Syro-Palestinian area. In its wider use also the terms "Canaanite" and "Amorite" tend to overlap directly. Thus Abram was promised Canaan (12:5, 7) but this occupancy was delayed—in fact was never realized by Abraham personally—because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Several inscriptions indicate clearly the contiguous use of "Amorites" and "Canaanites" in Moses' time; hence, "the use of these terms as the distinguishing marks of different literary hands is erroneous" (NBD, 184). It should be noted, too, that Shechem was a Canaanite principality under a Hivite ruler (Gen. 12:5, 6; 34:2, 30), but could be called "Amorite" (Gen. 48:22). It seems that at the time of the conquest of Abram's descendants, the mountainous land in the center, including the place of Shechem, was occupied by the Amorites and other tribes, while the coast of the Mediterranean and the west bank of the Jordan was held by the Canaanites proper (cf. Josh. 5:1, 11:3). The statement in v. 6 has been "fastened upon as a proof of the late composition of this history, as implying that though in Abram's time the Canaanite was in the land, he had ceased to have a place there in the writer's

days. The objection is not founded in historic truth; for it appears from Gen. 34:30, 1 Ki. 9:20-21, Ezek. 16:3, that the Canaanite continued to a certain extent in after ages to occupy the land" (CECG, 131). Murphy suggests three possible interpretations of this passage (MG, 265-266): "This simply implies that the land was not open for Abram to enter upon immediate possession of it without challenge: another was in possession; the sons of Kanaan had already arrived and preoccupied the country. It also intimates, or admits of, the supposition that there had been previous inhabitants who may have been subjugated by the invading Kenaanites. . . . It admits also of the supposition that the Kenaanites afterward ceased to be its inhabitants. Hence some have inferred that this could not have been penned by Moses, as they were expelled after his death. If this supposition were the necessary or the only one implied in the form of expression, we should acquiesce in the conclusion that this sentence came from one of the prophets to whom the conservation, revision, and continuation of the living oracles were committed. But we have seen that two other presuppositions may be made that satisfy the import of the passage. Moreover, the first of the three accounts for the fact that Abram does not instantly enter on possession, as there was an occupying tenant. And, finally, the third supposition may fairly be, not that the Kenaanites afterwards ceased, but that they should afterward cease to be in the land. This, then, as well as the others, admits of Moses being the writer of this interesting sentence." To the present writer the best explanation of this sentence is the simplest one: namely, that the writer intends us to know that the Canaanite was *already* in the land. Why try to give it some mysterious significance when the simplest interpretation makes the most sense? The implication could well be also that the Canaanite had driven out the earlier inhabitants.

*The Place of Shechem, The Oak of Moreh*

This was Abram's first stopping-place. The phrase is perhaps a prolepsis, for the place where the city Shechem, either built by or named after the Hivite prince (34:2) was afterward situated, between Ebal and Gerizim. This has been described as the only very beautiful spot in Central Palestine. *The oak of Moreh*: probably not the oak literally, but rather the terebinth or turpentine tree; however, the oak was a kind of generic name given to various kinds of trees. Cf. Deut. 11:30—in all likelihood, the oak-grove or terebinth-grove of Moreh. (Moreh, like Mamre, was probably the name of the owner: cf. Gen. 13:18, 14:13). It has been assumed by the critics that there was a sacred grove here where pagan rites had been practised, probably some aspect of the Cult of Fertility which prevailed generally among the inhabitants of the land. The phrase, "place of Shechem," is assumed to have been a "holy place." "Moreh" means literally "teacher" or "instructor": hence, it may be conceded that oaks of instruction were in the category of oaks of divination (Judg. 9:37). The notion that sacred trees and groves were inhabited by divinities and hence possessed oracular powers was widespread in the cults of ancient pagan peoples. To this day, we are told, the venerable cedars of Lebanon are tended by Maronite priests. From these facts it is further assumed by the critics that since this was the first place where Abram built an altar unto Jehovah (v. 7), he selected this particular "holy place" to worship his particular deity. This, of course, is conjecture. Lange (CDHCG, 391): "It is not probable that Abram would have fixed his abode precisely in a grove, which according to heathen notions had a sacred character as the residence of divining priests. The religious significance of the place may have arisen from the fact that Jacob buried the images brought with him in his family, under the oak of Shechem (35:4). The idols, indeed, must not be thrown into sacred but into

profane places (Isa. 2:20). But, perhaps, Jacob had regard to the feelings of his family, and prepared for the images, which, indeed, were not images belonging to any system of idolatry, an honorable burial. At the time of Joshua the place had a sacred character, and Joshua, therefore, erected here the monumental stone, commemorating the solemn renewal of the law (Josh., ch. 24). Thus they became the oaks of the pillar at which the Shechemites made Abimelech king (Judg. 19:6)." Leupold (EG, 419): "But all suppositions, such as that the words ought to be rendered 'oracle-terebinth,' or that we have here indications of an animistic religion on the part of the patriarchs, are guesses. It is just as possible that in days of old some worshiper of Yahweh had under this oak admonished and instructed the people." The sum and substance of the whole matter is clear, namely, that Abram encamped by an ancient landmark, and there received a second communication from God, and there built his first altar in the Land of Promise to the God who had called him to undertake this pilgrimage of faith.

*The Theophany and the Altar*, V. 7. The patriarch had left Ur of the Chaldees to set out on a trek, the destination of which God had not specified. The divine injunction was simply "unto the land that I will show thee" (12:1, cf. Heb. 11:8, "he went out, not knowing whither he went"). Now God appears to him and identifies this Land of Promise specifically: "unto thy seed will I give *this* land." Note that God did not declare He would give it to Abram himself: as a matter of fact, Abraham died without owning a foot of it, except the small spot he purchased for a burial-place (Gen. 23:17-20, 25:9-10, 49:28-33). Lange (CDHCG, 391, 392): "Abram's faith had developed itself thus far since he had entered Canaan, and now the promise is given to him of the land of Canaan, as the possession of the promised seed. . . . Abram's grateful acknowledgment: the erection of an altar, and



the founding of an outward service of Jehovah, which as to its first feature consisted in the calling upon his name (cultus), and as to its second in the profession and acknowledgement of his name. Thus also Jacob acted (33:20, Josh. 24:1, 26). Bethel, Jerusalem, Hebron, Beersheba are places of the same character (i.e., places which were consecrated by the patriarchs, and not as Knobel thinks, whose consecration took place in later times, and then was dated back to the period of the patriarchs). Abram's altars stood in the oaks of Moreh, and Mamre, in Bethel, and upon Moriah. Abram, and the patriarchs generally, served also the important purpose of preaching through their lives repentance to the Canaanites, as Noah was such a preacher for his time. For God leaves no race to perish unwarned. Sodom had even a constant warning in the life of Lot." *The divine deed to the Holy Land was here made over to the seed of Abraham.* "Abram himself was to possess only a burial ground. Faith had to accept 'things not seen.'"

Let us not forget that the three elements of Biblical religion are *the altar, the sacrifice, and the priesthood*. Hence Abram did here, precisely what Noah had done on coming out of the ark (Gen. 8:20), what undoubtedly the patriarchs of the Messianic Line had done from the time of Abel (Heb. 11:4; Gen. 4:1-5). Throughout the Patriarchal Dispensation, the patriarch himself fulfilled the three divine offices of prophet (revealer of the will of God to his household), priest (mediator between his household and God), and king (the one who had complete authority over his household). This threefold office was expressed in the titles, Messiah, Christos, Christ, meaning "The Anointed One." In Old Testament times those leaders inducted into these three ministries were formally set aside for their service by the ceremony of anointing (Judg. 9:8, 2 Sam. 2:4, 1 Ki. 1:34; Exo. 28:41; 1 Ki. 19:16). The holy anointing oil used in these ceremonies of induction

was typical of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16, 17; Acts 10:38, 4:26; Luke 4:18; Heb. 1:9; etc.). We see no reason for assuming that Abraham had not maintained this indispensable institution of sacrifice throughout his entire previous life; indispensable, that is, in the fact that from the beginning of revealed religion every lamb slain on the Patriarchal and Jewish altars was by divine ordination designed to point forward in type to the Lamb of God, our Passover, who would be offered up for the redemption of mankind (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Isa. 53:7; Acts 8:32, 1 Pet. 1:19, Rev. 5:4-14).

Note the Abram *built his altar unto Yahweh (Jehovah) and called upon the name of Yahweh*, v. 7. Advocates of the *Documentary Theory* have built up a mass of conjecture based on the assumption of different sources or codes. The name Elohim, they contend, is characteristic of the Elohist Code (E) and the Priestly Code (P), whereas the name Jehovah characterizes the Jahvistic or Yahwistic Code (J). (This will be treated again *infra* in connection with Gen. 22:14 as related to Exo. 6:2). Suffices it here to quote from Green on this point (UBG, 167, 168): "It is said that J and P differ in their conception of God; J's representation is anthropomorphic, that of P is more exalted and spiritual. But the two aspects of God's being, his supreme exaltation and his gracious condescension, are not mutually exclusive or conflicting, but mutually supplementary. Both must be combined in any correct apprehension of his nature and his relation to man. These are not to be sundered, as though they were distinct conceptions of separate minds. *They are found together throughout the Bible.* Since Elohim is used of God as the creator and in his relation to the world at large, while Jehovah is the name by which he made himself known to his chosen people, his chief acts of condescending grace naturally appear in connection with the latter." Leupold (EG, 420): "A word from God requires a response on the part

of man. Abram felt impelled to give personal public testimony to God's mercy displayed in this appearance. So he built an altar. This statement is misconstrued by criticism in its attempt to find as many distinctions as possible between so-called sources. This passage, ascribed to J, is said to mean that J never records instances of actual sacrifices by the patriarchs. This is the argument from silence, and it is inconclusive because the word for altar is *mizbeach*, meaning 'a place for slaughter.' The manifest intention of the author must be that 'a place for slaughter' was made in order to slaughter a victim. *Altars became altars when the victim is slain.* A mere altar of stones would have been a formalistic gesture on Abram's part—a gesture like falling on one's knees to pray but omitting the prayer. *The soul of the patriarchal religion was sacrifice. The critics find matters, which no one before their time dreamed of.* The altar is said to be built 'unto Yahweh' to emphasize the undeserved mercy of His promise." (Italics ours—C. The fact seems to be that the critics are for the most part motivated by zeal to destroy the integrity of the Bible and so to destroy its influence on mankind.) (HSB, 22): "Abraham's altar at Shechem implies animal sacrifice which was common to all Semites."

*On to Bethel.* From the oak of Moreh Abram now moved to the hill east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east (localities that are still recognized—the former as Beiten, the latter as Teller-Rigmeh, the mount of the heap). Obviously Abram was still predominantly nomadic and apparently was still seeking better pasture land. It could well be also that the "Canaanites" did not view with too kindly eyes the appearance of this patriarch's tents and flocks and herds; that Abram had neither the power nor the inclination to resort, like Jacob, to "his sword and his bow" (Gen. 48:22. Smith-Fields, OTH, 99). Abram was now on the heights

which skirt the Jordan, on the northern border of what was later the kingdom of Judah, between Bethel and Ai. Bethel was a *place*, adjacent to which was the town called *Luz* at the first (Gen. 28:19). (Jacob gave this name to the place twice (Gen. 28:19, 35:15). Archaeology confirms the fact that the city was established early in the Bronze Age; hence we meet the name as existing as such in Abram's time. Bethel continued afterward to be a place hallowed by the presence of God, to which the people resorted for counsel in the war with Benjamin (Judg. 20:18, 26, 31; xxi. 2), and in which Jeroboam, 1 Ki. 12:29, set up one of the golden calves). "Ai" meant literally a "heap of stones" (cf. Josh., chs. 7, 8). Here Abram *pitched his tent*. This was his *second stopping-place* in the Promised Land. (*Tent: used for dwelling*, Gen. 4:20, 9:21, 12:8, 13:18, 18:1, 13:5; Exo. 18:7; Num. 24:5, 6; 2 Sam. 20:1; Isa. 13:20, 38:12; Jer. 6:3. Women had tents apart from men, Gen. 24:67, 31:33. *Used for cattle*, 2 Chron. 14:15. *Manufacture of*, Acts 18:3.) Abram *called upon the name of Yahweh*. Murphy (MG, 267): "On the hill east of this sacred ground [Bethel] Abram built another altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. Here we have the reappearance of an ancient custom, instituted in the family of Adam after the birth of Enok (Gen. 4:26). Abram addresses God by his proper name, Jehovah, with an audible voice, in his assembled household. This, then, was a continuation of the worship of Adam, with additional light according to the progressive development of the moral nature of man. But Abram has not yet any settled abode in the land. He is only surveying its several regions, and feeding his flocks as he finds an opening. Hence he continues his journey southward." Leupold on Gen. 4:26 (EG, 227): "The 'name' here, as usual, means the whole truth that God had revealed about Himself. Since the name 'Yahweh' is attached to 'name,' this means that from days of old God was known in the

capacity of *Yahweh*, or in the character of *Yahweh*, whether that word as such was known at this early date or not. The thing that the name stood for was known. Men do not first in the age of Abraham or Moses begin to comprehend God's faithfulness, unchangeableness, and mercy. Since this calling out by the use of the name definitely implies public worship, we have here the first record of *regular* public worship. Private worship is presupposed as preceding. The great importance of public worship, both as a matter of personal necessity as well as a matter of public confession, is beautifully set forth by this brief record. This act bears eloquent testimony to the courage of this group, who wanted to be known as such whose hope was placed only in *Yahweh*. It is not enough to say that 'Yahweh's religion began with Enosh.' It began with Adam and developed into regular public worship in three generations." The significance of the statement here, v. 8, is the fact of the use of the Name *Yahweh* in worship, that is, to call out by the use of the Name. (SIBG, 239): "*Abram called on God, i.e., worshiped him by prayer, by preaching to his family, and by offering sacrifices for himself and them, ch. 18:19, 21:13. . . . It is not uncommon for men to speak and act religiously in one company or place, where religion is prevalent, or, if it may be so called, fashionable, who yet totally lay it aside in another place or company, where religion is less regarded, or perhaps altogether despised. Abram testifies for God wherever he goes.*" Again: "That Abram, before this time, knew and worshiped God, there can be no doubt; but this [Shechem] is the first altar erected by him; that is, the first decided and public establishment of the worship of *Jehovah* in his family. It is well known, that young Christians, who worship God in private, often find considerable difficulty in commencing family worship. Let them remember Abram's faith, Abram's altar, and Abram's blessing, and take courage."

7. *The Round Trip to Egypt (12:10-20)*

Literally, Abraham *pulled up stakes* and kept on moving toward the south, that is *toward the Negeb*. Evidently the hill area adjacent to Bethel, though it may have protected him somewhat from the animosity of his neighbors (who surely did not look with too friendly an eye on this nomadic intruder) furnished scanty pasturage for his cattle. He therefore went on southward, that is, toward the Negeb ("dry land"). The Negeb is the Palestinian region which extends south from Hebron. It is a more or less arid region in parts of which isolated flocks may be tended, as far south at least as Beersheba. The terrain and character of the Negeb was such that Judea was almost never invaded from the South through this area. When Israel sought to enter the Promised Land the procession was repulsed by this formidable barrier and its inhabitants (Deut. 1:42-46). Of course it may have been less desiccated in the days of the patriarchs. Frequently in Scripture the word is used merely to indicate direction, south. (The reference to the Negeb here and elsewhere in Genesis takes on great significance since Dr. Nelson Glueck's archaeological discoveries which make it clear that the region was occupied from 2100-1800 B.C., the period of Abraham. Incidentally, it is now believed by some archaeologists that Abraham and the Babylonian king Hammurabi were relatively contemporary. See Glueck's fascinating book, *Rivers in the Desert*, RD in our Bibliographical Abbreviations.) The route taken from the Beersheba region was probably by "the way of Shur," an area in the northwest part of the isthmus of Sinai, south of the Mediterranean coastline and "the way of the land of the Philistines" (Gen. 16:7, 25:18; Exo. 13:17-18, 15:22; 1 Sam. 15:7, 27:8).

*There arose a famine in the Land of Promise*, so Abram pressed on to the south. The Land of Promise, we are told, is watered by rain periodically, but seasons of drought occur in which the growth of vegetation is arrested and

thus famine is brought on. Because the fertility of her soil was guaranteed by the annual inundation of the Nile, Egypt as a rule enjoyed protection from drought; hence it was customary for peoples of Syria and Palestine to seek refuge there in times of famine in their own lands, as did Jacob later. Thus it will be noted that insofar as the Promised Land is considered, it was literally true that Abram simply "passed through the land" (v. 6). The first journey was apparently one of exploration and it seems to have been rapidly consummated and then terminated in a brief sojourn in Egypt.

*Abram in Egypt: The Problem of Sarai's Age*

Abram's wife, Sarai, is now thrust forward into what was an unenviable situation, and surely not one of her own making. Abram testified to her attractiveness: "thou art a fair woman to look upon" (v. 11) and the princes of Pharaoh on seeing her beauty "praised her to Pharaoh" (vv. 14, 15). The statement Sarai was so fair as to attract the attention of Pharaoh, even to the peril of her husband's life (12:11, 15) is said by the critics to be incompatible with 12:4 (cf. 17:17), according to which she was at that time upward of sixty-five years old. It is said to be still more incongruous that she should have attracted Abimelech when she was more than ninety years old (20:2-7, 7:17). Green (UBG, 167): "The only point of any consequence in this discussion is not what modern critics may think of the probability or possibility of what is here narrated, but whether the sacred historian credited it. On the hypothesis of the critics R (redactor) believed it and recorded it. What possible ground can they have for assuming that J and E had less faith than R in what is here told of the marvelous beauty and attractiveness of the ancestress of the nation? If the entire narrative could be put together by R, and related by him with no suspicion of discord, the same thing could just as well have been done by one original writer. It may be added, if it will in any measure

relieve the minds of doubting critics, that Abimelech is not said to have been taken with Sarah's beauty. He may have thought an alliance with 'a mighty prince' like Abraham (23:6) desirable, even if Sarah's personal charms were not what they had once been. And when Abraham lived to an age of one hundred and seventy-five, who can say how well a lady of ninety may have borne her years?" It has been suggested that Sarai's complexion, coming from a mountainous country, was no doubt fresh and fair as compared with the faces of Egyptian women, which, as the monuments show, were dark-brown or copper-colored (CECG, 132). This suggestion surely has merit.

*Abram in Egypt: His Attempted Deception (vv. 10-20).*

Leupold (EG, 421, 422): "Now follows an episode that is less attractive. Abram does not appear to good advantage in it. With impartial truth Moses records what Abram did. If the account remains entirely objective without the addition of a subjective opinion or estimate of the ethical value of Abram's conduct, this can readily be seen to be offset by the fact that the narrative as such in its unvarnished truth so plainly sets forth the unworthy sentiments that animated the patriarch, that the sympathetic reader is almost made to blush for the thing done by the man of God. The charge of the critics is decidedly unfair when they say: 'There is no suggestion that either the untruthfulness or the selfish cowardice of the request [of Abram] was severely reprobated by the ethical code to which the narrative appealed.' Prochsch sees the situation more nearly as it actually is when he asserts: 'It is quite impossible here not to notice the narrator's sarcasm,' and adds that this step that Abram took 'is most sharply condemned' by the writer. Comparing chapters twenty and twenty-six, we find two situations that constitute a close parallel to the one under consideration. Strange as such recurrences may strike us, it should be remembered



that life often brings us into situations that are practically duplicates of what transpired at an earlier date; and he that marvels that a patriarch sinned a second time after a definite rebuke, let him remember how often he himself may repeat a sin for which a stern admonition had been addressed to him. To say this must have been 'a very popular story in ancient Israel' hardly does justice to the facts of the case. Why should Israel have deemed the failings of its patriarchs material for 'popular' stories? The recording of three such instances is explicable only on the score of the strict impartiality of the author." See the parallel stories of Abram and Abimelech (ch. 20) and of Isaac and Abimelech (ch. 26). It must be understood that *the Bible is a very realistic book: it pictures life just as men lived it; it does not turn away from the truth to cover up the weaknesses of the heroes of the faith. It deals with them realistically as it deals with all men realistically, in the fact that it finds them in sin (as they know they are if they will but be honest with themselves and with God), but at the same time offers the only possible remedy, the Atonement, God's Covering of Grace (John 1:29, 1 John 1:7-10, Rom. 3:24, Eph. 1:7, Heb. 9:12). Divine Justice required the Atonement, and Divine Love provided it (John 3:16). It should be noted that the severe reproof which God administered to those practising deception, on all these occasions, was administered through the instrumentality of those who had been made the victims of their deception. In each case, too, the reproof was accompanied with manifestations of great mercy and benevolence.*

According to a previous understanding with Sarai, Abram palmed her off on the king of Egypt as his sister. This, of course, was a half-truth and a half-lie (20:12), which makes the incident more interesting and more complex ethically. Some authors have tried to minimize the deception by appeals to customs. Speiser, for example,

would have us know that, according to the inscriptions, in the Hurrian culture of the time men were accustomed to confer special status on their wives by adopting them as sisters. This, we are told, would have made Sarai eligible for sistership status in Haran which was predominantly a Hurrian city; and because this relationship was for Sarai a matter of prestige, Abram would have stressed it in introducing her to Pharaoh (ABG, 91-94). This notion is surely "out of tune" completely with the Genesis account: it is completely contrary to the motive explicitly attributed to Abram and Sarai in that account. Speiser's attempted explanation of the motives involved in Abram's deception makes it to be no deception at all. He writes: "Why was tradition so interested in the matter, enough to dwell on it repeatedly. We know now that the wife-sister position was a mark of cherished social standing. This kind of background would be an implicit guarantee of the purity of the wife's descendants. The ultimate purpose of the biblical genealogies was to establish the superior strain of the line through which the biblical way of life was transmitted from generation to generation. In other words, the integrity of the mission was to be safeguarded in transmission, the purity of the content protected by the quality of the container. This is why the antecedents of the wife—the mother of the next generation—in the formative early stages were of particular significance. Hence, too, all such notices would be obligatory entries in the pertinent records" (*ibid.*, 94). In opposition to this view, we may ask two questions: (1) What evidence have we that this special sister-wife status over in Haran was recognized, or even known, down in Egypt? (2) If the Old Testament writers were seeking to protect the moral integrity of the mothers of each succeeding generation, why do they present the deception practised by Abram and Sarai as *a deception pure and simple, and as motivated by selfishness*. It strikes this writer that from the viewpoint taken

by Dr. Speiser, the Genesis accounts of these deceptions would have been omitted from the history.

See JB (p. 29, n.): Here we have another attempt to "explain away" Abram's defection, and this is equally without any positive evidence to support it. We read: "The purpose of this narrative (the same theme recurs in ch. 20 where Sarai figures again, and in 26:1-11, where the story is told of Rebekah) is to commemorate the beauty of the ancestress of the race, the astuteness of its patriarch, the protection that God afforded them. The story reflects a stage of moral development when a lie was still considered lawful under certain circumstances and when the husband's life meant more than his wife's honor. God was leading man to an appreciation of the moral law but this appreciation was gradual." It will be noted that this writer puts the emphasis on the importance of the father, whereas Speiser puts it on the moral integrity of the mother. These views are hardly reconcilable.

*Why, then, do we not allow the Bible to say what it means and to mean what it says?* Let us get away from the nit-picking propensities of the "intellectual" who frequently cannot see the forest for the trees. Let us take a look at the other side—the realistic side—of the problem. For example (HSB, 22, n.): "God's will, done God's way, never lacks for God's blessing. *Say you are my sister.* Here Abraham did not tell the truth. Selfishness overtook this man of faith. Fear for his own life made him forget what consequences his deceit would bring for Sarah and others. Although Abraham was a man of faith he was not a perfect man. This incident serves to illustrate the fact that the end does not justify the means. The means and the end must both be right." (SIB, 232): "Sarai was his *sister* in some sense . . . but it was not in that sense, but in the common acceptation of the words, *sister and brother*, they sinfully wished the Egyptians to understand them." Jamieson (CECG, 132): "On reaching the con-

finer of Egypt, which was the greatest primeval kingdom in the world, Abram began to feel uneasy. Increasing signs of civilization, grandeur, and power, met his eye on every side; and as the immigration of so numerous a tribe as his from the neighboring desert would certainly arrest public attention, the prospect of encountering the authorities of Egypt, so different from the simple nomads of Asia, to whom his experience had hitherto been limited, filled him with awe. But all other anxieties were forgotten and absorbed in one cause of alarm. . . . He entertained a bad opinion of the morals and manners of the country; and anticipating that Sarai, whose style of beauty was far superior to that of the Egyptian women, might captivate some proud noble, who would try by any means to obtain possession of her, Abram became apprehensive of his life. The idea so completely unnerved him that his fortitude and faith alike gave way; and he formed an artful plan, which, while it would retain his wife beside him, would, he hoped, by leading to betrothal and other negotiations connected with the dowry, put off the evil day. The counsel of Abram to Sarai was true in words: but it was a deception, intended to give an impression that she was no more than his sister. His conduct was culpable and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God; it showed a reliance on worldly policy more than a trust in the promise; and he not only sinned himself, but tempted Sarah to sin also." Leupold (EG, 424): "Abram knows how little the rights of foreigners were respected in olden times. He also knows how beautiful women would be sought out when they came to a foreign land. He also understands that marriage was respected sufficiently that men felt they must dispose of the husband before they could take his wife. Egyptian parallels prove that men had no hesitation about committing murder in order to secure their object. There was nothing beside the point in the estimate that he makes of the situation except the morals of the patriarch. Though

20:12 indicates that the literal truth was being told, there is yet the possibility of telling it with the intent to deceive; and so it becomes a lie. In addition, there is something cowardly and mean about expecting Sarai to encounter the hazards in order that Abram might avoid danger. The heroic is notably absent in this request." In reply to the question as to how Sarai could be deemed beautiful at the age of sixty-five, this author writes' (*ibid.*, 424): "It must be remembered that according to the limits of longevity of those times she was only middle-aged. Middle-aged women may have retained their beauty, especially if they have not borne many children. On Pharaoh's part the taking of a woman into his harem may be largely a political expedient to enhance his own influence." Lange (CDHCG, 392): "It must be observed that by the side of the Hamitic women in Egypt and Canaan, Semitic women, even when advanced in years, would be admired as beautiful. Abram desired that Sarah should say that she was his sister, lest he should be killed. If she was regarded as his wife, an Egyptian could only obtain her when he had murdered her husband and possessor; but if she was his sister, then there was a hope that she might be won from her brother by kindly means. The declaration was not false (20:12), but it was not the whole truth." Lange goes on to say, trying to justify what Abram did in this case, that the patriarch's policy to report that Sarai was his sister was determined at an early period in their migrations, but was first brought into use in his dealing with Pharaoh. (To the present writer, this seems to be an unjustified assumption and wholly contrary to the tenor of 12:11.) He continues as follows: "Abram's venture was not from laxity as to the sanctity of marriage, or as to his duty to protect his wife; it was from a presumptuous confidence in the wonderful assistance of God. It was excused through the great necessity of the time, his defenceless state among strangers, the customary lawlessness of those in power, and

as to the relations of the sexes. Therefore Jehovah preserved him from disgrace, although he did not spare him personal anxiety, and the moral rebuke from a heathen. It is only in Christ, that with the broad view of faith, the knowledge of its moral human measures and limitations is from the beginning perfect. In the yet imperfect, but growing faith, the word is true, 'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' As a mere matter of prudence, Abram appeared to act prudently. He told no untruth, although he did not tell the whole truth. His word was, at all events, of doubtful import, and therefore, through his anxious forecast, was morally hazardous. But the necessity of the time, the difficulty of his position, and his confidence that God would make his relations clear at the proper time, serve to excuse it. It was intended to effect a final deception: his God would unloose the knot. In his faith Abram was a blameless type of believers, but not in his application of his faith to the moral problems of life. Still, even in this regard, he unfolds more and more his heroic greatness. We must distinguish clearly between a momentary, fanatical, exaggerated confidence in God, and the tempting of God with a selfish purpose." It strikes the present writer that there is much in the foregoing apologetic that is not in harmony with the Genesis account. Is it not the plain fact that Abram, in concealing the whole truth, did actually—by implication which cannot be ignored—tell an untruth? Oftentimes the most destructive lies are perpetrated by concealing that part of the truth which has the most bearing on the moral situation involved. We are reminded of the well-known couplet:

"A lie that is wholly a lie  
Can be met and fought outright,  
But a lie that is half a lie  
Is a harder matter to fight."

There are situations in which a person can lie simply by keeping silent. Cf. Smith-Fields (OTH, 99): "It is enough here to observe that the mighty kingdom of the Pharaohs had already been long established in Lower Egypt. In this crisis the faith of Abram failed. To protect his wife from the license of a despot, he stooped to that mean form of deceit, which is true in word but false in fact. The trick defeated itself. Sarai, as an unmarried woman, was taken to the harem of the king, who heaped wealth and honors upon Abram." Whitelaw (PCG, 188) comments on Abram's introduction of Sarai to Pharaoh as his 'sister' as follows: "A half truth (20:12) but a whole falsehood. The usual apologies, that he did not fabricate but did 'cautiously conceal the truth,' that perhaps he was acting in obedience to a Divine impulse, that he dissembled in order to protect his wife's chastity, are not satisfactory. On the other hand, Abram must not be judged by the light of New Testament revelation. It is not necessary for a Christian in every situation of life to tell all the truth, especially when its part suppression involves no deception, and is indispensable for self-preservation; and Abram may have deemed it legitimate as a means of securing both his own life and Sarah's honor, though how he was to shield his wife in the peculiar circumstances it is difficult to see. Rosenmuller suggests that he knew the preliminary ceremonies to marriage required a considerable time, and counted upon being able to leave Egypt before any injury was done to Sarah. The only objection to this is that the historian represents him as being less solicitous about the preservation of his wife's chastity than about the conservation of his own life. . . . 'No defence can be offered for a man who, merely through dread of danger to himself, tells a lie, risks his wife's chastity, puts temptation in the way of his neighbors, and betrays the charge to which the Divine favor had summoned him' (Dykes)." The plain fact is that should anyone take Sarah into his harem on the

supposition that she was his siter, Abram as the honored brother would be given most respectful treatment. Hence, as Leupold puts it (EG, 425): "Fully aware of the fact that such a course may involve the sacrifice of Sarai's honor in order that he himself might fare well, he nevertheless asks Sarai to make the sacrifice. Abram never sank lower, as far as we know, than when he made this request. Sarai's acquiescence, however, seems to grow out of the idea that there actually is no other safe course to follow. She was as sadly deficient in faith as he himself on this occasion." We repeat:

*The Bible is the most realistic book ever given to mankind. It never turns away from the truth to cover up the faults of the heroes of the faith. It deals with man as he is, and as he knows that he is, if he will but be honest with himself and with God. It finds him in sin, and proffers the only remedy for it.*

As A. Gosman puts it (CDHCG, 394, n.): "We are not to be harsh or censorious in our judgments upon the acts of these eminent saints. But neither are we called upon to defend their acts. . . . it is well to bear in mind that the Scripture records these acts without expressing distinctly any moral judgment upon them. It impliedly condemns. The Scripture, however, contains the great principles of moral truth and duty, and then oftentimes leaves the reader to draw the inference as to the moral quality of the act which it records. And its faithfulness in not concealing what may be of questionable morality, in the lives of the greatest saints shows the honesty and accuracy of the historian.' Wordsworth says well: 'The weaknesses of the patriarchs strengthen our faith in the Pentateuch.'"

Did Pharaoh enter into marital relations with Sarai? There is nothing in the records to indicate that he did; as a matter of fact, the customary prerequisites to any kind



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of royal marriage in the ancient world involved considerable time. As Simpson writes (IBG, 581): "Had the author intended such a representation he would have stated the fact explicitly by saying, e.g., at the end of verse 15, that Pharaoh lay with her." We may surely conclude that precisely what happened in the case of Rebekah (26:8-11) happened in the similar instances in which Abram and Sarai were involved, namely, that the woman was divinely protected against physical coition. It is interesting to note, too, that in each case the royal victim of patriarchal duplicity protested in almost the same language, "What is this than thou hast done unto me?" (12:18, 20:9, 26:10). *In a word, the man of God was rebuked, and that rightly, by the man of the world.* Cf. Bowie (IBG, 581): "In this unvarnished story there are several points that are significant. Conspicuous—to begin with—is the fact that here, as elsewhere, the O.T. is written with an unhesitating realism. The faults even of its greatest figures are not disguised. What Abraham is described as having done when he went into Egypt would throw discredit on any man. Being afraid that the Egyptians would covet Sarah, and thinking that if they knew she was tied to him as her husband they would kill him to get possession of her, he persuaded Sarah to pose as his unmarried sister; and as such she was taken to the house of Pharaoh. In the climax of the story the Egyptian stands in a much better light than Abraham, the man of the covenant; for he denounced indignantly the lie that Abraham had told him, gave Sarah back to him, and let him go out of the country with the rich possessions which had been bestowed upon him when Sarah was taken."

"What is this that thou hast done unto me?" he demanded of Abram when he learned of the latter's deception. Thus, as F. W. Robertson has written (NG, 53): "The man of God was rebuked by the man of the world: a thing singularly humiliating. It is common to find men of the

world whose honor and integrity are a shame to every Christian; and common enough to find men of religious feeling and aspiration, of whom that same world is compelled to say that whenever they are tried in business there is always a something found wanting. . . . Morality is not religion; but unless religion is grafted on morality, religion is worth nothing."

"Be sure your sin will find you out" is the solemn warning of Scripture as voiced by Moses in the days of old. If it does not find you out here, it will surely do so in the Great Judgment (1 Tim. 5:24-25, Matt. 16:27, Acts 17:30-31, Rom. 2:4-6, Rev. 20:12). God saw to it that Abram's sin found him out, and that through the instrumentality of his victim (precisely as in the two other similar incidents). "And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house." Murphy (MG, 271, 272): "The mode of divine interference is suited to have the desired effect on the parties concerned. As Pharaoh is punished, we conclude he was guilty in the eye of heaven in this matter. He committed a breach of hospitality by invading the private abode of the stranger. He further infringed the law of equity between man and man in the most tender point, by abstracting, if not with violence, at least with a show of arbitrary power which could not be resisted, a female, whether sister or wife, from the home of her natural guardian without the consent of either. A deed of ruthless self-will, also, is often rendered more heinous by a blamable inattention to the character or position of him who is wronged. So it was with Pharaoh. Abram was a man of blameless life and inoffensive manners. He was, moreover, the chosen and special servant of the Most High God. Pharaoh, however, does not condescend to inquire who the stranger is whom he is about to wrong; and is thus unwittingly involved in an aggravated crime. But the hand of the Almighty brings even tyrants to their

senses. . . . The princes of Pharaoh were accomplices in his crime (v. 15), and his domestics were concurring with him in carrying it into effect. But even apart from any positive consent or connivance in a particular act, men, otherwise culpable, are brought into trouble in this world by the faults of those with whom they are associated. *On account of Sarai*: Pharaoh was made aware of the cause of the plagues or strokes with which he was now visited."

Fully cognizant now of the fact that the "plagues" he and his household were suffering were *divine* visitations for a wrong he had committed, we can well suppose, I think, that this Egyptian king was motivated in large part by sheer superstitious fear of the gods or god whose will he had violated; hence, he was willing to do most anything he could to get this foreigner and his caravan out of Egypt posthaste, even providing him with an escort to see that he left the country unharmed. He actually sent Abram out with all the wealth the latter had acquired, some of it probably as the king's own purchase price for the projected admission of Sarai into his harem. (Bride purchase is a custom as old as the history of the race itself.) Pharaoh consoled himself with upbraiding Abram for the latter's deceit, and so permitted the incident to be terminated without any further unpleasantness. Abram, we are told, left Egypt, now "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (13:2). Traveling back through the south of Palestine (the Negeb) Abram finally reached his old camping-ground between Bethel and Ai, "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." "And there Abram called on the name of Jehovah," that is, re-established the worship of the living and true God. Murphy suggests that by this experience in Egypt, the patriarch, "thus reproved through the mouth of Pharaoh, will be less hasty in abandoning the land of promise, and betaking himself to carnal resources" (MG, 272).

*Recapitulation:* Leaving Haran, Abram journeyed through Shechem (12:6), Bethel (8), southward (9), Egypt (10), back to the Negeb (13:1), and to Bethel (13:3); but he seems not to have settled down until he reached Hebron (13:18). Here he remained (13:18, 14:13, 18:1), through the birth of Ishmael at 86 (16:16), and the conception of Isaac at 99 (17:1). The most significant event of this period, and indeed of his whole life, was the revelation of the Abrahamic covenant (ch. 15) and its confirmation (ch. 17), the means by which he and his fleshly seed were reconciled to God.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-SIX

1. Where were the earliest civilizations located and why?
2. What does the word "Mesopotamia" mean?
3. What especially enhanced the development of civilization in Mesopotamia?
4. Where did Semitic and Indo-European cultures flourish respectively?
5. Where did the Akkadians and Sumerians flourish geographically?
6. What was the Akkadian Empire and who established it?
7. Who were the Amorites? In what city especially have archaeologists discovered their cultural remains?
8. Who was their greatest king and in what city did he reign?
9. State the chief facts of the early history of Ur.
10. State the main facts of the later history of Ur.
11. Who were the Hurrians? What is the best known site of their cultural remains?
12. What was the kingdom of the Mitanni?
13. Who were the Hittites? Where did they establish themselves in the Near East? What was their chief city and where was it located?

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14. What economic development enhanced the power and prosperity of the Hittites?
15. Who were the Hyksos? When did they enter Palestine and why?
16. State the important facts about the Third Dynasty of Ur.
17. Name the centers of archaeological excavation the remains of which are relevant to the culture of the Patriarchal Age.
18. What light does Stephen's account in Acts 7:2-3 throw on the Call of Abram?
19. For what purpose in particular are the "generations of Terah" introduced in Genesis?
20. In what sense was the Call of Abram a turning-point in human history?
21. In what sense was it a turning-point in Messianic history?
22. Why do we take the view that Abram was not Terah's eldest son?
23. What two basic features of the Abrahamic Promise occur in all the statements of it in Genesis?
24. In what three ways was the Divine Promise *in re* Abram's seed fulfilled? Who was his *eminent* seed?
25. Summarize Murphy's eloquent treatment of the sequence of the earthly and the heavenly.
26. How was this sequence fulfilled in the life of Abraham?
27. Why do we say that the Abrahamic Covenant was the Covenant of Promise?
28. Who was the Child of Promise and why so called?
29. Why do many commentators assume that two divine calls were made to Abram?
30. Is it possible to harmonize Abram's many manifestations of faith in God with the notion that he had yielded to the religious apostasy which seems to have characterized his kinsmen?

31. What was the first lap of Abram's pilgrimage of faith?
32. How does Gosman reconcile the apparent discrepancy between Moses and Stephen concerning the Call of Abram?
33. Why are Sarai and Lot both mentioned in the accounts of Abram's departure from Ur and his departure from Haran?
34. What was the distance from Ur to Haran? How was Haran associated in Biblical history with Abram's various kinsmen? Where did Terah die?
35. State again the three fulfillments of the Abrahamic Promise concerning Abraham's seed.
36. Trace Abram's route from Haran to his first stopping-place at Shechem. What was the distance involved? How old was Abram when he left Haran?
37. How does the ancient city of Damascus figure in the story of the life of Abraham?
38. Explain the different uses of the word "Canaanite" in the Old Testament.
39. What suggested interpretations have we of the statement, "And the Canaanite was then in the land"?
40. What is the simplest explanation of this statement?
41. Why is it assumed that "the place of Shechem" is descriptive of a pagan "holy place"? Have we any reason for assuming that Abram himself participated in pagan rites?
42. Are we justified in assuming that we have in "the oak of Moreh" indications of primitive animism?
43. What is the significance of God's word to Abram in 12:7?
44. What was Abram's second stopping-place?
45. At what places were Abram's altars erected?
46. What are the three elements of Biblical religion?
47. Explain the statement that "altars become altars only when a victim is slain."

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48. What institution was the very "soul" of Patriarchal religion?
49. What typical meaning did sacrifice have under the Patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations?
50. Name in their proper sequence the three Dispensations of divine grace. What was the extent of each?
51. What specific changes determined the changes of Dispensations also?
52. In what other instances does Bethel figure in Old Testament history?
53. Explain the full meaning of the statement that Abram "called upon the name of Jehovah."
54. What was the Negeb? The Way of Shur?
55. What caused Abram to journey into Egypt?
56. What fact made Egypt a "breadbasket" in times of famine in Syria and Palestine?
57. In the light of Gen. 17:17 how old was Sarai when Abram entered Egypt?
58. How harmonize Sarah's age with her alleged attractiveness?
59. What deception did Abram perpetrate on Pharaoh?
60. What was the actual relationship of Sarai to Abram?
61. What according to the Genesis account motivated Abram's attempted deception in this case?
62. What explanation of Abram's deception is suggested by Speiser?
63. What explanation is suggested in the *Jerusalem Bible*?
64. How does Jamieson explain it?
65. What other cases of the same kind of deception are related in Genesis?
66. In what sense was Abram's introduction of Sarai to Pharaoh a half-truth but a whole lie at the same time?
67. In what sense is the Bible completely realistic? How is this illustrated by the report of Abram's behavior toward Pharaoh?

68. What evidence do we have that Pharaoh did not enter into marital relations with Sarai?
69. Discuss F. W. Robertson's statement that in this case the man of God was rebuked by the man of the world, and the parallels he draws from the incident.
70. Through whose instrumentality did God cause Abram's sin to "find him out"?
71. In what ways did God deal out justice to Pharaoh also?
72. How did Pharaoh deal with Abram?
73. To what place in Palestine did Abram return?
74. Give the "recap" of Abram's journey from Ur to Egypt and back into the Land of Promise.
75. What statement in the Abrahamic Promise shows that God did not abandon the "other families of the earth" when he called out Abram's seed, but was in fact making provision ultimately for their spiritual welfare also?



## PART TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: ABRAHAM AND LOT

(Gen., chs. 13, 14)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account (ch. 13)*

*And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. 2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journeys from the South even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Ai, 4 unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah. 5 And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelt then in the land. 8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left. 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. 11 So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly.*

14 And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: 15 for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it. 18 And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah.

## 2. The Separation from Lot

We now find Abram back at Bethel, "the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, unto the place of the altar"; and we are told that "there Abram called on the name of Jehovah." We have learned that this last statement means that he renewed the public worship of Yahweh on behalf of his household (retinue). It should be emphasized at this point that wherever Abram sojourned, there we find the altar, the sacrifice, and the priest (the patriarch himself), the elements of Biblical religion. It is impossible to harmonize this very important fact with the notion that Abram came out of Ur of the Chaldees contaminated by pagan idolatry. Abram and his household are now back at their second stopping-place after their entrance into the Promised Land.

At this point a matter of some significance takes place. "The land was not able to bear" the tents, flocks, and herds of both Abram and Lot. Hence, a separation became the feasible solution of the problem. Murphy (MG, 274, 275): "Lot has been hitherto kept in association with Abram by the ties of kinship. But it becomes gradually manifest that he has an independent interest, and is no longer disposed to follow the fortunes of the chosen

of God. In the natural course of things this under-feeling comes to the surface. Their serfs come into collision; and as Abram makes no claim of authority over Lot, he offers him the choice of a dwelling-place in the land. This issues in a peaceable separation in which Abram appears to great advantage. The chosen of the Lord is now in the course of providence isolated from all associations of kindred. He stands alone, in a strange land. . . . Lot now also abounds in the wealth of the East. Two opulent sheiks (elders, heads of houses) cannot dwell together any more. Their serfs come to strife. The carnal temper comes out among their dependents. Such disputes were unavoidable under the circumstances. Neither party had any title to the land. Landed property was not yet clearly defined or secured by law. The land therefore was a common, where everybody availed himself of the best spot for grazing he could find unoccupied. We can easily understand what facilities and temptations this would offer for the strong to overbear the weak. We meet with many incidental notices of such oppression (Gen. 21:25, 26:15-22; Exo. 2:16-19). The folly and impropriety of quarreling among kinsmen about pasture grounds on the present occasion is enhanced by the circumstances that Abram and Lot are mere strangers among the Kenaanites and the Perrizites, the settled occupants of the country. Custom had no doubt already given the possessor a prior claim. Abram and Lot were there merely on sufferance, because the country was thinly peopled, and many fertile spots were still unoccupied."

*Lot's Choice.* Note that "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere. . . . So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan," etc. Speiser (ABG, 98): "Having been orphaned early in his life (11:28), Lot was brought up first by his grandfather Terah (11:31). The task was then taken over by Abraham (12:5), who went on to treat his

nephew with unfailing solicitude and tenderness. Now the two must part, since each requires a large grazing and watering radius for his flocks and herds. Although the choice of territory rests with the older man, Abraham generously cedes this right to his ward. Nor does Lot fail to take advantage of this unforeseen opportunity. He picks the greener and richer portion. How was he to know what fate lay in store for Sodom and Gomorrah, or how glorious was to be the future of the rugged hill country to the west? The narrative ends thus on a note of gentle irony, the ever-present irony of history."

*Lot lifted up his eyes.* The spot where Abram and he were standing was the conspicuous hill between Bethel and Ai, from the top of which, according to travelers, they could see the Jordan, the broad grasslands on either bank, "and the waving verdure which marks the course of the stream." "The plain chosen was situated in, or at least included, the tract to the south of the Dead Sea, where at that time there were copious springs and an abundance of sweet water." It is surely obvious that Lot was looking out for "number one," as we say in American slang. Jamieson (CECG, 134): *In re* Lot's choice: A choice excellent from a worldly point of view, but most inexpedient for his best interests. He seems, though a good man, to have been too much under the influence of a selfish and covetous spirit; and how many, alas! imperil the good of their souls for the prospect of worldly advantage." Lange (CDHCG, 398): "It is the vale of Siddim (14:3), the present region of the Dead Sea, which is here intended. That the lower valley of the Jordan was peculiarly well-watered, and a rich pasture region, is expressed by a twofold comparison: it was as Paradise, and as the land of Egypt. The lower plain of the Jordan was glorious as the vanished glory of Paradise, or as the rich plains of the Nile in Egypt, which were still fresh in the memory of Lot." The land was watered not by trenches and canals (irrigation) but by

copious streams along its course, descending chiefly from the mountains of Moab. Leupold (EG, 430): "The separation from Lot is a necessity growing out of deeper reasons than those usually cited. Lot is an element that is not suited to be an integral part of the chosen people, as his later deterioration shows. Circumstances soon arise which make it eminently desirable to remove this unsuitable material as early as possible. Behind the outward separation lies a deeper motivation. At the same time, the incident has always served in the church as a typical case of how to deal in a practical way with the problem of incompatibility. If persons simply cannot get along together, nothing is gained by attempting to force the issue or by discussing the point until a solution is reached. Incompatibility is best dealt with by separation: let those that cannot agree get out of one another's way. To Ambrose is attributed the saying, *divide ut meneat amicitia*, a procedure which does not merit the criticism, 'a wretched but practicable rule' (Delitzsch)."

*The Plain of the Jordan*, literally, the circle or circuit of the Jordan, that is, at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Leupold (EG, 437): "It is not the whole basin of the Jordan from the Lake of Gennesareth to the Dead Sea, but only that portion which extends from about Jericho down to and including the northern end of the Dead Sea to Zoar. . . . Now when Moses reminds us that this region was so attractive 'before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,' he clearly implies that in his time the region was sadly altered. One question will perhaps never be determined at this point and that is how far the devastating effects of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah affected the rest of the Dead Sea region. Some hold that the Bible indicates that the entire Dead Sea is the result of that cataclysmic overthrow. We personally believe that indeed only the southern shallow end of the Dead Sea became covered with water as a result of the overthrow of these

cities, as also Kyle's investigations, seem to substantiate. But at the same time it appears that more or less of a blight settled upon the whole *kikkar*. For the author goes on to describe that it once was as 'the garden of Yahweh,' by which he must mean the garden of Eden which was in a special sense Yahweh's handiwork. The comparison must have been suitable, else Moses would not have used it. It is true that, nevertheless, the simile is a bit strong. Consequently, it is toned down by a second simile that has a fine propriety about it from another point of view: 'as the land of Egypt.' . . . The special propriety of this latter simile lies in this, that the region is like Egypt in that a deeper lying river winds through a fertile plain enclosed by mountains of either side." See Gen. 14:3, 8, 10, also (JB, 29, n.): "The author imagines the Dead Sea as not yet in existence; or else the Valley of Siddim (the name is not met with elsewhere) occupied only what is now the southern part of the Dead Sea, a depression of relatively recent formation."

V. 12, K.J.V. The old version is so much more forceful here: "Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom." What tragedy lay in this last statement, as strongly intimated in v. 13! Cf. JB (29): "Lot chooses a life of ease and a region where immorality flourishes; for this he will be heavily punished, ch. 19. But the generosity of Abraham in leaving his nephew the choice is to be rewarded by a renewal of the promise of 12:7." The choice of this present world above God inevitably leads to Divine judgment, just as it did when Lot chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom (18:20-21, 19:4-11).

*Abram's Reward* (vv. 14-18). Smith-Fields (OTH, 69, 70): Abram "now began to feel the evils of prosperity. The land could not support his own cattle and Lot's. Their herdsmen quarreled, and Lot probably put forward his rights as head of the family. Abram's faith did not fail this time. Remembering that he was 'the heir of better

promises,' he gave the choice of present good to Lot. Their encampment looked westward on the rugged hills of Judea and eastward on the fertile plain of the Jordan about Sodom, 'well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt' he had only lately left. Even from that distance, through the clear air of Palestine, can be distinctly seen the long and thick masses of vegetation which fringe the numerous streams that descend from the hills on either side to meet the central stream in its tropical depths. It was exactly the prospect to tempt a man who had no fixed purpose of his own, who had not like Abram obeyed the stern call of duty. So Lot left his uncle on the barren hills of Bethel, and chose all the precinct of the Jordan, and journeyed east. Abram received his reward in a *third blessing and promise* from Jehovah, who bade him lift up his eyes and scan the whole land on every side, for it should be the possession of his seed, and they should be unnumbered as the dust of the earth." Yahweh also enjoins him to walk over his inheritance, and to contemplate it in all its extent, with the repeated assurance that it will be his. "To be understood not as a literal direction, but as an intimation that he might leisurely survey his inheritance with the calm assurance that it was his" (PCG, 200). V. 15—Leupold (EG, 441): "True, Abram becomes possessor only in his seed. But such possession is none the less real." It is none the less real simply because it is guaranteed by God, who is the Owner of all things (Psa. 24:1, 50:12; 1 Cor. 10:26): and only He could give a completely clear title to any human being.

### 3. Abram's Third Altar: from Bethel to Mamre.

(Bethel became especially conspicuous in the time of Jacob (Gen. 28:11-22, 31:13, 35:1-15). It was allotted to the tribe of Ephraim later (1 Chron. 7:28) and bordered the territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:13). The Israelites resettled the town calling it by the name Jacob had given to the scene in his vision, instead of the name Luz which

it apparently bore at the time of the Conquest (Judg. 1:23). It became a sanctuary in the time of Samuel who visited it annually (1 Sam. 7:16, 10:3): this means undoubtedly that it was a center of the "school" of the prophets (1 Sam. 7:16-17, 10:5-11, 19:18-20; 2 Ki. 2:1-3), the famous line which originated with Samuel and culminated in John the Immerser. The name *Bethel* means "house of God."). HSB (23): "The strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot represents the first threat to the promise of God that Abraham would possess the land. Abraham lived above this threat in faith, and his gracious attitude toward Lot was rewarded by another confirmation of the promise of God." (Cf. 13:14-17, also ch. 15). Thus encouraged, the Friend of God (Jas. 2:23) pulled up stakes again and traveling southward took up his abode (tent) under the spreading "oaks" of Mamre, named after an Amorite prince, with whom and his brothers Eschol and Aner, the patriarch later formed an alliance for the purpose of rescuing Lot, 14:13, 24. The place was near Hebron, a town of great antiquity, having been built seven years before Tanis in Egypt (Num. 13:22; cf. Exo. 6:18), which seems to have been known also at this time as Kiriath-Arba, "city of Arba," from Arba, the father of Anak and the ancestor of the giant Anakim (Gen. 23:2, 35:27; Josh. 14:13-15, 15:13-14, 21:10-12). Evidently on being taken by Caleb it recovered its ancient name (Josh. 14:13-15). The town is some twenty miles south of Jerusalem and a like distance north of Beersheba. It became the burial place of Abraham and his family in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 23:19, 25:9, 49:29-33); from this circumstance the place is revered by the Mohammedans who call it *El-Khalil*, "The Friend," i.e., the Friend of God, the name which they give to Abraham. David first reigned as king in Hebron, and here, too Absalom began his tragic revolt (2 Sam. 5:1-5, 15:7-12). It will thus be seen that Hebron had a long and varied



history, under several masters: first, in all likelihood, a Shemite, then the Amorites (Gen. 14:13), then the Hittites (Gen. 23:10-20, 25:9), then the Anakim (Num. 13:22, 28; Josh. 14:13-15, 15:13-14), then Judah, and lastly the Mohammedans. Hebron became Abraham's more or less settled abode throughout the rest of his life. *There Abram built his third altar.* "A third altar is here built by Abram. His wandering course requires a varying place of worship. It is the Omnipresent whom he adores. The previous visits of the Lord had completed the restoration of his inward peace, security, and liberty of access to God, which had been disturbed by his descent into Egypt, and the temptation that had overcome him there. He feels himself again at peace with God, and his fortitude is renewed. He grows in spiritual knowledge and practice under the great Teacher" (MG, 278). Lot in the meantime has not only pitched his tent toward Sodom, but evidently has moved on into the city itself.

#### 4. *The Biblical Account (ch. 14).*

*And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar). 3 All these joined together in the vale of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaim in Ashterothkarnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shavehkiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 And they returned, and came to Enmishpat (the same is Kadesh), and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazazon-*

*tamar. 8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar); and they set the battle in array against them in the vale of Siddim; 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings against the five. 10 Now the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there, and they that remained fled to the mountain. 11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.*

*13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; now he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram. 14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. 15 And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobab, which is on the left hand of Damascus. 16 And he brought back all the goods and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.*

*17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the*

persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor ought that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: 24 save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

5. *The Battle of the Kings (vv. 1-12).*

*The Cities of the Plain.* Lot, we are told, dwelt in the Cities of the Plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom: *i.e.*, evidently he moved into Sodom itself. These cities were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (afterward called Zoar). They were located in what is now the southern part of the Dead Sea below the tongue of land known as the Lisan which protrudes from its eastern shore. (BBA, 57): "Fresh water streams flowing down from the mountains of Moab made possible culture in this area in the days of Lot. In subsequent years, however, a great change took place. Evidence indicates that an earthquake struck the area about 1900 B.C. The petroleum and the gases of the region helped produce a conflagration which totally obliterated the Cities of the Plain. The Sodom which Lot knew, however, was one of wealth and luxury which seemed to be excellent prey for an army bent on plunder. Copper mining was carried on in the area between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba in ancient times, and the Cities of the Plain may have controlled these mines. The invaders from the East were initially successful in securing tribute from this wealthy area." Each of these cities had its own king, and Sodom seems to have been the chief city. Their wickedness was so great that Sodom gave its name to sins (largely of sex perversion, cf. Rom. 1:18-32) of which the infamous record persists down to our own time: they were willing

victims of the vilest of passions, both sexes changing "the natural use into that which is against nature" (Gen. 13:13, 18:20, 19:5; Deut. 23:17; Rom. 1:26-27; 2 Pet. 2:7-8). Apparently at the very outset Lot turned to this environment because "the quiet tenor of a godly life in the company of Abram was not sufficiently attractive for him: he craved the diversions and the excitement offered by city life." Of course Lot may not have shared their sins; indeed we are told explicitly that he was distressed by the lasciviousness and violence which prevailed on every hand; nevertheless it would seem that a truly godly man would have, from the very first, shunned such associations. The lesson to be derived from Lot's defection is realistic, namely, that *what happened to Lot happens to every man who pitches his tent toward Sodom.*

*The Invasion from the East* (vv. 1-12). Destructive literary criticism of the Bible treats this story of the Battle of the Kings more or less contemptuously. For example, the following comment (JB, p. 29, n.): "This chapter does not belong to any of the three great sources of Genesis. Behind it lies a document of great age which has been touched up so as to give greater prominence to Abraham, extolling his bravery and selflessness and calling attention to his connection with Jerusalem. The episode is not improbable provided we understand the campaign as an expedition to clear the caravan route to the Red Sea and Abraham's part in it as a raid on the rear of a column laden with booty. But the narrative does not help to place Abraham historically because the persons mentioned cannot be identified: Amraphel is not, as is often asserted, the famous king of Babylon, Hammurabi. All we can say is that the narrative finds its most natural setting in the conditions of the 19th century B.C." Morgenstern calls the entire chapter a *midrash* (i.e., an explanation of Hebrew Scripture dating from between the 4th century B.C., and the 11th century of the Christian era), composed to

glorify Abraham. The campaign described in vv. 1-10, he says, is that of powerful kings against revolting cities and strange lands. But in vv. 11-24, it is a Bedouin raid on two not overly powerful cities. The story is comparable to the Midianite raids in the Gideon story (Judg., chs. 6 ff.), and the raid of the Amalekites on unprotected Ziklag in David's absence: "the story of David's pursuit and recovery of stolen persons and goods parallels in almost every detail the story of Abraham's pursuit and recovery," etc. This writer dismisses the entire narrative as the account of a Bedouin raid in which Lot was captured with other prisoners and other booty of Sodom. Abraham, with the help of Aner, Eschol, and Mamre pursue. The enemy is not overtaken until they reach the vicinity of Dan, far to the north; feeling themselves outside enemy territory, they proceed more leisurely, to enjoy the booty. This enables Abraham to overtake them and recapture Lot and the booty as a result of their unpreparedness and surprise by night. Vv. 18-20 most critics hold to be post-Exilic, a few as pre-Exilic. So argues Morgenstern ("Genesis 14," SJL, see also in his JIBG). In IBG (590) we read: "This narrative is an isolated unit belonging to none of the main documents of the Hexateuch, and comes from an age which 'admires military glory all the more because it can conduct no wars itself, . . . an age in which, in spite of certain historical erudition, the historic sense of Judaism had sunk almost to zero.'" (cf. Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp. 288-290, and Skinner, ICCG, pp. 271-276).

Evidences cited of the alleged "unhistorical" character of this tale may be listed as follows (1) The "representation that four great rulers of the east themselves moved westward to curb the revolt of five petty kings in Palestine (vv. 5-9) and that they came by the circuitous route outlined in vss. 5-7." But, cf. Leupold (EG, 451): "All manner of fault has been found with this route taken by Chedorlaomer. Because the reason for it is not given in

this brief account, the critics feel they may with impunity make light of any explanation that we may offer, as though it must needs be trivial. Again and again a very reasonable explanation has been suggested to them, only to be brushed aside. The simplest of all explanations is that the army coming from the east wanted to eliminate the possibility of an attack from the rear by unfriendly groups. These unfriendly groups were either unsubdued opponents or subjugated opponents known to be restive and inclined to side with other revolters. The author of our chapter is not under necessity of giving a full account of all that transpires and of the motives behind every act. For the building-up of the narrative, what is related is very effective. It shows the line being drawn closer and closer about Sodom and Gomorrah. We are made to sense the apprehension of the revolting cities; and they turn around from point to point as reports come pouring in about the defeat of the groups being attacked." As for the incentive that prompted four great rulers from the east to quash the revolt of five petty kings in Palestine, the explanation is clearly provided by recent archaeological discovery of metallurgical activities in the area involved. Kraeling (BA, 67): "Chedorlaomer and his vassal kings are said to have made war on the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and allied cities. Until very recently that seemed hard to understand, but the discovery that copper mining was anciently carried on in the region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah has put a new face on the matter. Babylonian and Elamite rulers in particular had a problem on their hands to obtain metals, as well as wool. If Sodom and Gomorrah lay southeast of the Dead Sea these towns could well have controlled the mines of *el'Arabah*, so that an expedition from Mesopotamia to seize the mines would in popular reporting assume the form of a campaign against these places." Again: "The invaders came through Gilead to Moab and Edom. Recent explorations by Glueck have

established that there was a line of Bronze Age cities running down through this region. Several such are mentioned as being subjected (Gen. 14:5-6). The places referred to can be identified with considerable certainty." The plain fact is that copper mining was carried on in the region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah and the Cities of the Plain may have controlled these mining operations. "The invaders from the East were initially successful in securing tribute from this wealthy area." When after twelve years this tribute was refused by the revolting cities, it became necessary for the original invaders to reimpose their demands on them—hence a second invasion occurred for the purpose of bringing the rebels to time. In the light of these facts the narrative is entirely plausible. HSB (24): "The fact that the four eastern kings devastated the area from Transjordan down to Kadesh-Barnea is borne out by Glueck's findings that sedentary culture in Transjordanian ceased about the 20th century B.C."

(2) "The representation that Abram with 318 retainers defeated the combined armies of the eastern kings (vss. 14-16)." But Speiser comments (ABG, 104): "The number involved is not too small for a surprise attack; by the same token it enhances the authenticity of the narrative." Also Whitelaw (PCG, 206): "servants, *born in his house, i.e.,* the children of his own patriarchal family, and neither purchased nor taken in war—*three hundred and eighteen*—which implied a household of probably a thousand souls." Jamieson (CECG, 140): "Those trained servants who are described as 'young men' (v. 24) were domestic slaves such as are common in Eastern countries still, and are considered and treated as members of the family. If Abram could spare three hundred and eighteen slaves, and leave a sufficient number to take care of his flocks, what a large establishment he must have had!" Cf. Haley (ADB, 319): "Abrahām had not *alone* routed the combined forces of the kings. His 'confederates,' Aner,

Eshcol, and Mamre, may have contributed much the larger portion of the victorious army." (Leupold translates this, "these were bound by covenant to Abram." This would indicate an agreement that guaranteed a close relationship.) These facts seems to be indicated in vv. 23-24: it is difficult to see how intelligent men could have ignored them. But again we are told that "nowhere else in the tradition is Abraham represented as living in such state;" that "in ch. 23, for instance, he is a lone stranger among the Hittite inhabitants of Kiriath-arba." The fact remains, however, that when Abram left the East, he was accompanied by "all the souls they had gotten in Haran" (12:5). This refers to all the bondservants he had gotten during his stay there. Where there is a large stock of cattle, there must be an adequate number of servants to attend them. Abraham and Lot entered Canaan as men of considerable substance. Moreover, Gen. 12:16 and 13:2 indicate that they came out of Egypt with a much greater retinue. (Cf. also 18:19 and 24:1). The argument that Abram was a "lone stranger" among the Hittites of Kiriath-arba is an argument from silence and does not harmonize with the tenor of the entire story of his first ventures in Canaan. Critics rely too much on assumption (or presumptions) to validate their views, assumptions which, obviously are not Scripturally justified: a fault stemming apparently from their innate (or academically generated) "inability to see the forest for the trees."

(3) "The representation that the Dead Sea was not yet in existence (cf. 13:10)." It is admitted that the words in v. 3, that is, *the Salt Sea*, may be a gloss and so may not reflect accurately the thought of the original writer" (See IBG, 590). But recent archaeological evidence supports the use of this name as an integral part of the original narrative. The *Salt Sea* is the name by which the Dead Sea is commonly designated in the Pentateuch and in the book of Joshua (Num. 34:3, Deut. 3:17; Josh. 3:16, 15:2, 5).



Jamieson (CECG, 137): "It is pre-eminently entitled to be called 'the salt sea,' for it is impregnated with saline qualities far beyond other seas." It is must noted that it is not the entire Dead Sea as we know it that is designated here, but only that part in which the Vale of Siddim was located. The Valley of Siddim, writes Speiser (ABG, 101), is "apparently the authentic name of the area at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which was later submerged." Cf. BBA (56-57): The Cities of the Plain "were located in what is now the southern portion of the Dead Sea below the tongue of land known as the Lisan which protrudes from its eastern shore. . . . Evidence indicates that an earthquake struck the area about 1900 B.C. The petroleum and gases of the region helped produce a conflagration which totally obliterated the Cities of the Plain." Cf. NBD (299): "The concentrated chemical deposits (salt, potash, magnesium, and calcium chlorides and bromide, 25 per cent of the water), which give the Dead Sea is buoyancy and its fatal effects on fish, may well have been ignited during an earthquake and caused the rain of brimstone and fire destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . Archaeological evidence suggests a break of several centuries in the sedentary occupation from early in the second millenium B.C. A hill of salt (*Jebel Usdum*, Mt. Sodom) at the southwest corner is eroded into strange forms, including pillars which are shown as 'Lot's Wife' by local Arabs. (Cf. Wisdom x. 7). Salt was obtained from the shore (Ezek. 47:11), and the Nabateans traded in the bitumen which floats on the surface." (cf. 14:10, 19:23-28). Kraeling contributes like evidence (BA, 68): "'Vale of Siddim' is apparently a name for the district at the south end of the Dead Sea. It is described as full of slime pits (R.S.V., bitumen pits), which proved disastrous for the fleeing defenders (cf. v. 10). We have previously noted that the Dead Sea at times spews up some bitumen or asphalt. Whether there originally were asphalt pits or

wells to the south of it is not yet known. But Glueck happened on lumps of asphalt on the shore south of Engedi in 1953, and describes it as a wonderfully lucky find which may not have been made a day earlier or later. In the last century alone the waters have risen six and one-half feet or more, so that the southern Dead Sea basin has been enlarged by one-third and considerable land has been put under water." Note here summarization in JB (29): "The author imagines the Dead Sea as not yet in existence, cf. 13:10; or else the Valley of Siddim (the name is not met with elsewhere) occupied only what is now the southern part of the Dead Sea, a depression of relatively recent formation." From evidence presented above the latter view is obviously the correct one.

*The Eastern Kings* (14:1, 9). *Amraphel*, king of Shinar. Shinar, is, of course, Babylonia, in the Old Testament. It is customary to identify Amraphel with the famous Hammurabi, but the identification is said to be "far from convincing." Hegemony of Elam over Babylonia under a king Kudur-Mabug existed before the time of Hammurabi, but on the accepted identification of Shinar with Babylonia, there is still no king-name in the list of Babylonian rulers that is as comparable to "Amraphel" as that of Hammurabi (Khammurapi). "Further speculation is unprofitable until the history of Hammurabi's time is better known." *Arioch* is certainly comparable to Eri-Aku whom some identify with Rim-Sin, King of Larsa (cf. "Ellasar"), an old Babylonian city on the Lower Euphrates. (Rim-Sin, ruler of the Larsa Dynasty whom Hammurabi overthrew, was a son and appointee of Kudur-Mabug, king of Elam.) Some fresh light is thrown upon this name "Arioch" from letters to King Zimri-lim of Mari (1700) which mention a certain *Arriyuk*, evidently a vassal, who calls himself that ruler's "son." *Tidal* is a name comparable to that of certain Hittite kings, namely, *Tudkhalia*, who flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries B.C. "Goiim" may simply mean "nations." It is doubtful whether it designates here a special nation or an aggregation of tribes. Could "Goiim" be an error for "Khittim" (Hittites)? *Chedorlaomer*, king of Elam, was the leader of this group of invaders; in all likelihood the other three were little more than "stooges" who accepted the overlordship of the King of Elam, who, because of the lacunae in the listing of early Elam rulers, has not yet been identified. We know, of course, that the Elamites, who occupied the territory east of the Tigris, were Indo-European. However, the political history of this period is such as to have made the account of a coalition of Elamites and West Semites entirely feasible. It seems clear from the narrative here that Chedorlaomer was the acknowledged commander-in-chief of this marauding expedition.

The Eastern kings made war, we are told, with the kings of the Cities of the Plain, namely, the rulers of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (or Zoar). (Cf. Gen. 19; Deut. 29:33; Hos. 11:8). The forces were joined in battle in the Vale of Siddim (see above) in which the kings of the East were triumphant, reducing the vanquished to tribute-paying states. After paying tribute for twelve years, however, the Cities of the Plain rebelled; and in the fourteenth year the kings from the East returned to the attack, again under the leadership of Chedorlaomer. As described above, they came—from somewhere on the Euphrates—down by way of Gilead through Transjordan (east of Jordan) where they "smote" what appear to have been the remnants of prehistoric and early historic peoples, namely: (1) the *Rephaim*, evidently a prehistoric people of gigantic stature (Gen. 15:20; Deut. 2:11, 3:11; Josh. 12:4, 13:12; 1 Sam. 17:23-27; 2 Sam. 21:16-22; 1 Chron. 20:4-8; Num. 13:30-33; Deut. 2:20-21). Speiser (ABG, 102): "It is worth noting that elsewhere this element is identified as pre-Israelite, which accords well

with the indicated early date of the present account." Note that the Rephaim dwelt in the twin cities of Ash-taroth and Karnaim, east of the Sea of Galilee. (2) The *Zuzim* (evidently the *Zemzimmim* of Deut. 2:20), the name of a giant pre-Ammonite people who were dispossessed by the Ammonites. The site of their town, Ham, is unknown today. (3) The *Emim*, who also dwelt east of the Dead Sea and who were, according to Deut. 2:10-11, fore-runners of the Moabites. (4) Note also the *Anakim* (accounted Rephaim, Deut. 2:10-11), who dwelt south of Jerusalem around Hebron (Josh. 15:8, 13, 14), who were displaced by the Israelites (Josh. 11:21-22, 15:14), the people who are said to have made the Israelites look like grasshoppers (Num. 13:33, cf. Gen. 6:4). Some have said that the name "Anakim" meant "the long-necked ones." (The Anakim are mentioned in the Torah as belonging to the Rephaim; however, they are not mentioned in the story of Chedorlaomer's invasion.) Chedorlaomer and his allies moved southward "smiting" and looting other peoples who were not actually Rephaim but are named here in connection with them, namely: (1) The *Horites* (Hurrians), original inhabitants of Mt. Seir (Gen. 14:6), who were displaced by the Edomites (Deut. 2:12, 22). Some authorities hold that "Horite" is the name used to designate two unrelated groups: the non-Semitic Hurrians (LXX, 34:3; also Josh. 9:7) and the Semitic predecessors of Seir Edom (Gen. 36:20, Deut. 12, 22, as in Gen. 14:6). (See ABG, 102). Seir was the name of the "mountain mass" of Edom, south of the Dead Sea and extending down the dry desert Arabah rift to the head of the Gulf of Aqabah (Deut. 2:1, 33:2). The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:8, Josh. 24:4). Yet chieftains of the Horites were designated the children of Seir in the land of Edom (Gen. 36:21, 30; cf. Ezek. 35:2 ff.). These Horites (Gen. 14:6) non-Semitic Hurrians who invaded N. Mesopotamia and spread over Palestine and Syria in

the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. (Cf. Gen. 32:3, 36:20 f.; Deut. 2:1-29; Josh. 24:4; 1 Chron. 4:42 ff.). (2) The *Amalekites*, traditional enemies of Israel (Exo. 17:8-16, Deut. 25:17-19, 1 Sam., chs. 15 and 30). (3) The *Amorites*, early occupants of Syria and Palestine; in the third millenium B.C. this region was designated by Babylonian records "the land of the Amorites." Hammurabi conquered Mari, the Amorite capital, in the 17th century B.C. They are listed with the families occupying Canaan in Gen. 10:15 ff. *Hazazon-tamar*, v. 7, is identified with Engedi, on the west shore of the Dead Sea (2 Chron. 20:2). The Eastern invaders apparently made a wide turn to the right before starting homeward. *En-mishpat* is positively identified here with Kadesh Barnea, the famous stopping-place of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. It will thus be seen that El-paran marked the farthest point reached, for, after reaching it, the invaders "returned" ("turned back") in the direction of En-mishpat.

*The Battle—and Disaster* (vv. 8-12). The kings of the Cities of the Plain now joined battle with the Eastern allies in the Vale of Siddim. Leupold (EG, 455): "That the kings of the Dead Sea region did not turn out sooner to encounter the foe of whose approach they had long been aware, indicates either lack of ability and enterprise, or lack of courage, or, perhaps, the illusory hope on their part that their enemies would not venture against them. It seems most in harmony with the facts of the case to argue that the debauched mode of life characteristic of this group had debased their courage so that they only took up arms when actually compelled to and then put up but a pitiable defense." It should be noted that Sodom is mentioned first in the list of the Cities of the Plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela); this indicates that the king of Sodom was the leader of the defense forces and that Sodom itself was the most powerful city in

this alliance. The result was complete disaster for the defending forces. (See *supra* for the Valley of Siddim and its slime pits, that is, bitumen pits, evidently "wells of liquid pitch oozing from the earth." Note Isaiah's vision of the Day of the Lord (34:9), as the time when the land should be turned to burning pitch.) The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and "they fell there." Does this mean that they died there? Evidently not (cf. v. 17). Speiser (ABG, 102): "*Flung themselves*: literally 'fell'; but the Hebrew stem (npl) often carries a reflexive connotation, notably in the phrase 'to fall on one's neck' (33:4, 45:14, 46:29), which describes a voluntary act: see also 17:3." Leupold (EG, 456), noting the indication in v. 17 that the king of Sodom was still living, "a new king of Sodom could hardly be met with so soon, for opportunity for the choice of one had hardly been given. But this verb *naphal* may mean 'to get down hastily' (cf. 24:64). So we have the somewhat disgraceful situation of a number of defeated kings crawling into bitumen pits, and their defeated army taking refuge in the mountains." Certainly this explanation is in accord with the generally unenviable role which these kings played in this entire encounter. The victors, of course, ravaged the towns, seized all the booty that could be transported readily, the women and children (no doubt with the intention of making slaves of them), and carried away Lot and his family among the captives. The narrative goes on to explain that Lot now "dwelt in Sodom." Obviously, Abraham's nephew had taken up residence in the city itself (by now he had pitched his tent in Sodom)—a development a bit puzzling to account for. It seems also that he was not in the defending army, or, if he was, was unfortunate enough to be taken captive, along with his "goods" and his family (v. 16). Lot's initial choice of Sodom and Gomorrah was wrong. The Apostle (2 Pet. 2:8) tells us that "righteous Lot" was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the

wicked" (Sodomites), that "seeing and hearing, he vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds." But there is not even an intimation in the Genesis account that Lot was under the necessity of living in that environment: why, then, did he not get out of it? It does not take any great exercise of the imagination to suggest the answers to this question. In the first place, it is almost a certainty that the family which Lot had reared in this environment of lust and violence was completely out of accord with his own "righteousness," and in the second place, we must admit that Lot's own "righteousness" was not sufficiently virile to impel him to break away from the wickedness which enveloped him on all sides (cf. ch. 19, also Matt. 10:34-39). *Those who pitch their tents toward Sodom usually come to the inglorious end of being swallowed up in Sodom. It was only through Abraham's intercession that Lot was finally rescued from the divine judgment visited upon all the Cities of the Plain.*

6. *The Rescue of Lot (vv. 13-16).*

Abram was still sojourning in the vale of Mamre when the tidings of Lot's capture was brought him by one who had escaped. Three Amorite brothers, Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, joined him with their clans, and he then armed his own three hundred and eighteen servants, and, dividing his small army into several bands, pursued the conquerors and fell upon them by night near Dan. Thus gaining the initiative, Abraham and his allies routed the invaders and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus, recovering the plunder and the prisoners. (See Num. 20:17). *Abram the Hebrew.* Lange (CDHCG, 404): "Abram the Hebrew, that is, the immigrant. Abraham, as Lot also, was viewed by the escaped, who was born in the land, as an immigrant, and because Lot the Hebrew was a captive, he sought Abram the Hebrew." ("Hebrew" as "crosser over," that is, the Euphrates: hence, "immigrant." This is the view of some authorities.) (Or, were the Hebrews to be

identified with the aggressive roaming Habiru, who are mentioned in tablets from the 19th and 18th centuries, and from the Tell el-Amarna letters of the 15th and 14th centuries, as invading "the king's cities"? On the other hand, was not Abram sprung from a large branch of the Shemites who continued to live in Shinar, and who probably regarded Eber as their direct ancestor? It seems to be a confirmation of this view that the word 'Hebrew' appears with peculiar propriety applied to Abram here (v. 13) as a patronymic, in contradistinction to his allies, who are styled Amorites (14:13). "Hebrew" is the name used for self-identification to foreigners (40:13, 43:32). V. 14, *Lot as Abram's "brother"*: such terms as "brother," "sister," which were used by Hebrews as cognate terms are used by Orientals still, in a wide sense, equivalent to *relative*, kinsman or kinswoman (cf. 20:11 with 28:6, 24:60; 2 Sam. 19:13, Judg. 14:15, Job 42:11). *Note Abram's 318 trained men*. Note that these were men born in his house even before he had a son of his own (12:5, 14:14). *Note the pursuit to Dan*. Before its capture by the Danites, this city was known as Laish (Judg. 18:29). (HSB, 24): "The name was modernized in Genesis so that the reader could readily identify the familiar Danite city." Dan was the northernmost Israelite city; hence the phrase, "from Dan to Beersheba" (e.g., Judg. 20:1). But, writes Leupold (EG, 459): "This town, as all know, first received the name Dan in the days of the Judges: see Judg. 18:7, 29. The use of the term at this point would then be clearly post-Mosaic and evidence of authorship of the book later than the time of the Judges. Critics are so ready to accept this view that by almost universal consent they ignore the other possible location of Dan so entirely as though it was not even worthy of consideration. For another Dan in Gilead (see Deut. 34:1), mentioned apparently in 2 Sam. 24:6 as 'Dan Jaan,' excellently meets the needs of the case, for that matter even



better than does Laish. For Dan Jaan must lie, according to Deut. 34:1, on the northern edge of Gilead and therefore about east, perhaps fifteen or twenty miles from the southern end of the Dead Sea, and therefore along the route than an army retreating to Babylon and Elam would be most likely to take in approaching Damascus. Dan Laish lies too far north and presents difficulties for men in flight, who would hardly turn to Damascus in flight because of intervening rivers. Consequently, we have here no post-Mosaic terms and everything conforms excellently with the idea of Mosaic authorship." This seems to the present writer the most satisfactory explanation of this geographical problem. However, we must still recognize the fact that the "modernization" of a town-name by a later writer really has no significant bearing on the basic problem of Mosaic authorship. (Cf. my *Genesis*, Vol. I, pp. 62-66).

7. *The Meeting with Melchizedek (vv. 17-24)*

On his return from their rout of the kings from the East, Abram and his allies were greeted by the King of Sodom in the Vale of Shaveh ("the same is the King's Vale"). *Note the reference here to the king of Sodom.* Do we have here a conflict between v. 10 and this verse 17? Not necessarily. Did the king of Sodom of vv. 2, 8, 10 actually die in the bitumen pits, and was the king of Sodom of v. 17 his immediate successor? It is said by some that this could not have been the case because "a new king of Sodom could hardly be met with so soon" (see *supra*). The present writer holds this objection to be unwarranted for the simple reason that in hereditary monarchies when the death of a king occurs, succession to the throne follows at once as determined by customary or statutory law. (Even when a president of the United States dies while in office, his successor assumes the duties of the presidency without delay.) However, the correct resolution of this problem is in all probability that which

is suggested in a foregoing paragraph, namely, that the original text indicates that the defeated kings "fell," in the sense of having "flung themselves," into the bitumen pits to save their own skins, leaving their armies to find refuge in flight into the surrounding mountains. Hence Leupold, on v. 17 (EG, 461-462): "'The king of Sodom,' whom we last saw taking precipitate refuge in the bitumen pits, now again has come forth and desires to acknowledge publicly the inestimable benefit that Abram has bestowed upon him. Critics again attempt to invalidate the story by stating that this verse conflicts with verse 10, claiming that there the king of Sodom died, here he is resurrected. In all fairness they ought to offer their readers the simple explanation given above, that v. 10 may mean they hastily hid in the pits. The canons of criticism employed by critics are often so sharp that no writings, not even their own, could pass muster in the face of them." *The King's Vale*: according to Josephus (*Ant.*, 8:10) about a quarter of a mile north (or northeast) of Jerusalem; described as a broad, defenseless valley, also known as the "King's Dale." It was here that Absalom later erected a memorial pillar for himself (2 Sam. 18:18).

It was here that one of the most memorable, mysterious and prophetic incidents in Abraham's career, indeed in the entire Old Testament, occurred. It seems that the king of Sodom was accompanied by a mysterious and venerated personage by the name of Melchizedek, who is described as King of Salem and Priest of God Most High. The sudden appearance of one who united in himself both the kingly and priestly functions, of whose origin and history we know nothing, has led to much useless speculation. Maclear (COTH, 35): "Putting aside the more improbable conjectures, we may perhaps conclude that he was an eminent Canaanitish prince in the line of Ham, who had maintained the pure worship of the One True God, and who, according to a custom not uncommon in patriarchal

times, was at once king and priest. A sufficient proof of his high dignity is afforded by the fact that to him Abram reverently gave tithes of all that he had taken in his late successful expedition, and received his solemn blessing (Heb. 7:2, 6).” Nowhere does the bias of Jewish commentators against any New Testament contribution to the understanding of an Old Testament passage or incident show up more clearly than in their efforts to “explain away” the content of this fourteenth chapter of Genesis, and especially the account of Abram’s meeting with Melchizedek, by defining it as a *midrash* designed to glorify the patriarch Abraham (or even the antiquity of Jerusalem). For example, Morgenstern writes (JIBG): “It is a midrash pure and simple, in which the glory of the patriarch Abraham is enhanced by the representation of him as the paragon of bravery, intrepid and successful warriorship, honor, faithfulness, pride, and magnanimity.” By all critics of like “persuasion,” the entire account had to be post-exilic. From the point of view of the New Testament no satisfactory understanding of the Melchizedek incident is possible, apart from the teaching which is presented in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here the Messianic significance of the story of the Priest-King Melchizedek is asserted too clearly for misunderstanding, and even though this explanation does really enhance the mystery, still and all it does bring it within the purview of a reasonable article of Christian faith. Beyond this we cannot go; without it the Melchizedek story is meaningless. It is not surprising, of course, that all who reject the Messiahship of Jesus are certain to reject, oftentimes to ridicule, the Old Testament evidence which supports the fact of His Messiahship. Among all such critics, Jew or Gentile, a blind spot develops as soon as New Testament teaching is disregarded either ignorantly or wilfully: a fact which again confirms one of the most important rules of interpretation—and one which has been

emphasized repeatedly in the present work—namely, that any passage of Scripture must be understood not only in the light of its immediate context but also in the light of Bible teaching as a whole. Those persons who refuse to correlate Old Testament and New Testament teaching properly will never acquire any comprehensive understanding of the Book of the Spirit.

*King of Salem.* The name *Melchizedek* means “king of righteousness.” *Salem* means “peace.” Salem here is undoubtedly Jerusalem, which did not become an Israelite city until the reign of David. “Salem” is simply a shortened form of “Jerusalem,” the *Urusalim* of the Amarna letters of the fourteenth century B.C.; the short form appears again in Psa. 76:2. This identification is further confirmed by the fact that proper names are frequently used in Scripture in abbreviated forms. Moreover, Abram is portrayed as having practically returned from his “military” expedition, that is, he is back to Hebron, and Jerusalem is not far from Hebron. Note that Melchizedek brought bread and wine to refresh the returning warriors. “He did this as one who wants to be seen to offer his support to such good men, who do such laudable things as Abram had done. He recognizes that a generous offer of rations for the troops was at this time the prime physical necessity. Nothing more should be sought in this act of Melchizedek’s. He expresses his friendship and perhaps his religious kinship with Abram by offering the most common form of meat and drink, ‘bread and wine’” (EG, 463). Lange (CDHCG, 404): “The papists explain it with reference to the sacrifices of the mass, but the reference is fatal to their own case, since Melchizedek gave the wine also. He brought forth, not he brought before God.”

*Priest of God Most High*, literally, *El Elyon*, of which the first term, *El*, from the same root as in *Elohim* (Gen. 1:1), signifies The Mighty One, and is seldom applied to

God without some qualifying attribute or cognomen, as *El Shaddai* (Gen. 17:1, God Almighty), *El Elobe Yisrael* (Gen. 33:20, God, the God of Israel); and the second, *Elyon*, occurring frequently (Num. 24:16, Psa. 7:17, 9:2) describes God as the Highest, the Exalted, etc., and is sometimes used in conjunction with Jehovah (Psa. 7:17), and with Elohim (Psa. 57:2), while sometimes it stands alone (Psa. 21:7). Whitelaw (PCG, 209): "Most probably the designation here describes the name under which the Supreme Deity was worshipped by Melchizedek and the king of Sodom, whom Abram recognizes as followers of the true God by identifying, as in v. 22, El-Elyon with Jehovah." Lange, quoting Delitzsch, declares that the signification of the name used here is *monotheistic*, "not God as the highest among many, but in a monotheistic sense, the one most high God" (CDHCG, 404). Leupold (EG, 465): "The priest defines who he considers El Elyon to be, namely, 'the Creator of heaven and earth'—a strictly monothestic conception and entirely correct. Though we only assume that Melchizedek came into possession of the truth concerning God by way of the tradition that still prevailed pure and true in a few instances at this late date after the Flood, there is nothing that conflicts with such an assumption except an evolution theory of history, which, at this point, as so often, conflicts with facts. The verb for 'Creator' (for 'Creator' is a participle) is not the customary *bara*, as the usual Hebrew tradition knows it, but the less common *qanah*, a further indication that Melchizedek had a religious background different from Abram's. In fact it would seem that Melchizedek is not in possession of as full a measure of the truth as is Abram: for, apparently, Melchizedek does not know God as Yahweh, though the correctness of the conception 'God Most High' cannot be denied." We see no reason for questioning the view that a strain of Semitic monotheism persisted in many instances, perhaps isolated instances, despite the inroads of

idolatry and other forms of paganism, down through the time of Noah to the age of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This fact seems to be pointed up here in the story of Abram's meeting with Melchizedek. The following comment (JB, 31, n.) is interesting and enlightening: "Ps. 76:2, the whole subsequent Jewish tradition, and many of the Fathers identify Salem with Jerusalem. Its priest-king Melchizedek (the name is Canaanite, cf. Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, Josh. 10:1) worships the Most High God, El-Elyon, a compound name, each of its two parts being the title of a god in the Phoenician pantheon. Elyon is used in the Bible (especially Psalms) as a divine title. In this passage, v. 22, El-Elyon is identified with the true God of Abraham. Melchizedek makes a brief and mysterious appearance in the narrative: he is king of that Jerusalem where Yahweh will deign to dwell, and a priest of the Most High even before the Levitical priesthood was established; moreover, he receives tithes from the Father of the chosen people. Ps. 110:4 represents him as a figure of the Messiah who is both king and priest: the application to Christ's priesthood is worked out in Heb. 7. Patristic tradition has developed and enriched this allegorical interpretation; in the bread and wine offered to Abraham it sees an image of the Eucharist and even a foreshadowing of the Eucharistic sacrifice—an interpretation that has been received into the Canon of the Mass. Several of the Fathers held the opinion that Melchizedek was a manifestation of the Son of God in person." (Protestantism, justifiably, has never seen any reason for accepting this Catholic "allegorical interpretation" of the bread-and-wine incident. See Lange's statement *supra*. Note that the word "Eucharist" is not in Scripture: it is a coinage of speculative theology, as is the assumption regarding Melchizedek's proffer of bread and wine to Abraham. Many theologians have not been able to resist the temptation to stretch Biblical allegory beyond all reasonable limits. This is especially true in cases in which the

imaginary extension of the meaning of a term seems to warrant sacerdotalism; that is, the magical powers of a special human priesthood. Traditional sacramentalism and sacerdotalism, both unscriptural, naturally go together: the one is presumed to justify the other.) Cf. HSB, 25: "*Melchizedek* (king of righteousness) was both priest and king of Salem (*peace*), probably the old name for Jerusalem. In the book of Hebrews the priestly function is stressed when Melchizedek is presented as a type of Christ. This emphasis rests on Ps. 110:4 where the Lord says through David, '*You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*' In Hebrews (7:1-17) the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek is shown to be superior to the Aaronic priesthood, which was transitory and imperfect." Speiser (ABG, 109): "The notice about Melchizedek merits a measure of confidence in its own right. He invokes an authentic Canaanite deity as a good Canaanite priest would be expected to do. Abraham, on the other hand, refers to Yahweh, using the Canaanite name or names in suitable apposition, which is not less appropriate in his particular case. That later religious Hebrew literature should have identified El-Elyon with Yahweh, quite possibly on the basis of this passage, is readily understandable. But this appears to be the only late reflex of Gen. 14. The narrative itself has all the ingredients of historicity." Again: (*ibid.*, 104): "Both elements ('*el*' and '*elyon*') occur as names of specific deities, the first in Ugaritic and the second in Phoenician; the Aram. inscription from Sujin combines the two into a compound." It should be noted that *El* is the component rendered 'God' in compound names, such as 'God Almighty' (17:1), 'the Everlasting God' (21:33), 'God, the God of Israel' (33:20), 'God of Bethel' (35:7). It is held to be the oldest Semitic appellation for God. *Elyon* is used frequently in the Old Testament of the Lord (with *el* in Ps. 78:35), especially in psalms referring clearly to Jerusalem and its temple (Psa.

9:2, 21:7, 46:4, 50:14, 87:5). (See IBG, 598). (SIB, 234): "Who this Melchizedek was, this priest of God among the Canaanites, greater than Abram, the friend of God, who were his parents or his successors, is on purpose concealed by the Holy Ghost. And hence he is without father or mother, predecessor or successor, in historical account, in order that he might typify the incomprehensible dignity, the amazing pedigree, and unchangeable duration of Jesus Christ, our great High priest. Heb. 6:20, 'Jesus was made a high priest after the order of Melchizedek'; Heb. 5:6, 10; Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-24)."

In the New Testament account of Melchizedek (Heb., chs. 6, 7), we find him described as both king and priest; hence our Christ (Messiah) is likewise a King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. It is also said of Melchizedek that he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," "but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:2, 3). It is further declared that our great High Priest was made High Priest "not after the law of a carnal commandment" (as in the case of the Levitical priesthood), but in "the likeness of Melchizedek" was made High Priest "after the power of an endless life" (7:15-17). Does this really mean that the analogy is only "in the historical account"? So writes Milligan (NTCH, 198): ". . . the Apostle manifestly uses these negative epithets in our text, to denote simply that the parentage of Melchizedek is unknown; that so far as the record goes, he was without father and without mother, and furthermore that he was without descent, or, rather, without genealogy. Nothing concerning either his ancestry or his posterity is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. There, he appears on the page of typical history isolated and alone. . . . Christ, in the sense in which he is here contemplated by our author, had no predecessors, and he will have no successors. He himself will continue to officiate as our royal high priest during



the entire period of his mediatorial reign. And so it was with Melchisedec. So far as the record goes, his priesthood, as well as that of Christ, was unbroken, uninterrupted by any changes of succession. All that is here meant by his being made like unto the Son of God and abiding a priest perpetually is simply this: that like Jesus he completely fills up the entire era of his royal priesthood in his own proper person. This period, however short, is intended to serve as a typical representation of the era of Christ's priesthood, and Melchisedec is thus made a more perfect type of Christ than was Aaron or any of his successors. . . . And all that is therefore implied in the words of the text is simply this: that as the shadow, however small it may be, corresponds with the substance which forms it, so also did the priesthood of Melchisedec correspond with that of Christ. Each of them was unbroken, uninterrupted, and relatively perfect in itself. Great care is therefore necessary in dealing with these relative terms and expressions, lest peradventure we give them an extension which is wholly beyond what was intended by the Holy Spirit."

True it is that "this Canaanite crosses for a moment the path of Abram, and is unhesitatingly recognized as a person of higher spiritual rank than the friend of God. Disappearing as suddenly as he came in, he is lost to the sacred writing for a thousand years; and then a few emphatic words for another moment bring him into sight as a type of the coming Lord of David. Once more, after another thousand years, the Hebrew Christians are taught to see in him a proof that it was the consistent purpose of God to abolish the Levitical priesthood. His person, his office, his relation to Christ, and the seat of his sovereignty, have given rise to innumerable discussions, which even now can scarcely be considered as settled" (OTH, 99). But can we really be satisfied with the view that all that is said of Melchizedek as a type of Christ is fulfilled simply "in historical account," that is, without reference to the

real life-identity of this King-priest? Is not some truth infinitely more profound intended here (1) in the Old Testament picture of the intercourse between Abram and Melchizedek, and especially (2) in the New Testament elaboration of the significance of Melchizedek as typical of the Priesthood of Christ. Is this historical—or to be more exact, *epistolary*—presentation of the identity of Melchizedek all that is implied in Abram's recognition of this king-priest of what was later to be the locale of the throne of David? (cf. Psa. 110:4, Isa. 9:6, 7). Note especially Heb. 7:4, "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils." (HEW, 114-115): "The proof of the greatness of Melchisedec here given is threefold. 1. In the nomination of the person that was subject unto him—Abraham; he was the stock and root of the whole people, their common father, in whom they were first separated from the other nations to be a people of themselves. It was he who first received the promise and the covenant with the token of it; therefore, the Hebrews esteemed Abraham next unto God Himself. 2. In the fact that Abraham was a patriarch, that is, a father who is a prince and ruler in this family. Those who succeeded Abraham are called 'patriarchs'; but he, being the first of all these, is accounted the principal, and hath the pre-eminence over all the rest. If anyone were greater than Abraham in his own time, it must be acknowledged that it was upon the account of some privilege that was above all that ever that whole nation as descendants of Abraham were made partakers of. But that this was so the Apostle proves by the instance ensuing, namely, that Abraham gave to Melchisedec. 3. Abraham 'gave the tenth of the spoils,' not arbitrarily but in the way of a necessary duty; not as an honorary respect, but as a religious office. He gave 'the tenth,' delivering it up to the use and disposal of the priest of the Most High God. He gave the tenth of the spoils,

a portion taken out of the whole, and representing the whole. What further concerns the greatness of Melchizedec the Apostle declares in the ensuing verses, . . . The sole reason that can be given for the greatness of Melchizedec is, that God raised him up, and disposed of him into that condition of His own good pleasure." (Comments by John Owen on Heb. 7:1-7).

It should be noted that in response to Abram's unsolicited manifestation of the most devout regard for Melchizedek (actually, no doubt, for the twofold office vested in him), that the latter is said to have pronounced a twofold blessing himself, namely, he blessed Abram (of God Most High), and he blessed God Most High (El Elyon) also. Leupold (EG, 465-466): "Melchizedek's blessing is in every way what it should be: it ascribes the glory to God and lets Abram appear merely as what he is, an instrument God deigned to use—so the second half of the blessing. The first half had represented Abram as standing in need of the blessing of El Elyon and therefore bestowed that blessing from the hands of the Omnipotent Creator. . . . There can be no doubt about it that whether long or short this blessing was a clear-cut confession of him who gave it and a strong testimony to the truth, given at a solemn moment under memorable circumstances also in the ears of an ungodly and unbelieving group of neighbors. No doubt, on Moses' part the object of recording so memorable a piece of history connected with one of the major cities of the blessed land, was to impress the people with the glorious record that truth had had in the earliest day in some of these venerable cities."

Thus it will be seen that both of these factors, namely, Abram's manifestation of profound regard for Melchizedek, and the latter's twofold benediction in response, accompanied by his provision of food for the rescuing forces, surely point up the fact that the *timelessness* attributed to Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews

must be regarded as something more than a matter of epistolary recording. Certainly this entire account is evidence that a strong monotheism continued at least among some Semitic groups down to Abraham's time (cf. Gen. 4:26), and that Abram inwardly recognized this fact in the personal regard he manifested toward this king-priest of Salem and outwardly recognized it in the tithe (the "tenth" of the spoils which he had taken) which he presented to him. The tithe was later incorporated in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:30-33, Num. 18:21-32). But do these various factors indicate anything more than this? In the present writer's opinion it can reasonably be assumed that they do; that they might well support the conviction held by several of the Church Fathers, and by many able Biblical scholars throughout the ages, that Melchizedek was an epiphany of the personal Logos (John 1:1), the One "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" Mic. 5:2, (RSV, "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days"), the One who is the First and the Last, the Living One, Rev. 1:17-18 (that is, without beginning or end), the One who became God's Only Begotten in the Bethlehem manger (John 1:1-3, Luke 1:35, John 3:16, Gal. 4:4). Is not this One—the Logos, the Son—the executive Agent in the unfolding of God's Eternal Purpose, both in Creation and in Redemption? (Cf. Ps. 33:6, 9; Ps. 148:1-6; Heb. 11:3, Col. 1:16, John 1:3, 1 Tim. 2:6, Eph. 1:7, Rom. 3:24-25, Heb. 9:12.) Of course we know that the Bible is made up of two main parts, known as Covenants or (in stereotyped form) as Testaments or Wills. The second part is known as the New or Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If He—Jesus Christ—left a New or Last Will, did He not authorize an Old or First Will and Testament, at some time and for some purpose? If so, what is this First or Old Will? Where is it to be found? Is it not the Old Covenant or Testament of the Scriptures? Was it not also *the Testa-*

*ment of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?* That is to say, when God finished the work of Creation and entered into His rest (Gen. 2:2), did not the Logos, the Son, take over the direction of the divine Plan of Redemption? *Is not the Old Testament as truly His as the New Testament is?* If not, what does the Apostle mean, 1 Cor. 10:4, when he tells us that ancient Israel in the Exodus "drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ"? (Cf. Exo. 17:6, Num. 20:11, Psa. 78:15.) Furthermore, who was the "Angel of Jehovah" of the Old Testament record? Strong writes (ST, 319): In the Old Testament "the appearances of 'the angel of Jehovah' seem to be preliminary manifestations of the divine Logos." (Cf. Gen. 18:2, 13; Dan. 3:25, 28; Gen. 22:11, 16; Gen. 31:11-13, 16:9-13, 48:15, 16; Exo. 3:2, 4, 5; Judg. 13:20-22.) Strong (*ibid*): "Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh." (Cf. also Josh. 5:13-15 and Gen. 32:1-2.) Who was this Prince of the Host of Yahweh? Was He the angel Michael (Dan. 10:13, 12:1; Jude 9, Rev. 12:7), or was He the Pre-incarnate Logos? See also John 17:4, 24; John 8:58, 19:30; Phil. 2:5-8: it should be noted that the statements of Jesus referred to here were all spoken under the Old Covenant, before the New Covenant was ratified at Golgotha and the Christian Dispensation was ushered in, on Pentecost, A.D. 30 (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb., chs. 8, 9; John 1:17; 2 Cor., ch. 3; Matt. 5:17-20, Acts 2. etc.). We might add here that those who reject the Virgin Birth of Jesus should be prepared to "explain away" the repeated Scripture affirmations of His eternal Pre-existence (cf. John 17:5, 8:58, 1:1-5; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:13-18; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1-4) as the Logos, the Very

Image, and the Effulgence of God. All this is in harmony with the view held by many competent scholars that whereas the name *Elohim* designates the Creator-God, "the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15), the name *Yahweh* designates the Covenant-God, whose love embraces especially His moral creation (John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-11) to the extent of having provided redemption of spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23) for all who commit themselves to Him by the obedience of faith (Rom. 3:21-25). Do we not have abundant evidence, then, to justify our conviction that the Covenant-God of Scripture is indeed the Logos, the Author of both the Old Testament and the New? To sum up: *It is the conviction of the present writer that this identification of Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Logos is in harmony with Biblical teaching as a whole, and that it does justice to the details of the Genesis narrative of Abram's meeting with this King of Salem and Priest of God Most High, more fully than any other explanation that can be offered.*

Other noteworthy details of this meeting of Abram with the King of Sodom and the King-Priest Melchizedek are the following: (1) The apparent *magnanimity* of the King of Sodom, who, perhaps anticipating that like donations of the spoils might be made to him as to Melchizedek, said simply, Give me the souls (of my people), *i.e.*, the domestic slaves (cf. 12:5), and keep the goods recaptured ("the movable chattels"), such as precious garments, all gold and silver, weapons, cattle, etc., to thyself. This, of course, Abram was entitled to do, according to the customary laws of the time, by right of military victory. It must be recognized, of course, that the spoils in this case included much that had been stolen by the Eastern kings from their original owners (in the cities of the plain), and probably additional spoils which the marauders had seized elsewhere in the course of their looting expedition. These facts seem

to enhance the generosity of the King of Sodom in this case. (2) *Abram's oath and consequent reply*, vv. 22-24. I have lifted up my hand unto Yahweh, God Most High (El-Elyon), "possessor of heaven and earth," that I will not take anything, not even a thread or a shoe-latchet "that is thine"? Why not? "Lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Abram was not entirely averse to accepting presents from heathen kings (cf. 12:16), but in this case the patriarch could not consent to sharing in the slightest measure the wealth of the impious Sodomites. What a striking contrast to Lot's selfish acts! No one could deny that Abram had the privilege of keeping these chattels as his due. "Abraham, however, cannot do such a thing. He is not covetous; the thought of the acquisition of wealth never entered into the undertaking of the expedition. But another weightier consideration enters into the case: Abram desires to stand out clearly as a man who prospers only because of God's blessings. Hitherto this status of his had been unmistakably clear; Abram had never sought wealth, nor resorted to questionable methods of getting it; nor had anyone contributed to his wealth. Least of all could Abram accept a generous bestowal from a man of the calibre of the King of Sodom, a purely sensual materialist and idolater. The acceptance of the gift would have impugned Abram's spiritual standing. Consequently, Abram summarily rejects the proposal" (EG, 467). Critics have attempted to make contradictions here where everything harmonizes, by contending that Abram who disclaimed a right to the spoils for his own use could not therefore have bestowed a tenth on Melchizedek. "The least bit of effort to understand would show that a religious tenth reveals the same spirit as the refusal for personal use." As a matter of fact, the tenth belonged to Yahweh at all times: to have kept it would have been robbing the One who is the "possessor of heaven and earth." "One

natural exception must be made: something of that which was taken from the vanquished enemy had to be used to feed the deliverers. Abram wanted it understood that he felt justified in having appropriated this much. His confederates, Aner, Eschol and Mamre, were, of course, not to be bound by his own conscientious scruples. These men were at liberty to make whatever adjustment they desired with the King of Sodom" (EG, 469). There is little doubt that Abram knew what kind of a character he was dealing with in the person of the King of Sodom; he knew full well that this king would later distort the facts of the case in such a way as to make the claim that he had made Abram wealthy, and the patriarch was not going to have any of this. (3) *The oath itself*: "I have lifted up my hand to Yahweh." A common form of oath-taking (Deut. 32:40, Ezek. 20:5-6; Dan. 12:7; Rev. 10:5, 6; cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, 12, 195). Oaths have been employed from earliest times; the purpose of an oath is explained in Heb. 6:16, "For men swear by the greater; and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation." Under ancient customary law, the oath was rigidly held to be sacred, and perjury was one of the most heinous crimes a man could perpetrate. (HSB, 25): "In the Old Testament they were employed for (1) confirming covenants (26:28; 31:44, 53); (2) resolving controversies in courts of law (Exo. 22:11, Num. 5:19); (3) guaranteeing the fulfillment of promised acts or sacred duties (24:3, 4; 50:25; Num. 30:2, 2 Chron. 15:14). Believers have always been forbidden to take oaths in the name of idols or created things (Josh. 23:7, Matt. 5:34-36, Jas. 5:12). God Himself used an oath to show His immutability (22:16; Num. 14:28; Heb. 6:17). But the Lord Jesus admonished believers to fulfill their promises without the need of resorting to any oaths, so their word would be as good as their bond (Matt. 5:34-37)."



To sum up with Lange (CDHCG, 405): "As Abram declares *his intimate communion* with Melchizedek, and introduces it into the very forms of expression of his religion, so he utterly refuses *any community of goods* with the King of Sodom. He reserves only what his servants had already consumed in the necessities of war, and that part of the spoil which fell to his three confederates, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre (Num. 31:26, 1 Sam. 30:26)." In view of the foregoing array of facts, how utterly stupid becomes the critical claim that v. 20, in which we are told that Abram gave to Melchizedek a tithe of the recaptured booty, contradicts v. 23, in which it is said that Abram returned to the King of Sodom all the recaptured booty, refusing to retain even a shoe-latchet for himself.

#### 8. *Reliability of the Narrative*

It is repeatedly charged by the critics that the content of chapter 14 is "an intrusive section within the patriarchal framework," and because (as they say) it cannot be identified with J, E or P, it must be ascribed to an isolated source. To this critique we are bound to reply that—to any unbiased person—the content of this chapter is definitely related to Old Testament history (1) in the fact that it traces the ultimate destiny of Lot and his progeny (the Moabites and Ammonites), as we shall see later (Gen. 19:30-38; Deut. 2:9, 19; Psalms 83:8); (2) in the fact that it justifies the canonization of the book of Ruth, in which the Messianic genealogy is carried forward through Ruth, a Moabite maiden, to Obed, to Jesse, and then to David (Ruth 1:4, 4:17; 1 Chron. 2:9-16, Matt. 1:5, Luke 3:32). It is commonplace of Old Testament prophecy that Messiah should be of the royal lineage of David (Matt. 1:1; Isa. 9:7, 16:5; Psalm 110:1; Matt. 22:41-45, Mark 12:35-37, Luke 20:41-44, John 7:42, Acts 2:34-35, Rom. 1:3, 2 Tim. 2:8, Heb. 1:13; Rev. 5:5, 22:16). Moreover, the content of Genesis 14 is inseparably linked with explanatory pas-

sages in the New Testament: without it, these passages would be maningless. (See Luke 17:28-32, 2 Pet. 2:6-8; Rom. 4:23-24, 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). *The fact must always be kept in mind that the Bible is a whole and a unitary whole.*

Hence, writes Speiser (ABG, 106-109): "A fresh re-examination of all the available scraps of evidence, both internal and external, favors an early date, scarcely later in fact than the middle of the second millenium. For one thing, the account is admittedly not the work of J, or E, let alone P. Who, then, could have had an interest in learned speculations of this sort? For another thing, Sodom, Gomorrah, and three neighboring towns are still very much in the picture . . . Most important of all, the names of the foreign invaders and their respective countries are not made up. They have an authentic ring, in spite of all the hazards of transliteration and transmission; one of them at least (Arioch) takes us back to the Old Babylonian age, with which the period of Abraham has to be synchronized. . . . The geographic detail that marks the route of the invaders, and the casual listings of the Cities of the Plain, lend further support to the essential credibility of the narrative. Who the foreign invaders were remains uncertain. It is highly improbable, however, that they were major political figures. The mere fact that Abraham could rout them with no more than 318 warriors at his disposal (the force is just small enough to be realistic) would seem to suggest that the outlanders were foreign adventurers bent on controlling the copper mines south of the Dead Sea. The most likely date for such an expedition would be approximately the eighteenth century B.C. Finally, the notice about Melchizedek merits a measure of confidence in its own right. He invokes an authentic Canaanite deity as a good Canaanite priest would be expected to do. Abraham, on the other hand, refers to

Yahweh, using the Canaanite name or names in suitable apposition, which is no less appropriate in his particular case. That later religious Hebrew literature should have identified El-Elyon with Yahweh, quite probably on the basis of this passage, is readily understandable. But this appears to be the only late reflex of Gen. 14. The narrative itself has all the ingredients of history." (We cannot help wondering why so many commentators seem to be blind to the fact that Abram's confederates furnished troops, in addition to Abram's own 318 men.)

Cornfeld testifies in like vein (AtD, 59): "Abraham and his band of 'hanikhim' (followers) corresponds almost exactly to the chieftains of the early part of the second millenium, with their 'hanaku' or 'hnku.' We know from cuneiform texts in Mari, Ugarit, Alalah (a state north of Ugarit), and Boghazkoi (the Hittite kingdom), that city-states and tribes were linked by treaties or 'covenants.' Although the opponents of Abraham cannot be identified with certainty, the personal names Tudhalia ('Tidal in Hebrew), Ariukka (Arioch), and place names which have been identified, fit well into the contemporary picture of the 18th-17th centuries, One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, now at the Hebrew University, has a passage elaborating on the events, and containing many new geographical names east of the Jordan, around the Dead Sea and Canaan proper. This material gives Genesis 14 a new timelessness for the modern reader. Few stories in Genesis have had so much written about them. The antiquity of this story and the accuracy of the names referred to in it are being constantly corroborated as new background material becomes available."

As a matter of fact, the general authenticity of the Patriarchal narratives is in our day seldom called in question by those who are familiar with the findings of the archaeologists. The historicity of the personages and events

related in Genesis seems now to be firmly established. Dr. Albright (FSAC, 81): "As critical study of the Bible is more and more influenced by the rich new material from the ancient Near East, we shall see a steady rise in respect for the historical significance of now neglected or despised passages and details in the Old and New Testaments." The distinguished Orientalist, Dr. Nelson Glueck of Hebrew Union College, writes (RD, 31): "The archaeological explorer in Bible lands must be aware of the fact that as important as the Bible is for historical information, it is definitely not primarily a chronicle of history, as we understand that term today. It is above all concerned with true religion and only secondarily with illustrative records. Even if the latter had suffered through faulty transmission or embellishments, the purity and primacy of the Bible's innermost message would not thereby be diminished. As a matter of fact, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries. They form tesserae in the vast mosaic of the Bible's almost incredibly correct historical memory."

This final testimony is from the pen of James Muilenburg, distinguished contributor to the *Interpreter's Bible* (Vol. I, p. 296, "The History of the Religion of Israel"): "Archaeology has revealed an extraordinary correspondence between the general social and cultural conditions portrayed in Genesis and those exposed by excavations. Discoveries from such sites as Nuzi, Mari, and elsewhere, provide the geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious background against which the stories of the patriarchs are laid."

## TENTING TOWARD SODOM FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### Pitching One's Tent Toward Sodom

Gen. 13:12

Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. His choice was determined solely by contemplated *personal advantage*, by the prospect of a "more abundant" *earthly* life: his highest values were those of this present evil world. Greed, with the prospect of ease and luxury, proved to be too alluring for him to resist it. Having pitched his tent toward Sodom, he finally went all the way and became a resident of that den of iniquity. No matter to what extent his "righteous soul" was "sore distressed" (2 Pet. 2:7-8) by the lust and violence which all but engulfed him, he lacked the moral stamina to get himself and his family out of it. Flabbiness of character showed itself in everything he did. The root of his tragedy was that his values were all distorted: he did not know how to put first things first. His life story reminds us of a similar tragedy portrayed in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. This tragic tale leaves one emotionally depressed by its sordidness; nevertheless, it does inculcate a tremendous moral lesson. The protagonist, Willy Loman—a salesman whose escapist tendencies blinded him to his real mediocrity—worshiped only one god, the great god Success. In pursuing this false god, he sacrificed his home and family, and he himself could find "no exit" except by suicide. Such is always the tragic end of one who pitches his tent toward Sodom, that is, unless he "comes to himself" and resolutely comes back to the Father's house.

What happened to Lot happens to every man who pitches his tent toward Sodom unless and until he heeds the cry, "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4). In what ways, then, do men and women in our time pitch their tents toward Sodom: They do it in various ways, as follows: 1. By getting into the wrong crowd (Psa. 1:1;

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Prov. 1:10, 4:14, 9:6; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:16). 2. By assuming the posture of piety (piosity, religiosity), while conforming more and more to the ways of the world ("the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life," 1 John 2:15-17; cf. Rom. 12:2). 3. By neglecting the appointments of the Spiritual Life (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 6, 11:23-30; Heb. 10:25). Where there is life, there is growth; where there is no growth, the living thing stagnates and dies (Rom. 14:17, 2 Pet. 1:5-11, 3:18). 4. By turning from the Word of God, the Foundation that stands sure and strong (2 Tim. 2:19) to the vain babblings of human speculation, "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men" (Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20, 2 Tim. 2:16).

What of parents who move from one community to another without ever giving any thought as to what effects the new environment will have on the moral character of their children? How many put the demands of their business or profession above the spiritual welfare of their families? Are not these instances of pitching one's tent toward Sodom?

But the greatest tragedy of all is the fact that *every human being*, on reaching the age of discretion, pitches his tent toward Sodom. Rom. 3:23—"all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

Lot himself would have perished in Sodom had not God come to his rescue. Likewise, all sinners will eventually perish in hell, unless they heed God's call to repentance. (Luke 13:3, Matt. 25:46, Rev. 6:16-17).

### The Priesthood of Christ

Heb. 6:20—"Jesus . . . having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

The terms "Messiah" (Hebrew), "Christos" (Greek), and "Christ" (English), all mean "The Anointed One". Jesus the Christ (or Jesus Christ) is, then, The Anointed

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of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:14-15). It was the custom by Divine warrant in Old Testament times to formally anoint into office those who were called to be prophets, priests, and kings. See Exo. 28:41; Lev. 16:32; 1 Sam. 9:16, 15:1, 16:12-13; 1 Ki. 19:15-16, etc. This anointing was emblematic of investiture with sacred office, and of particular sanctification or designation to the service of God. To anoint meant, says Cruden, "to consecrate and set one apart to an office" (s.v., *Concordance*). The element used in the ceremony of anointing was olive oil (Exo. 30:22-25). This "holy anointing oil" was typical of the comforting and strengthening gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit.

To accept Jesus as Christ, therefore, is to accept Him as prophet to whom we go for the Word of Life, to accept Him as our great high priest who intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father, and to accept Him as King from whose will there is no appeal (because, of course, He wills only our good). (Cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; John 8:31-32, 16:14-15; Matt. 28:17; Eph. 1:19-23, 4:5; Col. 1:13-18, etc.).

According to the teaching of the Bible, there are three Dispensations of true religion. (Religion is that system of faith and practice by which man is bound anew to God, from the root, *lig*, and the prefix, *re*, meaning to "bind back" or "bind anew".) Dispensations changed—from the family to the national to the universal—as the type of priesthood changed. The Patriarchal Dispensation was the age of family rule and family worship, with the patriarch (paternal head) acting as prophet (revealer of God's will), priest (intercessor) and king, for his entire living progeny. The Jewish Dispensation was ushered in with the establishment of a national institution of worship (the Tabernacle, and later the Temple) and a national priesthood (the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood). The Christian Dispensation had its beginning with the abrogation of the Old Covenant and ratification of the New, by

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one and the same event—the death of Christ on the Cross (although the Jewish institution was permitted to remain as a social and civil institution some forty years longer, that is, down to the Destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its people by the Roman armies, A.D. 70). (Cf. John 1:17, Gal. 3:23-29, 2 Cor. 3:1-11, Col. 2:13-15, and especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, chs. 7, 8, 9, 10). Under the Christian System all Christians are priests unto God, and Christ is their High Priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10, Rom. 12:1-2, 8:34; Heb. 2:17, also chs. 3, 5, 7; 1 Tim. 2:5, 1 John 2:1, etc.). It will be recalled that Alexander Campbell referred to the Patriarchal Dispensation as the starlight age, to the Jewish Dispensation as the moonlight age, to the special ministry of John the Immerser (to the Jewish nation) as the twilight age, and to the present or Christian Dispensation (which may rightly be designated also the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit) as the sunlight age, of the unfolding of the divine Plan of Redemption. These successive “ages,” therefore, embrace the successive stages of the revelation of true religion, as set forth in the Scriptures. Refusal to recognize this fundamental unity of the Bible *as a whole* can result only in confusion, presumption, and, ultimately, eternal separation from God and all good (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The subject matter of the Epistle to the Hebrews deals with the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34, Heb., ch. 8). This is proved by the superiority of Christ, the Son of God, to angels, to Moses, to the Levitical priesthood, etc. Judaizers, in and out of the church, were contending, it seems, that if Jesus was truly Messiah, as High Priest He must have sprung from the tribe of Levi, because that tribe alone had been set apart as Israel's priesthood. But, said they, Jesus actually hailed from the tribe of Judah, and this fact disqualified Him for the priestly office. The writer of the Epistle, replying to this argu-



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ment, frankly admitted that the Lord Jesus did hail from the tribe of Judah, the tribe from which no high priest was ever supposed to come, according to the Old Testament writings. But, said he, referring to Psa. 110:4, God Himself declared in days of old (affirmed by an immutable oath) that the Messiah's High Priesthood should be after the order of Melchizedek, not after the order of the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood; that, whereas the Levitical priesthood was authenticated only by the power of a carnal commandment, the priesthood of the Messiah, like that of Melchizedek, was authenticated by the power of an endless life; hence, that whereas the former was temporal and imperfect, the latter was eternal and in every respect perfect or complete. Moreover, the Messianic High Priest, like Melchizedek of old who was King of Salem and Priest of God Most High, was destined to combine in His own Person both the Eternal Kingship and the Eternal Priesthood. (See Hebrews, chs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.) This is true simply because of the fact that our Lord Jesus, God's Only Begotten, is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Living One (Rev. 1:4, 8; 1:17-18; cf. John 1:1-14; Eph. 1:3-14, 2:11-22, 3:1-12; Col. 2:12-20; 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Phil. 2:5-11, etc.).

The priestly office is necessitated (1) by the difference in rank between the divine and the human, (2) by the very structure of human nature and its needs. Man has always felt the need of confession and intercession. This is a recognized psychological fact: catharsis, the draining off of one's burdens by sharing them with a trusted friend is the first step in the psychoanalytic cure; every minister of the Gospel and every physician knows this to be true. If a famished man is not supplied with food, he will seize anything within his reach; and if the wants of the soul are not lawfully satisfied, the soul will seek unlawful and unholy gratification. *If Christ does not fill the heart, some monstrous idol or some human*

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*priest (or even some supreme object of devotion such as Party or Cause, to the monolithic Leninist) will fill it.* People need a confessor and intercessor. And if they do not learn to make God their Confessor, prayer their confessional, and Christ Jesus their Intercessor, they will heap to themselves a human confessional and a human priesthood, and so degrade true religion into superstition.

A true priest must possess three qualities or excellences:

1. *He must have authority.* Authority is *moral power*, and moral power is *right*, that is, the right to possess something, to do something, or to require something to be done. Who, then, truly has this power? Not the Jewish priests of old, because they were compassed about with infirmities. They had no authority to forgive sin in any sense of the term: all the High Priest of Israel could do was to go into the Holy of Holies on each Day of Atonement and offer sacrifices for the people; but even this did not procure the forgiveness of their sins. God merely laid them over, put them out of His Mind, so to speak, until the next Day of Atonement; and so the weight of human sin, laid over from year to year, grew into what was veritably a crushing burden until the one Sin-offering was made once for all, on the Cross of Calvary (Hebrews, ch. 9). John 1:29—note the singular here, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the *sin* of the world.”

Who has this moral power? Not the priests of either pagan or papal Rome. They are men, and their assumption of it is a monstrous imposition upon the credulity of the masses. Jesus expressly forbids our calling anyone “Father” in a spiritual sense, except our Father in Heaven (Matt. 23:9); He alone is entitled to be addressed as “Holy Father” (John 17:11, 25).

Who, then, does have this authority (moral power) to forgive sin, to be intercessor for the saints? Only one Person has it—Jesus of Nazareth: “He hath this priesthood unchangeable”; He alone “is able to save to the

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uttermost them that draw near unto God through him" (Heb. 7:24-25); He alone "ever liveth to make intercession for" His saints. This authority is His by virtue of WHO HE IS, The Living One: He who is alive for evermore; He is without beginning or end (Rev. 1:1, 4, 8, 17-18; John 8:58), and therefore His power is that of an endless life (Heb. 7:16). While in the flesh He exercised this moral power as He saw fit (cf. Luke 5:17-26, 23:39-43); now that He is Acting Sovereign of the universe and Absolute Monarch of the Kingdom of God, He alone has the right to intercede for His people at the Right Hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19, 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). All authority (moral power) has been given unto Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18); and He must reign until He has put all His enemies, including death itself, under His feet for ever (1 Cor. 15:20-23, Phil. 2:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:4).

2. *The true priest must be characterized by purity.* This fact manifests itself in our desire for the prayers of a good man in times of trouble; even a dying man would summon all his energies to spurn the prayer of a hypocrite offered in his behalf; such a prayer is an abomination to God and to man (Jas. 5:16; Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46-49; John 15:16; Col. 3:17). "A preacher is not a priest, except as every Christian man is a priest; but he is called upon to discharge certain priestly functions, to comfort the sorrowful, support the weak, pray with the dying; and the demand for his personal purity is as righteous as it is instinctive and universal." The Jewish high priest wore on his forehead a plate of pure gold, on which was engraved, "Holiness to the Lord," God thus affirming the holiness of his ministry.

Now our High Priest alone meets this demand for personal purity. Heb. 7:26—"Such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and

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made higher than the heavens." Note the saying, Such a High Priest is *becoming* to us, that is, appropriate, befitting. Not that it is fortuitous that we have such a High Priest, but that it is *necessary*: no other could fill the office of the eternal Priesthood. Consider, then, the High Priest of our Christian profession. "Living on earth, yet undefiled with sin; keeping company with the outcast, but only to bless and save them. Our purity is soon lost; we leave it in our cradles. We lay off our innocence with our child garments. But the Son of Man lived a holy and undefiled life. How beautiful! How wonderful! that human life of pain, hunger, sorrow, thorns, temptation, and death, without sin!" (Heb. 2:18, 4:14-15, 10:19-25).

3. *The true priest must be characterized by sympathy.* Perhaps *compassion* would be the better word: pity for the undeserving and the guilty (cf. Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60). "We need a priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He must be pure, to appear before God. He must be filled with all human sympathies, to win our love and bear our burdens." It is the human heart of Jesus that qualifies Him for the eternal priesthood. "It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren," that is, to take upon Himself their human nature, "that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14-18). "These words declare, not simply that he was made in all things like unto his brethren, but that it was *necessary* that he should be made in all things like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." It was absolutely *necessary* for Him to assume our human nature and experience its frailties, in order to qualify for this eternal Priesthood. Heb. 13:8—"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Men sympathize with those of their own class or kind, but the rich can hardly

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sympathize with the poor, the learned with the ignorant, adults with children and youth. "Let every tempted and struggling child be taught to go boldly to Christ, and find mercy and grace in the time of need. We need not be afraid to trust the faith of the child because he cannot appreciate the evidences of the divine origin of the Gospel. Salvation is in the Gospel, not in its evidences. Life is in the air we breathe, and not in any knowledge of its causes and chemistry." Our High Priest sympathized with all who needed mercy and salvation: with frail and impulsive Simon Peter; with the sisters of Bethany, Martha and Mary, at the grave of Lazarus; with the woman taken in the act of adultery (no doubt a victim of the social evils of her day); with the publican Zaccheus; with all who needed the true Burden Bearer of all time. Our High Priest, while in the flesh, was often tired and hungry; suffered loneliness such as only His sensitive soul could suffer; felt despair, as when He cried out on the Cross, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was tempted in all points as we are, *and yet without sin*. His sympathy is for all humankind, not for their sins, but for their frailties and struggles. (Cf. Psa. 103:13-18).

He knows all our sorrows. He knows all our struggles. He knows all our frustrations. He knows all our problems. He is our great High Priest who knoweth all our infirmities. The trouble with us is that *we will not come unto Him that* we may have all these blessings. What hope can we have of heaven without such a High Priest? What hope does the man have who ignores Him, who rejects the only salvation ever offered, the only Atonement provided, the only Intercession available? If we who are in Christ so often feel our unworthiness so much that we question whether we shall ever be able to attain, what must be the sad condition of the one who does not even make the effort, the one who proudly asserts his own good-

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ness instead of reclining on the grace and advocacy of Christ? "If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18).

(The quotes appearing above are from a sermon by John Shackelford, in *Biographies and Sermons of Pioneer Preachers*, edited by Goodpasture and Moore, Nashville, Tenn. 1954.)

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-SEVEN

1. Where did Abram stop at first on his return to Canaan?
2. What is indicated by the statement that "Abram called on the name of Yahweh"?
3. What caused the separation of Abram and Lot? What choice did Lot make?
4. What tragedy is in the statement that Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom"?
5. What did Lot probably see when he "lifted up his eyes"?
6. Describe the Plain of the Jordan.
7. What was the blessing which Abram received from Yahweh at this time?
8. To what place did Abram now move, the place where he pitched his third tent?
9. What more do we learn about this place near Hebron which became Abram's more or less settled place of abode?
10. Name the Cities of the Plain. For what were they notorious?
11. What economic advantages were controlled by these cities in early times?
12. What geological and topographical changes evidently took place in this Plain of the Jordan probably about the beginning of the second millenium?

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13. Who were the kings who invaded from the East? What may have been the economic factor in this invasion?
14. What is a *midrash*? For what reasons must we reject this view of the Battle of the Kings and Abram's role in these events?
15. What route was taken by the invaders from the East? On what grounds do we accept this as historically valid?
16. How explain Abram's pursuit and victory with a force of 318 men? Was this his entire force? Who were his allies?
17. How account for the representation that the Dead Sea was not yet in existence?
18. What and where was the Salt Sea? The Valley of Siddim? What light has been thrown on this problem by Glueck's archaeological findings?
19. Identify as closely as possible the cities or kingdoms from which the Eastern kings came.
20. What peoples are mentioned as living along the highway by which the Eastern invaders came?
20. Who were the Anakim, the Horites, the Amalekites, the Amorites?
22. What was the result of the Battle of the Kings in the Vale of Siddim?
23. What was the fate of the King of Sodom and his allies? What did they and their armies do to escape destruction?
24. What further move did Lot make after pitching his tent *toward* Sodom?
25. What did this last move indicate as to Lot's spiritual state? How does the Apostle Peter describe Lot's attitude at this time?
26. Describe Abram's rescue of Lot. How far to the North did he go to effect the rescue?

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27. How reconcile the statements in verses 10 and 17 concerning the king of Sodom?
28. What was the King's Vale?
29. What two offices did Melchizedek hold? How does this typify Christ's ministry?
30. Explain "King of Salem," "Priest of God Most High."
31. Explain the significance of the name El Elyon.
32. Is there any reason for denying that a strain of Semitic monotheism had persisted from the beginning of the human race? What does Gen. 4:26 mean?
33. What similarity is indicated here between the God of Abraham and the God of Melchizedek?
34. What facts do we have confirming the historicity of this incident?
35. How does the writer of Hebrews describe Melchizedek, in ch. 7:2-3?
36. What is Milligan's interpretation of this ascription of timelessness to Melchizedek? What are the objections to this view?
37. What, according to John Owen, are the proofs of the greatness of Melchizedek?
38. What is indicated by Melchizedek's proffer of bread and wine? What is not indicated?
39. What is the significance of Melchizedek's twofold blessing?
40. What evidence is there to support the view that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah Himself?
41. How explain the King of Sodom's "generosity" on this occasion?
42. What was Abram's reply to the King's offer?
43. What was Abram's oath and why did he make it?
44. What was signified by his lifting up his hand?
45. What gave Abram the right to appropriate a tenth of the spoils?



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46. What gave him the right to divert part of the spoils as repayment to his own and allied forces?
47. What relation does the content of ch. 14 bear to the history of God's Old Testament people?
48. What does Speiser say as to the general authenticity of this narrative?
49. What is Cornfeld's testimony as to the general authenticity of the Patriarchal narratives?
50. What is Albright's testimony about this matter? What is Nelson Glueck's testimony?
51. What usually happens to men who pitch their tents toward Sodom?
52. In what ways do men in all ages do this?
53. In what specific details was Melchizedek a type of Christ?
54. What does the writer of Hebrews tell us about the High Priesthood of Jesus?
55. What is the full significance of the titles Messiah, Christos, Christ?
56. Explain how Dispensations changed with changes of priesthood.
57. In what sense are all Christians priests unto God in the present Dispensation?
58. Explain how our Lord is priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
59. How did the priesthood of the Jewish Dispensation differ from that of the Patriarchal Dispensation?
60. What are the three necessary qualifications for a priest?
61. Is there any authority in Scripture for a special priesthood in our Dispensation?
62. What does our Lord say about calling any man "Father" in a spiritual sense of the term? Who alone is addressed as "Holy Father" in the New Testament and where is the passage found in which this occurs?

## PART TWENTY-EIGHT

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: DIVINE ELABORATION OF THE PROMISE AND THE COVENANT

(Ch. 15)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account (ch. 15)*

1. *After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. 7 And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not. 11 and the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away.*

12 *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs,*

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*and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. 18 In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, 20 and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, 21 and the Amorite, and the Canaanite and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.*

### 2. The Unity of Chapter 15

The analytical critics have tried to tear this chapter into shreds from three points of view, namely, 1. That there is discrepancy in respect to time. According to v. 5, it is in the night and the stars are visible; but vv. 7-11 imply that it is in the day; in v. 12a, the sun is setting, and in ver. 17, it has gone down. Green (UBG, 202-203): "But it is not easy to see how anyone can imagine a difficulty here. The transaction described required time. The vision (v. 1) occurred in the night or in the early morning when the stars still appeared in the sky (v. 5). A fresh communication was made to Abram (vv. 7 ff.) which, whether it followed the preceding one immediately or after an interval, contained directions that could only be executed in the daytime. Five animals were to be taken and slain, properly prepared and divided, and the parts suitably adjusted. This would occupy a portion of the day, and during the remainder of it he guarded the pieces from the birds of prey. Then came sunset with the pro-

phetic disclosure (vv. 12-16), and finally darkness with the symbolic ratification of the covenant. The narrative is consistent throughout and develops regularly from first to last." 2. That a vision is announced in v. 1, but it cannot possibly be continued through the chapter, Green (*ibid.*, 203): "Knobel thinks the vision does not begin till v. 12, and ends with v. 16. This is plainly a mistake; the communication in v. 1 is expressly said to have been made in a vision. Whether all the communications in the chapter were similarly made, and only vv. 10, 11 belong to Abram's ordinary state, or whether the vision is limited to vv. 1-6, as Wellhausen supposes, it may be difficult to determine, and it is of no account as nothing is dependent on the mode in which the revelation was given." 3. That v. 8 is inconsistent with v. 6. In the latter Abram is said to have believed the Lord; and yet he asks in the former for a visible token of the truth of God's word." Green (*ibid.*, 203): "But this request does not indicate doubt or distrust, but rather a desire for a more complete assurance and a fresh confirmation of his faith in the fulfilment of promises so far transcending all natural expectation." (*ibid.*, p. 208): "It is plain enough that no partition of the chapter has been found possible. The signs of its composite character are hard to discover. Its lack of conformity to any one of the so-called documents discredits these documents, not the unity of the chapter." (But—can any *measured* time sequence be ascribed to prophetic vision?) Again, we have an instance in which the ultra-intellectualized mentality is unable to see the forest for the trees: unfortunately, this defect is, in most cases, a manifestation of the *will* to find discrepancies (where none actually exist) for the ultimate purpose of discrediting the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The content of this chapter (15) divides naturally into four parts: the Promise, the Sign, the Oracle, and the Covenant.

## 3 Abram's "Dialogue" with God (vv. 1-4).

Leupold (EG, 470): "In a very particular sense this is a monumental chapter, monumental in the testimony that it bears to saving truth. It is for this reason that Paul alludes to a word from this chapter when he establishes the truth concerning salvation (Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6). It is nothing short of amazing to find in the patriarchal age so clear-cut an answer to the question: How can a man be justified in the sight of God? The way of salvation was one and the same in the old covenant as well as in the new." (That is, by the obedience of faith to the terms prescribed by the Divine Will in either case.) Skinner (ICCG, 280) rightly refers to his incident (esp. v.6) as a "remarkable anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith" (cf. Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6).

V. 1—"the word of Yahweh." The first occurrence of this remarkable phrase, afterward so common in the Hebrew Scriptures (Exo. 9:20, Num. 3:16, Deut. 34:5, 1 Sam. 3:1, Psa. 33:6, *et passim*). "That this was a personal designation of the pre-incarnate Logos, if not susceptible of complete demonstration, yet receives not a little sanction from the language employed throughout this narrative (cf. vv. 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, etc.) At least the expression denotes 'the Lord manifesting himself by speech to his servant'" (Whitelaw, PCG, 216; Murphy, MG, 295). Note that the word of Yahweh came to Abram *in a vision*, that is, a night vision, not in a dream (cf. v. 5). Whitelaw (*ibid.*, 216): "Biblically viewed, the vision, as distinguished from the ordinary dream, defines the presentation to the bodily senses or to the mental consciousness, of objects usually beyond the sphere of their natural activities; hence, visions might be imparted in dreams (Num. 12:6) or in trances (Num. 24:4, 16, 17)."

V. 1—"Fear not, Abram," etc. Was this fear anxiety about his defenseless position among the surrounding Ca-

naanite tribes, many of whom probably were growing envious of his increasing power and prosperity, and by the possibility—certainly not to be ruled out—of a retribution descending on him from the Eastern powers? Or, was it a kind of mental dejection—not necessarily distrust of God, but melancholy—caused by the fact of his continuing to remain childless? Skinner (ICCG, 279): “To die childless and leave no name on earth (Num. 27.4) is a fate so melancholy that even the assurance of present fellowship with God brings no hope or joy.” This was considered a tragedy indeed, in the thinking of the ancient world! Leupold *et al* affirm that this “fear of remaining childless is what Abram and the Lord alone refer to.” With this view we are inclined to agree, from the fact that this constitutes the subject matter of the “dialogue” that follows between Abram and Yahwe. Note the divine reassurance, v. 1—“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” Murhpy (MG, 293): “The word ‘I’ is separately expressed, and therefore emphatic, in the original. I, JEHOVAH, the Self-existent, the Author of existence, the Performer of promise, the Manifest of myself to man, and not any creature however exalted. This was something beyond a seed, or a land, or any temporal thing. The Creator infinitely transcends the creature. The mind of Abram is here lifted up to the spiritual and the eternal. 1. Thy shield. 2. Thy exceeding great reward. Abram has two fears—the presence of evil, and the absence of good. Experience and conscience had begun to teach him that both of these were justly his doom. But Jehovah has chosen him, and here engages Himself to stand between him and all harm, and Himself to be to him all good. With such a shield from all evil, and such a source of all good, he need not be afraid. The Lord, we see, begins, as usual, with the immediate and the tangible: but he propounds a principle that reaches to the eternal and the spiritual. We

have here the opening germ of the great doctrine of 'the Lord our righteousness,' redeeming us on the one hand from the sentence of death, and on the other to a title to eternal life." "*In the vision* the intelligent observer passes from the merely sensible to the supersensible sphere of reality." (SIB, 236): "*Fear not*, indulge no slavish or excessive terror on account of thine enemies, wants, or dangers, or on account of the awful appearances of God, Isa. 43:1, 41:10; Matt. 28:5; Rev. 1:17-18. *I am thy shield*, infallibly to protect thee, Psalms 3:3, 84:11, 91:4, and thy *exceeding great* but *gracious* reward of thy piety and love, giving myself, in all that I am and have, to thee, as thine everlasting all and in all, Prov. 11:18; Psalm 19:11, 16:5-6, 42:5; Deut. 33:26-29, Isa. 41:10; 1 Cor. 3:22, 15-28, 58; Col. 2:9-10." *Abram's Reply* (v. 2, 3). What avails it in the way of external prosperity and comforts, as long as I have no child of my own, but only this Syrian servant, Eliezer of Damascus, to be my heir? Again (SIB, 236): "The full force and meaning of Abram's words can only be seen by considering his position in connection with the promise originally given to him. He was not only childless, but to all human appearance hopelessly so. God had promised him that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude. As yet there was no sign, as he thought, no hope of its fulfilment. Consequently, when the Lord now says, 'I am thy shield,' etc., Abraham replies in the bitterness of hopelessness, 'What wilt thou give me? What can make up for the want of a child?' 'The heir of my house is this Damascus-Eliezer—my slave must be my heir.' Abram's complaint amounts to just this: All gifts and promises are nothing to me since a child is withheld." Special notice should be taken of Abram's form of address here: "O Lord Jehovah." This is the first time the name Adonai appears in the divine records. This address, comments Leupold (EG, 473), "represents a very respectful and reverent ad-

dress and shows Abram as one who was by no means doubtful of God's omnipotence. But, at the same time, Abram voices the natural misgivings of the limited human understanding." Certainly this limitation God Himself recognized: hence His reiteration of the subject-matter of 12:2-3 and 13:16, coupled with a reply to Abram's particular complaint.

4. *The Divine Promise of an Heir* (vv. 4-6).

(HSB, 25): "The concern of Abraham here is made intelligible by the Nuzi tablets. From these tablets we learn that childless couples used to adopt a slave on condition that he would care for them and give them a proper burial. If a natural son should be born later, the slave heir was disinherited to a great extent." Speiser (ABG, 112): "We know now that in Hurrian family law, which was also normative for the patriarchs, two types of heir were sharply distinguished. One was the *aplu* or direct heir; and the other was the *ewuru* or indirect heir, whom the law recognized when normal inheritors were lacking. Such an *ewuru* could be a member of a collateral line, and at times even an outsider, depending on the circumstances. Consequently, our Dammeseck Eliezer—whoever he may have been and whatever the first word might mean—was juridically in the position of an *ewuru*. Here, then, is another instance of Hurrian customs which the patriarchs followed, but which tradition and its later expounders were bound to find perplexing." V. 6 surely indicates that a servant by the name of Eliezer, apparently a Damascene by birth, was the only prospective heir to Abram's estate. It is significant to note that the divine promise was specific: Yahwe declared explicitly that, not Eliezer, *but the one who would issue from Abram's own body would be his heir*. Thus Abram's unwillingness to part with the hope that the Promise, however seemingly impossible, would eventually be realized, the unwillingness "which caused him so pathetically to call the Divine attention to his childless



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condition," was recognized and rewarded by Yahwe's assurance that the Promise would not go unfulfilled—"an assurance that must have thrilled his anxious heart with joy."

### 5. *The Accompanying Sign* (vv. 5, 6).

Apparently without any request on Abram's part, Yahweh then proceeds to confirm the Promise with a sign: "and he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." That is, since no man can put himself into a position such as to be able to count the number of the stars, it follows that *Abram's posterity likewise would be innumerable*. (Cf. again 12:2, 13:16.) V. 6—And Abram "believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." One of the greatest words in the Old Testament is found here for the first time in Scripture; it is the word rendered "believe," a word which essentially means "trust": "the author would indicate that the permanence of this attitude is to be stressed; not only, Abraham believed just this once, but, Abram proved constant in his faith" (Leupold, EG, 477). So now, when God asks Abram to carry out certain orders, Abram unhesitatingly obeys, and this attitude is demonstration of his faith. But even more is revealed here: God's response to Abram's implicit obedience shows that the patriarch met with God's favor (*grace* is unmerited favor); he was justified; his faith had been counted to him for righteousness. And now, in the verses following, *we see the promise and the Sign issuing forth in the Covenant*.

*God reckoned this abiding trust to Abram as righteousness.* "Righteousness is here a right relationship to God, and it was conferred by the divine sentence of approval in response to Abram's trust in God's character. In Deut. 6:25, 24:13, this righteousness is attained by obedience to the law. Here Abraham, who had no law to fulfill, was nevertheless made righteous because of his inner

attitude, a position which is approximated in Psa. 24:5 and to a lesser degree in Psa. 106:31" (IBG, 600). (JB, 31): "The faith of Abraham is an act of trust in a promise which, humanly speaking, could never be realized. God acknowledges that this act is worthy of reward (Deut. 24:13, Psa. 106:31), accrediting it to Abraham's 'righteousness,' namely, to that sum of integrity and humble submission which makes a man pleasing to God. St. Paul uses this text to prove that justification depends on faith and not on the works of the Law; but since Abraham's faith was the mainspring of his conduct, St. James is able to cite this same text when he wishes to condemn 'dead' faith, i.e., faith without the works that spring from it." (Cf. Rom., ch. 4, James 2:14-26). *Righteousness* is "the equivalent of measuring up to the demands of God." Righteousness here, as elsewhere in Scripture, means literally *justification*, that is, divinely accepted as just, good, or righteous; it follows from loving obedience to God's way of doing things (as distinct from self's way of doing things (cf. Matt. 3:15). Leupold (EG, 478): "What God demands and expects of a sinful mortal is faith. He that has faith measures up to God's requirements, is declared to have manifested the normal attitude pleasing to God; against such a one God has no wrath or displeasure. He counts him innocent; He gives him a verdict of 'not guilty.'" "Under the old covenant salvation was the gift of the grace of God through faith as it is under the new covenant. In Romans (ch. 4) the Apostle Paul uses Abraham as an example of one whose faith, and not his works, justified him. Indeed, he argues that Abraham was justified *before* he was circumcised, a seal that follows faith, not precedes it" (HSB, 26). Cornfeld (AtD): "It was the tribal practice to enter into a personal relationship, namely a covenant or agreement, with the deity, so that God would devote himself to the covenanters, in return for their exclusive agreement with him. This was not an

agreement between equals, but as between a great ruler and those who promise to be his loyal subjects. So the divine protector was known to Abraham as 'Your Shield' (15:1), whereby Abraham was to recognize and worship no other deity and God was to protect and seek the welfare of Abraham and his family exclusively. . . . This closeness of man to God was a social phenomenon which will be illustrated shortly in the dialogue between God and Abraham over the fate of Sodom (Gen. 18). It is important to note that in Israel's tradition of the divine covenant, the role of the patriarchs was twofold: (a) They stood in a covenantal relation to the Lord Yahweh; (b) They lived by faith on the one hand and experienced the faithfulness of God on the other. One point of the patriarchal narratives and their arrangement is to teach what the Bible meant by faith; an illustration is the description of Abraham as 'father of faith.' This will make clear a most significant statement explaining Abraham's attitude: 'And he believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness' (15:6). This implies that God required just that man should choose Him to be his God. *Biblical Hebrew, be it noted, has no word for 'religion.'* The true religion is designated as the 'fear of God' (or Yahweh)."

6. *The Divine Promise of the Land and the Accompanying Sign* (vv. 7-11).

On this occasion the Almighty not only solemnly assures His servant that he shall sire a son himself, an earnest of a seed as numerous as the stars in the heavens; but He also reiterates the Divine promise of the Land of Promise, namely, that the land on which the patriarch walks shall be his progeny's inheritance (cf. 12:1, 13:14-17). Abram asks in reply, By what proof shall I know that I shall possess the land; that is, May I have some intimation as to the time and mode of entering upon possession of it? "O Lord Jehovah": "Again the same reverent address as in

v. 2, in token of his faith in God's ability to perform what He promises. But this faith seeks legitimate tokens; it is anxious to have still fuller assurance. So Abram asks, not in a spirit of doubt but with the purpose to be more solidly established in its conviction." The sign Abram asks for is in reference to concrete possession in the here and now: a perfectly reasonable and legitimate request, under the circumstances. (Cf. Gideon's prayer, Judg. 6:17 ff.; also Mary's question, Luke 1:34.) In reply, God condescends to show him that a covenant is to be established, and tells him what must be done on his part. (Note again Cornfeld's explanation in the paragraph above.) He bade the patriarch take a heifer, a ram and a she-goat, each three years old, together with a turtle-dove and a young pigeon, and after dividing each of them except the birds, to lay them piece by piece over against the other. This seems to have been the ancient procedure in the matter of establishing covenants, especially among the Chaldeans. Having divided the animals (cut each in two, cf. Jer. 34:18-19), the contracting parties would pass between the halves; this may have implied that a similar lot—that is, being killed—was to befall their own cattle in the event of their violating the covenant. However, in this case, there was a significant modification: the contracting parties were not to pass between the halves, nor is the threat implied in anything that was done. In this case, Abram did as the Lord had ordered him, slew the victims, and laid the divided parts in order. Then from morning until evening he watched them, and from time to time drove away the birds of prey which hovered over them. The proceeding in this instance, therefore, was not a sacrifice, even though the victims killed were later incorporated in the Mosaic ritual of sacrifice; rather, it was that aspect of the *covenantal* relationship which manifested the faith of the worshiper.

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It should be noted, in this connection, that the Amorites of the Mari documents used asses for this kind of ritual, with the result that "to slay an ass" was in their terminology idiomatic for "to enter into a compact." It was this prominence of the ass in pagan cults that caused the Israelites to proscribe that animal in their own ritual sacrifices (Exo. 13:13, 34:20). Archaeologists tell us also that the Hurrians (Horites) of Nuzi resorted on solemn occasions to a combination of "one bull, one ass, and ten sheep." Turtle doves and pigeons are mentioned repeatedly in connection with the ritual provisions laid down in the book of Leviticus (14:22). (HSB, 26): "Cutting the animals in halves may have been part of the normal custom or ritual at a covenant sealing. The Hebrew of 15:18 reads that God 'cut a covenant' with Abraham. For a long time Old Testament scholars doubted the accuracy of this expression, but texts have been uncovered in Quatna and Mari informing us that covenants were sealed by some ritual involving the cutting up of asses." Cf. JB, 31: "Ancient ritual of covenant (Jer. 34:18): the contracting parties passed between the parts of the slain animal and called down upon themselves the fate of the victim should they violate the agreement. The flame symbolizes Yahweh (cf. the burning bush, Exo. 3:2, the pillar of fire, Exo. 13:21; the smoke of Sinai, Exo. 19:19); He alone passes between the parts because His Covenant is a unilateral pact, the initiative is His; cf. 9:9 ff." (The covenant with Noah was likewise a unilateral covenant). (Some commentators hold that this covenant was bilateral (as described in ch. 15) because Abram passed between the parts when he placed them in proper order.)

Is any symbolic significance to be attributed to the respective animals used in this covenantal response by Abram? (JB, 31): "The birds of prey were a bad omen (cf. 40:17 ff.) signifying the miseries of Israel's bondage in Egypt; the dispersal of the birds symbolizes her de-

liverance." (Cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, 3:225 ff.) Murhpy (MG, 298): When Abram asks for some intimation as to the time and manner of entering into possession of the Promised Land, "the Lord directs him to make ready the things requisite for entering into a formal covenant regarding the land. These include all kinds of animals afterward used in sacrifice. The number *three* is sacred, and denotes the perfection of the victim in point of maturity. The division of the animals refers to the covenant between two parties, who participate in the rights which it guarantees. The birds are two without being divided. *Abram drove them away* (i.e., the birds of prey). As the animals slain and divided represent the only mean and way through which the two parties can meet in a covenant of peace, they must be preserved pure and un mutilated for the end they have to serve." Skinner (ICCG, 281): "The preparation for the covenant ceremony; although not strictly sacrificial, the operation conforms to later Levitical usage in so far as the animals are all such as were allowed in sacrifice, and the birds are not divided, Lev. 1:17."

Note the elaborate symbolism suggested, SIBG, 236-237: "Ver. 8-15. Moved by the Spirit of God, Abram asked this sign. The beasts he presented to God were emblems of his seed; the *heifer* prefigured them in their patience, labour, and proneness to backsliding, Hos. 4:16; the *goat*, in their mischievousness and lust, Jer. 5:7-9; the *ram*, in their strength and fortitude, Num. 24:8-9; the *doves*, in their simplicity and harmlessness in their purest state, Ps. 74:19. The *division* of the four-footed animals (1) represented the torn condition of his seed, by the division of the kingdom, etc., 1 Ki. 11:12-13; (2) ratified the covenant made with him and his seed, in God's passing between the pieces, in the symbol of the *burning lamp*. The pieces being laid over against one another, imported that God would in due time join the separated and scattered Hebrews into one body, Ezek. 37:15-22. The *fowls*

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which attempted to light on the pieces, denoted the Egyptians, and other enemies of Israel, which should in vain attempt to devour them, Ezek. 17:3, 7, 12. The *horror of great darkness* which fell upon Abram, signified their great distress and vexation in Egypt, and under their frequent oppressors, Psa. 55:3-5, Dan. 10:8; and hence they are like to a bush burning and not consumed, Exo. 3:2-3. The *burning lamp* denoted their manifest and joyful deliverance, Judg. 6:21, Isa. 62:1; the *smoking furnace*, their affliction in Egypt, Deut. 4:20, Jer. 11:4." *It should be noted again that it was the Lord Jehovah who did the promising and the revealing: all that was required of Abram was that he believe the word of God and act accordingly. This Abram did, actualizing in every detail the ritual of the unilateral covenant (which was soon to be extended to include circumcision as the divinely appointed seal).*

### 7. The Oracle (vv. 12-17).

In this connection, review Green's analysis (*supra*) of the time element involved in the sequence of Abram's experiences as related in this chapter. After keeping watch over the birds of sacrifice, driving away the birds of prey, evidently from what in his consciousness was morning until evening, the sun went down, we are told, and a deep sleep fell upon him, and a horror of great darkness gathered around him. "Amidst the deepening gloom there appeared unto him a Smoking Furnace and a Burning Lamp passing along the space between the divided victims. Presently a Voice came to him telling him that *his seed should be a stranger in a land that was not theirs, that there they should suffer affliction 400 years; that afterwards, in the fourth generation, when the cup of the Amorites was full, they should come out with great substance, return to the spot where the patriarch now was, and enter on their promised inheritance.* Thus, amidst mingled light and gloom, the ancestor of the elect nation was warned of the

chequered fortunes which awaited his progeny, while at the same time he was assured of the ultimate fulfillment of the Promise, and the actual boundaries of the lands of his inheritance were marked out from the river of Egypt to the distant Euphrates; and in this confidence Abram was content to *possess his soul in patience*, Luke 21:19" (COTH, 37). The present writer is inclined to the view that the time sequence of events narrated here was not that of Abram's usual day and night, but that of his experiences of light and darkness (daylight, sunset, etc.) in his prophetic or preternatural "sleep" brought on by Divine influence. Many a man has experienced dreams whose content stretched over more or less extended periods of duration, only to discover on awaking that he has actually been asleep only a few minutes of humanly-measured time. Such indeed are the phenomenal powers of the Sub-conscious in man. We have no way of knowing how long-drawn-out the sequence of Abram's total "vision" experience was. As Leupold writes (EG, 482): "As far as the vision itself is concerned, it transpires in such a fashion that in the course of it Abram sees the sun at the point of setting, about as a man might dream he sees the sun setting. Such a dream or vision might occur morning, noon or night. Attempts to compute the length of time over which the experience extended by the expressions used such as 'the sun was about to go down,' would lead to an unnaturally long lapse of time. The setting of the sun in the vision prepares for the falling of darkness upon him. But first of all comes a 'deep sleep' which is as little a 'trance' here as it was in 2:21. The 'terror and the great darkness' that fall upon him are the terror which the ancestor experiences in the vision, at the revelation of the sufferings which his descendants must endure. In the vision he feels these things in anticipation, even before the revelation is imparted to him that his descendants are destined to this particular form of misery." Again, *ibid.*,



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p. 483, concerning vv. 13-16: "Now comes the revelation in words apart from the symbolic act, which here is made to represent the same facts, but it can be understood only after the revelation thus offered by word and by symbol makes the fact involved doubly impressive; and, surely, there was need of unusual emphasis, for this word was largely to furnish the much needed light during the dark ages of the period here described." Thus Abram was to *know of a surety* (v. 13), that is, in a very definite way, of the bondage in which his progeny should suffer in the times ahead, of their subsequent deliverance by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah (Deut. 5:15), and of the divine judgment that was certain to fall upon their oppressors.

Lange comments as follows (CDHCG, 411), and in a somewhat different vein: "V. 12. From this reference to the time, we may judge what was the marvelous attention and watchfulness of Abram. The great scene of the revelation began on the previous night; he had stood under the starry heavens as holding a solemnity; the victims were slain, and the pieces distributed, and then the watch over them was held until the setting of the sun. His physical strength sinks with it, a deep sleep overcomes him. But the disposition for visions preserves itself in the sleep, and so much the more, since it is even the deep, prophetic sleep. Abram sees himself overtaken by a great horror of darkness, which the word of Jehovah explains to him. It was the anticipation of the terror of darkness, which, with the Egyptian bondage, should rest upon the people. This bondage itself was pointed out to him, under three or four circumstances: 1. they would be oppressed and tortured in this service; 2. it would endure four hundred years; 3. the oppressing people should be judged; 4. they should come out of the bondage with great substance. It is to be distinctly observed, that the name of this people, and

the land of this servitude, is concealed. Moreover, there are further disclosures which concern the relation of the patriarch to this sorrow of his descendants. *He himself should go to his fathers in peace* in a good, that is, great age. But his people should reach Canaan in the fourth generation after its oppression, from which we may infer that a hundred years is reckoned as a generation."

Jamieson (CECG, 145): "While visions and dreams were distinct, there was a close connection between them, so close that, as *Henderson* ('On Inspiration') has remarked, 'the one species of revelation occasionally merges into the other.' Such was the case in the experience of Abram. The divine communications first took place in the daytime in a vision, but afterwards, at sunset, they continued to be made when 'a deep sleep and a horror of great darkness fell upon him.' 'The statement of the time is meant to signify the supernatural character of the darkness and of the sleep, and to denote the difference between a vision and a dream' (*Gerlach*). That Abram saw in prophetic ecstasy the servitude of his children in Egypt, represented in a panoramic view before his mental eye, is maintained by *Hengstenberg*, who thinks that this scenic picture accompanied the prediction made to him, and recorded in the following verses—a prediction remarkable for its specific character, and which bears upon its front the marks of having been uttered before the event to which it refers took place." "God here revealed to Abram future history and events in the life of the promised seed. The bondage in Egypt is foretold and its length marked as four hundred years or four generations. The Egyptian bondage, then, was part of the plan of God for the cradling of the Hebrew race. But it also reveals the mercy and kindness of God toward the Amorites to whom He extended time for repentance before judgment should befall them" (HSB, 26).

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v. 15—Note the personal aspects of the Divine promise. These were literally fulfilled. "Abram did go *to his fathers* in death, his spirit to the world of spirits, and his body to the grave (dust), where they—his fathers—had gone before him (Heb. 12:23; Gen. 25:8, 17; Gen. 49:29; Eccl. 12:7; Num. 27:13, 31:2; Judg. 2:10; 1 Chron. 23:1, 29:28; Job 42:17; Jer. 8:2). And he went *in peace*, without remarkable trouble of any kind: in peace with God, with his own conscience, and with his neighbors (Psa. 37:37; Isa. 57:2; 2 Ki. 22:20). And it was also in a *good old age*, when he was full of years, weary of this world, and ready and longing for heaven, yet free from any of the infirmities of old age, and falling like ripe fruit in the time of gathering (Gen. 25:8; 1 Chron. 29:28; Job 5:26)" (SIBG, 238). Consider carefully the promise, "thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace." Is not more implied here than the return of their bodies to the dust? From the vivid portrayal of Abraham's faith presented in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, especially v. 10, it surely would seem so. Whitelaw comments (PCG, 221): "Not a periphrasis for going to the grave, since Abram's ancestors were not entombed in Canaan; but a proof of the survival of departed spirits in a state of conscious existence after death, to the company of which the patriarch was in due time to be gathered. The disposal of his remains is provided for in what follows." Cf. Leupold (EG, 485): "The expression 'go unto thy fathers' must involve more than having his own dead body laid beside the dead bodies of the fathers. So we find here a clear testimony to belief in an eternal life in the patriarchal age. Coupled with this revelation from God is the assurance of a decent burial at a ripe old age, a thing desired especially in Israel, and, for that matter, among most of the nations of antiquity."

The specifics of the Divine communication (oracle) here are indeed clear, as follows: 1. The bondage of the Children of Israel in a strange (unnamed) land over a

period of 400 years. (Cf. Exo. 12:40, for 430 years, the witness of Moses; Acts 7:6, for 400 years, the testimony of Stephen the martyr; Gal. 3:17, for 430 years, from the confirmation of the Promise to the giving of the Law, the words of the Apostle Paul.) (For this problem of the *time span* involved, see *infra*.) The identity of the nation involved is not disclosed, probably because Egypt was wont to serve as a place of refuge for peoples of Mesopotamia and Asia (now designated Asia Minor) when those areas were hit by famine, as had occurred already in the case of Abram (12:10); probably because God did not want to appear to be interfering with the free volition of His creatures, "who, while accomplishing his high designs and secret purposes, are ever conscious of their moral freedom" (PCG, 221); conceivably, lest the fleshly seed of Abram should conceive, prematurely, an undue prejudice against the Egyptians. *We must keep in mind that man is predestined to be free, hence his free choices constitute the foreknowledge of God: it follows, therefore, that the sequence of events disclosed in this oracle, although indeed foreknown by Yahweh were not necessarily fore-ordained by Him. Foreknowing the circumstances that would cause the migration of the Israelites into Egypt, and the bondage that would ensue with the ascent of a Pharaoh to the Egyptian throne who would be driven by jealousy to attempt what might be called a modified form of genocide, i.e., of Israel and his progeny, Yahweh, according to His own pronouncement, would effect their deliverance "by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm" (Exo. 1:8 ff., Deut. 5:15).* 2. Their delivery from this bondage "with great substance," and the judgment that would be divinely imposed on their oppressors. (Cf. Exo. 12:35-36.) The God of Israel utilized the world-shaking events of the Period of Deliverance (Exodus) to demonstrate beyond any possibility of doubt His absolute sovereignty, in striking contrast to the powerlessness of pagan

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gods, and in particular those monstrosities which characterized Egyptian paganism. Jamieson (CECG, 145): "The exodus of Israel from Egypt was to be marked by a series of severe national judgments upon that country; and these were to be inflicted by God upon the Egyptians, not only because the subjects of their grinding oppression were the posterity of Abram, but on account of their aggravated sins particularly that of idolatry." As Dr. Will Durant writes (OOH, 197-200): "Beneath and above everything in Egypt was religion. We find it there in every stage and form from totemism to theology; we see its influence in literature, in government, in art, in everything except morality." The Egyptians heaped unto themselves gods of every kind and description: sky gods, the Sun-god (Re, Amon, or Ptah), plant gods, insect gods, animal gods (so numerous that they "filled the Egyptian pantheon like a chattering menagerie"), sex gods (of which the bull, the goat, and the snake were especially venerated for their sexual reproductive power), humanized gods (human beings elevated to "godhood": even these, however, retained animal doubles and symbols). The Nile River was especially an object of veneration (with good reason, to be sure, because all life in Egypt depended on its inundations). It is a matter of common knowledge that every one of the great Plagues (Exo., chs. 7 through 12) was directed against some form of Egyptian worship. In addition to all this, phallic worship in its grossest forms characterized all aspects of Egyptian ritual and life (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32). 3. Their return to the Promised Land "in the fourth generation," when the iniquity of its inhabitants should be "full" (cf. Gen. 6:5). 4. The specific boundaries of the land: it would extend "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." This geography is further clarified by the enumeration of the Canaanite peoples who occupied the land (vv. 19-21). "*The River of Egypt*": not the Wady el Arish, at the

southern limits of Palestine (Num. 34:5, Josh. 15:4, Isa. 27:12), an insignificant winter torrent designated in Scripture "the brook of Egypt"; not the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, from Pelusium which was from earliest times the frontier town of Egypt; but surely the Nile itself, the only river worthy of being designated *the River of Egypt*. This did not necessarily mean that the boundary of Israel should some day actually extend to the Nile directly; but, that in relation to the Euphrates these two great rivers "were the easiest way of designating within what limits Israel's boundaries should lie" (EG, 490). Some authorities hold that at two different times in Israel's history this extent of territorial sovereignty was realized: first, during the reign of Solomon (1 Ki. 4:21-25, 8:65; 2 Chron. 9:26) and later, in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Ki. 14:25-28). Because of the uncertainty of geographical identifications here, the present writer is inclined to agree with other authorities whose position is well stated by Jamieson (CECG, 147): "The descendants of Abram, in point of fact, never extended their possessions, even in the greatest height of their national prosperity, to the full extent of the boundaries here defined. But the land of promise, as contemplated in the Divine purpose, was co-extensive with the limits specified, and the failure to realize the full accomplishment of the promise arose not from unfaithfulness on the part of God, but from the sinful apathy and disobedience of those to whom the promise was given, in not exterminating the heathen, who had forfeited the right to occupy the land (Exo. 23:31)."

*The Inhabitants of the Land.* The nations enumerated here as occupying the Land of Promise are ten in number. The enumeration varies in other Scriptures: in Exo. 23:28, three are mentioned as representative of all; in Exo. 3:17, six are named; most generally named are seven, as in Josh. 24:11. This variation may be attributed to two factors: the appearance of other ethnic groups in

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the territory between Abram's time and the occupation under Joshua, and the obvious inclusiveness with which some of the names are vested, especially the names, Canaanite, Amorite, and Hittite. For the *Kenites*, see Num. 24:21; Judg. 1:16, 4:11, 4:17, 5:24; 1 Sam. 30:29; for the *Kadmonites*, "children of the East," Judg. 6:3; Job 1:3; for the *Hittites*, who certainly occupied the area in the north between the Sea of Tiberias and the Mediterranean, see Gen. 23:10, 26:34; Josh. 1:4; Judg. 1:26, 3:5; 1 Ki. 11:1; 2 Ki. 7:6; 2 Chron. 8:7; Ezra 9:1; for the *Perizzites*, who are always mentioned along with the Canaanites, cf. Gen. 34:30; Exo. 3:8, 23:23; Josh. 17:15; Judg. 1:4-5, 3:5; 2 Chron. 8:7; Ezra 9:1; for the *Rephaim*, see comment in Part Twenty-Seven herein, on Gen. 14:5; for the *Jebusites*, cf. Gen. 10:16; Exo. 33:2, 34:11; Num. 13:29; Josh. 15:63 (here mentioned as inhabiting Jerusalem); Judg. 1:21, 19:11; 2 Sam. 5:8. According to Speiser (ABG, 69), the Jebusites constituted "the ruling Hurrian element in Jerusalem during the Amarna age, ca. 1400 B.C." The location of the *Kenizzites* (mentioned only in this place) and that of the *Girgashites* are unidentifiable; however, cf. Gen. 10:16, 36:15, 42; Deut. 7:1, Josh. 3:10, 1 Chron. 1:14, Neh. 9:8. As for the *Canaanites* and the *Amorites*, either as an ethnic group or as a complex of ethnic groups, see any reliable Concordance.

*The Iniquity of the Amorites.* "Amorite," normally, designates a specific nation or people, but is sometimes also used, like the name "Canaanite," for the pre-Israelite population of Canaan. (Cf. all this material with the Table of Nations, ch. 10). The Amorites were so numerous and powerful throughout the land that their name was often, as is the case here, given to all the occupants (cf. Judg. 6:10, Josh. 10:5, 24:15): one of their great cultural centers was Mari, on the middle Euphrates northwest of Babylon, where the archaeologist, M. A. Parrot,

has dug up thousands of clay tables from the archives of an Amorite king. In the Oracle of Gen. 15:16, we are told that the occupancy of the Promised Land by the Israelites was to be delayed four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, that is, had not reached such a state that there was no one righteous among them—no, not one! As a matter of fact, that the Canaanites were not yet vessels fit only for destruction is proved by the courtesy of Abimelech toward Abraham, and of one of his successors toward Isaac later (chs. 20, 26). Jamieson (CECG, 146), concerning v. 16: "The statement implies that there is a progress in the course of sin and vice among nations as well as with individuals, and that, although it be long permitted, by the tolerant spirit of the Divine government, to go on with impunity, it will at length reach a culminating point, where, in the retributions of a righteous Providence, the punishment of the sinner, even in this world, is inevitable." "Iniquity is full, when it is arrived at such a number of acts, such a degree of aggravation, and time of continuance, that God, in consistence with his purpose or honour, can no longer forbear to punish it" (SIBG, 238). (Cf. Gen. 6:3, Jer. 5:13, Dan. 8:23, Joel 3:12, Matt. 12:32, 1 Thess. 2:16, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, Rev. 19:15-16).

Murphy (MG, 299): "*For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full.* From this simple sentence we have much to learn. 1. The Lord foreknows the moral character of men. 2. In his providence he administers the affairs of nations on the principle of moral rectitude. 3. Nations are spared until their iniquity is full. 4. They are then cut off in retributive justice. 5. The Amorite was to be the chief nation extirpated for its iniquity on the return of the seed of Abram. Accordingly we find the Amorites occupying by conquest the country east of the Jordan, from the Arnon to Mount Hermon, under their two kings Sihon and Og (Num. 21:21-35). On the west of Jordan



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we have already met them at En-gedi and Hebron, and they dwelt in the mountains of Judah and Ephraim (Num. 13:29), whence they seem to have crossed the Jordan for conquest (Num. 21:26). Thus had they of all the tribes that overspread the land by far the largest extent of territory. And they seem to have been extinguished as a nation by the invasion of Israel, as we hear no more of them in the subsequent history of the country." No nation is destroyed until its iniquity becomes intolerable to Absolute Justice. (Cf. Gen. 18:22-23, 1 Ki. 19:18, Rom. 11:4, Exo. 17:14, Deut. 25:17-19; Matt. 23:37-39; Ezek. 21:27—"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it," that is, Jerusalem.) *History proves that there are times when the destruction of a nation's power, even of the nation itself, becomes a moral necessity.* "National sin prevented the Israelites from possessing the *whole* country originally promised to Abraham (Exo. 23:20-33, with Josh. 23:11-16, Judg. 2:20-23). The country as promised here to Abraham was much more extensive than that described by Moses in Num. 34" (SIBG, 238).

*The Time-Span Problem:* "four hundred years," "in the fourth generation" (Gen. 15:13, 16; Acts 7:6), vs. "four hundred and thirty years" (Exo. 12:40, Gal. 3:17). These phrases have given rise to much computation and differences of interpretation. The Septuagint gives Exo. 12:40 as follows: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt and *in the land of Canaan*, was 430 years." The Samaritan Version reads: "The sojourning of the children of Israel *and of their fathers*, which they sojourned *in the land of Canaan and* in the land of Egypt, was 430 years." Whitelaw (PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 17): "If the Hebrew text is sound we must count 430 years from the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the Exodus; if it is corrupt, and to be corrected from the two ancient versions, the time of the sojourn will be reduced one-half, for it was a space of exactly 215 years

from the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the descent of Jacob into Egypt." "From the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was twenty-five years (Gen. 12:4, 17:1, 21); from the birth of Isaac to that of Jacob was sixty years (Gen. 25:26). Jacob was 130 years old when he went into Egypt (Gen. 47:9). Thus 25 plus 60 plus 130 equals 215 years' (*ibid.*) In refutation of this view, it should be noted that according to the Hebrew text the Children of Israel were to be *afflicted* four hundred years. But there is no evidence that the seed of Abraham suffered affliction of any unusual kind at the hands of the Canaanites: indeed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob seem to have been treated with considerable courtesy by their Canaanite neighbors (chs. 20, 26; esp. ch. 34, the account of the perfidy of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, toward the Hivite princes). In fact none of the statements with reference to the nation oppressing the Israelites (vv. 13, 14) can apply to the Canaanites. Moreover, the longer period "is most consonant alike with the estimate formed of the entire number of the grown males at the time of the Exodus (600,000, Exo. 12:37), and with the details given of particular families in the Book of Numbers, as especially those of the families of the Levites, in ch. 3:21-39" (*ibid.*). It seems obvious that the account which is given in the Hebrew text is the authentic one: this is supported by the fact that there are signs that the Septuagint and Samaritan texts are interpolated, and by the additional fact that it is only the length of the sojourn in Egypt that is in the writer's mind at this point of his narrative (*ibid.*).

Leupold (EG, 484): "The whole experience of being sojourner, being enslaved, and being oppressed shall involve 'four hundred years.' To make the whole sojourn one continuous oppression is completely at variance with the facts. In fact, computing according to the life of Moses, we should be nearest the truth if we allot the last century

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to the oppression. The four hundred years mentioned are, of course, a round number, which is given more exactly in Exo. 12:40 as 430 years." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 216): "That these words had reference to the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, is placed beyond all doubt by the fulfillment. The 400 years were, according to prophetic language, a round number for the 430 years that Israel spent in Egypt." Jamieson (CECG, 145): "'Four hundred years.' The statement is made here in round numbers, as also in Acts 7:6, but more exactly 430 years in Exo. 12:40, Gal. 3:17." Whitelaw (PCG, 221): "Three different stages of adverse fortune are described—exile, bondage, and affliction; or the two last clauses depict the contents of the first. *Four hundred years*. The duration not of their affliction merely, but either of their bondage and affliction, or more probably of their exile, bondage, and affliction; either a round number for 430, to be reckoned from the date of the descent into Egypt, as Moses (Exo. 12:40) and Stephen (Acts 7:6) seem to say, and to be reconciled with the statement of Paul (Gal. 3:17) by regarding the death of Jacob as the closing of the time of promise; or an exact number dating from the birth of Isaac, which was thirty years after the call in Ur, thus making the entire interval correspond with the 430 years of Paul, or from the persecution of Ishmael which occurred thirty years after the promise in ch. 12:3." Gosman (CDHCG, 413): "The genealogical table, Exod. 6:16 ff., favors a much shorter residence than four hundred years; since the combined ages of the persons there mentioned, Levi, Kohath, Amram, including the years of Moses at the time of the exodus, amount to only four hundred and eighty-four years, from which we must take, of course, the age of Levi, at the entrance of Jacob into Egypt, and the ages of the different fathers at the birth of their sons. It is better, therefore, with Wordsworth, Murphy, Jacobus,

and many of the earlier commentators, to make the four hundred years begin with the birth of Isaac, and the four hundred and thirty of the apostle to date from the call of Abram." Again, Leupold (EG, 484): "The four hundred years mentioned are, of course, a round number, which is given more exactly in Exod. 12:40 as 430 years. Michell's computations agree with these figures, making the year of Jacob's going down into Egypt to be 1879 B.C. and the year of the Exodus 1449. Since this latter year, or perhaps 1447 B.C., is now quite commonly accepted, we may let these dates stand as sufficiently exact for all practical purposes. How Moses arrived at the computation 430 in Exod. 12:40 need not here concern us. Other instances of exact predictions in numbers of years are found in Jer. 25:11, 29:10, in reference to seventy years; and Isa. 16:14, for a matter of three years." As for the Apostle's timespan, Gal. 3:17, this "would simply show that, in writing to Greek-speaking Jews, whose only Bible was the Septuagint version, he made use of that translation. It would not even prove his own opinion upon the point, since the chronological question is not pertinent to his argument, and, whatever he may have thought upon it, he would certainly not have obtruded upon his Galatian disciples a wholly irrelevant discussion" (PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 18).

V. 16. *In the fourth generation.* This should probably read "the fourth generation shall return," etc. Here the original word, *dor*, translated "generation," means "circle," "turning," "age." Jamieson (CECG, 146): "the revolution or circle of human years; an age or generation. Like *genea* among the Greeks, and *saeculum* among the Romans, its meaning, as to extent of time, differed at different periods. In the patriarchal age it denoted a hundred years (cf. v. 13 with Exo. 12:40). In later ages its signification was more limited, as it is used to describe a period of from thirty to forty years (Job 42:16). And on the ground of

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this ordinary import borne by the word 'generation,' a recent writer has founded an objection to the historical truth of this history. But he draws an unwarrantable conclusion; for, as there are only two modes of computing a 'generation,' the original rate of calculating it at from thirty to forty years, and the patriarchal usage to which, in accordance with Abram's habits of thought, the Divine Revealer accorded his words, it is evident that the 'fourth generation' is to be taken in the latter sense, as is distinctly intimated in v. 13." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 216): "The calculations are made here on the basis of a hundred years to a generation: not too much for those times, when the average duration of life was above 150 years, and Isaac was born in the hundredth year of Abraham's life." Speiser (ABG, 113): As in Gen. 6:9, "Heb. *dor* signifies, 'duration,' 'age,' 'time span,' and only secondarily 'generation' in the current use of the term. The context does not show specifically how the author used the term in this instance; it could have been any of the several round numbers of years. No conclusion can therefore be drawn from this passage in regard to the date of the Exodus." Murhpy (MG, 299: "*In the fourth age*. An age here means the average period from the birth to the death of one man. This use of the word is proved by Numbers 32:13—'He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the *generation* that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed.' This age or generation ran parallel with the life of Moses, and therefore consisted of one hundred and twenty years. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Four such generations amount to four hundred and eighty or four hundred and forty years. From the birth of Isaac to the return to the land of promise was an interval of four hundred and forty years. Isaac, Levi, Amram, and Eleazar may represent the four ages." Again, on v. 13, Murphy (*ibid.*, p. 298): "Four hundred years are to elapse before

the seed of Abraham shall actually proceed to take possession of the land. This interval can only commence when the seed is born; that is, at the birth of Isaac, when Abram was a hundred years of age, and therefore thirty years after the call. During this interval they are to be, *first, strangers in a land not theirs* for one hundred and ninety years; and then for the remaining two hundred and ten years in Egypt: at first, *servants*, with considerable privilege and position; and at last, *afflicted serfs*, under a hard and cruel bondage. At the end of this period Pharaoh and his nation were visited with a succession of tremendous judgments, and Israel went out free from bondage *with great wealth* (Exo. chs. 12:14)."

Leupold (EG, 486): "Another factor enters into these computations and readjustments—the guilt of the Amorites.' All the inhabitants of Canaan are referred to by the term 'Amorites,' the most important family of the Canaanites (see on 10:16). The term is similarly used in 48:22; Num. 13:29, 21:21, etc., Deut. 1:7, 19. These aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan had heaped up a measure of 'guilt' by this time. The measure was not yet 'complete' (*shalem*), that is, they were nearing the point where divine tolerance could bear with them no longer, but they had not yet arrived at this point. God's foreknowledge discerned that in a few more centuries these wicked nations would have forfeited their right to live, and then He would replace them in the land of Canaan by the Israelites. Passages bearing on the iniquity of the Canaanites are Lev. 18:24 ff.; 20:22 ff.; Deut. 18:9ff. So God will allow the children of Israel to be absent from the land while the Canaanites continue in their evil ways. When He can bear the Canaanites no longer, He will have another nation ready wherewith to replace them. Thus far we have encountered no direct evidence of Canaanite iniquity but shall soon see the starting examples offered by Sodom."

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It seems to us that the following summarization of the time-span problem here under study is by far the most satisfactory (from PC, Exodus, Vol. I, Intro., p. 19):

From the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the death of Joseph	71 years
From the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses	278 years
From the birth of Moses to his flight into Midian	40 years
From the flight of Moses into Midian to his return to Egypt	40 years
From the return of Moses, to the Exodus	1 year
Total	430 years

(For a thoroughgoing explanation of these figures, see Keil and Delitzsch (COTP, 371, and 414, art., "Chronological Survey of the Leading Events of the Patriarchal History"; also Kalisch, *Comment on Exodus*, Introduction, pp. 11-13). Finally, Lange (CDHCG, 413): "The difference between the four hundred years, v. 13, and Acts 7:6, and the four hundred and thirty years, Exo. 12:40, is explained, not only by the use of round, prophetic numbers here, but also from the fact that we must distinguish between the time when the Israelites generally dwelt in Egypt, and the period when they became enslaved and oppressed. Paul counts (Gal. 3:17) the time between the promise and the law, as four hundred and thirty years, in the thought that the closing date of the time of promise was the death of Jacob (Gen. 49)." (See also, on Exo. 12:40, Haley, ADB, 418.)

### 8. *The Covenant* (vv. 17-21)

The Divine promises—of a seed and of a land—with the accompanying signs are now brought up into the Covenant, i.e., subsumed therein. The Divinely appointed

sign of the Covenant as an ethnic, and later a national, institution (that is, with Abraham *and* his fleshly seed) is to be disclosed in the 17th chapter.

*Stages of the Promise.* Lange (CDHCG, 412): "The stages of the promise which Abram received, viewed as to its genealogical sequence, may be regarded in this order: 1. Thou shalt be a man of blessing, and shalt become a great people (12:2); 2. To thy seed will I give this land (12:7); 3. To thy seed the land, to thy land thy seed (13:14 ff.). Here (15:18) *the promise of the seed and the land* was sealed in the form of a covenant. 4. The promise of a seed advances in the form of a covenant to the assurance that God would be the God of his seed (17:7). 5. The promise is more definite, that not Ishmael but the son of Sarah should be his heir (17:15 ff.). 6. The heir was promised in the next year (18:10). 7. The whole promise in its richest fullness was sealed by the *oath of Jehovah* (ch. 22)."

*God's Covenants*, it must be understood, are not like compacts or contracts between men. The covenant with Noah, of course, was absolutely *unilateral* (Gen. 9:8-17), that is, the obligation (promise) was solely on the Divine side; nothing is required of mankind. The two great Covenants of the Bible, with the fleshly seed and the spiritual seed of Abraham respectively, of which the Old and New Testaments are the permanent or stereotyped records (Gal. 3:15-29), strictly speaking are likewise unilateral in essence but conditioned upon man's response by the obedience of faith (Gal. 3:2). That is to say, God overtures, states the terms upon which the Divine promises will be fulfilled; man must hear, accept, and obey the terms or conditions, whereupon he will receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises. Hence, not even the great Covenants are, strictly speaking, bilateral. "Whatever may have been the supposed relative standing of the two parties to the covenant. [in



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pagan cults] . . . in the Israelite tradition it was no agreement between equals. The terms of the covenant were not the result of negotiation: they were imposed by the Lord (cf. Exod. 34:10-11; 24:7); and the covenant was inaugurated at the foot of the flaming mountain (cf. Exod. 19:18)." The commentator here is assuming the premise that the Old Covenant of the Bible was a borrowing from the "cult of Baal-berith at Shechem." The theory is absurd for two reasons: (1) the ethical purity of the Covenant with Israel as compared with that of the pagan cults; (2) the name of Deity (I AM) of the Covenant with Israel expresses *pure personality* in striking contrast to the names of pagan gods and goddesses which are simply *personifications* of natural forces. The difference between pure personality and mere personification is the difference between heaven and earth, the divine and the human. The NAME of the Old Covenant God is a *revealed* name; the names of pagan gods and goddesses were all of human origin. (There is no word for goddess in the Hebrew language.) It is inconceivable that any human being could ever have conjured up out of his own imagination the great and incommunicable NAME by which God revealed Himself to His ancient people (Exo. 3:14-15), and especially any member of a nation surrounded on all sides by nothing but pagan idolatrous cults with their gross immoralities as was ancient Israel. We now quote the remainder of the comment in which the writer (IBG, 603) emphasizes the ethical superiority of the Covenant with Israel. Israel made the covenant idea, he goes on to say, "the vehicle of their faith in the dependability of God. He was no capricious despot but a God of righteousness and order who respected human personality. He would not change: his favor was sure. But Israel would benefit by that favor only in so far as they were obedient to the divine will." With these statements we agree wholeheartedly. The commentator continues as follows concerning v. 18: "In this

passage, stating God's promise to Abraham in covenant terms, no conditions are imposed. But the implication of the narrative in its present and final form would seem to be that the covenant would stand so long as Abraham's descendants continued to follow the example set by him when *he believed the Lord* (v. 6)." *Biblical covenants are not agreements between equals*: hence can hardly be designated bilateral in the strict sense of the term. *In all such covenants, Grace promises and provides, but human faith must accept and obey in order to enjoy.*

V. 17. R.S.V.—"A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces" (cf. Jer. 34:18-19) of the various sacrificial creatures arranged in proper order. Keil-Delitzsch, (COTP, 216-217): "In this symbol Jehovah manifested Himself to Abram, just as He afterwards did to the people of Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. Passing through the pieces, He ratified the covenant which He had made with Abram. His glory was enveloped in fire and smoke, the product of the consuming fire—both symbols of the wrath of God, whose fiery zeal consumes whatever opposes it." (Cf. Exo. 3:2, 13:21, 19:18; Deut. 4:24, Heb. 10:31; Ps. 18:9.) Continuing (*ibid.*): To establish and give reality to the covenant to be concluded with Abram, Jehovah would have to pass through the seed of Abram when oppressed by the Egyptians and threatened by destruction, and to execute judgment on their oppressors (Exo. 7:4, 12:2). In this symbol, the passing of the Lord between the pieces meant something altogether different from the oath of the Lord by Himself in ch. 22:16, or by His life in Deut. 32:40, or by His soul in Amos 6:8 and Jer. 51:14. It set before Abram the condescension of the Lord to his seed, in the fearful glory of His majesty as the judge of their foes. Hence the pieces were not consumed by the fire; for the transaction had reference not to a sacrifice, which God accepted, and in which the soul

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of the offered was to ascend in the smoke to God, but to a covenant in which God came down to man. *From the nature of the covenant, it followed, however, that God alone went through the pieces in a symbolical representation of Himself, and not Abram also. For although a covenant always establishes a reciprocal relation between two individuals, yet in that covenant which God concluded with a man, the man did not stand on an equality with God, but God established the relation of fellowship by His promise and His gracious condescension to the man, who was at first purely a recipient, and was only qualified and bound to fulfill the obligations consequent upon the covenant by the reception of gifts of grace.*" (Italics mine—C. C.) Skinner (ICCG, 283): "This ceremony constitutes a *Berith*, of which the one provision is the possession of 'the land.' A *Berith* necessarily implies two or more parties; but it may happen that from the nature of the case its stipulations are binding only on one. So, here: Yahweh alone passes (symbolically) between the pieces, because He alone contracts obligation. The *land* is described according to its ideal limits." Keil-Delitzsch, on vv. 18-21 (*ibid.*, p. 217): "In vers. 18-21 this divine revelation is described as the making of a covenant . . . the bond concluded by cutting up the sacrificial animals, and the substance of this covenant is embraced in the promise, that God would give that land to the seed of Abram, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. The river of Egypt is the Nile, and not the brook of Egypt, Num. 34:5, i.e., the boundary stream *Rhinocorura*, Wady *el Arish*. According to the oratorical character of the promise, the two large rivers, the Nile and the Euphrates, are mentioned as the boundaries within which the seed of Abram would possess the promised land, the exact limits of which are minutely described in the list of the tribes who were then in possession." With these concluding statements the present author finds himself in complete agreement.

Schultz (OTS, 34): "The covenant plays an important role in Abraham's experience. Note the successive revelations of God after the initial promise to which Abraham responded in obedience. As God enlarged this promise, Abraham exercised faith which was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen. 15). In this covenant the land of Canaan was specifically pledged to the descendants of Abraham. With the promise of the son, circumcision was made the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17). This covenant promise was finally sealed in Abraham's act of obedience when he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22)."

In its present fused form, ch. 15 consists of two interrelated parts. The first (1-6) has to do with the increasingly urgent matter of Abraham's heir. The patriarch's original call (12:1 ff.) implied that the mandate was to be taken over by Abraham's descendants. Thus far, however, Abraham has remained childless. The ultimate success of his mission was therefore in danger. Moreover, he had cause for personal anxiety, for in ancient Near Eastern societies it was left to a son to ensure a restful afterlife for his father through proper interment and rites ('he shall lament him and bury him,' say the Nuzi texts). God's reaffirmed promise of a son now sets Abraham's mind at rest on both counts. The remainder of the chapter (7-24) places the preceding incident in a broader perspective. Above and beyond personal considerations, the birth of an heir to Abraham is essential to God's scheme of things. It involves a nation to be, and its establishment in the Promised Land. That land shall extend from Egypt to Mesopotamia (18). The emphasis shifts thus to world history, and the importance of the episode is underscored by the conclusion of a covenant. In secular practice, this is normally a binding compact between states. This time, however, we are witnessing a covenant between the Creator of the universe and the ancestor of a nation ordained in

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advance to be a tool for shaping the history of the world. Small wonder, therefore, that the description touches on magic, and carries with it a feeling of awe and mystery which, thanks to the genius of the narrator, can still grip the reader after all the intervening centuries" (ABG, 115).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

What God Did Through the Children of Israel

(1 Cor. 10:1-13, Rom. 15:4, Gal. 3:24-25)

We often hear the question, Why did not God send His Son into the world to redeem mankind immediately after the disobedience of our first parents? Why did He not send Him in the time of Abraham or Moses or the Prophets, etc.? Why did He wait so long before inaugurating the redemptive phase of His Eternal Purpose? (Cf. Eph. 3:8-13, 1 Pet. 1:10-12, Gal. 4:4.)

We might counter these questions with the following: Why did not God so constitute the acorn that it would grow into an oak instantaneously? Or, why did He not so create the infant that it would grow into a man or woman in a few minutes, weeks or months? The answer seems to be that "sundry matters had first to be practically demonstrated before the Gospel could be fully and properly revealed to mankind as the power of God for the salvation of every true believer" (Milligan, SR, 73). In the Purpose of God, it was left to the Gentiles to demonstrate by their numerous failures in theoretical and practical "wisdom," such as, for example, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, etc., and indeed all "schools" of philosophy, the sheer inadequacy of human speculation to fathom the mysteries of Being; and by their equally numerous failures in trying to establish an adequate system of religion with only the dim light of "nature" to guide them (cf. Rom. 1:20-32). The history of philosophy shows that man's greatest problem has ever been that of relating, in any

satisfying way, the mystery of life to the supreme and inevitable frustration, death. Philosophy has ever been concerned, above all other things, with *death*. (By way of contrast, Jesus had little to say about death—the theme that was on His lips at all times was life: Matt. 25:46; John 5:40, 10:10.) As Immanuel Kant has put it, the three great problems that have always engendered human speculation are God, freedom, and immortality; it will be noted that these have to do with the origin, nature, and destiny of the person. The outstanding fact that has to do with human life in its fullness is that the question voiced by Job in the early ages of the world (Job 14:14) remained unanswered until it was answered at Joseph's tomb (1 Cor. 15:12-28).

What ends, then, did God achieve through His ancient people, the fleshly seed of Abraham, the Children of Israel? The following:

1. The continuance and increase of the knowledge of Himself, His attributes and His works, among men. Through the Patriarchs He revealed His self-existence, unity and personality. Through Moses and the demonstrations in Egypt, He revealed His omnipotence. Through the Prophets especially He revealed His wisdom and holiness. Throughout the entire history of the People of Israel He revealed His infinite justice, goodness, and righteousness. Through His Only Begotten He revealed His ineffable love and compassion (John 14:9, 1 Cor. 1:21, Heb. 1:1-4). How utterly absurd for any human being to try to apprehend and worship God aright from the revelation of "nature"! Hence it was that God put His Old Testament people in the pulpit of the world to preserve monotheism, the knowledge of the living and true God, HE WHO IS (Jer. 10:10, Matt. 16:16, John 17:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, 1 John 1:20); by way of contrast to the coldly intellectual "God," THAT WHICH IS, of human philosophy. This God, the pantheistic God of human philosophy, will never suffice

## WHAT GOD DID THRU ISRAEL

to meet the institutions, aspirations, and needs of the human spirit (cf. Rom. 8:26-27).

2. The perpetuation and development of the essential principles, laws, and institutions of true religion. These are, as we have learned already, the Altar, the Sacrifice, and the Priesthood. (Cf. Gen. 8:20, 12:7-8, 13:18, etc.; Exo. 20:24-26; Heb. 9:22; Lev. 17:11; Exo. 12:5; Rom. 3:24-26; Rev. 5:9; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9, 24; Heb. 9:11-28; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6.)

3. The revelation of the essential principles of moral conduct, and of national and social righteousness. There were many noted lawgivers in the ancient world: Minos and Rhadamanthus of Crete, Hammurabi of Babylon, Numa Pompilius of Rome, Solon of Athens, Lycurgus of Sparta, etc. Undoubtedly there was a strain of Semitic moral (and civil) law—norms of right and wrong conduct—handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation (Rom. 2:14-15). The apostle tells us that under conscience, however, as educated by tradition alone, man became more and more sinful; hence the necessity of incorporating these basic norms into a permanent code: this was done through the mediatorship of Moses (Gal. 3:19). There can be no doubt, in the minds of honest intelligent persons that if all men could be induced to shape their lives by the two Great Commandments as incorporated in the Decalogue (cf. Matt. 22:34-40, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18, Exo. 20:1-17) this temporal world of mankind in which we are living today would be a very different world. H. A. Overstreet (*The Mature Mind*, 96) points up the superiority of the Mosaic Code to all other legal codes of antiquity, in these words: "The Decalogue remains for us the first great insight of our culture into man's moral nature. There had been other 'codes' before this one, but they had lacked the consistency of moral insight conveyed in the Decalogue. One and all, they had been class codes, making arbitrary discriminations

## GENESIS

between human beings; assigning more rights to some than to others. Thus, they were not yet moral because they failed of moral universality. They belonged to cultures that had not yet emerged from the stage of many gods and many different truths: one truth for the highborn, another for the lowborn. The Decalogue was the first statement of the oneness of all who are human: oneness in rights and oneness in obligations." The Decalogue is God's Mandate to Humanity: to prince, scholar, commoner, rich man, and pauper alike. (See also Rom. 3:20, Eccl. 12:13, Prov. 14:34, Psa. 111:10, Amos 5:11, Mic. 6:8, Isa. 1:15-17, Jer. 25:5-6, etc.)

4. The fact of the inadequacy of law to save people from their sins. (See Rom. 7:7-8, 8:3; Heb. 10:1, 1 Cor. 15:56, John 1:17, 1 John 3:4). It is not the function of law to save or redeem: law serves only to distinguish right conduct from wrong conduct. The Children of Israel were specially called and used of God to demonstrate the exceeding sinfulness of sin, our inability to save ourselves through works of the moral law, and consequently the need of every accountable human being for personal regeneration and holiness (John 3:1-8). (Rom. 4:2, 5:1; Gal. 2:16, 3:11, etc.)

5. The development of a system of type, symbol, and prophecy that would serve to identify the Messiah at His coming, and to establish the divine origin of the entire Christian System. (1 Cor. 10:11, Rom. 15:4, Heb. 10:1, etc.) Most of the characters, institutions and events of the Old Covenant were designed to be types (shadows) of Christ and His Church. Adam, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Jonah, etc., were all typical of Christ in certain respects. The deliverance of Noah from the ungodly antediluvian world, through water as the transitional element, was typical of our deliverance from the bondage and corruption of sin, through baptism, again the transitional element through which deliverance is consummated



## WHAT GOD DID THRU ISRAEL

(1 Pet. 3:20-21, Gal. 3:27, John 3:3-5). The Tabernacle and the Temple were successively types, in even their minute details, of the Church. The Paschal Lamb, the Smitten Rock, the Brazen Serpent, etc., were metaphors of Christ. The Levitical Priesthood was typical of the priesthood of all Christians. In fact the entire Mosaic System was, in its essential features, typical of the Christian System. Typology is a most convincing proof of the divine origin of the Scriptures, for it must be admitted that the points of resemblance between the types and their corresponding antitypes were designed and preordained by the same God who established them and revealed them through His Holy Spirit. In addition to the types and symbols, there are some three hundred prophetic statements in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the details of the constitution of His Church and His Kingdom. What more evidence could any honest and intelligent person require, to convince him that Jesus is truly the Christ, the Son of the living God? (Matt. 16:16.)

6. Finally, the giving to the world of the Messiah Himself, the Seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, through the Virgin Mary, by the "overshadowing" of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 3:16, Luke 1:26-38; Gen. 22:18, Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17, Rev. 22:16, Heb. 7:14, Rev. 5:5; Isa. 9:6-7, 11:1-2; Rom. 1:1-4, Matt. 1:1, Heb. 7:14, etc.)

In view of this array of evidence that our God piled up in olden times as preparatory to the full disclosure of His Eternal Purpose, His Plan of Redemption, two fundamental truths present themselves to us:

1. That one can ascertain this divine truth—the content of this revelation—only by treating the Bible *as a whole*. For, as Augustine put it hundreds of years ago,

In the Old Testament we have the New Testament concealed,

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In the New Testament we have the Old Testament revealed.

2. That the very people to whom all this evidence was revealed, and through whom it was preserved for future generations, should reject the evidence and reject the Redeemer whom it identified so clearly, becomes the irony—and the most profound tragedy—of all the ages. This tragedy is expressed in one simple statement by John the Beloved, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (John 1:11; cf. John 5:40, Matt. 23:37-39, 27:25; Acts 7:51-53).

### History's Message to Man

(Gen. 15:16)

Can any over-all purposiveness be discovered in history? Does history have any lessons for us? Does it have any meaning? There are those who have answered affirmatively, but with considerable variability of interpretation. There are those who answer in the negative. History, they say, is simply the record of man's Will to Live, to resist extinction, to just keep on going on, but without any predetermined end or goal. Popeye's "philosophy" expresses this negative view fairly well, "I yam what I yam,"

It is interesting to note that all prevailing "philosophies" of history arose in ancient Greece. *Herodotus*, "the father of history," who lived in the 5th century B.C., originated what has come to be known as the *ethical* philosophy of history. His view was that history is largely the record of the work of the goddess Nemesis, Retributive Justice, who inevitably interferes in the affairs of men to overthrow inordinate human pride, ambition, and arrogance. *Thucydides* (ca. 471-400 B.C.) adopted the strictly *secularistic* theory of history, namely, that the events of history are brought about by purely secular (chiefly economic) causes; that human events are the

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consequences of purely human causes, apart from oracular, superhuman or supernatural influences. *Polybius* (ca. 205-125 B.C.) was the first to propose the *fatalistic* view, that all events of history are foreordained by a Sovereign Power bearing the name of Destiny or Fortune. Polybius was a Stoic, and this was Stoic doctrine. The *secularistic* interpretation has been revived in modern times, first by Machiavelli, then by Thomas Hobbes; and finally by Marx and Lenin, with their theory of economic determinism and their substitution of expediency for morality. The *fatalistic* interpretation is represented in our day by the work of Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*. According to Spengler, every culture inevitably passes through four successive periods corresponding respectively to the four seasons—spring, summer, fall and winter—the last-named being the period of decay that terminates in death, the period that is best designated that of “civilization.” Spengler was a pessimist: there is no escape from this remorseless cycle, according to his view. The *ethical* interpretation, in broad outline, is represented today in the thinking of such men as Berdyaev, Sorokin, Schweitzer, and Toynbee. Toynbee’s elaborately-worked-out theory is known as that of challenge and response. According to Toynbee, Christian “civilization” or culture must meet three primary needs or challenges: the need to establish a constitutional system of cooperative world government (politically), the need to find a workable compromise between free enterprise and socialism (economically), and the need to put the secular superstructure back on a religious foundation, that in which the dignity and worth of the person is made the supreme ethical norm. Toynbee’s over-all thesis is that our Western culture will survive only if it responds in a positive way to these basic needs or challenges. *Augustine* (in his great work, *The City of God*) interprets the function of the secular state to be the preservation of order whereby the righteous can culti-

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vate the Spiritual Life here that is befitting that of the Heavenly City. *Montesquieu*: the end of the state is its own self-preservation. *Hegel*: the end of the state is its self-glorification to the achievement of which individual citizens are but the means: indeed the state is God on the march. The present-day *totalitarian* state, whether Communistic, Nazi, or Fascist, is the concrete embodiment of Hegel's state-ism.

In Genesis 15:16, we have an intimation of what may properly be called the *providential* interpretation of history. This doctrine is given us in its fullness in Jeremiah, ch. 18, vv. 5-10. It may be stated as follows:

1. *God rules the world. But within the framework of His Providence both individuals and nations are left relatively free to work out their own history and ultimate destiny.* God exercises sovereignty over the whole creation. He owns it all (Psa. 24:1-2, 19:1-6, 8:3-9, 148:1-6; Psa. 50:12, 89:11; Isa. 45:18, 46:8-11; 1 Cor. 10:26). "You can't take it with you" is infinitely more than a cliché: it is absolutely truth (cf. Luke 16:19-31). The redeemed are in a special sense God's own: they are not *their* own, they have been bought with a price, and that price was the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20, 7:23; Acts 20:28). Law is the expression of the will of the Lawgiver: hence, what scientists call laws of nature are simply the laws of God. His Will is the constitution of the Totality of Being. In the unforgettable lines of Maltbie D. Babcock's great hymn:

"This is my Father's World,  
And to my listening ears,  
All nature sings, and round me rings  
The music of the spheres  
This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
His hand the wonders wrought."

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At the same time, however, God has chosen to recognize man's freedom of will with which he has been endowed from the beginning and without which he would not be man. God chooses to allow man to exercise this freedom of choice. Men are predestined to be free, and their free choices constitute God's foreknowledge. *God does not rule His moral world by coercion. He does not burglarize our wills.* He surrounds us with the necessary means to physical and spiritual life and growth and then looks to us to work out our own salvation within the framework of His Providence, holding us accountable in the long run for the deeds we have done in the flesh. (John 5:29, Rom. 2:6, Phil. 2:12, Acts 17:31, Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:13).

The same is true of nations as of individuals. God does not rule the affairs of nations by force. He allows them to work out their own history and destiny under the aegis of His Providence. At the same time, however, he *overrules* (overthrows, Ezek. 21:27) peoples and their rulers when pride, ambition, greed, and arrogance may impel them into schemes of world conquest. For the simple fact is that God has reserved universal sovereignty for the only One worthy of it, His Only Begotten (Phil. 2:9-10, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Rev. 11:15). *In every great conflict in which the forces of righteousness have been challenged by the combined powers of evil, the evil powers have always gone down to defeat. I know of no exception to this principle in all human history.* Free men will never be enslaved for any great length of time by would-be empire builders.

2. *Nations fall when they ignore and violate the moral law and thus make themselves vessels fit only for destruction.*

(1) No better example of this fact can be cited than that of the text before us. Abraham made his pilgrimage of faith to the Land of Promise, lived there throughout

his natural life (as did also Isaac and Jacob) without owning a foot of Canaan's soil except the small plot of land which he bought from Abimelech, a Canaanite prince, for a burial ground. What is the explanation? It is that of our text: the iniquity of the Canaanites had not yet reached the point where there was none righteous, no, not one. We know this from the kindness shown Abraham by various Canaanite chieftains (Gen. 14:13, 20:1-18, 23:7-20, 26:6-11). Some four hundred years later when Israel came out of Egypt under Moses and Joshua, the Canaanites had become so given over to the grossest forms of licentiousness and idolatry that their very existence was a moral blight on mankind. Therefore God gave them up to destruction *as nations* when the Israelites under Joshua took possession of their land (cf. Lev. 18:24-28).

(2) History is the story of the rise and fall of nations; the stage on which history is acted out has rightly been called the graveyard of nations. As expressed in Shelley's imperishable lines:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair.  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

And in the memorable lines of Kipling's *Recessional*:

"Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire—  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

(3) Nations do not die of old age: they perish when they die of a *rotten heart*. They die when they cease to be fit to go on living (Cf. Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah: not even ten righteous souls could

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be found therein (Gen. 18:22-33). (For the opposite side of the coin, see 1 Ki. 19:9-18, Rom. 11:2-4).

(4) There are times in the course of human events when the destruction of a nation's power becomes a moral necessity. Cf. Exo. 17:14. In the namby-pamby notions of God that men seem to have today, He takes on the status of a glorified bellhop, or that of a kindly old gentleman up in the sky who will permit his beard to be pulled, with impunity, by every rogue that happens to pass by. Our God is the God of love, to be sure; but *He is also Absolute Justice*. Lacking this Absolute Justice, He simply could not be God. The God of the Bible is still, and always, the Lord of Hosts (1 Sam. 1:11, 2 Sam. 6:2; Psa. 59:5, 24:10; Isa. 6:3; Mal. 1:14, etc.). The unredeemed will discover, when it is everlastingly too late, that our God is truly "a consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24, Heb. 12:29, Rev. 6:12-17).

*Conclusion:* God's "philosophy" of history is clearly stated in Jer. 18:5-10. It may be stated in a single sentence: *the stability of a nation or national state depends on the ethical quality of the national life*. This is true, regardless of the type of regime, whether that be a tyranny, a monarchy, or a democracy.

How fitting, then, these lines, again from Kipling's *Recessional*:

"The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart—  
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

As Christians we look forward with keen anticipation to the return of our Lord to receive His church into eternal Glory and to Judge the living and the dead (Acts 17:31, 10:42; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess.

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1:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 19:11-16, 20:4-6, 20:11-15).

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-EIGHT

1. Show the fallacy of the alleged composite character of ch. 15.
2. Can measured time sequence be attributed to prophetic vision? Explain.
3. What are the four parts into which the content of ch. 15 divides?
4. Where does the phrase, "the word of Yahwe," first appear in Scripture?
5. How does Whitelaw explain this designation?
6. What in all likelihood was the cause of Abram's "fear," as alluded to in v. 13?
7. Explain the Divine assurance, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."
8. What was the character of Abram's response to this Divine assurance? Explain.
9. What ancient custom prevailed concerning an heir in instances of couples who remained childless?
10. Explain the distinction in customary law between the direct heir and the indirect heir.
11. What was Yahweh's promise in response to Abram's complaint?
12. What was the sign by which God confirmed the promise?
13. Explain what is meant by "righteousness" (v. 6).
14. Explain as fully as possible the meaning of v. 6. How and where is this meaning developed in the New Testament?
15. Differentiate works of the law (Paul) and works of faith (James).
16. What more profound meaning must be attributed to the term *faith* in the light of these Scriptures?



## THE PROMISE AND COVENANT 15:12-17

17. State Cornfeld's explanation of the term "covenant."
18. What is to be inferred from the fact that Biblical Hebrew has no words for "goddess" or "religion"?
19. What sign did God give Abram to confirm the latter's possession of the Land?
20. Explain ancient ritual procedure in the establishing of a covenant. How did this differ from the ritual of sacrifice?
21. Explain what was meant by the phrase, "to cut a covenant."
22. What was symbolized by the "smoking furnace"? By the "flaming torch"?
23. What was symbolized by the birds of prey? By their dispersal?
24. Explain the symbolism of the various details of this sign as given in SIBG.
25. Explain what is meant by the Oracle. List the specifics of it, vv. 13-16.
26. How is the time element to be understood in relation to a preternatural sleep? Explain, in relation to v. 12.
27. Summarize Leupold's explanation of Abram's "deep sleep" experience.
28. Summarize Lange's explanation of it.
29. In what sense can it be said that God here revealed to Abram future events in the life of the Promised Seed?
30. What were the personal aspects of the Divine promise?
31. What was involved in the promise that Abram should "go unto his fathers"?
32. What were the probable reasons why the identity of the oppressing nation was not revealed at this time?
33. What fact about Himself did God demonstrate by the events of the Deliverance?
34. What were the judgments inflicted on the oppressing nation?

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35. Summarize Durant's comment on Egyptian "religion." What were the characteristic features of this "religion"?
36. How were the great Plagues related to forms of idolatry?
37. What were to be the boundaries of the Promised Land?
38. Explain what is meant by the "River of Egypt."
39. Did the Israelites ever extend their dominion to the full extent of the limits named here? If so, when? If not, why not?
40. How account for the differences in the various Old Testament listings of the inhabitants of the Land of Promise?
41. Who were the Amorites in the most inclusive sense of the name? What was their great cultural center and where located?
42. Why was the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage to be delayed 400 years?
43. What great ethical lesson does this have for us?
44. By what incidents do we know that the Amorites (and Canaanites in general) were not yet wholly given over to iniquity?
45. Summarize Murphy's analysis of v. 16.
46. How does Exo. 12:40 appear in the Septuagint and Samaritan versions respectively?
47. What is the time-span problem involved here?
48. What reasons does Whitelaw give for preference for the Hebrew text?
49. How does Leupold resolve this time-span problem?
50. What feasible explanation can be given of the Apostle's time-span, Gal. 3:17?
51. What is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word *dor*, translated "generation" here?
52. What is the probable significance of the phrase, v. 16, "in the fourth generation"?

## THE PROMISE AND COVENANT 15:12-17

53. Summarize Whitelaw's proposed solution of this time-span problem.
54. Summarize Lange's proposed solution of it.
55. Repeat the stages of the revelation of the Promise as given by Lange.
56. How do God's covenants differ from agreements or compacts among men?
57. What did the covenant idea mean to Israel?
58. Explain: "Biblical covenants are not agreements between equals."
59. In what way did Yahweh ratify the covenant with Abraham regarding the seed and the land?
60. What was the character of the reciprocal relation between Yahweh and Abram in this covenant?
61. Trace the development of the covenant as given by Schultz.
62. What are the two interrelated parts of ch. 15? Show how the emphasis shifts from personal to world history in the latter part.
63. What did God do, through the fleshly seed of Abraham, in the unfolding of His Eternal Purpose?
64. What is history's message to mankind?
65. What briefly are the ethical, secularistic, and fatalistic philosophies of history?
66. By what Greek historians respectively were these three views presented? Name modern exponents of these views.
67. What is Augustine's theory of the function of the secular state?
68. What was Hegel's philosophy of the state? In what political systems was it objectified?
69. State clearly God's "philosophy" of history as given in Jeremiah 18:5-10.
70. For Whom alone has our God reserved universal sovereignty? Give Scriptures to confirm your answer.

## PART TWENTY-NINE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN

(16:1-16)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account.*

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children; and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes; Jehovah judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction. 12

## THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN 16:1-16

*And he shall be as a wild ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren. 13 And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Beer-labai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

*15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.*

### 2. *The Domestic Drama in Abram's Household* (vv. 1-6).

*The story of Hagar and Ishmael has real value for the believer. It conveys a lesson both profound and practical. Abram, it will be recalled, was seventy-five years old when he left Haran on receiving God's covenantal Promise (Gen. 12:4) in which the promise of seed was inherent. Now Abram had reached the age of eighty-five (16:3) and the promise of seed had not been fulfilled and indeed seemed impossible of fulfillment in view of the fact that Sarai had passed the normal age of childbearing. Of course, as far as we can know, it had not been explicitly stated that Sarai was the destined mother of the long-promised and anxiously-awaited son; it seems unreasonable, however, to assume anything to the contrary. Therefore, as the prospect of her contributing to the fulfillment of the Promise became more and more remote, she seems to have reached the conclusion that this honor was not reserved for her, and proceeded to take matters into her own hands. She persuaded her husband to take her handmaid, Hagar, an Egyptian, as a kind of secondary wife (concubine), that by her he might obtain what had been denied her (Sarai). Abram evidently was not averse to the arrangement: he consorted with Hagar, and the Egyptian conceived.*

*The consequences of this unfortunate event*—unfortunate because both ill-conceived and ill-timed (because the persons involved were not willing to await God's own time to fulfill the Promise)—seem to be never-ending. After all, it was God's own Promise that was involved: they needed only to await His will in the matter. Instead of so doing, however, they proceeded to take the situation in hand themselves. In spite of the many instances cited us of Abraham's faith, and in spite of the high evaluation of his faith in the New Testament writings, the fact remains that in this instance his faith was wanting in integrity, else he should have rebuked Sarai for her impatience. (But how many professing Christians in our day (or in any other day, for that matter) would have the faith to hold out for God's time in a similar situation? We are inclined to think, Very, very few! After all, Abram and Sarai were human, and we have here one of the most far-reaching of human interest stories in literature, and also another proof of the realism of the Biblical record. It is a record in which life is portrayed exactly as men and women lived it, with their frailties as well as their virtues, and their sorrows and disillusionments as well as their joys. The sum and substance of the matter is that the consequences of Sarai's rash act failed to bring happiness to any of the persons directly involved (not to mention the innocent victim, Ishmael). In a moment of elation which begat a false pride, Hagar mocked her mistress, who in turn was outraged (she had lost "face" in the eyes of the Egyptian) and vented her spleen on both Abram and Hagar despite the fact they had done only what she herself had persuaded them to do. The net result was a domestic mess in which Hagar and her son, both indirectly involved, suffered the greater injustices; a situation which is having repercussions in world history even in our own time, the twentieth century.

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*Archeological discoveries* have fully substantiated the details of this incident which occurred some eighteen or twenty centuries prior to the beginning of the Christian era. The practice of a slave woman bearing a child for a childless wife is strange indeed from the point of view of the Western world. But that this was a common practice in the patriarchal world is evident from two sources especially, namely, the Code of Hammurabi and the Nuzi tablets. Excavations at Nuzi (or Nuzu), an ancient city of northern Mesopotamia east of the Tigris—the site is now near Kirkuk in Iraq—have uncovered thousands of clay tablets in cuneiform script most of which date back to the 15th and 16th centuries before Christ, at the time when the town was under Hurrian (Horite) domination. From Par. 146 of the Code of Hammurabi we learn that a priestess of certain rank who was free to marry but not to bear children, gave her husband a slave girl in order to provide him with a son. We learn that if the concubine should then have tried to arrogate unto herself a social status of equality with her mistress, the wife should have downgraded her to her former standing as a slave. The wife, however, did not have the right to sell her to others. Speiser (ABG, 120): "This law is applicable to the case before us in that (a) the childless wife must herself provide a concubine, (b) the successful substitute must not forget her place. But these provisions are restricted to certain priestesses for whom motherhood was ruled out. No such limitations applied to Sarah." Her case is covered fully, however, in one of the published texts from Nuzi. Here we have an account of a socially prominent family (of no special religious commitments) in which the wife who is childless is required to provide a slave girl as concubine in order that the husband may have an heir. The wife, however, will have legal rights to the offspring. Moreover, if the formerly childless couple should later have a child of their own, they could not thrust out the child

of the secondary wife. "The other provisions of the Nuzi case are likewise paralleled in our narrative: Sarah is childless, and it is she herself who has pressed a concubine on Abraham (v. 5). What Sarai did, then, was not so much in obedience to an impulse as in conformance with the family law of the Hurrians, a society whose customs the patriarchs knew intimately and followed often" (ABG, 121). (HSB, 27): "Archeological evidence of Nuzi customs indicate that in some marriage contracts a childless wife was required to furnish a substitute for her husband. In oriental eyes, childlessness was the greatest of tragedies. Nuzu custom stipulated further that the slave wife and her children could not be sent away. Thus the action of Sarah and Abraham was undoubtedly consonant with the customs of that day." (JB, 31): "According to Mesopotamian law a barren wife could present one of her female slaves to the husband and acknowledge the issue as her son. The same is to happen in Rachel's case, 30:1-6, and in Leah's, 30:9-13."

*The personal element in this story* is interwoven with the societal and legal: "the basic conflict is between certain specific legal rights and natural human feelings." V. 2—Note that Sarai ascribes her failure to bear children to Yahweh's not having given them to her. Said she, Yahweh has shut up my womb, *i.e.*, restrained me from bearing. Does Sarah's action in this case stem from her lack of specific knowledge that she was to be the mother of Abram's child? Or, did she take matters into her own hands and proceed to resolve the problem on her own authority, motivated to some extent by her impatience with God? Certainly her manner of speech indicates a certain measure of *petulance*. Said she to Abram, "Suppose you go in unto my handmaid (*i.e.*, cohabit with her) that perhaps I may be built up by her, *i.e.*, that I may have children by her." And Abram "hearkened" to his wife's "voice," that is, he showed no hesitancy in approving her



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suggestion. V. 3—Sarah then took Hagar and gave her (*i.e.*, gave her in marriage) to her husband. This happened after ten years of dwelling in the Promised Land, when Abram was eighty-five years old and his wife seventy-five. Truly they had been awaiting God's fulfillment of the Promise a long, long time, but, as we see it today in the light of the Christian revelation, God could hardly have made known to them His design to produce a birth out of the natural order of such events which would prefigure the Supreme Begetting and Birth of Messiah (Luke 1:34-35). Still and all, should not their faith have remained steadfast that God would keep His commitment to them? V. 4—When Hagar knew she had conceived, "her mistress was lessened in her eyes," that is, Sarah lost caste in the eyes of the Egyptian. V. 5—that Hagar's superciliousness irritated Sarai was perfectly natural: what other reaction might have been expected? The Code of Hammurabi states expressly that a slave girl who was elevated to the status of concubine could not claim equality with her mistress (par. 146). After all, a genuine privilege had been granted Hagar, one which she might well have appreciated. Of course the whole transaction was not in accord with the will of God: The Child of Promise could hardly have been the offspring of an Egyptian. Moreover, as we have noted above, Sarah had acted in accord with prevailing Mesopotamian law. Hence we are not surprised to read that she complained to Abram about the contempt which she had received from her maid, saying, "Let this injustice come upon thee: now Yahweh must judge between us" (that is, between Sarai and Abram. (Cf. Gen. 27:13, Jer. 51:35, Judg. 11:27, 1 Sam. 24:15). "I myself put my maid in your lap," said Sarai; "not just a fanciful expression, but recognized legal phraseology" (ABG, 118). Certainly this was a very imprudent act, even had it not been actually sinful. In calling on Yahweh to "referee" the case, commentators generally agree that this was an

irreverent use of the Divine Name and that Sarah's speech was a tirade which exhibited great passion. Abram replied, The maid is in your hands: deal with her as you see fit. In holding her husband responsible Sarai was well within her legal rights, we are told, as indicated by patriarchal law; Abram, in turn gave her full power to act as mistress toward the maid without elevating the slave, who had been made a concubine, above her original status. In the attitude of the patriarch do we detect an evidence of his peaceful disposition, or his recognition of the fact that he had already discovered his mistake in expecting the promised seed through Hagar, or an attitude of weakness in yielding to Sarai's invective, or an unjustifiable wrong inflicted on the future mother of his child? (Cf. PCG, 226). "Sarah, despite the undertaking that Hagar's sons would be counted as hers (Gen. 16:2) and thus have a claim to the inheritance, sought to drive Hagar away (Gen. 21:10). Abraham acted against the contemporary custom only when given a special assurance from God that he should do so (verse 12)" (NBD, 69). At any rate Sarah dealt harshly with Hagar, we are told; literally "applied force to her, threatened her with violence" (ABG, 118). Obviously the treatment was severe enough to cause the Egyptian maid "to flee from the face of her mistress" (v. 8).

*In evaluating the actions and reactions of the dramatic personae of this human—exceedingly human—interest story, commentators find themselves hard pressed to try to justify the conduct of the three involved. Some, of course, are inclined to be more lenient than others, as will be noted from the following excerpts. (HSB, 27): "When Abraham was eighty-six years of age Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (16:16). This incident reveals how two genuine believers may seek to fulfill God's will by normally acceptable methods but spiritually carnal ones. The promise of God was not to Hagar but to Sarah. Sarah suggested the use of Hagar, and Abraham consented to the arrangement.*

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Both were guilty. The birth of Ishmael introduced a people (the nucleus of the later Mohammedans) which has been a challenge both to the Jews and the Christian Church. It was not until Abraham was a hundred years old that Isaac was born (21:5). From the length of time between the promise and the fulfillment we can draw the lessons that God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isa. 55:8, 9). Patient waiting would have produced the desired results without the additional problems created by impatience and lack of faith. God always rewards those who have faith to believe His promises." Speiser (ABG, 119): "At the personal level, from which the author starts out, the basic conflict is between certain specific legal rights and natural human feelings. We know now the pertinent legal measures as illustrated by the Laws of Hammurabi and the Nuzi documents. The juridical background of the issue before us is as complex as it is authentic, a circumstance that makes the unfolding drama at once more poignant and intelligible. All three principals in the case have some things in their favor and other things against them. Sarah is thus not altogether out of order when she bitterly complains to Abraham that her rights have not been honored (5). Beyond all the legal niceties, however are the tangled emotions of the characters in the drama: Sarah, frustrated and enraged; Hagar, spirited but tactless; and Abraham, who must know that, whatever his personal sentiments, he may not dissuade Sarah from following the letter of the law." "The custom of a barren wife giving her handmaid to her husband in order that she might *obtain children by her* is further attested by 30:3, according to which the childless Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob, and by 30:9, where Leah, who had "ceased bearing," gave him Zilpah. The children born of such a union were thus reckoned as the children not of the handmaid, but of the wife, by adoption, the slave girl being delivered on the knees of her mistress

(cf. 30:3). Sarah, however, is unable to go through with the arrangement. Hagar's contempt for her childlessness (v. 4), being more than she can stand. Unreasonably she blames Abraham. The verse throws a significant light upon the tensions inevitable in a polygamous household." (IBG, 605). Lange (CDHCG, 418): "The moral motive or impulse of seeking the heir of blessing, made availing to an erroneous and selfish degree, is here torn away from its connection with the love impulse or motive, and exalted above its importance. The substitution of the maid for the mistress, however, must be distinguished from polygamy in its peculiar sense. Hagar, on the contrary, regards herself—in the sense of polygamy, as standing with Sarai, and as the favored, fruitful wife, exalts herself above her. The shadow of polygamy resting on the patriarchal monogamy. Isaac's marriage is free from this. It has the purest New Testament form. Rebecca appears, indeed, to have exercised a certain predominant influence, as the wife often does in the Christian marriage of modern times." Jamieson (CECG, 149): "Abram being a man of peace, as well as affectionately disposed towards his wife, left her to settle these broils in her own way. In all households where concubinage exists, the principal wife retains her supreme authority over the inferior ones; and in cases where a slave is brought into the relation with her master that Hagar held to Abram, the maid-servant remains in her former position unchanged, or although some more attentions may be paid to her, she is as much subject to the absolute control of her mistress as before. Sarai, left by Abram to act at discretion, exerted her full authority." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 219): "But as soon as Sarai made her feel her power, Hagar fled. Thus, instead of securing the fulfillment of their wishes, Sarai and Abram had reaped nothing but grief and vexation, and apparently had lost the maid through their self-concerted scheme.

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But the faithful covenant-God turned the whole into a blessing."

Leupold would be more lenient in dealing with the principals in this narrative. (EG, 494): "As is evident from v. 16, Abram had been in the land about ten years. If we consider the advanced age of both Abram and Sarai, they had surely waited a long time. . . . To Sarai the thought comes that perhaps constomary devices may be resorted to. Women of standing like Sarai had their personal maids, who were their own in a special sense. They were the personal property of the wife and were appointed specially to wait upon her. The maid under consideration here happened to be an Egyptian, having been acquired, no doubt, during the brief stay in Egypt (12:10 ff.). The custom of those days allowed in a case of this sort that the wife give her maid to her husband as a secondary wife in the hope that the new union would be blessed with offspring, which offspring would then promptly be claimed and adopted by the mistress. No stigma was attached to the position of the maid: she was a wife, though not, indeed, of the same social standing as the first wife. For Sarai to take such a step certainly involved self-sacrifice, even a kind of self-effacement. It was this rather noble mode of procedure on Sarai's part that may in part have blinded the patriarch's eyes so that he failed to discern the actual issues involved. Then, also, if we consider the chief servant, Eliezer, and the excellent faith he later displays we may well suppose that the chief maid may have been a woman who was indeed imbued with the faith that reigned in the household and may modestly have been desirous of having a part in the achievement of the high purpose to which this household was destined. Yet, in spite of all that may be said by way of extenuating the fault of the parties involved, it was still a double fault and sin. First, it clashed with the true conception of monogamous marriage, which alone is acceptable with God.

Secondly, it involved the employment of human devices seemingly to bolster up a divine purpose which was in any case destined to be achieved as God had originally ordained. In so far the fault involved was unbelief." Concerning v. 3, the same writer says, "It must be quite apparent that 'to give as a wife' must mean 'to give in marriage.' Here was no concubinage but a formal marital union, though Hagar was but the second wife" (*ibid.*, p. 496). Again in v. 4 (*ibid.*, 497): "Now at this point the evils of polygamy begin to rear their ugly head. It is always bound to be the fruitful mother of envy, jealousy, and strife. The baser elements in man are unleashed by it. Each of the three characters now appears to disadvantage. Yet we are not compelled now to suppose that such extremes resulted as Jamieson suggests—'bursts of temper, or blows.' The fine praise that Peter bestows upon Sarai (1 Pet. 3:6) hardly allows us to think of her as degenerating into a shrew. When it is remarked of Hagar that 'her mistress was lightly esteemed in her eyes,' that need involve nothing more than that she thought that God had bestowed upon her what He had denied Sarai, and so she thought herself superior to her mistress and showed her disdain in certain ways. This attitude was bound to pain Sarai, who was, no doubt, a woman of high position, while Hagar was only an Egyptian slave." Again, on v. 5 (*ibid.*, 497): "Now Sarai's judgment becomes impaired by the bitter feelings roused in her. Hagar's wrong leads Sarai to do further wrong. Sin grows more involved. Sarai blames Abram for doing what in reality she had suggested. At least, so it seems. Luther attempts to avoid so crude a charge on her part by supposing that she rather charges Abram with showing certain preferences and honors to Hagar and so becoming the cause of her arrogance. Then her charge would be correct: 'The wrong done to me is your fault.' But the explanation that follows does not interpret the wrong thus. So we shall do better to call hers an unreasonable

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charge growing out of her wounded pride. . . . The injustice of the charge made by Sarai might well have roused Abram to a heated reply. Indeed with excellent self-control he replies moderately." Finally, on v. 6 (*ibid.*, 489-499): "Some charge Abram at this point with being 'strangely unchivalrous.' He is not suggesting cruelty to Sarai nor condoning it. He is merely suggesting the natural solution of the problem. In reality, Sarai is still Hagar's mistress. That relation has not really been cancelled. Abram suggests that she use her right as mistress. He does not, however, suggest the use of cruelty or injustice. It is not really said that Sarai did what is unjustifiable. Nor should it be forgotten that Hagar had begun to do wrong and required correction. Apparently also, according to the custom of the times, Abram had no jurisdiction over Hagar directly, for she was esteemed Sarai's maid. The Hebrew idiom, 'do what is good in thine eyes,' is our, 'do what pleases thee.' Here, we believe, Sarai is usually wronged. . . . Luther may well be followed, 'wanted to humble her.' When the problem is approached, Sarai is merely regarded as having taken steps to bring Hagar to realize that she had begun to be somewhat presumptuous, such as making her to live with the servants and perform more menial tasks. But, of course, we must allow for sinful excesses on her part. Sarai may not have proceeded with due tact and consideration. In suggesting such a course Abram may too have failed to counsel due caution. Every actor in this domestic drama may have given evidence of shortcomings in one way or another. Hagar, on her part, being somewhat self-willed and independent, refused to accept correction and 'fled from her.'" (The present writer cannot help feeling that the foregoing evaluation of the emotions of the three characters in this drama is a somewhat "watered down" version. The student will have to decide these matters for himself. It is

well to have, or course, the various presentations of this "domestic drama" so that it may be studied from all points of view.)

*Does the legal background reflected here conform to actual chronology?* The Nuzi archives, we are told, give us some of the most intimate pictures of life in an ancient Mesopotamian community. Note well the following (NBD, 69): "The remarkable parallels between the customs and social conditions of these peoples and the patriarchal narratives in Genesis have led some scholars to argue from this for a similar 15th-century date for Abraham and his sons; but there is evidence that many of these customs had been observed for some centuries, and that the Hurrians were already a virile part of the population of N. Mesopotamia and Syria by the 18th century B.C. These parallels provide useful background information to the patriarchal age, and are one of the external factors supporting the historicity of this part of Genesis."

The stories of Ishmael and Isaac also have to do, of course, with *the law of inheritance*. Indeed this is at the very root of the entire narrative, one might well say, of *all* the patriarchal narratives. The problems also involves, as we have already learned, the status of Abraham's steward, Eliezer of Damascus. Fortunately, the Nuzi archives make clear the legal aspects of this matter which is stated as follows (NBD, 69): "Normally the estate passed to the eldest son, who received a 'double portion' compared with the younger. Should a man (or woman) have no sons, he could adopt as a son a person from outside the family, even if he was a slave. Such an adopted son was expected to care for the man in his old age, to provide proper burial and the maintenance of religious rites (including the pouring of libations), and to continue the family name in return for the property. This may explain Abram's adoption of Eliezer as heir prior to the birth of Isaac (Gen. 15:2-4). Such agreements were legally void if the adopter subse-



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quently had a son of his own; the adoptee then took second place. At Nuzi this process of adoption was extended to become a fiction by which property, legally inalienable, might be sold. A further way of ensuring an heir was the custom, known also from earlier Babylonian texts, whereby a childless wife would give her husband a substitute slave-wife to bear sons. . . . Sarah, despite the undertaking that Hagar's sons would be counted as hers (Gen. 16:2) and thus have a claim to the inheritance, sought to drive Hagar away (Gen. 21:10). Abraham acted against the contemporary custom only when given a special assurance from God that he should do so (v. 12)." A survey of Mesopotamian legal procedures will necessarily arise again in our study of the careers of Isaac, Jacob, Esau, etc.

3. *The Flight of Hagar* (v. 6). It is difficult to avoid the realistic conclusion, from the language that is used here, that Sarai did actually deal "hardly" (*i.e.*, harshly) with the pregnant Egyptian maiden, so much so that the latter fled from the presence of her mistress and did not stop until she had gone a long way on the road to Shur. (1) The name "Hagar" means "flight" or something similar; cf. the Arab *begira*. The name is Semitic, not Egyptian, and perhaps was given to the woman by Abram himself, either when he left Egypt or after her actual flight into the desert. (2) The way to Shur was probably the ancient transport route to Egypt from Beersheba. Shur itself was a locality near the Egyptian border. The land was dry and parched, and Hagar evidently did not waste any time getting to the *fountain* (oasis) on this route. It seems obvious that the Egyptian was on her way back to her home country; having reached this spot, she had come far enough from Abram's tents to allow herself time to settle her thoughts and feelings, and to look back upon her experience with more soberness and justness than she could have had at the beginning of her flight. The time was fitting for the Angel of the Lord to put in appearance.

4. *The Angel of the Lord: the Theophany at the Well* (vv. 7-14). The scene is the *fountain of water* (as yet nameless) *in the desert . . . on the way to Shur*. The *Angel of Yahwe* (of *Jehovah*, of *the Lord*) "found" the young woman (by design, of course) at this spot. The Angel of Yahwe is "here introduced for the first time as the medium of the theophany. . . . 'Yahwe Himself in self-manifestation,' or, in other words, a personification of the theophany. This somewhat subtle definition is founded on the fact that in very many instances the Angel is at once identified with God and differentiated from Him (cf. vv. 10, 13 with v. 11)" (Skinner, ICCG, 286). Cf. also "And the word was with God, and the Word was God," John 1:1). Certainly the Angel's identity with Yahweh is fully confirmed in v. 13. We present here Whitelaw's five arguments (PCG, 228) for the view *that The Angel of the Lord here is not a created being* (hence not one member of "the innumerable hosts" of "ministering spirits," who figure repeatedly in the story of the unfolding of the Plan of Redemption, Heb. 1:14, 12:22; Col. 1:16, Psa. 148:2, 5, etc.), *but the Divine Being Himself*, as follows: (1) He explicitly identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions (cf. v. 13) and with Elohim (Gen. 22:12). (2) Those to whom He makes His presence known recognize Him as divine (Gen. 16:13, 18:23-33, 28:16-22; Exo. 3:6; Judg. 6:11-24; 13:21-22). (3) Biblical writers constantly speak of him as divine, calling him Jehovah without the least reserve (Gen. 16:13, 18:1, 22:16; Exo. 3:2, Judg. 6:12). (4) The doctrine here implied of a plurality of persons in the Godhead is in complete accordance with earlier foreshadowings (Gen. 1:26, 11:7). (5) "The organic unity of Scripture would be broken if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation was a creature angel, while that of the New is the incarnation of the Godhead" (cf. Col. 1:16-19, John 1:1-3, 14). Certainly by the Old Testament writers the Angel

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of the Lord is recognized as a superior being in a class by Himself: a fact which raises the question, Is the Yahweh of the Old Testament, the Covenant God, identical with the Incarnate Logos (cf. Mic. 5:2, John 10:17-18, 1 Cor. 10:1-4)? Gosman (CDHCG, 416): "The expression [Angel of Jehovah] appears here for the first time. While the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah himself, it is remarkable, that in the very meaning of the name, as messenger, or one who is sent, there is implied a distinction of persons in the Godhead. There must be one who sends, whose message he bears." Lange (*ibid.*, 416): "That this Angel is identical with Jehovah, is placed beyond question in vers. 13 and 14. The disposition of Hagar, helpless, forsaken, with all her pride, still believing in God, warned by her own conscience, makes it altogether fitting that the Angel of Jehovah should appear to her, *i.e.*, Jehovah himself, in his condescension—manifesting himself as the Angel." Note the following comment also (JB, 33): "In the most ancient texts the angel of Yahweh, 22:11, Exo. 3:2, Judg. 2:1, or the angel of God, 21:17, 31:11, Exo. 14:19, etc., is not a created being distinct from God, Exo. 23:20, but God himself in a form visible to man. V. 13 identifies the angel with Yahweh. In other texts the angel of Yahweh is the one who executes God's avenging sentence: see Exo. 12:23 ff." Note the following summarization (ST, 319): (1) The Angel of Yahweh identifies Himself with Yahweh (Jehovah) or Elohim (Gen. 22:11, 16; 31:11, 13). (2) The Angel of Yahweh is identified with Yahweh or with Elohim by others (Gen. 16:9, 13; 48:15, 16). (3) The Angel of Yahweh accepts worship due only to God (Exo. 3:2, 4, 5; Judg. 13:20-22. The "angel of the Lord" appears to be a human messenger in Hag. 1:13, a created angel in Matt. 1:20, Acts 8:26, 12:7. Again, Strong (ST, 319): "But commonly, in the O.T., the 'angel of Jehovah' is a theophany, a self-manifestation of God. The only dis-

inction is that between Jehovah in Himself and Jehovah in manifestation. The appearances of "the angel of Jehovah" seem to be preliminary manifestations of the divine Logos, as in Gen. 18:2, 13, in Dan. 3:25, 28. The N.T. 'angel of the Lord' does not permit, the O.T. 'angel of the Lord' requires, worship (Rev. 22:8, 9; cf. Exo. 3:8)." Again, *ibid.*, "Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in the later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed His final coming in the flesh." (Cf. also John. 5:13-15, Gen. 15:18-20, Mic. 5:2; Exo. 14:19, 23:23, 32:34, 33:2, cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-3; 2 Sam. 24:15-17, John 17:5, Rev. 19:11-16, etc.). We must recall here our fundamental thesis that the name *Elohim* is used in the Old Testament to designate God the Creator, and the name Yahweh (Yahwe, Jehovah) is used to designate the Covenant God. There is but one God, of course: hence the former name pictures Him in His omnipotence especially (Isa. 57:15), and the latter portrays Him in His benevolence, goodness, etc., with respect to His creatures, especially man. (Eph. 4:6, 1 Tim. 2:5).

The most thoroughgoing exposition of this title, the Angel of Yahweh, or the Angel of the Lord, the Angel of God, etc., is presented by Jamieson (CECG, 149) as follows: "Angel means messenger, and the term is frequently used in Scripture to denote some natural phenomenon, or visible symbol, betokening the presence and agency of the Divine Majesty (Exo. 14:19, 2 Ki. 19:35, Psa. 104:4). That the whole tenor of this narrative [Gen. 16:7-14], however, indicates a living personal being, is allowed on all hands; but a variety of opinions are entertained respecting the essential standing of the messenger of Jehovah. Some think that he was a created angel, one

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of those celestial spirits who were frequently delegated under the ancient economies to execute the purposes of God's grace to his chosen; while others convinced that things are predicated of this angel involving the possession of attributes and powers superior to those of the most exalted creatures, maintain that this must be considered a real theophany, a visible manifestation of God, without reference to any distinction of persons. To each of these hypotheses insuperable objections have been urged: against the latter, on the ground that 'no man hath seen God at any time' (John 1:18, Col. 1:15); and against the former, founded on the historical circumstances of this narrative in which 'the angel of the Lord' promises to do what was manifestly beyond the capabilities of any created being (v. 10), and also did himself what he afterward ascribed to the Lord (cf. vv. 7, 8 with v. 11, last clause). The conclusion, therefore, to which, on a full consideration of the facts, the most eminent Biblical critics and divines have come is, that this was an appearance of the Logos, or Divine person of the Messiah, prelude, as in many subsequent instances, to his actually incarnate manifestation in the fullness of time (cf. Mic. 5:2). Such was 'the angel of the Lord,' the Revealer of the invisible God to the Church, usually designated by this and the analogous titles of 'the messenger of the covenant' and 'the angel of his presence.' This is the first occasion on which the name occurs; and it has been pronounced a myth, or at least a traditionary legend, intended to throw a halo of dignity and mysterious interest on the origin of the Arabs, by recording the special interposition of heaven in behalf of a poor, destitute Egyptian bondwoman, their humble ancestress. But the objection is groundless: the divine manifestation will appear in keeping with the occasion, when it is borne in mind that 'the angel of the Lord,' in guiding and encouraging Hagar, was taking care about the *seed* of Abraham."

*The Angel's question*, v. 8, reveals a mysterious knowledge of Hagar's experiences, designed, it would seem, to impress the fugitive "with a full conviction of the supernatural, the divine character of the speaker, and a lively sense of her sin in abandoning the station in which His providence had placed her."

*The Angel's Command*: Hagar must return to her mistress, that is, she must correct the existing wrong she has done, her self-willed departure from her regular status in life; for Sarai is still mistress, by the Egyptian's own admission (v. 8). The accomplishment of her son's great destiny must depend on her maintaining proper connections with Abram's family. *She must put duty first*, and retrace her steps to Hebron. "Plain, dutiful submission . . . is sufficient for Hagar; nor would Sarai, after this experience with the Angel became known, have asked any more."

*The Angel's Revelations* were three: (1) she must return and submit herself to her mistress, v. 9; (2) she will be the ancestress of countless offspring, v. 10; (3) She shall bear a son and this son shall bear a name that shall always be a reminder to all concerned that God in a very signal way heard the cry of this woman in her hour of great distress, v. 11. "Ishmael" means literally "God hears." "Yahweh hath heard thy affliction": the inference is unavoidable that Hagar in her distress had cried out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It should be noted that the three consecutive verses here, 9, 10, 11, begin with the same statement, "And the Angel of Yahweh said unto her."

##### 5. *The Prophecy Concerning Ishmael and His Seed* (vv. 11, 12).

(1) By disposition Ishmael shall be "*a wild ass of a man*": "a fine image of the free intractable Bedouin character which is to be manifested in Ishmael's descen-

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dants" (Skinner,, ICCG, 287). Ishmael will be among human families what the wild ass is among animals (cf. Job 39:5-8, Jer. 2:24). "Ishmael descendants are the desert Arabs who are as intractable and vagrant as the wild ass" (JB, 33). (2) "*His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him,*" thus descriptive of "the rude, turbulent, and plundering character of the Arabs" (Jamieson, CECG, 150). This describes "most truly the incessant state of feud, in which the Ishmaelites live with one another or with their neighbors" (Keil and Delitzsch, (BCOTP, 220). (3) "*And he shall dwell over against all his brethren*" ("over against" means "to the east," cf. 25:18). The geographical meaning is included here, but much greater significance is to be attached to this statement. Ishmael and his progeny shall live in defiance or disregard of their own kinsmen (cf. Deut. 21:16, "to the disregard of" the older son of the unloved wife). This passage indicates also that "Ishmael would maintain an independent standing before (in the presence of) all the descendants of Abraham. History has confirmed this promise. The Ishmaelites have continued to this day in free and undiminished possession of the extensive peninsula between the Euphrates, the Straits of Suez, and the Red Sea, from which they have overspread both Northern Africa and Southern Asia" (Keil-Delitzsch, *ibid.*, p. 221).

VV. 13-14. Hitherto Hagar's position had been growing increasingly difficult, but now she knew that Yahweh cares, that He was looking after her, that He is "a God who sees." She aptly invents the name for Yahweh, *El Roi*. "*El Roi* means 'God of vision.' *Labai Roi* may mean, the well 'of the Living One who sees me'; to this place Isaac was to come, 24:62, 25:11" (JB, 33). (To Hagar, Yahweh was the "God who sees" in the sense of being the "God who cares." Leupold (EG, 506): "No mortal to whom God appeared ventured to look directly

into or upon the glorious countenance of the Lord. Even Moses in answer to his special request could not venture to take such a step (Exo. 33:23). So here very tersely Hagar described what happened in her case. When Yahweh appeared, she indeed conversed with Him; but only as He departed did she 'look after Him.' So at least she appears to have understood that no sinful mortal can see God's countenance directly and live (see Exo. 33:20). So she did not even attempt so rash a thing. But to her God now is a God 'who sees me,' i.e., 'cares for me.' Hagar's experiences became known, and as a result of what she said, the well came to bear the name descriptive of her experience. God is called "the Living One." "Quite properly so, because the fact that He has regard for the needs of those who call upon Him, stamps Him as truly a Living God and not a dead conception." *The Location of the well*: between Kadesh and Bered (v. 14). "Bered" has never been located. "Kadesh" is the site commonly designated Kadesh Barnea (cf. Josh. 15:3, Num. 13:3-26, Deut. 9:23, etc.), forty miles due south and a little to the west of Beersheba. Skinner (ICCG, 228): "In Arab tradition the well of Hagar is plausibly enough identified with 'Ain-Muweilih, a caravan station about 12 miles to the W. of Kadesh. The well must have been a chief sanctuary of the Ishmaelites; hence the later Jews, to whom Ishmael was a name for all Arabs, identified it with the sacred well Zemzem at Mecca." Leupold (EG, 503): "So it comes to pass that two vast nations, the Jews and the Ishmaelites, are descended from Abraham. No further spiritual advantage is attached to the advantage of numbers" (cf. v. 10).

*The Birth of Ishmael* (vv. 15-16). Certainly there can be no doubt that Hagar did as the Angel of Yahweh told her to do, and having returned to Abram's household at Hebron, she bore him a son in his 86th year. He gave



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the child the name *Ishmael*. It appears that he may have regarded Ishmael as the promised seed, until, thirteen years later, the counsel of God was more clearly unfolded to him (cf. KD, COTP, 222).

### 6. *The Historical Fulfillment of the Prophecy.*

The fulfillment in history of the oracle (v. 12) concerning the future of Ishmael's seed is precise in every detail, and unqualifiedly stamps the prediction a prophetic revelation from God. The details of this fulfillment are presented so authentically by Dr. Henry Cooke (*Self-Interpreting Bible*, Vol. I, *The Pentateuch*, pp. 238-239) that we feel justified in reproducing it here verbatim, as follows:

"Ver. 10-12. Here it is foretold that Ishmael and his seed should be *wild free men, like wild asses*: mischievous to all around them, and extremely numerous. For almost four thousand years the fulfillment has been amazingly remarkable. Ishmael had twelve sons, who gave rise to as many tribes or nations, called by their names, and who dwelt southward in Arabia, *before the face or in the presence* of their near relations, the Ammonites, Moabites, descendants of Keturah, Edomites, and Jews (17:20; 21:13, 18; 25:11-18). All along they have been a nuisance and plague to the nations around them; infamous for theft, robbery, revenge, pillage, and murder. It has therefore been the continued and common interest of mankind to extirpate them from the earth. But though almost every noted conqueror who has appeared in the world, whether Hebrew, Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, Roman, Tartar, or Turkish, has pushed his conquest to their borders, or even beyond them into Egypt or Arabia Felix, not one has ever been able to subdue these Ishmaelites, or deprive them of their freedom. The mighty Shishak, King of Egypt, was obliged to draw a line along their frontiers for the protection of his kingdom from their

ravaging inroads. The Assyrians under Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, and the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, greatly harassed them, and almost extirpated some of their tribes (Isa. 2:11-17, Num. 24:22; Jér. 25:23-24, 49:28-33).

"Provoked with their contempt, Alexander the Great made vast preparations for their utter destruction; but death cut short his purpose. Antigonus, one of his valiant captains and successors, provoked with their depredations, more than once, but to his repeated dishonor, attempted to subdue them. Flushed with his eastern victories, Pompey, the famed Roman general, attempted to reduce them; but his army being recalled when they had hopes of gaining their purpose, these wild Arabs pursued them, almost at their heels, and dreadfully harassed the Roman subjects in Syria. Augustus, the renowned emperor, made one or more fruitless attempts to subdue them. About A.D. 110, Trajan, one of the most powerful emperors and valiant generals that ever filled the Roman throne, with a mighty army, determined if possible to subdue them, and laid siege to their capital. But storms of hail, which are scarcely ever seen in this country, thunder, lightning, whirlwind, swarms of flies, and dreadful apparitions in the air, terrified or repulsed his troops as often as they repeated their attacks. About eighty years after, Severus, another warlike emperor, determined to punish their siding with Niger, his rival, by an utter reduction of them. But, after he had made a breach on the wall of their principal city, an unaccountable difference between him and his faithful European troops obliged him to raise the siege, and leave the country.

"In the seventh century of the Christian era, these Ishmaelites, under Mahomet, their famed impostor, and his successors, furiously extended their empire, and their new and false religion, through a great part of Asia and

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Africa, and even some countries of Europe (Rev. 9:1-11). Since the fall of their empire, the Turks have made repeated attempts to subdue them; but instead of succeeding, they have been obliged, for near three hundred years past, to pay them a yearly tribute of forty thousand crowns, for procuring a safe passage for their pilgrims to Mecca, the holy city, where Mahomet was born. If, to fulfill his promise, God has done so much for protecting the temporal liberty of miscreants, what will he not do for the salvation of his people!

"Ver. 12—The 'wild ass' (pere, the Hebrew word here translated 'wild') was the emblem of wild, rude, uncontrollable freedom—total disregard of the law and social restraint (Job 24:5, 11:12). Such has ever been, and still is, the character of the Arab. He roams free through his native desert. No power has been able to control his movements, or to induce or compel him to accept the settled habits of civilized life. His hand has been, and is, against every man who, without his protection, enters his country; and the hand of every surrounding ruler has been and is against him. Yet he dwells to this day, as he has done for nearly forty centuries, in the presence of all his brethren. He meets them on the east, west, north, and south; and none can extirpate or subdue him. . . . *Against every man and every man's hand against him.* The descendants of Ishmael were divided into tribes, after the manner of the Jews, differing to a certain extent in dispositions, habits, character, and government. Many of them made great advances in civilization and learning; and exhibited the ordinary aspect of powerful, settled, and regular communities. Still there has been a vast number, of whom the Bedouins are most generally known, who have, in all ages, practically and literally realized this prediction, and lived, as they still do, in a state of uninterrupted hostility with all men, seeking no home but the desert, submitting to no law

but their will, and acknowledging no right but their sword; 'their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them.'—'*And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*' To ascertain the meaning of this sentence, we must recollect that one peculiarity in the prophecies concerning the Jews—another branch of the Abrahamic tree—was, Deut. 28:64, '*And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.*' Now this was foretold of the child of the promise, the descendants of *Isaac*; but of *Ishmael*, the son of the bondwoman, it is said, *He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*, that is, while *Israel* shall be *scattered, dispersed, and outcast*, Isa. 11:12, from the land promised to *Abram*, *Ishmael* shall abide in the land promised to *Hagar*. The event has verified the prediction, and proved that it proceeded from him who 'determined the bounds of their habitation.' *Israel* is scattered in judgment as chaff of the thrashing-flour; *Ishmael* abides immovable as *Sinai*." (Cf. Luke 21:24, Acts 17:26). (Explanatory: the name *Arabia Felix*, as used above, has reference to *Yemen* and surrounding area; *Arabia Petraea* was the name by which the northern part of the Arabian world was known, that which bordered on the *Negeb* and the adjacent *Sinaitic peninsula*. The latter derived its name from the capital city, *Petra*, of the Aramaic-speaking *Nabataean Arabs*. *Petra* was some fifty miles south of the *Dead Sea*. The *Nabataeans* derived from *Nebaioth*, son of *Ishmael* and brother-in-law of *Edom* (*Esau*): cf. Gen. 25:13, 28:9, etc. It should be noted here that the *Apostle Paul* (Gal. 4:25) identifies "*Agar*" as the *Arabian name* of *Sinai*. "It is not clear where *Paul* thought *Sinai* lay; but *Strabo* speaks of drawing a line from *Petra* to *Babylon* which would bisect the regions of the *Nabateans*, *Chauloteans* (*Havilah*), and *Agreans*. The last-named people, who appear as *Hagrites* in 1 *Chronicles* 5:19, may well have furnished the

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name for Hagar. Indeed, *El Hejar*, an important Arabian road junction, may preserve the name of the Hagrites. Their earlier habitat may have been more westerly. That Hagar is 'Egyptian' suggests residence in the north Sinaitic area" (Kraeling, BA, 69). It would be well for the student to familiarize himself with the archaeological discoveries at Petra: it is one of the most important historical centers of the ancient Near East.

We cannot close this phase of our study without remarking that the age-long conflict between the sons of Isaac and the sons of Ishmael has reached fever heat in our own time, following the establishment of the Jewish state of Israeli, and threatens to plunge the world into another global war. One of the anomalies of the present situation is the collusion of the Arab world under Nasser the Egyptian dictator, a Mohammedan, with the atheistic totalitarian state of the Russian Leninists, particularly in view of the fact that Islamism is the most rigidly monotheistic "religion" in the world. Even in our day, moreover, the Arab political regimes are despotisms in the true sense of the term: they have none of the characteristics of a democracy. It is interesting too that the Turks, although Mohammedans also, are of Mongolian extraction and hence do not aline themselves with the Arab world. These various facts call for an examination of the term "anti-Semitic," which is bandied about so loosely, as meaning only "anti-Jew." But the Arabs are also Semitic, as are the Egyptians, the Ethiopians, and other peoples of the same part of the world. The languages usually classified as Semitic are the Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Arabic. Thus it will be seen that "anti-Semitism" is a term which cannot be used rightly to designate only those who are opposed to Jews. It is time for these "weighted" terms, phrases, and cliches, to be stripped of their overtones and used in their true signification.

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## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### *The Friend of God*

Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; cf. Jas. 2:23.

Many eminent philosophers, essayists, poets, etc., have written eloquently on the subject of friendship. Aristotle, for example, in Books Eight and Nine of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, tells us that "there are three kinds of friendship, corresponding in number to the objects worthy of affection." These objects (objectives) are usefulness, pleasure, and virtue. Virtue, in Aristotle's thought, means an *excellence*. He writes: "The perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue. For these friends wish alike for one another's good because they are good men, and they are good *per se*, that is, their friendship is something intrinsic, not incidental. "Those who wish for their friends' good for their friends' sake are friends in the truest sense, since their attitude is determined by what their friends are and not by incidental considerations." To sum up: True friendship is that kind of affection from which all selfish ends are eliminated. This Aristotelian concept is indicated in Greek by the word *philia* (brotherly love), as distinct from *eros* (passion, desire, lust) and from *agape* (reverential love). Cicero, in his famous essay *On Friendship* (*De Amicitia*) writes in similar fashion: "It is love (*amor*), from which the word 'friendship' (*amicitia*) is derived, that leads to the establishing of goodwill. . . . in friendship there is nothing false, nothing pretended; whatever there is is genuine and comes of its own accord. Wherefore it seems to me that friendship springs rather from nature than from need, and from an inclination of the soul joined with a feeling of love rather than from calculation of how much profit the friendship is likely to afford." One is reminded here of Augustine's doctrine of *pure love for God*: "Whosoever

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seeketh of God any thing besides God, doth not love God purely. If a wife loveth her husband because he is rich, she is not pure, for she loveth not her husband, but the gold of her husband." "Who seeks from God any other reward but God, and for it would serve God, esteems what he wishes to receive, more than Him from whom he would receive it" (See Everyman's Library, *The Confessions*, p. 52, n.). That is to say, the noblest motivation to the Spiritual Life is neither the fear of punishment nor the hope of reward, but love for God simply because He is God (cf. John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-21).

The title *Friend of God* undoubtedly comes from the passages cited above from Isaiah and Second Chronicles. It is given to Abraham also by Clement of Rome (*Ad Cor.* chs. 10, 17). It was Abraham's special privilege to be known by this title among the Jews, and to our own day he is known also among the Arabs as *El Khalil*, equivalent to "the Friend." We recall here what God had to say in praise of His "servant Job" (Job 1-8), and when His praise was challenged by the Adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), God accepted the challenge and *proved* Job's uprightness by his steadfastness under the pressure of the most terrible calamities. We may rest assured that when God speaks approvingly of one of His great servants, He speaks the truth as always. So it was in Abraham's case: when God called Abraham His Friend, we may sure that the patriarch was His Friend with all that this term means to God Himself.

A man may have all the silver and gold in the world, but if he has not friends, he is poor. He may operate factories and mills, live in mansions of brick or stone; he may possess acres of real estate, vast rolling plains and valleys; he may have oil wells scattered about, everywhere; indeed he may be a billionaire, but if he has not friends, he is nothing. The most priceless possession in this world is a true friend. It is a wonderful thing to have in one's heart true friendship for others. It is a sanctifying senti-

ment that ennobles the soul and enhances one's conviction of the dignity and worth of the person. But if to be a friend of man is wonderful, how much more wonderful it is to be a friend of God! Remember the definition of a friend by a woman in mourning: "A friend is one who comes in when the world goes out." I believe that the business of Heaven must have stopped for just a moment when God pronounced above the bier of Abraham the words, "My Friend." What an epitaph!

What was it in Abraham's career that made the patriarch worthy of being called the Friend of God?

1. Abraham *believed* God. The faith of Abraham was of such quality that the patriarch has gone down in history as *the father of the faithful* (Rom. 4:11, 16; Gal. 3:9, 3:23-29). Abram was seventy-five years old when the Call came to him. The Call was specific and the Divine promises were definite. He was to establish a family and father a great nation; his name was to be great; and through him all the peoples of earth were to be blessed. *That was what God said.* Faith is taking God at His word, and, nothing doubting, Abram gathered his substance together and all the family, including Lot, his brother's son, and left Ur of the Chaldees. At Haran they left the rest of their immediate kin behind and they themselves pushed on to an unknown destination. They went by faith, not knowing whither they went or where the end of their journey would be. Theirs was in every sense of the word *the pilgrimage of faith*. (Rom. 10:8-17, Heb. 11:8-12). Faith is the substance of things hoped for (that which stands under hope) and a conviction with respect to things *not seen*. So it was in Abram's case: "he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:1, 8; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Note Gen. 12:1-4. God *said* to Abram, etc., etc., and "Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." Where else can we find so great a communication so simply expressed? And where an



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answer expressing so much in so few words that mean so much to the human race? *That Call to Abram and Abram's response changed the entire course of human history.*

2. Abram heard the Call, and Abram *obeyed*. (1) His faith led to works of faith. We hear a great deal about "faith only" as equivalent to conversion. There is no such thing as "faith only": the Bible does not teach salvation by "faith only" any more than it teaches salvation by "baptism only" (1 Pet. 3:21). What would "faith only" be? What could it be but a pseudo-intellectual acquiescence that lacks any kind of real commitment? But Christian faith includes not only belief and confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16, 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10), but also the commitment of the whole man—in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Rom. 12:1-2)—to the authority and example of Christ (Col. 3:17). (2) Hence, the testimony of James that "as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:14-26). James' argument is twofold: (a) Faith that does not manifest itself in works (acts) of faith is dead, because it is only profession without practice; (b) even the devils believe and tremble: how worthless, then, must be faith alone! But does not this contradict what the Apostle Paul says in Rom. 3:20, "By works of law shall no flesh be justified" (accounted righteous) in God's sight. At first glance this statement from James appears to be diametrically opposed to Paul's teaching: for (1) Paul says, Rom. 3:28, "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law," whereas James asserts that "faith without works is dead," and that man is "justified by works and not only by faith" (Jas. 2:26, 24). (2) Paul speaks of Abraham as justified by *faith* (Rom. 4, Gal. 3:6 ff.), James says that he was justified by works (v. 21). (3) Paul, or the writer of Hebrews, appeals to the case

of Rahab as an example of *faith* (Heb. 11:31), but James cites her as an example of justification by *works* (v. 25). Gibson (PC, James, *in loco*): "The opposition, however, is only apparent: for (1) The two apostles use the word *erga* in different senses. In St. Paul it always has a deprecatory sense, unless qualified by the adjective *kala* or *agatha*. The works which he denies to have any share in justification are 'legal works,' not those which he elsewhere denominates the 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:22), which are the works of which St. James speaks. (2) The word *pistis* is also used in different senses. In St. Paul it is *pistis di' agapes energoumene* (Gal. 5:6): [*i.e.*, faith working through reverential love]; in St. James it is simply an orthodox creed, 'even the devils *pisteuousi*' (v. 19); it may, therefore, be barren of works of charity. (3) The Apostles are writing against different errors and tendencies: St. Paul against those who would impose the Jewish law and the rite of circumcision upon Gentile believers; St. James against 'the self-complacent orthodoxy of the Pharisaic Christian, who, satisfied with the possession of a pure monotheism and vaunting his descent from Abraham, needed to be reminded not to neglect the still weightier matters of self-denying love.' . . . (4) The Apostles regarded the new dispensation from different standpoints. With St. Paul it is the negation of the law: 'Ye are not under Law, but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). With St. James it is the perfection of Law." The term "works" has come to indicate different categories of human acts. (1) By works of the Law the Apostle Paul surely has reference to human acts included in the keeping of the Mosaic Law, both the Decalogue and the ritualistic aspect of it. Obviously, no human being *does* or even *can* keep the Ten Commandments perfectly: the sad fact is that all "have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). One must obey the requirments of the Decalogue to be considered a "moral" man: unfortunately in the view of

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the commonality morality is usually identified with respectability. Christianity demands infinitely more than obedience to the Law of Moses: it requires total commitment to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2), the royal law, the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 2:8, Matt. 22:34-40, Jas. 1:25, 2 Cor. 3:17), of which Love is essentially the fulfillment (Rom. 13:10). *Law is designed to distinguish right from wrong, and to protect the weak from the strong, but Law is powerless to save a single human soul. Salvation is by grace, through faith* (Eph. 2:8): *Grace overtures and states the conditions, and man by faith accepts and obeys, and so receives the fulfillment of the Divine promises.* (2) Again, in the gobbledygook of medieval psuedo-Christianity, such practices as indulgences, penance, counting beads, bowing before images, keeping feasts and fasts and solemn processions, sprinkling holy water as a feature of ritualistic priestly "blessings," extreme unction, praying souls out of purgatory, etc., etc., were often categorized as "works" by the Protestant reformers, beginning, of course, with Luther. But in our time Protestantism has ceased to protest: it too has drifted into a crass legalism and spiritless ritual (when not superseded entirely by the much-vaunted "social gospel"), a form of religion lacking the spirit thereof (hence, lacking the Holy Spirit), a state of the inner man which Jesus thoroughly despised. The two sins which He anathematized above all others were *formalism* and *hypocrisy*. (Cf. Matt., chs. 5, 6, 7, 23). (3) The works which James writes about are of a different kind altogether. They are works which proceed inevitably from the truly regenerated heart, from a living and active faith, the faith that leads to just such works of faith, without which religion is nothing but an empty shell, a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal (Cff. Matt. 3:7-9, 25:31-46; Luke 13:3, 3:7-14; Gal. 5:22-24; Jas. 1:27, 2:14-26, etc.). James is simply reiterating here the universal principle laid

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down by Jesus, and confirmed by human experience, that a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 7:16-20). (4) Baptism, the Communion, the tithes and offerings, almsgiving, worship, praise, meditation, prayer: by no stretch of the imagination can these acts be designated "works"; first, last, and always, they are acts of faith. They proceed only and inevitably from faith, and only from faith that is far more than mere intellectual assent, that is, from faith that is as living and active as the Word itself (Heb. 4:12). When God commands, faith raises no questions, but proceeds to take God at His word and to do what God commands to be done. Genuine faith will never start an argument at the baptismal pool. (5) Of course, *the motivating principle of the Spiritual Life from beginning to end is faith*. Repentance is faith deciding, choosing, will-ing; confession is faith declaring itself; baptism is faith witnessing to the facts of the Gospel (Rom. 6:17-18); the Communion is faith memorializing; worship is faith praising, thanking, adoring; the assembly of the saints is faith fellowshiping, etc. Any act that is Christian must be an act of faith. From the cradle to the grave the true Christian lives and acts, to the best of his knowledge and ability, by faith (Rom. 5:1), and by a faith that is full commitment.

3. This principle of *obedient faith* runs throughout the Spiritual Life, indeed it motivates it and controls it. God recognized Abraham as His Friend on the ground that Abraham did what He commanded him to do. This does not mean that he was perfect, but that his disposition, as in the case of Noah (Gen. 7:1, 6:22), was to obey God in all things. Of course, as we all know, Abraham did "slip" a little from the plumb line at times (cf. Amos 7:7-8), but admittedly the temptation was great. Abraham, like all of us, even the most devoted Christian, was a creature with all the weaknesses of his kind. It is difficult for any of us to attain a state of complete trust either

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in God or in our fellows, and many times we are compelled to cry out, as did the Apostles of old, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). But we have the assurance that "like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 103:13), and we have His promise that His grace is sufficient for our support if we will but call on Him for spiritual strength that we may need (2 Cor. 12:9, Rom. 8:26-28, 1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Pet. 2:9, etc.).

Conclusion: God requires—and expects—the same obedient faith on the part of His saints in all Dispensations, in ours as well as in those preceding it. Jesus makes this so clear that no one can misunderstand or claim ignorance as an alibi. "If ye love me," said He, "ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Again, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But our Lord hath greater love than this, in that He laid down His life even for His enemies, for the sin of the whole world (John 1:29). Again: "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). *The obedience of faith is the ultimate proof of friendship.* This—our Lord Himself declares—is the essence of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:24-27). Practice, He tells us, rather than profession, is the ultimate evidence of one's faith (Matt. 7:21-23). He is the Author of salvation to one class only—"unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

"Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." It would be "blind faith," to be sure, to do what a *man* commands *just because he commands it*. But it is intelligent faith to do what our Lord commands *just because He commands it*. It is always intelligent faith to do what is commanded by Perfect Wisdom, Perfect Justice and Perfect Love, as incarnate in the Logos, God's

Only Begotten. This is true, simply because Perfect Wisdom and Justice and Love would command only that which contributes to the good of His saints. Surely, then, Abraham deserved the title, Friend of God. Gen. 15:6—"And he [Abraham] believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." Abraham's belief manifested itself in obedience: when God called, Abraham heard, believed, and obeyed: this is what faith always does, if it is truly faith. Hence, when the ultimate proof came on Moriah (Gen. 22:2), the patriarch did not question, quail, or fail. He met the test in a sublime manifestation of the obedience of faith (Gen. 22:9-14). "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Would you be a friend of God? Then believe as Abraham believed, obey as Abraham obeyed, trust as Abraham trusted, walk as Abraham walked, give as Abraham gave (Gen. 14:18-20), sacrifice as Abraham sacrificed (Matt. 12:46-50, 10:37), die in faith as Abraham died in faith, anticipating that City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Will you not come now and start on that same glorious pilgrimage of faith that leads the faithful to that same City, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2)?

## REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-NINE

1. What important lessons are to be obtained from the story of Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael?
2. What, probably, was Sarai's motive in proposing that Abram take Hagar as his "secondary wife"?
3. What are some of the apparently never-ending consequences of this event?
4. What was the status of a concubine under Mesopotamian law?

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5. Why do we say that this event was ill-conceived and ill-timed?
6. Do you think that the Apostle's statement in Acts 17:30 has relevance in respect to this event? Explain your answer.
7. On what grounds are we justified in criticizing Sarai and Abram for their hasty action?
8. How does this story point up the realism of the Bible?
9. What was Hagar's sin following the awareness of her pregnancy? How did Sarai and Abram react to Hagar's attitude?
10. Explain how archeological discoveries have substantiated the details of this story. What do we learn from the Code of Hammurabi that is relevant to it? What do we learn from the Nuzi tablets?
11. What was Sarai's attitude toward Abram at this time? What was Abram's reply?
12. Why do we say that Sarai used the Divine Name irreverently (v. 5)?
13. How is Sarai's treatment of Hagar variously interpreted (v. 6)?
14. Is it conceivable that Abram might have been prepared to accept Ishmael as the Child of Promise? Explain your answer.
15. What does this incident teach us about the quality of genuine faith?
16. Was not the sin of Abram and Sarai their failure to await God's own pleasure as to the fulfillment of His promise? Explain.
17. What always happens when men presume to take matters of Divine ordination into their own hands?
18. Explain how Leupold deals more leniently with the principals in this story.
19. How was childlessness regarded in patriarchal times?
20. Explain the special far-reaching significance of the childlessness of Abram and Sarai.

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21. How does the legal background reflected in this story conform to the actual time element?
22. Explain how the stories of Ishmael and Isaac have to do with the law of inheritance in the Patriarchal Age.
23. What caused Hagar to flee from Sarai's presence?
24. What is indicated by the direction of Hagar's flight? Explain what was meant by "the way to Shur." What and where is the Negeb?
25. Describe the theophany which occurred at "the fountain of water."
26. Discuss fully the problem of the true identity of the Angel of Jehovah (Yahwe).
27. What interpretation of this title is in greatest accord with Biblical teaching as a whole?
28. Cite other Scriptures in which this Personage is pictured as taking a prominent role.
29. What reasons have we for not thinking of Him as a *created* being?
30. What reasons have we for thinking of Him as a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Eternal Logos?
31. What was the threefold revelation of the Angel to Hagar? Explain the Angel's question, command, and promise, respectively.
32. State the details of the prophetic statement concerning Ishmael and his seed.
33. What did Hagar learn from this visit of the Angel of the Lord?
34. What did Hagar name this famous well? Explain what the name means? What is its probable location?
35. Where did Hagar go, following the Angel's visit?
36. Show how the Angel's statement regarding the destiny of Ishmael's seed is fulfilled throughout history and even in our own time.
37. What is occurring today between the seed of Ishmael and Isaac's seed?



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38. Explain the full meaning of the term *anti-Semitic*. How is it being used erroneously today.
39. On what grounds are we justified in accepting Abraham as the Friend of God?
40. What is the norm by which our Lord Jesus distinguishes His friends from "followers afar off"? (Matt. 26:58).

## PART THIRTY

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE OLD COVENANT

(Genesis 17:1-27)

#### 1. *Synopsis of Chapter Seventeen*

"Again thirteen years rolled away, and still the Promise was not fulfilled. But when hope might almost have ceased to hope, God appeared once more to Abram, recapitulated the main outline of the Covenant-Promise, changed his name from Abram (*a high father*), to Abraham (*the father of a multitude*), and assured him that at length the long-expected time was well-nigh come. But in prospect of the peculiar blessing about to be bestowed upon him, he himself, and all his seed after him, must carry about with them a perpetual pledge of their covenant relation to Jehovah. The rite of Circumcision must now be adopted by him, and instead of being the badge of any favored class amongst the nation destined to spring from his loins, was, on pain of excommunication, to be open to the lowliest member of the Hebrew commonwealth, even to the bond-servant and the stranger. At the same time it was intimated to the patriarch that his wife Sarai, whose name also was now changed to SARAH (*princess*), and no other, was to be the mother of the promised child, that he would be born during the next year, and be called Isaac (*Laughter*); while Ishmael also, for whom Abraham had prayed, would not be forgotten, but be a partaker in the Divine blessing, and become the father of twelve princes, the ancestors of a great nation. Thereupon Abraham complied with the Divine command, and was circumcised, together with Ishmael, now thirteen years of age, and all the male members of his household" (COTH, 38-39).

#### 2. *The Covenant-Promise (17:1-8)*

1 *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God*

*Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

Leupold (EG, 511): "The basic fact to be observed for a proper approach to this chapter is that the covenant referred to is not a new one. For 15:18 reports the establishment of the covenant, whose essential provisions are the same as those here outlined. Consequently this chapter marks an advance in this direction, that the things previously guaranteed are now foretold as finally coming to pass: the one covenant promises certain blessings, the other the realization of these blessings when their appointed time has come. Criticism confuses issues by claiming that our chapter gives P's account of the covenant which was covered by J's account in the somewhat different fashion in chapter 15. Consequently it need not be wondered at, that the critical approach continually magnifies incidental differences and tries to set these two chapters at variance with one another. Furthermore, the distinct importance of our chapter is readily discerned. A man who has long been obligated to wait in unwavering faith certainly re-

quires clear promises of God upon which to build such faith. For faith must have a foundation. Here these promises, covering the essentials of numerous posterity and possession of the land, and involving by implication the Messianic features found in v. 12, now specify Sarai as the mother who is to bear the son, and also establish a covenant sign. Immediately before the birth of the son of promise these distinct features are, of course, most in place. Aside from this, to have all these promises featured as parts of the covenant seals everything for the faith of Abram which is now under necessity of hoping and believing against all hope."

"God's making a covenant here, and in many other places, denotes the enlargement, renewal, establishment, or confirmation of it. It cannot be imagined that, in various instances in which this phrase is used, He had not respect to His former declarations of the same kind as still in force." (SIBG, 239). (Psa. 105:8-10, Gen. 15:18, Exo. 34:10-27, 1 Ki. 8:9, Jer. 31:33, Hos. 2:18, Gen. 6:18, Exo. 6:4, Lev. 27:9, Deut. 8:11-20, Ezek. 16:60, 62, etc.) It should be noted that this is God's covenant with Abraham *in the wider sense*, that is, it included Abraham's posterity ("thee and thy seed after thee," v. 7). V. 4—"the father of a multitude of nations." This was fulfilled to the letter. Abraham was the progenitor of the Ishmaelites, the Israelites, the Midianites, the Edomites, and their kings (v. 20; Num., ch. 31, Gen., ch. 36, Matt., ch. 1) but chiefly Christ and His spiritual subjects (Gal. 3:23-29; Psa. 45:16; Rev. 17:14, 1:6, 11:15, 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:9, etc.). Isaac and his Israelite descendants were properly the *natural seed* with whom this covenant was established, v. 21. By it, God in Christ, became to the Israelites in general, the head of their nation and assumed them for His peculiar people (Exo. 19:5-6, Deut. 14:2, Eph. 1:11), bestowed on them the land of Canaan as His land, in the enjoyment of which they tasted His goodness, and had access to contem-

plate the glories of the new covenant state, and of the heavenly blessedness of spiritual Israel in Christ. (Note the parallelism between Exo. 19:5-6 and 1 Pet. 2:9-19). (Cf. Gen. 12:3, 3:6-9, Rom. 9:6-9, John 8:56, Heb. 11:8-16).

V. 1—Abram was *ninety-nine* years old when *all* the details of the covenant were made known to him. The long interval between this age and that given in 16:16 should be noted carefully. It marks a long delay in the fulfillment of the Promise, a tarrying on God's part; this, however, corresponds to the undue impatience and haste of Abram (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9).

V. 1—*El Shaddai*, "meaning *God Almighty*, from the root *shadad* (be violent, irresistibly strong). Some accept another interpretation, 'God of the mountain,' which is not to be taken as worship of nature (animism) but that God appeared to Abram on the mountain. *El Shaddai* appears to Abram when he is ninety-nine years of age, and when the birth of an heir seems literally impossible. The mighty God steps in and does the impossible" (HSB, 28). It should be noted that it is Yahweh, according to the text, who says, "I am *El Shaddai*." (This Name is found six times in Genesis and thirty-one times in Job). *Elohim*, according to Delitzsch, is the God who causes nature to be and to endure; *El Shaddai* is the God who constrains nature and subdues it, "so that it bows and yields itself to the service of grace." "*Walk before me, and be thou perfect*," said Yahweh to Abraham: "the one command demands a God-conscious life of the best type; the other, faithful observance of all duties. The one is sound mysticism; the other, conscientious conduct. The one is the soul of true religion; the other, the practice of it" (EG, 514). That this was another *theophany* is clear from v. 22; hence, "*Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him*," etc. Abram fell on his face "in token of his fear and reverence, as being afraid and ashamed to look

upon God" (cf. v. 17; Exo. 3:6, Lev. 9:24, Num. 22:31, Josh. 5:14, Judg. 13:20; Ezek. 1:28, 3:23, 9:8, 43:3; Dan. 8:17; Matt. 17:6, Rev. 1:17; cf. also Psa. 89:7, Deut. 4:24, Exo. 24:17; Heb. 10:31, 12:29; Gen. 28:16-17; Psa. 96:4, 9; Psa. 91:9; Rev. 15:4).

VV. 5, 15. *New names.* "God's giving names to persons imports His making them to correspond with them in their condition or usefulness" (Gen. 32:28; 2 Sam. 12:25; Isa. 62:2, 4:5; Rev. 2:17; Jer. 20:3, 23:6, 33:16; Matt. 1:21). Lange (CDHCG, 422): "The Hebrews connected the giving of names with circumcision (ch. 21:3 ff.; Luke 1:59, 2:21). The connection of the giving of names, and circumcision, effects a mutual explanation. The name announces a definite human character, the new name a new character (the new name, Rev. 2:17, the perfect stamp of individual character), circumcision, a new or renewed, and more noble nature." Jamieson (CECG, 151): "In eastern countries the name given in infancy is sometimes in the course of life altered: a change of name is an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank, or religion of the individual who bears it. The change is made variously—by the old name being entirely dropped for the new, or by conjoining the new with the old, or sometimes only a few letters are inserted, so that the altered form may express the difference in the owner's state or prospects. It is surprising how soon a new name is known, and its import spread through the country. In dealing with Abraham and Sarai, God was pleased to adapt his procedure to the ideas and customs of the country and age. There was no way, according to prevailing notions, in which the Divine promise would be so well remembered, and the splendid prospects of the patriarch became more widely known than by giving him and his wife new names, significant of their high destiny. Instead of Abram—*Ab* or *Abba*, father, and *ram*, high, 'a high father,' he was to be called—*Ab-ra-ham*on, father of a great multitude; and

this has been verified, whether he has been considered as the ancestor of the Jews, Arabs, etc., or as the Father of the Faithful." (Cf. Neh. 9:7-8). "For the ancients a name did not merely indicate, rather it made a thing what it was, and a change of name meant a change of destiny, cf. v. 15 and 35:10. *Abram* and *Abraham*, it seems, are in fact just two dialectical forms of the same name whose meaning is 'he is great by reason of his father, he is of noble descent.' In this place, however, *Abraham* is interpreted on the strength of its similarity with *ab hamon*, 'father of a multitude'" (JB, 33). Note also in this connection, Sarai's change of name to *Sarah* (v. 15). This new name "bears no different meaning from her former name but marks an added dignity nevertheless because of the circumstances involved" (EG, 526). As in the case of Abraham, "such a change is viewed as the external sign of an important turn in the life or function of the bearer. . . . The underlying concept was probably much the same as in a king's assumption of a special throne name. The event marked a new era" (ABG, 127). "Sarah and Sarai are two forms of the same name, which means 'princess'; Sarah is to be the mother of kings, v. 16" (JB, 33). The meaning that some attach to the name in saying that it means "the contender," is hardly appropriate. "'Sarah' means 'princess' or 'the princely one.' Without a special divine blessing it would, of course, have been a physical impossibility for Sarah to bring forth this son [Isaac]. Consequently this potent blessing of God is twice referred to: once in connection with this son, then in relation to 'the kings of peoples' that shall in the course of time spring from this son. But she who thus becomes the mother of kings certainly merits the name 'Princess'" (EG, 526).

Note carefully: "*thy seed after thee, throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant*" (v. 7), "*all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*" (vv. 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 19). *Everlasting*—how long? (1) Note how

modern analytical (destructive) criticism deals with this phase of the Promise: "With this cf. Ps. 105:44-45, where the possession of the land is regarded as necessary if Israel is to keep God's statutes and observe his laws. The chosen people was no abstract idea. Israel was a concrete reality, a people, however unique, among the peoples of the earth. To be itself and to achieve its destiny it needed its own land, in which would be the center of its religion—the temple—and within which it could freely order its life in accordance with the divine law. . . . This insistence on the part of P was in part an expression of the natural love of a people for its home. It was in part a consequence of the fact that Israel had as yet no adequate belief in life after death, so that God's promise had to be realized, if at all, here and now on this earth. Nevertheless, in insisting upon the importance of the natural community he was on sure ground for, without this insistence, belief in the supernatural becomes little more than a world-escaping piety" (IBG, 611-612). *Note well that under this view the spiritual (antitypical) aspect of this phase of the Promise, which indeed permeates the Bible throughout, in the Old Testament as anticipation, in the New as fulfillment, is utterly ignored. The critics seem to be completely blind with respect to the unity of the Bible as a whole. (2)*

"This covenant, as it respected the Hebrew nation, together with the possession of Canaan, and the various ceremonial ordinances by which they were marked the peculiar people of God, and in the observance of which they were to enjoy their rest and prosperity in Canaan, is represented as *everlasting* or *for ever*; but in these passages no more than a long time is meant (Gen. 48:4; Exo. 12:14, 17; 21:6, 31:17; 32:13, 40:15; Lev. 16:34; 25:23, 40, 46; Num. 10:8, 15:15, 18:9, 25:13; Deut. 4:40, 15:17, 18:5; Josh. 4:7, 14:9, etc.). But as this covenant respected Christ, and believers in him, it, and all the spiritual blessings contained in it, are everlasting in the strictest sense (Heb.



13:20; 9:12, 15; 1 Pet. 1:4, 2 Pet. 1:11). And it is perhaps chiefly because the covenant of peculiarity with Israel, and the ordinances and blessings thereof, prefigured these eternal relations and privileges that they are represented as *everlasting*" (SIBG, 240). (3) Jamieson (CECG, 152): "It is perfectly clear that this promise was meant to refer to the natural descendants of Abram, who, by the election of grace, were to be separated from the rest of the nations, and to the temporal blessings which it guaranteed to them (Rom. 11:16, 15:8). They were in their collective capacity to form the visible external Church; and in the sense of their being 'a chosen generation, a peculiar people,' though many of them were unbelievers, they were to be called the people of God, as is manifest from the words 'in their generations.' In this sense partly the covenant is called 'an everlasting covenant'; for it is continued in force down to the promulgation of the Gospel, when the national distinction ceased, by the admission of all mankind to the spiritual blessings contained in the Abrahamic covenant (Eph. 2:14). But further, in a spiritual point of view, it is called 'an everlasting covenant.' The promise is a promise made to the Church of all ages; for He who is not the God of the dead, but of the living, made it to 'Abraham and his seed' (Cf. Gal. 3:17). The sign of circumcision was annexed to it under the Jewish dispensation (cf. Acts 2:38, 39; Gal. 3:6, 7, 9, 14, 22, 26, 29; Heb. 8:10), and that of baptism under the Christian." (This writer goes on to justify the connection of fleshly circumcision with baptism as "spiritual circumcision," a notion which we shall give attention later. Suffice it to say that in the foregoing exegesis, although much of it is Scriptural, there are three obvious errors: (1) To say that the phrases under consideration here were meant to refer chiefly to the natural descendants of Abraham is contradicted in the latter part of the quotation by the applica-

tion of these phrases to the *spiritual* seed of Abraham: the Scriptures teach that the spiritual seed of Abraham were included, by Divine ordination, in the original promises to Abraham and his *seed*, i.e., the term *seed* included *from the beginning both the fleshly and the spiritual, the typical and the antitypical, the latter being of far greater import than the former* (John 8:56, Gal. 3:8, 29). (2) To speak of the Old Covenant people as a Church is utterly erroneous. The Church is the Divine institution which was established on Pentecost (Acts 2) and is used always in Scripture to designate God's people under the New Covenant. (3) *There is no Scriptural justification whatever for identifying baptism with spiritual circumcision.* The indwelling Holy Spirit, not baptism, is the sign and seal of the New Covenant (Acts 2:38, Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13, 4:30). (Spiritual circumcision is Scripturally explained *infra*.)

The simple fact of the matter is that these terms, *for ever* and *everlasting*, as used with respect to the land (Canaan) and the covenant, means *as long as the Old Covenant continued to be in force*: hence the import of the phrase, "throughout their generations." The Abrahamic Covenant, of course, was enlarged into a national covenant at Sinai, under the mediatorship of Moses (Exo. 19:5-6, 24:18, 34:28; Deut. 5:2, 9:9; cf. 1 Pet. 2:9, John 7:19; Gal. 3:15-22, etc.). That this Old Covenant would be abrogated and superseded by the New is expressly announced in the Old Testament itself (Jer. 31:31-34, cf. Heb. 8:6-13; Hos. 2:11; Amos 5:21, 8:10, etc.). The New Covenant, it should be understood, is not a continuation or enlargement of the Old: it is the New Covenant, mediated by Messiah Himself, and established upon better promises (John 1:17; Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24), in which Jews and Gentiles come together by induction into Christ (Gal. 3:27-29, Eph. 2:11-18) to form the *one new man*.

By His death on the Cross, our Lord at one and the same time abrogated the Old Covenant and ratified the New (Col. 2:13-15, Heb. 9:11-22).

*The Covenant-Promises:* these were first stated in Gen. 12:1-3, then variously amplified as repeated in Gen. 13:14-17, 15:1-2, 17:1-27, 22:15-19, etc. From careful analysis of these various passages we find that we have given here what may be regarded as *four distinct elementary promises*. These are (1) that Abraham should have a numerous offspring (Gen. 13:16, 15:3-5, 17:2-4, 22:17); (2) that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. 17:1-8); (3) that He would give to Abraham and to his seed, an everlasting possession (Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 15:18-21, 17:8); that He would bless all the peoples of the earth through him and his seed (Gen. 12:3, 22:18). "But nevertheless they may all in harmony with Scripture usage be regarded as but elementary parts of one and the same promise, made to Abraham and his seed (Acts 2:39; 13:23, 32; 26:6; Rom. 4:14, 16; Gal. 3:18, 22, 29, etc.); each part having a double reference: that is, looking to both the typical and the antitypical side of the Divine economy. The first element, for instance, was a pledge to Abraham that he would have a numerous family, first, according to the flesh, and secondly, according to the Spirit; the second, that God would be a God to both of these families, though in a far higher sense to the latter than to the former; the third, that each of these families would become heirs to an inheritance; and the fourth, that through each of them the world would be blessed" (Milligan, SR, 75-76). Through the fleshly seed of Abraham, the worship of the living and true God (monotheism) and the basic principles of the moral law (the Decalogue) were preserved and handed down to posterity; through the spiritual seed of Abraham, eternal good news of redemption through Christ Jesus is proclaimed to all nations for the obedience of faith (Exo. 3:14, Deut. 5:26, Acts 14:15,

1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 9:14, 10:31; Rev. 7:2; John 1:17, Exo. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17-18, 22:34-40; Rev. 14:6-8; Matt. 24:14, 28:18-20; Eph. 3:8-12, 1 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 1:16, 10:6-17; 1 Cor. 1:21-25, etc.)

### 3. *The Covenant-Sign* (17:9-14)

9 And God said unto Abraham, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 and the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

*Fleshly Circumcision:* "The Greeks had two words for covenant, viz., *suntheke* and *diatheke*. The former was used to denote a solemn agreement made between equals; and the latter, to denote any arrangement made by a superior for the acceptance and observance of an inferior. And hence it is, that all of God's covenants are expressed in Greek by the word *diatheke*. The word *suntheke* is not found in the New Testament; but *diatheke* occurs in it 33 times; and *b'reeth* is used 267 times in the Old Testament" (Milligan, SR. 77, n.). The former word indicates a contract; the latter, the distinction between a covenant and a contract.

*The time has now arrived for the details of the Old Covenant to be set forth.* "How could a rite of this sort be inaugurated at all in a satisfactory manner without clear directions a) as to what manner of operation it was to be (v. 11); or b) as to at what age it was to be administered (v. 12a); or c) as to who falls under its provisions, whether only the direct descendants of Abraham or also the slaves of the household (v. 12b); or d) as to the absolute or relative necessity of this rite for all those enumerated (v. 13). To impose the rite and leave all these problems open would merely have caused grievous perplexity to those entrusted with the duty of circumcision. Consequently, all such critical remarks as 'the legal style of this section is so pronounced that it reads like a stray leaf from the book of Leviticus,' are just another case where the nature of the circumstances that call for just such a presentation is confused with the problem of style. The question of various authors (J, E, and P) does not enter in at this point. No matter who the author is, the case in question calls for this kind of presentation of the necessary details" (EG, 522).

The details are, therefore, made very clear. Lange (CDHCG, 423): "1. The act of circumcision: the removal of the foreskin; 2. the destination; the sign of the covenant; 3. the time: eight days after the birth (see ch. 21:4, Lev. 12:3; Luke 1:59, 2:21; John 7:22, Phil. 3:5; Josephus, *Antiq.* I, 12, 2); 4. the extent of its efficacy: not only the children, but slaves born in the house (and those also bought with his money) were to be circumcised; 5. its inviolability: those who were not circumcised should be cut off, uprooted." Note also the clear specification here, v. 12—"every *male* throughout your generation," etc. Females were considered as represented in the males: thus the patriarchal authority was divinely confirmed and the unity and integrity of the family as well. The provisions of the Mosaic Law were directed toward the preservation

of the family as the social unit. Circumcision served to cement all families into a single family or people of God. (A people is rightly designated a nation.) It was the sign that set the national family (people) apart as belonging exclusively to the living and true God.

Skinner (ICCG, 293): "The *Berith* is conceived as a self-determination of God to be to one particular race all that the word God implies, a reciprocal act of choice on man's part being no essential feature of the relation." (Why say it was so *conceived*? According to the text it *was* a self-determination on God's part.) Concerning vv. 6-7, "*kings shall come out of thee*" (cf. Mic. 5:2), "*I will establish my covenant . . . to be a God unto thee.*" Jamieson writes (CECG, 151-152): "Had this communication to Abram been made at the time of his call, it could have conveyed no other idea to the mind of one who had been an idolater, and was imbued with the prejudices engendered by idolatry, than that, instead of the ideal fictitious deities he had been accustomed to look to and worship, the true, living, personal, God was to be substituted. But he had now for a long series of years become familiarized with the name, appearances, and educational training of Him who had called him, and therefore he was prepared to accept the promise in a wider and more comprehensive sense—to understand, in short, that to 'be a God unto him' included all that God had been, or had promised to be to him and to his posterity—an instructor, a guide, a governor, a friend, a wise and loving father, who would confer upon them whatever was for their good, chasten them whenever they did wrong, and fit them for the high and important destiny for which he had chosen them. It is perfectly clear that this promise was primarily meant to refer to the natural descendants of Abram, who, by the election of grace, were to be separated from the rest of the nations, and to the temporal blessings which it guaranteed to them (Rom. 11:16, 15:8)." Note again v. 7, "*to*

*be to thee a God.*" "The essence of the covenant relation is expressed by this frequently recurring formula" (Skinner, ICCG, 293).

Leupold (EG, 522): "So then, first of all, since a mark in the flesh might be cut into various parts of the body, the divine command specifies what man's thought might well have deemed improbable, that this cutting was to be 'in the flesh'—euphemism—of their foreskin. Such a *peritome* will then certainly be 'a sign of a covenant' between God and a member of the covenant people. So little does the unsanctified mind appreciate the issues involved, that in the eyes of the Gentiles circumcision was merely an occasion for ridicule of the Jews." Again (p. 524): "It certainly is passing strange to find critics referring to this solemn rite which God ordained as a 'taboo'—'the taboo of the household required the circumcision' of the purchased slave child (Procksch). Taboos are superstitious practices: here is one of the most solemn divine institutions of the Old Testament."

*History of Circumcision.* Speiser (ABG, 126): "Circumcision is an old and widely diffused practice, generally linked with puberty and premarital rites. In the ancient Near East it was observed by many of Israel's neighbors, among them the Egyptians, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and certain other nomadic elements (cf. Jer. 9:26). But the Philistines did not follow it (cf. 2 Sam. 1:20), and neither did the 'Hivites' (*i.e.*, Horites) of Central Palestine (Gen. 34:15). Nor was the custom in vogue in Mesopotamia. Thus the patriarchs would not have been likely to adopt circumcision prior to their arrival in Canaan, which is just what the present account says in another way. . . . Eventually, the rite became a distinctive group characteristic, and hence also a cultural and spiritual symbol. To P, however, it was essential proof of adherence to the covenant." (P, of course, is the Priestly Code, to which this chapter is assigned by the critics.) Toy

(IHR, 68 ff.): "The most widely diffused of such customs of initiation is the gashing or the complete removal of the prepuce. It existed in ancient times among the Egyptians, the Canaanites, and the Hebrews (for the Arabs, the Syrians, and the Babylonians and Assyrians we have no information), not, so far as the records go, among the Greeks, Romans, and Hindus. At the present time it is found among all Moslems and most Jewish communities, throughout Africa, Australia, Polynesia and Melanesia, and, it is said, in Eastern Mexico. It is hardly possible to say what its original distribution was, and whether or not there was a single center of distribution. As to its origin many theories have been advanced. Its character as initiatory is not an explanation—all customs of initiation needed to have their origins explained." This author goes on to list these various theories as to the origin of the practice, giving also the objections to them as follows: 1. "It cannot be regarded as a test of endurance, for it involves no great suffering, and neither it nor the severer operation of sub-incision (practiced in Australia) is ever spoken of as an official test." 2. "A hygienic ground is out of the question for early society. The requisite medical observation is then lacking, and there is no hint of such a motive in the material bearing on the subject. . . . The exact meaning of Herodotus's statement that the Egyptians were circumcised for the sake of cleanliness, preferring it to beauty, is not clear; but in any case so late an idea throws no light on the beginnings." (Cf. Herod. II, 7). 3. "Somewhat more to the point is Crawley's view that the object of the removal of the prepuce is to get rid of the dangerous emanation from the physical secretion therewith connected. . . . But this view, though conceivably correct, is without support from known facts. . . . There is no trace of fear of the secretion in question. . . . nor does this theory account for the custom of subincision." 4. "As circumcision is often performed shortly before marriage,



it has been suggested that its object is to increase procreative phimosis. . . . Such an object, however, is improbable for low stages of society—it implies an extent of observation that is not to be assumed for savages.” 5. “There is no clear evidence that the origin of circumcision is to be traced to religious conceptions. It has been held that it is connected with the cult of the generative organs (phallic worship). . . . But each of these customs is found frequently without the other: In India we have phallic worship without circumcision, in Australia circumcision without phallic worship; and this separateness of the two may be said to be the rule. The cult of the phallus seems not to exist among the lowest peoples.” 6. “The view that circumcision is of the nature of a sacrifice or dedication to a deity, particularly to a diety of fertility, appears to be derived from late usages in times when more refined ideas have been attached to early customs. The Phrygian practice of excision was regarded, probably, as a sacrifice. But elsewhere, in Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, and Canaan, where the worship of gods and goddesses of fertility was prominent, we do not find circumcision connected therewith. In the writings of the Old Testament prophets it is treated as a symbol of moral purification. Among the lower peoples there is no trace of the conception if it as a sacrifice. It is not circumcision that makes the phallus sacred—it is sacred in itself, and all procedures of savage veneration for the prepuce assume its inherent potency.” 7. Nor can circumcision be explained as an attenuated survival of human sacrifice. “The practice (in Peru and elsewhere) of drawing blood from the heads or hands of children on solemn occasions may be a softening of an old savage custom, and the blood of circumcision is sacred. But this quality attaches to all blood, and the essential thing in circumcision is not the blood but the removal of the prepuce.” 8. “The suggestion that the object of detaching and preserving the foreskin (a vital part of one’s

self) is to lay up a stock of vital energy, and thus secure reincarnation for the disembodied spirit, is putting an afterthought for origin. The existence of the practice in question is doubtful, and it must have arisen, if it existed, after circumcision had become an established custom. Savages and other peoples, when they feel the need of providing for reincarnation, commonly preserve the bones or the whole body of the deceased."

Lange (CDHCG, 423, 424): "The Epistle of Barnabas, in a passage which has not been sufficiently regarded (ch. 9) brings into prominence the idea, that we must distinguish circumcision, as an original custom of different nations, from that which receives the patriarchal and theocratic sanction. 'The heathen circumcision,' as Delitzsch remarks, 'leaving out of view the Ishmaelites, Arabians, and the tribes connected with them both by blood and in history, is thus very analogous to the heathen sacrifice. As the sacrifice sprang from the feeling of the necessity for an atonement, so circumcision from the consciousness of the impurity of human nature.' But that the spread of circumcision among the ancient nations is analogous to the general prevalence of sacrifice, has not yet been proved. It remains to be investigated, whether the national origin of circumcision stands rather in some relation to religious sacrifice; whether it may possibly form an opposition to the custom of human sacrifice (for it is just as absurd to view it with some, as a remnant of human sacrifice, as to regard it with others, as a modification of eunuchism); whether it may have prevailed from sanitary motives, or whether it has not rather from the first had its ground and source in the idea of the consecration of the generative nature, and of the propagation of the race. *At all events, circumcision did not come to Abraham as a custom of his ancestors; he was circumcised when ninety-nine years of age. This bears with decisive weight against the generalizing of the custom by Delitzsch. As to the destination of*

*circumcision to be the sign of the covenant, its patriarchal origin is beyond question.*" Again, Gosman (CDHCG, 424): "As the rainbow was chosen to be the sign of the covenant with Noah, so the prior existence of circumcision does not render it less fit to be the sign of the covenant with Abraham, nor less significant." Murphy (MG, 310): "The rainbow was the appropriate natural emblem of preservation from a flood; and the removal of the foreskin was the fit symbol of that removal of the old man and renewal of nature, which qualified Abraham to be the parent of a holy seed. And as the former sign foreshadows an incorruptible inheritance, so the latter prepares the way for a holy seed, by which the holiness and the heritage will at length be universally extended." Again, Lange, *ibid.*, p. 424): "See John 7:22. Still it was placed upon a new legal basis by Moses (Exo. 4:24, 25; Lev. 12:3), and was brought into regular observance by Joshua (Josh. 5:2). That it should be the symbol of the new birth, *i.e.*, of the sanctification of human nature, from its source and origin, is shown both by the passages which speak of the circumcision of the heart (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 9:25; Ezek. 44:7), and from the manner of speech in use among the Israelites, in which Jewish proselytes were described as new-born."

*Details of the Ordinance of Circumcision.* (1) V. 10—"every male among you shall be circumcised." (Cf. Exo. 12:48-49, Josh. 5:3, 7). This allowed for no exceptions; at the same time it exempted all females. (It should be noted that circumcision of girls (by the removal of the clitoris and the labia minora) was a common custom among many primitive peoples and continues to be practised by some groups in our own time. Closely related to circumcision of girls was the practice of introcision (enlargement of the vaginal orifice by tearing it downward) and infibulation (the closing of the labia just after circumcision). The first two of the practices mentioned were

for the purpose of facilitating coition; the last-named was for the purpose of preventing coition until the proper age was reached. These practices were all characteristic of initiation ceremonies associated with arrival at the age of puberty. Obviously this could not have been the design of circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant: hence, we must conclude that in it females were considered as represented by the males, as stated above. (2) V. 8—“*he that is eight days old*” (cf. Lev. 12:3; Luke 1:59; 2:21; Phil. 3:5). This specific age requirement shows that *in the Abrahamic covenant circumcision could not have been a puberty rite in any sense of the term*: we know of no puberty rites performed on infants only eight days old. (Note the interesting case of Zipporah and Moses and their two sons, Exo. 2:22, 18:2-4, 4:24-26. The narrative in vv. 24-26 is somewhat obscure. It seems, however, that Eliezer had been born a few days before Zipporah and Moses set out on the journey back to Egypt. In the course of the journey, the eighth day from the birth of the child arrived and his circumcision should have taken place. Evidently the rite was repugnant to Zipporah and she deferred it, with Moses weakly consenting to this act of disobedience. At the end of the eighth day, when Moses went to rest for the night, he was seized by what was probably a dangerous illness of some kind. This he rightly regarded as a divinely inflicted punishment, visited on him for his act of disobedience. “To dishonor that sign and seal of the covenant was criminal in any Hebrew, particularly so in one destined to be the leader and deliverer of the Hebrews; and he seems to have felt his sickness as a merited chastisement for the sinful omission. Concerned for her husband’s safety, Zipporah overcomes her maternal feelings of aversion to the painful rite, performs it herself, by means of one of the sharp flints with which that part of the desert abounded, an operation which her husband, on whom the

duty devolved, was unable to do; and having brought the bloody evidence, exclaimed, in the painful excitement of her feelings, that from love to him she had risked the life of her child" (Jamieson, CEC, Exo., *in loco*). Note her reproachful words, "Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me." That is, "surely I have redeemed thy life, and, as it were, wedded thee anew to me in the bloody circumcision of thy son" (SIB, Exo., *in loco*). Note the following explanation (JB, 83): "Zipporah circumcises her son and simulates circumcision for her husband by touching his male organ with her son's foreskin." "Not to circumcise was tantamount to abrogating the covenant (Gen. 17:14) and meant that the uncircumcised was cut off from inclusion in the covenant people. Since the advent of Christ, real circumcision has been of the heart and not of the flesh, Rom 2:29" (HSB, 89). The rite once performed, albeit reluctantly, God abated His anger and permitted Moses to recover his strength and continue his journey to Egypt. *This incident surely proves that fleshly circumcision was not to be treated lightly under the Old Covenant. It points up the fact also that no divine ordination is to be treated lightly. Think of the many ways in which churchmen have ignored, rejected, distorted, even ridiculed, Christian baptism!* (3) *Why on the eighth day?* Perhaps because it was held that the child was not separated and purified from its embryonic state until seven days had gone by following birth, seven having been regarded as the number (symbol) of perfection and the week of birth was a terminus for the birth throes and labor (the time element may have been definitely connected with the ceremonial purification of the mother, Lev. 12). Moreover, as the law regarded animals used for sacrifice as entering upon their independent existence with the eighth day (Exo. 22:30, Lev. 22:17), so the human infant was probably viewed from the same angle.

The following summation (K<sup>1</sup>D, 227) is worthy of careful study here: "Eternal duration was promised only to the covenant established by God with the seed of Abraham, which was to grow into a multitude of nations, but not to the covenant institution which God established in connection with the lineal posterity of Abraham, the twelve tribes of Israel. Everything in this institution which was of a local and limited character, and only befitted the physical Israel and the earthly Canaan, existed only so long as was necessary for the seed of Abraham to expand into a multitude of nations. So again it was only in its essence that circumcision could be a sign of the eternal covenant. Circumcision, whether it passed from Abraham to other nations, or sprang up among other nations independently of Abraham and his descendants, was based upon the religious view that the sin and moral impurity which the fall of Adam had introduced into the nature of man had concentrated itself in the sexual organs, because it is in sexual life that it generally manifests itself with peculiar force; and, consequently, that for the sanctification of life, a purification or sanctification of the organ of generation, by which life is propagated, is especially required. In this way circumcision in the flesh became a symbol of the circumcision, *i.e.*, the purification of the heart (Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4, 9:25, Ezek. 44:7), and a covenant sign to those who received it, inasmuch as they were received into the fellowship of the holy nation (Exo. 19:6), and required to sanctify their lives, in other words, to fulfill all that the covenant demanded. It was to be performed on every boy on the eighth day after birth, not because the child, like its mother, remains so long in a state of impurity, but because, as the analogous rule with regard to the fitness of young animals for sacrifice would lead us to conclude, this was regarded as the first day of independent existence (Lev. 22:27, Exo. 22:29)."

(4) Vv. 12, 13—Every male child "*that is born in thy house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed*" (cf. Lev. 24:22, Num. 15:15-16). Murphy (MG, 310): This "points out the applicability of the covenant to others, as well as the children of Abraham, and therefore its capability of universal extension when the fullness of the time should come. It also intimates the very plain but very often forgotten truth, that our obligation to obey God is not cancelled by our unwillingness. The serf is bound to have his child circumcised as long as God requires it, though he may be unwilling to comply with the divine commandments." It will be noted that the two classes specified here were those male children born within the limits of Abraham's own household, and foreign male children born of parents who had been bought with his money. Obviously these two classes had to be taught to "know Jehovah" after their induction into the covenant. Cf. Jer. 31:31-34—here we learn that this fleshly covenant was to give way in due time to a new spiritual covenant, a covenant of faith; that is, all who enter into this new covenant relationship should "know Jehovah" as a condition of admission. Under this New Covenant God's law would be written in their hearts (put into their inward parts) as a prerequisite of their induction into the covenant (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-11, Heb. 8:6-13). Fleshly circumcision should give way to spiritual circumcision, circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:9-13). But now the further question: Were such uncircumcised slaves and slave children incorporated into the chosen people by this rite? Leupold (EG, 524): "We believe that the answer must be, Yes. Israel certainly never had a separate slave class, who were deemed inferior beings and mere chattels. What then became of the slaves that originally were part of the household establishment and went down into Egypt at Jacob's time? The answer seems to be: They were naturally absorbed by the Israelites and blended with the

Israelite stock, adopting the Israelite religion. So with all its necessary exclusiveness Israel was at the same time broader in its attitude than many assume. But there certainly could be little hesitation about letting circumcised slaves be merged with the chosen race." The rite of circumcision, instead of being the badge of any favored class within the nation destined to spring from Abraham's loins, was, on pain of excommunication, to be open to the lowliest member of the commonwealth of Israel, even to the bond-servant and the stranger. (5) *The penalty for disobedience*, either by omission or commission: "that soul shall be cut off from his people." Not infants, who could not circumcise themselves, but such as wilfully neglected the ordinance when they grew up, would nationally be *cut off from their people*. Anyone who renounced this distinguishing mark of Abraham's seed, renounced his covenant alliance with God and fellowship with His people. Nothing could be more reasonable, therefore, than that they should be excluded from the privileges of the nation and accounted as heathens. This is the import of *cutting off from his people* in most of the passages where we find the phrase (cf. Exo. 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38.—Lev. 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 10, 14; 22:3.—Num. 9:3, 19:13, 20). In some passages, however, death is certainly connected with the phrase, that is, death by the immediate hand of God thru the magistrate (cf. Exo. 31:14; Lev. 18:29, 19:8; 20:3, 5, 6, 17; Num. 15:30, 31, 32-36). It is difficult to determine whether this phrase indicated anything beyond *excommunication* in the present instance. Certainly, however, to despise and reject the sign, was to despise and reject the covenant itself; hence, he who neglects or refuses the sign, "*he hath broken my covenant*" (v. 14). It can not be doubted that in some cases capital punishment (by stoning to death) was the sanction inflicted for flagrant violations of God's law under the Mosaic institution. However, "to suppose that such was its meaning here necessi-



tates the restriction of the punishment to adults, whereas with the alternative signification no such restriction requires to be imposed on the statute. The uncircumcised Hebrew, whether child or adult, forfeited his standing in the congregation, i.e., ceased to be a member of the Hebrew commonwealth: *he hath broken my covenant*" (Whitelaw, PCG, 234).

*Design of the Covenant Sign.* "Not a divinely ordained instrumentality for initiation into the people of God, at least not for a native Israelite. He was a member of the people of God by virtue of birth. By circumcision he was made aware of his covenant obligations and received a perpetual badge or reminder of these obligations" (Leupold, EG, 521). Was it, as some would have it, "a self-imposed obligation on the part of God, irrespective of any condition on the part of man," or was it, as others would say, "a bilateral engagement involving reciprocal obligations between God and men"? We think Skinner's explanation is more to the point (ICCG, 298): "The truth seems to lie somewhere between two extremes. The *Berith* is neither a simple divine promise to which no obligation on man's part is attached (as in 15:18), nor is it a mutual contract in the sense that the failure of one party dissolves the relation. It is an immutable determination of God's purpose, which no unfaithfulness of man can invalidate; but it carries conditions, the neglect of which will exclude the individual from its benefits." (The same is equally true of the New Covenant). Circumcision here "becomes a sign which, like the rainbow of 9:16-17, is to remind God of his Covenant and man of the obligations deriving from his belonging to chosen people" (JB, 33, n.). "Circumcision was covenantal in nature, being the outward sign or seal of the Abrahamic agreement which God made (17:11). The failure to be circumcised separated one from the people of Israel. The command was perpetuated in

the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:3, John 7:22, 23). In the gospel dispensation, circumcision was abolished (Eph. 2:11-15, Col. 3:11), and to require it now is to revert to legalism. Circumcision in this age is of the heart and not of the flesh, but even when it was binding it had no value unless accompanied by faith and obedience (Rom. 3:30, Gal. 5:6, Rom. 2:25, 1 Cor. 7:19)" (HSB, 28). The most important fact of all is that *circumcision is tied up closely with the Messianic hope*. "For if it indicates the purification of life at its source, it in the last analysis points forward to Him through whom all such purification is to be achieved, who is Himself also to be born by a woman, but is to be He in whom for the first time that which circumcision prefigures will be actually realized" (EG, 521).

#### 4. *The Covenant-Heir* (vv. 15-21)

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. 16 And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. 17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18 And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

*The Child of Promise.* Sarah, not having mentioned hitherto in any of the divine promises, is now explicitly taken into the covenant, and accordingly receives a new name. (Cf. Gen. 32:27-28, Isa. 62:2, Rev. 3:12). In view of the fact that she is to be the mother of the covenant-heir, her name will no longer be Sarai, but Sarah (princess); that is, whereas formerly she was Abraham's princess only, she is now to be recognized as princess generally, especially as princess to the Lord. Moreover, it is now expressly announced for the first time that the Child of Promise—the promised seed—was to be Sarah's child; that he should be born "at this set time in the next year"; that his name should be Isaac ("laughter"). (Cf. 16:11 on naming prior to birth). V. 16—"A mother of nations she shall be; kings of peoples shall be of her." This promise did not include the Ishmaelites or the sons of Keturah (25:1-4): they were not born of Sarah. The Israelites descended from her, but were only one nation. Hence this promise must mean that the posterity of Abraham embraced his spiritual posterity also, *i.e.*, all peoples who are "grafted" into the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 4:11, 12, 16, 17; 11:15-24). Aptly she was named *Sarah*: she was to bear the child of promise, to become a mother of peoples, and a mother of kings. History testifies, of course, that all the parts of this divine promise were literally fulfilled.

*Abraham's Laughter*, v. 7. Interpretations of the patriarch's response to this announcement of the identity of the Child of Promise are varied. For example, Skinner (ICCG, 295) "Abraham's demeanor is a strange mixture of reverence and incredulity." Cornfeld (AtD, 67): "God was not conceived as impersonal in patriarchal times, and if we are to understand properly the biblical texts, we must develop a feeling for a social phenomenon of the times, the closeness of men to gods, and of the Hebrews to God. In our society a man who claims to have divine visitors is

regarded as queer. That is why it is not easy for every modern reader, who is not familiar with the ancient background and literatures, to understand that aspect of Hebrew society. For the ancient Hebrews, the human and divine intermingled freely. The early direct relationship between men and gods is common to all the epics: Ugarit, Mesopotamian, Greek and proto-patriarchal. This simple personal contact between men and God was gradually eliminated." Again: "A charming tradition illustrates how Abraham, on intimate terms with the Lord, dared to intercede with him, in the famous dialogue over the problem of the wicked people of Sodom and its few, hypothetical righteous men." (Cf. Moses and God, Exo. 19:7-15; Num. 11:10-23, 14:11-35). But, note Lange's comment (CDHCG, 424): "That the interpreter . . . knows nothing of a laugh of astonishment, in connection with full faith, indeed, in the immediate experience of the events (Psa. 126:1-2) is evident. . . . We may confidently infer from the different judgments of Abraham's laughter here, and that of Sarah, which is recorded afterward, that there was an important distinction in the states of mind from which they sprang. The characteristic feature in the narration here is, that Abraham fell upon his face, as at first, after the promise, v. 2." "The laughter of Abraham was the exultation of joy, not the smile of unbelief" (Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 16, 26). Certainly the laughter of Sarah later (18:12-15) was one of incredulity, but the concept of Abraham in a derisive attitude toward God is not in keeping with the patriarch's character. Murphy (MG, 311): "From the reverential attitude assumed by Abraham we infer that his laughter sprang from joyful and grateful surprise. *Said in his heart*. The following questions of wonder are not addressed to God; they merely agitate the breast of the astonished patriarch. Hence his irrepressible smile arises not from any doubt of the fulfillment of the promise, but from surprise at the unexpected

mode in which it is to be fulfilled. Laughing in Scripture expresses joy in the countenance, as dancing does in the whole body." Jamieson (CSCG, 153): "It was not the sneer of unbelief, but a smile of delight at the prospect of so improbable an event (Rom. 4:20); he fully believed the word of God; there was humility blended with wonder and joy. This is what our Lord alluded to, John 8:56. As Abraham saw heaven in the promise of Canaan, so he saw Christ in the promise of Isaac (laughter.)" "Abraham's laughter is to be echoed by Sarah's, 18:12, and Ishmael's, 21:9 (see also 21:6): each is an allusion to the name Isaac . . . which means, 'May God smile, be kind' or 'has smiled, has been kind.' Abraham's laughter is a sign not so much of unbelief as of surprise at the extraordinary announcement; his mention of Ishmael, present heir-apparent to the Promise, is an implicit request for reassurance." Speiser would render it, *he smiled*, anticipating the personal name *Isaac*. He adds (ABG, 125): "A Hurro-Hittite tale describes the father (Appu) as placing his newborn son on his knees and rejoicing over him. Such acts were often the basis for naming the child accordingly. The shortened form *Isaac* (with the subject left out) undoubtedly reflects some such symbolic gesture: (X) rejoiced over, smiled on (the child), etc." Leupold (EG, 527): "From what follows it becomes very clear that Abraham's attitude in no way lays him open to blame. Nothing is indicative of doubt or misgivings in his reply. Consequently, when he falls upon his face, this is an act of worshipful adoration. Also his laughter is the laughter of joy and surprise. A host of glad feelings is called forth in him at this precious promise. So, too, the questions express no doubt but happy wonder. For saying 'to himself' the Hebrew uses the more expressive *belibbo*, 'in his heart.'" "Abraham laughed, in virtue of his firm belief of the promise, and his satisfaction therein (Rom. 4:16-25, John 8:56); but

Sarah laughed in unbelieving derision, ch. 18:12 (SIB, 240). "After twenty-four years of impatient waiting, the words of God seem an idle fancy to Abraham. All of the outward circumstances were against him. The biological facts of life stood over against the promise of God. Sight and sense told him the promise was impossible of fulfillment. Yet Abraham was a man of faith who had moments of doubt. How much we can learn from his laugh of disbelief here!" (HSB, 29).

*Abraham's Intercession for Ishmael* v. 18. Would that Ishmael might live in your favor! was Abraham's plea. We may assume—or so it seems to this writer—that Abraham had fallen into the erroneous expectation that the divine promise would be fulfilled in Ishmael, and since there is no record of any divine correction of his error in the meantime, it is difficult to see how the patriarch could have avoided this conclusion. Undoubtedly Hagar had communicated to him the substance of the revelation granted her as to her own son's destiny (16:10-11) and this surely would have strengthened his conviction. Now he receives the final communication from God which expressly identifies the covenant-heir as Sarah's child who is to be born "at this set time in the next year," his paternal solicitude manifests itself for the firstborn, the child of the handmaiden. "It puts an end to the old, sad doubt, in regard to Ishmael, since it starts a new and transient doubt in reference to the promise of Isaac; therefore there is mingling with his faith, not yet perfect on account of the joy (Luke 24:41), a beautiful paternal feeling for the still beloved Ishmael, and his future of faith. Hence the intercession for Ishmael, the characteristic feature of which is, a question of love, whether the son of the long-delayed hope, should also hold his share of the blessing" (Lange, CDHCG, 425). Let Ishmael live and prosper under thy favor, was Abraham's plea. God answers, "I have heard

thee," and agrees to bestow His blessing in a fourfold manner; Ishmael is to be fruitful, that is, prolific; he is to be multiplied exceedingly; he is to beget twelve princes (cf Gen. 25:12-16): he is to become "a great nation" (people). Some nations might have called these rulers "kings," but the Ishmaelites called them "princes." Nevertheless, the divine promise is expressly reaffirmed: *the true covenant-beir shall be Sarah's child* (v. 21). ("As for Ishmael, I have heard thee," an allusion to the significance of the name Ishmael, which means "God hears.") "Abraham still hoped that Ishmael would be recognized, but this plea and God's answer in v. 19 shows that man's answers and ways can never be substituted for God's" (HSB, 29). The blessings of the covenant were reserved for Isaac, but common blessings were to be showered abundantly on Ishmael; and though the covenant relationship did not descend from his family, yet personally he might, and it is to be hoped *did*, enjoy its benefits. "And God left off talking with him, and God *went up* from Abraham," went up to heaven. (cf. 35:13): a most interesting concluding statement.

#### 5. Abraham's Obedience, vv. 22-27

22 *And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.*

23 *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin; in the self-same day, as God had said unto him.* 24 *And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.* 25 *And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.* 26 *In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son;* 27 *And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.*

The prompt obedience of Abraham is shown by his circumcising himself and all male members of his household without delay ("in the selfsame day"). The text indicates that Abraham performed the rite upon himself and upon Ishmael first, and then upon the men of his house, "those born in the house and those bought with money of a foreigner." Abraham was 99 and Ishmael 13 years old when the circumcision was performed. (According to the testimony of Josephus, *Ant.* I. 12. 2, the Arabs delay circumcision until the 13th year. By Moslems Ishmael is hailed as an ancestor, buried with his mother in the Kaaba at Mecca.) "Abraham's faith triumphed over his doubts. He responded to the covenant by circumcising himself and all his males. Thus he passed another crucial stage in his walk and experience with the covenant-keeping God! (HSB, 29). Note well, v. 27—"all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him." Jamieson (CECG, 154): "Whatever had become the heathen version of this symbol, no one will deny that when the Hebrew patriarch circumcised the members of his household, he both acted with a definite purpose and was animated by a spirit thoroughly religious. The symbol was profoundly ethical, and was distinguished not only for its equal operation, but the grandeur of the end for which it was appointed. Translated into words, the meaning of it was, 'be ye holy, for I am holy.' Outward in the flesh, and so, accordant with the sterner genius of the old economy, it imprinted on the mind of every Hebrew the peculiar closeness of his own relations to the pure and perfect God, and the necessity therein implied of fearing and loving Him, and circumcising (Deut. 10:12-16) more and more 'the foreskin of the heart.' The narrative describes the rite as performed upon 'every male' in 'Abraham's house.' Females had no equivalent for it. The



absence of circumcision, however, did not convey the idea that the privileges of the covenant were not applicable to woman also, but that she was dependent, and that her position in the natural and covenant-life was not *without* the husband, but *in* and *with* him—not in her capacity as *woman*, but as *wife* (and *mother*). Woman was sanctified and set apart in and with man; in and with him she had part in the covenant, and so far as her nature and position demanded and admitted of it, she had to co-operate in the development of the covenant!"

The Covenant, God repeated (v. 21) for emphasis no doubt, should be established with Isaac whom Sarah was to bear to Abraham at that very time in the following year. "Since Ishmael therefore was excluded from participating in the covenant grace, which was ensured to Isaac alone; and yet Abraham was to become a multitude of nations, and that through Sarah, who was to become 'nations' through the son she was to bear (v. 16); this 'multitude of nations' could not include either the Ishmaelites or the tribes descended from the sons of Keturah (ch. 25:2 ff.), but the descendants of Isaac alone; and as one of Isaac's two sons received no part of the covenant promise, but only the descendants of Jacob alone. But the whole of the twelve sons of Jacob founded only the *one* nation of Israel, with which Jehovah established the covenant made with Abraham (Exo. chs. 6, 20-24), so that Abraham became through Israel the lineal father of *one* nation only. From this it necessarily follows, that the posterity of Abraham, which was to expand into a multitude of nations, extends beyond this one lineal posterity, and embraces the spiritual posterity also, *i.e.*, all nations who are grafted *ex piteos Abraam* into the seed of Abraham, Rom. 4:11, 12, 16, 17)." (KD, 226). By this enlargement it follows that in reality Abraham received the promise "that he should be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13).

To summarize: "The covenant plays an important role in Abraham's experience. Note the successive revelations of God after the initial promise to which Abraham responded in obedience. As God enlarged this promise, Abraham exercised faith which was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen. 15). In this covenant the land of Canaan was specifically pledged to the descendants of Abraham. With the promise of the son, circumcision was made the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17). This covenant promise was finally sealed in Abraham's act of obedience when he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22)." (Schultz, OTS, 34).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### *The Two Covenants, or From Sinai to Calvary*

John 1:17, Gal. 3:23-29, Heb. 8, 2 Cor. 3.

Every student of the Bible knows that it consists of two general divisions or parts: what is known as the Old Testament or Covenant, and what is known as the New Testament or Covenant (the Testaments being the stereotyped records of the respective Covenants); what is known as the Law before the Cross, and what is known as the Gospel since the Cross; what is known as the "letter" on the other side of the Cross, and what is known as the "spirit" on this side; what is called the ministration of death" on the other side, and what is called "the ministration of life" on this side; what is known as "the ministration of condemnation" on the other side, and what is known as "the ministration of righteousness" on this side. Calvary is the dividing line. When Jesus died on the Cross, the Partition Veil, *i.e.*, the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, of the Temple, was rent in twain (Matt. 27:51), thus symbolizing the point of demarcation between the Covenants and signifying that for the first time since man's fall, the way into heaven itself,

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the Holy of Holies, was opened up; that humanity had unhindered access to the Throne of Grace, through Christ, and without the services of an officiating earthly priesthood. In brief the rent veil symbolized the abrogation of the Old Covenant and the ratification of the New.

The books of the Old Testament point forward in type, symbol, metaphor and prophecy, to Christ and His church as revealed in the New Testament. The subject-matter of the Old Testament is valuable to us historically, and in its delineation of human character and its treatment of the problems of everyday living, its ethical value is inestimable. Its evidential worth, in laying a proper foundation for the Christian system, is immeasurable. *But the books of the Old Testament do not reveal the Christian religion.* Though inspired by the Holy Spirit, they were for the fleshly seed of Abraham. Christianity is not revealed in the Old Testament, except in shadow, as a thing of the future, as a system yet to be instituted. In the words of the well-known couplet:

"In the Old Testament we have the New Testament  
concealed,

In the New Testament we have the Old Testament  
revealed."

It should be understood also that the two Covenants are not identical; that is, that the New is not a continuation or enlargement of the Old, but a distinct and separate Covenant, enacted upon better promises and offering infinitely greater blessings and rewards (Heb. 8:6, Eph. 2:15-16). (Note the significance of the expression, "one new man," as used in this connection).

It becomes exceedingly important that we know what belongs to the respective Covenants. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). Much confusion has resulted from the failure of theologians and preachers generally to make the proper distinc-

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tions. We hear it said even in our day of enlightenment that "the whole Bible is binding upon Christians." Certainly those who make such assertions do not believe what they say, or, if they do, they do not practice what they preach. This writer does not know of a church group in all Christendom that even makes a pretense of perpetuating the laws and observances of the Old Covenant. For example, under the Old Covenant, God commanded the following: (1) that every male child should be circumcised on the eighth day, Gen. 7:9-14; (2) that many different kinds of animal sacrifices should be offered; Lev. 23; (3) that the Passover should be kept annually Exo. 12; (4) that the seventh day should be set aside as the Sabbath, as a memorial of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, Exo. 16:21-30, Deut. 5:12-15; (5) that the people should allow their lands to rest every seventh year, Exo. 23:10-11; (6) that a distinction should be made between "clean" and "unclean" animals, Lev. 11; (7) the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle and its ritualism, the Day of Atonement, the many and varied solemn feasts and convocations, new moons and sabbaths, etc. Under the Old Covenant no one was permitted to kindle a fire on the Sabbath day, (Exo. 35:2-3). In Numbers 15:23-26 there is an account of a violation of this command, and we read that the guilty man was taken outside the camp and stoned to death. Capital punishment was usually inflicted for an infraction of the Law of Moses; hence, the Apostle speaks of the Old Covenant as "the ministration of death," 2 Cor. 3:7. The various Christian bodies make no pretense of maintaining these Mosaic laws and observances, and would indeed be foolish to do so, because they are not in any sense a part of the Christian Gospel or system. They were for the *fleshly* seed of Abraham only, and were abrogated along with the Mosaic Law at the death of Christ.

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The distinctions between the Two Covenants may be listed briefly as follows:

1. The Old was made with the fleshly seed of Abraham only. It was first announced to Abraham himself, and was later enlarged into a national covenant at the time of the establishment of the Jewish theocracy under Moses, at Mount Sinai, Gen. 12:1-3, 17:1-8, 22:15-18; Deut. 5:2-5, Gal. 3:19. It is generally known as the Abrahamic Covenant. The New Covenant, on the other hand, is an overture to all mankind, although its blessings are confined to those who comply with its conditions of membership, Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 10:34-43, 17:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10, Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:26-29.

2. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, Jesus of the New (Deut. 5:5; Heb. 3:1-6, 8:6, 9:18-28, 12:24; 1 Tim. 2:5).

3. The basis of membership in the Old Covenant was *fleshly*. The Covenant included those born in Abraham's house and those bought with Abraham's money, that is, those born of Hebrew parents and those retained as slaves in the Hebrew households, Gen. 17:12. Obviously, *all such infants and heathen servants had to be taught to "know Jehovah" after they had been inducted into the Covenant by circumcision*. But the basis of membership in the New Covenant is *spiritual*, Jer. 31:31-33-34, John 3:1-6; it depends not on earthly parentage, nor upon inclusion in any particular racial or ethnic group, but upon spiritual birth. (See Jer. 31:31-34, John 3:1-6). Under the New, God must write His laws in our hearts, and we must all know Him, from the least unto the greatest of us, in order to be admitted into the Covenant. In a word, one of the things absolutely necessary to participation in the blessings of the New Covenant is that we know God by faith in Jesus Christ who came to reveal God to us (John 14:1, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10, etc.). We know Him by faith,

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and we appropriate the blessings of the Covenant by obedience (Rom. 10:17, Heb. 11:6, Matt. 7:24-27, John 15:14, Heb. 5:9, 2 Thess. 1:8, 1 Pet. 1:22). This, of course, does not include the innocent and the irresponsible, such as infants, for whom Jesus atoned *unconditionally* when He died on the Cross. Those who die in infancy pass directly from the kingdom of innocence into the kingdom of glory (Rom. 5:19, 1 John 3:4, Matt. 19:14, 18:1-6, etc.)

4. The seal of the Old Covenant was *fleshly circumcision* (Gen. 17:9-14). The seal of the New Covenant is the indwelling Spirit of God (2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13, 4:30, etc.). This cutting off of the old sinful relationship and life by the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the obedient believer's heart is spiritual circumcision (Acts 2:38-39, Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:9-12, Eph. 1:13-14).

5. The Old Covenant was *national*, confined to one people, the fleshly seed of Abraham, The Mosaic Code was a civil code for the government of the Theocracy of Israel. In this sense the Law of Moses might be said to correspond to the civil statutes of the United States of America, and the Decalogue, which was the core of the Mosaic Law, to our federal Constitution (Deut. 5:2-21). The tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were engraved were known as the tables of testimony or tables of the Covenant (Exo. 24:12, 31:18, 32:15-16; Deut. 6:20-23, 4:13, 10:1-5). The New Covenant is for all mankind. It has no *geographical* or racial *limitations*. The Decalogue is God's mandate to humanity, binding on ruled and ruler alike.

6. The Old Covenant was *local* i.e., adapted to a people living in a fairly warm climate. Its provisions pertained largely to matters of the flesh, "meats and drinks and divers washings, carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). How could any human being living in a cold climate obey the Old Covenant

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regulations governing the observance of the Sabbath, one of which was that no fire was to be kindled on that day? The commands of the New Covenant are, on the other hand, moral and spiritual in nature, and can be obeyed by all people in all parts of the world. This is not only true with respect to Christ's ethical teaching, but equally so with respect to His positive ordinances—baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Day (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 11:23-30, 16:1-2). These ordinances can be observed anywhere regardless of circumstances, climate, or environment.

7. The penalty for violating the Old Covenant was in most cases *physical death*. The penalty for refusing the overtures of the New Covenant is *spiritual death*, eternal separation from "the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1:8-9, Rev. 20:11-15). For example, under the Old Covenant adultery was a crime for which the death penalty was inflicted, usually by stoning; under the New, it is a sin which will damn the soul.

8. The New Covenant is a better Covenant because it has been "enacted upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). Under the Old, for instance, there was no actual remission of sins, for the simple reason that animal sacrifices were not a sufficient atonement for the guilt of sin (Heb. 10:1-18). On each annual Day of Atonement the High Priest of Israel went into the Holy of Holies with the prescribed offerings for his own sins and for the sins of the people, in response to which God merely laid the guilt of their sins over to the next annual Day of Atonement, and so on throughout the entire Jewish Dispensation. There was never any actual remission of sins until the Son of God Himself made the sufficient Atonement "once at the end of the ages . . . by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:6-10, 23-28; Exo. 30:10, Lev. 23). Under the New Covenant, however, remission of sins is one of the promises of the Gospel (Acts 2:38, 10:43; Luke 24:45-49). We have

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God's promise that on condition of our own faith and continued obedience He will be merciful with respect to our iniquities and will remember our sins against us no more (Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:10-12). And let us remember that *when God forgives, He forgets* (Psa. 103:12, Heb. 8:12).

9. Under the Old Covenant there was no distinct assurance of blessedness beyond the grave. Old Testament intimations of the future life are indefinite (cf. Job 14:13-15, 19:25-27; Psa. 23). But the Christian Scriptures speak with positiveness about Judgment, blessedness, Life Everlasting, immortality, etc. Jesus Himself spoke of the future life in such unmistakable terms as to leave no room for doubt, and the Apostles testify with no less finality about these matters in their own writings. (John 11:25-26, 10:18; Acts 2:36, 17:31; Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 6:28, 8:11; 2 Cor. 5:1-4, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15, etc.).

10. The Old Covenant was *negative* throughout. The Ten Commandments have been called the "thou-shalt-nots" of God. The contrast between the thunderings of Jehovah above Sinai announcing the prohibitions of the Decalogue, and the gentle accents of the Son of Man proclaiming the Beatitudes, in His "Sermon on the Mount," is an analogy of the distinction between the Covenants. No wonder, then, that the New Covenant is called "the royal law" and "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:8, 1:25).

11. The Decalogue was the foundation and the very heart, so to speak, of the Law of Moses. Yet the Ten Commandments were nailed to the Cross, along with the rest of the Law. They were not abolished, but were *abrogated*, i.e., set aside, then re-enacted, with but one exception, in the New Testament. We as Christians are subject to the provisions of the Decalogue only to the extent that is fundamental ethical principles, which are necessarily permanent, have been re-enacted as a part of



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the Christian System. When a man makes two wills, he may take certain provisions of the old will and re-incorporate them in the new; and they are binding, not because they were in the old, but because they are in the new. A careful survey of the apostolic writings reveals the fact that all the Ten Commandments, with but one exception, have been re-stated in the Christian Scriptures, with this fundamental difference: in the Old they are stated *negatively*, but in the New, *positively*. The Fourth Commandment is not re-enacted in the New Testament. There is no command in the apostolic writings that we as Christians should keep the Sabbath. There would be no reason for our keeping it, as it was a memorial to the fleshly seed of Abraham of their fathers' deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It would be meaningless to a Gentile. Therefore, we as Christians are to keep the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, instead of the seventh day. The Lord's Day is a memorial of the resurrection of our Lord (Mark 16:9, Acts 20:7, Rev. 1:10, Psa. 118:22-24, Acts 4:11-12). (Note the parallels: Exo. 20:3—Acts 4:15, 17:24-31; Exo. 20:4-6—1 John 5:21; Exo. 20:7—Jas. 5:12; Exo. 20:12—Eph. 6:1-4; Exo. 20:13—Rom. 13:9-10; Exo. 20:14—Matt. 5:28, 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Exo. 20:15—Eph. 4:28; Exo. 20:16—Col. 3:9; Exo. 20:17—Eph. 5:3.)

A great many persons seem to have the notion—and it is one that should be corrected—that all they need to do to be saved is to keep the Ten Commandments. This is a false and misleading idea. Obeying the Ten Commandments will make a man a respectable citizen and keep him out of jail, but he might obey the Commandments consistently, even perfectly if that were possible, and still not be a Christian. (Cf. Mark 10:17-22). There is nothing in the Decalogue about Christ and His church. We might keep the Commandments perfectly and never believe in Christ, never be baptized, never pray, never observe the Lord's Supper, never attend a Christian worshiping assem-

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bly. *The Decalogue is not the Gospel, nor is it any part of the Gospel.* Though essential to good morals, it is a minor part of the Christian system of faith and worship. Moreover, Jesus made it quite clear that, spiritually, the Decalogue is inadequate, when, in answer to a question propounded by His critics, He pointed out the two greatest commandments in the Law, and neither of the two is found among the Ten Commandments (Matt. 22:35-40, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18). In brief, we must keep the Ten Commandments to stay out of jail, but one might keep all of them and still fall far short of being a Christian.

Frequently we have been asked the question, *Why can we not be saved as the penitent thief (on the Cross) was saved?* The answer is obvious. As long as a will-maker (testator) lives, he dispenses his property as he sees fit personally; but when he dies, his property must be dispensed as directed in his last will and testament (cf. Heb. 9:16-17); and so, as long as our Lord was on earth in the flesh, it was His prerogative to dispense his gifts and graces as He saw fit (Luke 23:39-43, 5:17-26). But when He returned to the Father, He left us His Last Will and Testament, the executors of which were the Apostles, by whom it was probated on the great Day of Pentecost; and so, throughout the present Dispensation His blessings are bestowed on the conditions specified in the New Covenant; these are the "keys of the kingdom," and the terms of admission into the Church (Body) of Christ. These conditions are faith in Christ as the Son of the living God, repentance toward Christ, confession of Christ, and baptism into Christ (Matt. 16:18-20, 28:18-20; Acts 2:38, 16:31-34; Rom. 10:9-10, Luke 13:3, 2 Cor. 7:10, Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:34-39, 22:16; Rom. 6:4-6, Gal. 3:26-29, John 3:1-5, etc.). (The function of a key is to unlock a door; hence the "keys of the kingdom" are the requirements which open the door of the church to the obedient believer.)

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12. The Law was a civil code for the government of the old Jewish theocracy. It was never intended to be a permanent and universal rule of religious faith and practice. It was added, the Apostle tells us, that is, added to the Abrahamic promise, "because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made" (Gal. 3:19). The tendency of the Children of Israel to drift into the customs and practices of their idolatrous heathen neighbors occasioned the giving of the Law. Under conscience alone the people became such habitual sinners that it became necessary to put them under a code of law, in order that they might know the eternal distinctions between good and bad, right and wrong. Such is the purpose of law, generally speaking: it is to define right and distinguish it from wrong. *Law was never enacted to make people better, but for the purpose of restraining the lawless and protecting the weak from the strong.* (Cf. Rom. 7:7-11, 3:19-20). Therefore, what the Law could not do for man, God did for him by a manifestation of His infinite grace in the person of His Only Begotten (Rom. 8:3-4).

13. To summarize: as stated above, God has made two wills. The first was made with respect to the fleshly seed of Abraham, through the mediation of Moses (Deut. 5). The last is an overture to all mankind through the mediation of Jesus Christ. The Old was ratified by the blood of animals at Sinai: the New was ratified by the precious blood of Christ on Calvary. (Cf. Heb. 8:11-22). the death of our Lord abrogated the Old and ratified the New at the same time (Col. 2:13-15, Heb. 8:23-28). He nailed the Law to His Cross and ushered in the universal reign of grace. God graciously permitted the Law to remain as a civil code for the Jewish people down to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but its binding force was removed when Jesus was crucified. One of the elementary principles of law is that a new will

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automatically abrogates all prior testaments. We today are under "the Last Will and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We are not under Law, but under grace; not under the bond written in ordinances, but under the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. (John 1:17, Jer. 31:31-34, Rom. 4:21-31, Gal. 3:15-29, 2 Cor. 3:1-11, Heb. 8; Col. 2:8-17, etc.).

### *Circumcision of the Heart*

Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 9:25-26. Cf. Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, Acts 7:51, Gal. 3:27-28, 2 Cor. 3:2-6, Col. 2:9-13. The Scriptures teach expressly that there is such a thing as "circumcision of the heart." But what does "heart" (Heb. *leb*, Gr. *kardia*) mean in Scripture? This we can determine by what the "heart" is said to do, to experience, to suffer, etc., namely, it *thinks* (Gen. 6:5, Deut. 15:9, Prov. 23:7, Matt. 9:4, Heb. 4:12); it *reasons* (Mark 2:8, Luke 5:22); it *understands* (Matt. 13:15); it *believes* (Rom. 10:8-10); it *loves* (Matt. 22:37); it *knows* (Deut. 29:4); it "*breaks*" with sorrow (Jer. 8:18, 23:9); it can *be grieved* (Deut. 15:10); it can *be troubled* (John 14:1); it can *be fearful* (John 14:27); it *rejoices* (Psa. 16:9, 28:7; Acts 2:26); it can *be comforted* (Eph. 6:22); it *wills*, "*purposes*," "*determines*" (Dan. 1:8, 2 Cor. 9:7, 1 Cor. 7:37); it can *lust* (Matt. 5:28, Rom. 8:6-7); it *obeys* (Rom. 6:17, Eph. 6:6); it *approves* and *condemns* (Rom. 2:14-16, Acts 2:37, 1 John 3:19-22). From all these texts we must conclude that the Scriptural "heart" includes intellect, feeling, conscience, and will. It is the entire "inner man," everything that is not included in the phrase, "flesh and blood" (John 3:6, 1 Cor. 15:50, 2 Cor. 4:16, Rom. 7:22, cf. 1 Pet. 3:4—"the hidden man of the heart").

1. There is such a thing as spiritual circumcision, "a circumcision not made with hands." The Bible leaves no room for doubt on this matter.

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2. Fleshly (physical) circumcision of the Old Covenant was designed to be a type of spiritual circumcision under the New. Hence, as the circumcision ordained in the Old Testament was a seal stamped upon the flesh, it follows that the circumcision ordained in the New Testament must be a seal stamped on the *mind* or *spirit* of man, the true "inner man" (Cf. John 3:1-8, Acts 2:38, Jer. 31:33, Ezek. 11:19).

Whitelaw writes (PCG, 232) that fleshly circumcision was designed (1) to be a sign of the faith that Christ should be descended from Abraham, and (2) to be a symbolic representation of the putting away of the filth of the flesh and of sin in general; therefore, it served the following uses: "(1) to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the Gentiles, (2) to perpetuate the memory of Jehovah's covenant, (3) to foster in the nation the hope of the Messiah, (4) to remind them of the duty of cultivating moral purity (Deut. 10:16), (5) to preach to them the gospel of a righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:11), (6) to suggest the idea of a holy or spiritual seed of Abram (Rom. 2:29) and (7) to foreshadow the Christian rite of baptism (Col. 2:11, 12)."

There can hardly be any disagreement about the first six of the "uses" of fleshly circumcision listed above. The one exception is the last-named. One of the errors that has caused untold confusion in Christian teaching and practice is this oft-recurring claim that fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant was the type of which baptism is the antitype under the New Covenant. There is no Scripture warrant for this view.

There are many "clergymen" who still cling to the threadbare argument that baptism as "spiritual circumcision" under the New Covenant has taken the place of fleshly circumcision, the seal of the Old Covenant; hence, they contend, that as infants were inducted into the Old

Covenant by fleshly circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14, cf. Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8), so infants are to be inducted into the New Covenant by "baptism" (as a matter of fact, by sprinkling), which, according to the theory has "taken the place of" the old fleshly circumcision. *Their errors are those of making baptism the seal of the New Covenant, and identifying baptism with spiritual circumcision.* We reply to this argument as follows:

1. *Baptism is not a seal.* In New Testament teaching there is not the slightest intimation that baptism is the seal of anything. On the contrary, it is expressly stated that the seal of the New Covenant is the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20; Rom. 8:14-17, etc.). True, the reception of the Holy Spirit by the repentant believer is connected in Scripture with baptism; however, it is not baptism. It is the Holy Spirit who seals us as members of the Covenant (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:27, Tit. 3:5). If someone should ask, How can we know that the baptized believer is sealed by the Spirit? or, What is the certain proof? The answer is obvious, namely, the principle enunciated by Jesus Himself, "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:43-45), or "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16-23). The baptized believer who is truly sealed by the Spirit will bring forth in his life the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Jas. 1:22-27, 2:14-26; Matt. 7:11-27, 25:31-46).

2. *Baptism is not spiritual circumcision.* If baptism under the New Covenant has "taken the place of" fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant, it follows that, since only male infants received fleshly circumcision under the Old (and that "when eight days old," Gen. 17:12), so only male infants can be proper subjects for what the "pedobaptists" call "baptism" under the New Covenant. As stated above, there is such a thing as "spiritual circum-

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cision" (Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, 2 Cor. 3:2-6, Col. 2:9-13), a "circumcision not made with hands." Moreover, as the fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant was designed to be a type of spiritual circumcision under the New, and hence, that as the circumcision ordained under the Old Covenant was a seal stamped on the flesh, so the circumcision ordained in the New Covenant must be a seal stamped upon the *mind* or *spirit*, the inner man.

3. *Spiritual circumcision consists in the cutting off—from the interior man—of the body of the guilt of sin.* Rom. 6:6—"our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away" (1) This is done by the Spirit of God at the time of His entrance into the human heart to indwell and to sanctify it: although this occurs in connection with the penitent believer's baptism into Christ, still it is not baptism itself. (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:2, 5:16-26; John 3:3-8, Tit. 3:4-7, etc.). The remedy for sin is the blood of Christ, and the place divinely appointed for the repentant believer to meet the efficacy of this blood is the grave of water (1 John 1:7, Rom. 6:1-10, John 3:1-8, Col. 2:9-12): here divine grace and human faith meet, and the pardon, remission, justification, etc., takes place in the Mind of God; the entrance of the Holy Spirit at the same time cuts off the body of the guilt of past sin: this guilt will be put away as far as the east is from the west (Psa. 103:11-12, Rom. 6:6, Col. 2:9-12). (2) The Spirit of God, as He continues to indwell and to possess the heart of the true Christian as the Agent of the latter's sanctification, is the *seal* of his participation in the privileges and responsibilities of the New Covenant, and is at the same time the *earnest* or pledge of his eternal inheritance, the rest that remaineth for the people of God (1 Pet. 1:3-5, Eph. 1:13-14; Acts 20:32, 26:18; Rom. 8:18-23; Col. 1:12; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Heb. 4:9, 9:15, 11:13-16, 10:28-31; Rom. 5:5, 14:17; 1 Thess. 5:19).

(3) In a word, spiritual circumcision is, in its essential nature, identical with regeneration, the process which begins with the reception of Christ into the human heart by faith (Gal. 4:19, Col. 1:27; Rom. 10:17, 8:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:22-25, Jas. 1:18), and is consummated in the penitent believer's birth from the water of his final act of "primary obedience" (conversion): John 3:37, 3:1-9; Tit. 3:5, Eph. 5:25-27; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Heb. 10:22). (4) Thus it will be seen that baptism as the consummating act of the process variously designated in Scripture as conversion, adoption, justification, regeneration, etc. (*i.e.*, the consummating act on the human side) has associated with it the entrance of the Spirit into the obedient believer's heart, to possess and to mould his inner spiritual life. (It must be emphasized here that *only those who believe and repent are proper subjects for Christian baptism*. What is commonly designated *change of heart* must precede baptism (Luke 13:3, 1 Cor. 7:10, Acts 2:38, Acts 16:29-34; Rom. 10:9-10, Luke 24:46-47). One who does not have this change of heart will go down into the baptism a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner (Rom. 6:17). *However, it is the indwelling Spirit, and not baptism, that is the seal of the Christian, stamping him as set apart for participation in the blessings and responsibilities of the New Covenant. And it is the operation by the Spirit of excising the body of the guilt of sin, at His entrance into the newly-made saint's interior life—and not baptism—which is designated in Scripture spiritual circumcision. Baptism and spiritual circumcision are associated in God's plan, but they are not identical* (Col. 2:9-14). As a matter of fact, to identify baptism *per se* with spiritual circumcision is to vest the ordinance, that is to say, the water itself, with magical properties. Certainly, to present infants—or anyone incapable of faith—for such a rite as what is generally called "infant baptism" (sprinkling, pouring) is not only



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unscriptural—it is antiscritptural. If there is any efficacy in such an act, obviously it cannot be in the state of the child's heart, but would have to be in the water: this would be sheer magic. There is no warrant in the New Testament for such an esoteric concept. Moreover, the attitude of the parents in such a practice cannot in any way affect the child's salvation. There is no such thing in Scripture as *salvation by proxy*.

But, someone may be asking, *what about the salvation of infants?* We answer as follows: (1) According to Scripture teaching, sin is a personal act, and responsibility for the guilt of sin is *personal* (Ezek. 18:19-20: here we have the doctrine of the *guilt* of sin, as distinguished from that of the *consequences* of sin as stated in Exo. 20:1-17; Prov. 24:12, Matt. 16:27, Rom. 2:6, 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15; Eph. 6:8, Col. 3:25; Rev. 2:23, 20:12, 22:12). As there is no such thing as salvation by proxy, so there is no such thing as sinning by proxy. "Original sin," in the sense of original *guilt*, is just another fabrication of the theological mentality. True it is that the human race is suffering the consequences of Adam's sin (of which the most frustrating is physical death, Gen. 3:17-19, Heb. 9:27) and of the sins of the fathers, but there is no evidence from Scripture, experience or common sense that any person will be held *guilty* before God for what Adam did or what his own forebears have done. Such a notion impugns the justice and goodness of the Heavenly Father. All this "theological groundwork" for the practice of what is called "infant baptism" (true infant baptism would be infant immersion) thus turns out to be nothing more than a house of cards. The infant does not sin for the simple reason that it *can not* sin; hence, said Jesus, "to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). (2) Whatever the human race lost through the disobedience

of the First Adam, it has regained through the obedience of the Second Adam (Rom. 5:19, 1 Cor. 15:45-49), regained *unconditionally* for the innocent and the irresponsible, but regained *conditionally* for all accountable human beings, that is, on the terms and conditions of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ ("the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:37-38). Our Lord atoned for the innocent unconditionally by His sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7). The infant is in need of salvation from the *consequences* of sin only; it is in need only of the redemption of the body, that is, salvation from mortality itself (Rom. 8:22-23, 2 Cor. 5:4). The spiritual progression for accountable persons is from the Kingdom of Nature, through the Kingdom of Grace (John 3:1-8), into the Kingdom of Glory (Rev. 20:11-14, 22:1-5). The spiritual progression for those who die in infancy, we may surely believe, is *directly* from the Kingdom of Nature, by means of the Covering of Grace, our Lord's Vicarious Sacrifice, into the Kingdom of Glory (Rom. 8:29, 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18-23, Heb. 12:23).

(3) Infant sprinkling, pouring, christening, etc., reverses the order specified in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). The order demanded by the Commission is (a) *go*, (b) *make disciples*, that is, learners, believers; (c) *baptize* those who have been made disciples, believers, by the preaching of the facts, commands, and promises of the Gospel; (d) *nurture* those who have been baptized into Christ and have the right to wear the name Christian, that is, nurture them in the most holy faith, the Spiritual Life. The pedobaptist order is (a) *go*, (b) "baptize," and then (c) *teach*, or *make disciples*; in a word, "christen" them in infancy and require "confirmation" at about the age of

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twelve. Those who practice this sequence are simply bringing over into the New Testament the sequence prescribed in the Old Testament. The Old Abrahamic Covenant took in those born in Abraham's house and those heathen servants bought with his money, all of whom had to be taught to *know Jehovah after* their induction into the Covenant by fleshly circumcision. But God states explicitly, with respect to the promised New Covenant, that "they shall teach no more, every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah: *for they shall all know me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them," etc. The New Covenant is not a covenant of *flesh*, but a covenant of *faith*. Those who would enter the New Covenant must, as Jesus states expressly, be "born anew," literally "born from above," "born of water and the Spirit," "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13, 3:3-5). God's law is put in their inward parts, written in their hearts, in order for them to be born again, and so to enter the Covenant. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-7). Suffice it to say that there can be no spiritual birth without a prior spiritual begetting, and there can be no spiritual begetting without faith. Infant christening, "baptism," sprinkling, pouring, etc., ignores this teaching *in toto*; not only ignores it, but contradicts it in every particular. Infant christening, infant "baptism," infant affusion, infant aspersion, infant dedication, infant church membership, etc., not one of these things, nor all of them together, can be substituted, in the Gospel Plan of Salvation, for spiritual birth (regeneration). These are all forms of so-called "baptismal regeneration," a dogma which the present writer rejects flatly. *Baptism is an act of faith, or it is nothing*. My personal conviction is that the term *kingdom* (literally, *reign*) in Scripture is more comprehensive than the term *church*, in that it takes in all who, in the very nature of

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the case, cannot belong to the church; that is, infants and irresponsibles generally, and in all probability the elect of prior Dispensations. (Cf. Luke 17:21, Mark 10:24, Matt. 18:3, Mark 10:15, Luke 18:15-17, Matt. 21:43; Heb. 11:4, 5, 7, 8-16, etc.)

(4) Other objections to the pedobaptist practice of following the Old Covenant pattern are the following: It contradicts New Testament teaching regarding the design of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21, Rom. 6:17). It belies the plain teaching of the New Testament that Christian baptism is more than a physical act. It tends to fill the church with unconverted, unregenerated persons; that is, with those who would make of their Christianity nothing but vain ritual observances. It ignores altogether man's God-given power of choice. Finally, it tends to obliterate the distinction between the church and the world, and the distinction between church and state as well. How many professing "Christian" parents use the practice of christening pretty largely for the credentials by which birth certification can be established? Moreover, so-called "infant dedication" is misleading: the popular tendency, so great is the general ignorance of the Bible, is to identify it with infant sprinkling. If the act is simply a dedication, why use water in the observance of it?

To summarize: the equating of Christian baptism with spiritual circumcision is one of the most egregious fallacies that has ever been perpetrated on the Christian world. We repeat that baptism is an act of faith, "the appeal of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21)—or it is nothing. Spiritual circumcision is the excision of the body of the guilt of sin by the entrance of the Spirit into the human heart to take possession of it and thus to make it, little by little, a partaker of the divine nature and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light (2 Pet. 1:4, Col. 1:12, Heb. 9:11).

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### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY

1. Explain how the content of ch. 17 is an enlargement of the Abrahamic Covenant. Explain how it is more inclusive.
2. How old was Abraham at the time when all the details of the Covenant were finally made known to him?
3. By what name did God reveal Himself to Abraham here? What does this name mean?
4. What is the significance of a new name in Scripture?
5. What changes were made at this time in the names of Abram and Sarai? What did the changes signify?
6. Show how these changes served to elevate the moral and spiritual status of Abram and Sarai.
7. What did the terms "everlasting" and "forever" signify with reference to the Covenant?
8. What happened to the Abrahamic Covenant at Sinai? At Calvary?
9. What two progenies (seeds) of Abraham are included in these promises?
10. Explain how each of these promises had a twofold fulfillment (double reference).
11. What was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant?
12. Give the two Greek words for "covenant" and explain the meaning of each. Which word is used in the New Testament?
13. How is a covenant to be distinguished from a contract?
14. Why was it necessary for God to specify the details of the Covenant?
15. List these details.
16. How are females dealt with in the details of the Covenant?

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17. What was the connection between the terms of the Old Covenant and the preservation of the family, and later that of the nation?
18. Why were the details of the Covenant not revealed to Abraham at first?
19. Discuss briefly the history of circumcision.
20. Why cannot circumcision have been originally a test of edurance?
21. Why cannot circumcision have originated on hygienic grounds?
22. Why do we object to the view that circumcision originated to increase procreative powers?
23. Why do we reject the notion that it originated for the purpose of getting rid of emanation from physical secretion connected with the physiology of the fore-skin?
24. Why can we not accept the view that circumcision originated as a phase of phallic worship?
25. Why is it unlikely that it was originally of the nature of a sacrifice to deity?
26. Why is it unlikely that it persisted as an attenuated survival of human sacrifice?
27. Why do we reject the view that circumcision was in some manner related to the cult of reincarnation?
28. Can it be proved that the spread of circumcision among ancient peoples was in any way connected with human sacrifice?
29. On what ground does Lange affirm that circumcision did not come to Abraham as a custom of his ancestors?
30. What was its special significance under patriarchal law?
31. How does Lange explain its symbolic significance?
32. How is the status of females to be explained under the covenant of circumcision?
33. What specific requirement proves that circumcision was not a puberty rite?

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34. Explain the customs of sub-incision, introcision, and infibulation, as practiced by primitives? Do we find any of these practices in the history of the Israelites? What does all this prove with regard to the purity of Hebrew monotheism?
35. What Old Testament incident shows that circumcision was not to be treated lightly by the Children of Israel? Explain.
36. What reasons are suggested for the provision that circumcision of males should take place on the eighth day after birth?
37. What provision shows us that the blessings of the Covenant were to be extended to others as well as those born in Abraham's household? To what others were these blessings extended?
38. What was the penalty for disobedience to the law of circumcision? Did this penalty include anything beyond excommunication from the commonwealth?
39. What was the design of the Covenant-Sign? How was it related to the Messianic hope?
40. Who was now specified to become the Covenant-Heir? What significance in the change of Sarai's name to *Sarah*?
41. What are the various explanations of Abraham's "laughter" on receiving the promise of Isaac's birth?
42. What does Cornfeld say about this? How does Murphy explain it? Speiser? Leupold? How do you explain it?
43. Did Abraham's laughter differ from that of Sarah later? Explain.
44. Can we say that Abraham "was a man of faith who had moments of doubt"? Can we say the same of ourselves?
45. How does God reply to Abraham's intercession for Ishmael?

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46. What was Abraham's response to the law of circumcision? How old was he at the time? How old was Ishmael?
47. State the successive steps in the progressive revelation of the Covenant.
48. When and where was the Abrahamic Covenant enlarged into a national Covenant?
49. Where in the Old Testament do we find references to "circumcision of the heart"?
50. What is the fundamental difference between the Old Covenant and the New?
51. When and where was the Old Covenant abrogated and the New Covenant ratified?
52. Who was the mediator of the Old Covenant? The mediator of the New?
53. Is the New Covenant an extension of the Old, or is it strictly a *New Covenant*? Explain.
54. What was made the basis of membership in the Old Covenant and what is it in the New?
55. Why do we say that the Old Covenant was local? How does the New Covenant differ on this point?
56. What did fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant point forward to in the New?
57. What is meant by *spiritual* circumcision? What is it, according to New Testament teaching?
58. Explain the fallacy of identifying Christian baptism and spiritual circumcision.
59. What did the Old Covenant include as to membership? What does the New Covenant include?
60. How is the New Covenant a better covenant "enacted upon better promises"?
61. Are the Ten Commandments a part of the Gospel? Explain.
62. Which of the Commandments are morally binding upon Christians, and why?
63. Which one is not binding upon Christians? Explain.



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64. Why can we not be saved today as the penitent thief on the Cross was saved?
65. What is the primary function of law in general? Does the Law have the power to regenerate and sanctify men?
66. Can one keep the Ten Commandments and still not be a Christian? Is it possible for any person to keep them perfectly?
67. Explain the distinction between the Old Covenant as a Covenant of Law and the New Covenant as a Covenant of Grace.
68. Does the New Testament teach that baptism is a seal of anything? Explain.
69. What are the necessary conditions to baptism? What is meant by a "change of heart"?
70. Is it possible Scripturally to baptize one who is not old enough to believe?
71. In what way did our Lord provide for the salvation of the innocent and the irresponsible.
72. Distinguish the import of Exo. 20:1-17 and Ezek. 18:19-20.
73. Do the Scriptures teach that we inherit the *guilt* of the sins committed by our ancestors or of that committed by Adam? Explain.
74. Is the dogma of "original sin" warranted by Scripture teaching?
75. Explain the statement that the innocent (infants) need to be redeemed only from the *consequences* of sin.
76. Explain how and why so-called "infant baptism" is unscriptural?
77. Why do we affirm that so called "infant baptism" is essentially a form of magic?
78. What according to the New Testament is the necessary motivation for baptism?

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79. Show how "infant baptism" reverses the order laid down in the Great Commission.
80. In what sense is "infant baptism" the "appeal of a good conscience" toward God?
81. Explain how "infant christening," "infant baptism," etc. obliterates the distinction between the church and the world and between church and state.
82. In what sense is the Kingdom probably more inclusive than the Church?
83. What is the spiritual progression for accountable persons? What is it for the innocent (infants)?
84. What fundamental error is involved in the pedobaptist procedure with respect to membership in the new Covenant?
85. Where is the promise of the New Covenant found in the Old Testament? Explain how the language of this divine promise indicates the distinctions between the Covenants.

## PART THIRTY-ONE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE PATRIARCH AS INTERCESSOR

Genesis, 18:1-33

#### 1. *Abraham as the Gracious Host* (18:1-8)

1 And Jehovah appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said, My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4 let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5 and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and strengthen ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on: 'forasmuch as ye are come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes. 7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant; and he hasted to dress it 8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

#### (1) *Abraham and His Mysterious Visitors.*

Under the oaks (terebinths) at Mamre, not far from what later became the city of Hebron, the place where the patriarch had formerly pitched his tent (Gen. 13:18), we now see him sitting in the opening of his tent (a fold of which was fastened to a post near by to admit any breeze that might be stirring) "in the heat of the day," that is, at noontide. (Cf. 1 Sam. 11:11, the cool of the day; Gen. 3:8, here the Hebrew reads the "wind" of the day: these terms refer to the eventide). Among Orientals

the noon hour is the time of rest (S. of Sol. 1:7) and of dinner (Gen. 43:16, 25). In this instance Abraham had probably dined and was resting after the dinner, as indicated by the fact that when the visitors arrived special preparations were begun for their entertainment. Who were these mysterious visitors? When first perceived by the patriarch he took them to be men, but on closer scrutiny (when he *saw* them, that is, not with physical but with mental vision) he recognized them as divine beings, as evidenced by the fact that he "bowed himself to the earth, and said, my Lord," etc. This expression indicates the complete prostration of the body by first falling on the knees and then inclining the head forward until it touches the ground. This was a mode of salutation practised by Orientals toward superiors generally. Certainly the language in which Abraham immediately addressed one of the three men leads to the conclusion that he had already recognized one of them as Yahwe Himself or as the Angel of Yahwe. Obviously the divine character of the three was fully disclosed by the fact of their supernatural knowledge of Sarah's thoughts (vv. 12-15). Lange (CDHCG, 433): "Abraham instantly recognizes among the three the one whom he addresses as the Lord in a religious sense, who afterward appears as Jehovah, and was clearly distinguished from the accompanying angels, ch. 19:1." "In its definitive form this 'Yahwistic' narrative recounts an apparition of Yahweh (vv. 1, 3, 13, 17-22) accompanied by two 'men' who, according to 19:1, are angels. . . . In these three, to whom Abraham addressed a single act of homage, many of the Fathers saw a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine that was revealed only in the N.T." (JB, 33). It is difficult, from the language of the text here, to think of this as an apparition: *there were real persons*, not just ghosts or phantoms. We believe Skinner is correct in describing the incident as a *theophany*. Speiser (ABG, 129): "At

this stage (v. 3) Abraham is as yet unaware of the true identity of his visitors, so that he would not address any of them as God; and he cannot mean all three, because the rest of the verse contains three unambiguous singulars. . . . Later on, in vss. 27, 32-34, the divine appellation is in order, because by then it is clear that Abraham's guests are out of the ordinary. The present pointing was probably influenced by the explicit mention of Yahweh in vs. 1. But this is the author's aside to the reader who is thus prepared at the outset for the surprise that is in store for Abraham." (The pointing here, says this writer, is that which "is applied to YHWH in the received text"). For a contrary view (to be expected, of course, from the general *critical* approach of the entire work), see IBG, 617: "The statement that *he bowed himself to the earth* does not mean that he recognized his visitors as divine beings. The act was an expression of the self-deprecating courtesy of the Orient (cf. 23:7, 1 Sam. 24:8, 2 Sam. 14:4, 22; 1 Ki. 1:31)." Murphy (MG, 315): "These men in some way represented God: for the Lord on this occasion appeared unto Abraham (v. 1). The number is in this respect notable. Abraham addresses himself first to one person (v. 3), then to more than one (v. 4, 5). It is stated that '*they* said, So do (v. 5), *they* did eat (v. 8), *they* said unto him, Where is Sarah, thy wife?' (v. 9). Then the singular number is resumed in the phrase *and he said* (v. 10), and at length, 'The Lord said unto Abraham' (v. 13), and then, 'and he said' (v. 15). Then we are told '*the men* rose up, and Abraham went with them' (v. 16). Then we have 'The Lord said' twice (v. 17, 20). And lastly, it is said (v. 22) '*the men* turned their faces and went toward Sodom, and Abraham was yet standing before the Lord.' From this it appears that of the three men, one, at all events, was the Lord, who, when the other two went toward Sodom, remained with Abraham while he made his intercession for Sodom, and afterward he also

went his way. The other two will come before us again in the next chapter. Meanwhile we have here the first explicit instance of the Lord appearing as man to man, and holding familiar intercourse with him." "The person to whom Abraham addressed himself, and who was at least the chief speaker, was the Son of God and Judge of the world: cf. v. 25 with John 5:22" (SIBG, p. 241). Was the Lord in this instance a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Eternal Logos? Was this another epiphany of the Angel of Jehovah, the Logos whose goings forth have been "from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2). Surely, this interpretation is in greater accord with Bible teaching *as a whole* than any of the other views suggested!

(2.) *Abraham the Host.* We have here a realistic picture of the ancient ritual of hospitality. The scene is one, we are told, which may be seen in any Bedouin camp even at the present day. The hospitality of the Easterner, and even that of the Arab has often been remarked by travelers: "the virtue of hospitality is one of the great redeeming virtues in the character of the Bedouins." Whitelaw (PCG, 241): "Whenever our path led us near an encampment, as was frequently the case, we always found some active sheikh or venerable patriarch sitting 'in his tent door,' and as soon as we were within hail we heard the earnest words of welcome and invitation which the Old Testament Scriptures had rendered long ago familiar to us: 'Stay, my lord, stay. Pass not on till thou hast eaten bread, and rested under thy servant's tent. Alight and remain until thy servants kill a kid and prepare a feast'" (quoted from Porter's *Great Cities of Bashan*, p. 326). Since this was the hottest and drowsiest time of the day, it is indeed likely that Abraham at first glance recognized the strangers only as three "men" approaching his tent, and received them with all the courtesies of a generous, high-minded, and self-respecting chieftain. Skinner (PCG, 299): "The description 'presents a perfect picture of the

manner in which a modern Bedawee sheikh receives travelers arriving at his encampment. He immediately orders his wife or women to make bread, slaughters a sheep or some other animal, and dresses it in haste; and, bringing milk and any other provisions that he may have at hand, with the bread and meat that he has dressed, sets them before his guest: if they are persons of high rank he also stands by them while they eat'" (quoted from E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 5th ed. 1860). It will be noted that after the preliminary greetings the first act of the ritual of hospitality was the serving of the visitors with water for washing their feet. As people in those countries went barefoot, or with sandals, because of the heat, washing the feet after traveling was a common and needful practice (cf. Gen. 19:2, 24:32; Judg. 19:21, 2 Sam. 11:8; 1 Tim. 5:10, Luke 7:44). Note v. 4, "*rest yourselves* under the tree," that is, recline by resting on the elbow. V. 8—Abraham *stood* by them as their servant, to give them what they needed (Neh. 12:44, Gal. 5:13, Luke 14:8). "Here, therefore, as often in Genesis, one recognizes that the framework of a story belongs to a far-off time. Yet there are values in it which do not disappear. There is the opening picture of the hospitality of Abraham. From the door of his tent he sees three figures coming toward him through the heat of the day—figures whom he has no reason to believe are other than ordinary men who have chanced to come his way. Instantly he goes out to meet them and to offer them his utmost hospitality; and the men, thus welcomed, bring to Abraham a reward of which he had not dreamed. It was not the last time that a generous spirit has found that he has 'entertained angels unawares' (Heb. 13:2). When anyone receives another human being with warmhearted kindness he may be nearer than he knows to a divine experience. Although it is a long way from Genesis to the Gospels, in

the story of Abraham there is at least a foregleam of the promise of Christ, Matt. 25:40" (IBG, 617). In the words of Lowell, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*:

"The gift without the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—  
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

(Cf. Exo. 23:9, Lev. 24:22; Deut 10:18, 27:19; Matt. 22:1-10 25:34; Luke 14:12, Rom. 12:13, 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:10; Heb. 13:2, 1 Pet. 4:9). Leupold (EG, 539): "The eating of the three heavenly guests—'and they ate'—is marvelous indeed. We must declare this eating to have been real but rather by way of accomodation than of necessity. Augustine's word still stands as a classic explanation: 'That He ate, was rather of power than of necessity. The earth absorbs water by drinking it in. Different is the mode of absorption by the glowing day of the sun. The one is because of need; the other by virtue of power.' The eating on the part of the glorified Christ after the resurrection serves as an explanatory parallel to this incident. The friendliest and most intimate contacts among the sons of men are oft made over a friendly meal." (Cf. Luke 24:36-43, Acts 10:41). "At first, Abraham sees his guests as mere human beings, and welcomes them warmly; their superhuman character is only gradually revealed (vs. 2, 9, 13, 14)" (JB, 33).

## 2. *Sarah's Laughter* (18:9-15).

Oriental courtesy no doubt in those early days forbade to all, except the most intimate friends, inquiry about a wife. The fact that these visitors did inquire about Sarah indicates their special authority to do so. It is now disclosed that their visit is concerned vitally with an experience that is relatively soon, let us say, to befall her. Moreover, Sarah's faith needs to be raised to the proper degree to do justice to the experience. "Behold, in the



tent" is the patriarch's reply to his visitor's pointed question, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" The "behold" here amounts to little more than "there inside the tent."

9 *And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.* 10 *And he said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round: and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.* 11 *Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.* 12 *And Sarah laughed within herself, saying After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?* 13 *And Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old?* 14 *Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son.* 15 *Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.*

Without circumlocution the visitor, the One outstanding among the three, assumes control of the conversation and delivers the promise He has come to give, "Sarah shall have a son." "When the season cometh round," that is, at the time determined, we may well suppose, *naturally*: "according to the time of that which is born" or nine months after conception. Of course, we do not know how much time had elapsed since the earlier announcement to Abraham (17:16-19, 21:2). Sarah, standing behind the tent door, "was hearing," that is, *she was listening*: no doubt with the well-known female curiosity. So Sarah *laughed to herself*: not a laugh of derision: it evidently bore no trace of scoffing. Rather it was *the laugh of incredulousness*, and hence to a degree a form of unbelief. To the carnal thinking of Sarah, sexual delight could not be expected *naturally* at the age to which Abraham and

she had both attained: it should be noted that she did not put the matter very delicately (v. 12). There is nothing equivocal where Sarah is concerned. "She is depicted as down-to-earth to a fault, with her curiosity, her impulsiveness, and her feeble attempt at deception" (Speiser, ABG, 131). A remarkable evidence of divine insight follows: the Speaker knows that Sarah has laughed within herself, although He has neither seen nor heard her. Whitelaw (PCG, 242): V. 13—"And the Lord said unto Abraham, *Wherefore did Sarah laugh?*—a question which must have convinced Abraham of the Speaker's omniscience. Not only had He heard the silent, inaudible, inward cachinnation of Sarah's spirit, but he knew the tenor of her thoughts and the purport of her dubitations." Sarah herself is startled by this unexpected exposure of her secret thoughts into actual *fear* of these visitors, especially of the Principal Guest who has taken over the course of the conversation to reiterate the promise of the covenant-heir. Fear threw her into confusion and engendered the *deception* to which she resorted (v. 15). "The laughter is not from Sarah's lack of faith: Sarah does not yet know who her Guest is; in v. 15, she guesses and is frightened" (JB, 35). *As to the identity of this Heavenly Visitor, verse 14 alone might have left the question unresolved, but v. 13 had identified the Speaker beforehand.* "With a directness similar to that which he employed in dealing with the first culprits in the garden, not contending in a multiplicity of words, but solemnly announcing that what she said was false. The silence of Sarah was an evidence of her conviction; her subsequent conception was a proof of her repentance and forgiveness" (PCG, 242). "Sarah, like Abraham, passed through periods of doubt and disbelief. It was the laughter of doubt which caused God to pose the question, *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* (v. 13). God who changes not continues faithful despite the sin of unbelief in His people. In 17:15 the same Sarai, meaning "conten-

tious' or 'princely,' was changed to Sarah which means 'princess'" (HSB, 30). The J B Version makes these verses most meaningful: "So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, 'Now that I am past the age of child-bearing, and my husband is an old man, is pleasure to come my way again?' But Yahweh asked Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, am I really going to have a child now that I am old? Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh? At the same time next year I shall visit you again and Sarah will have a son.' 'I did not laugh,' Sarah said, lying because she was afraid. But he replied, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'"

The second half of the chapter begins at this point (v. 16). It tells us what transpired at Mamre after Abraham's guests had been escorted along the road for a short distance. It is not until 19:1 that the two "men" are specifically identified as angels. Noting the distinction clearly made in vv. 16-17 and v. 22, between the two and the third (the Principal Speaker) who is specifically designated *Jehovah*, it seems obvious that this personage was Jehovah Himself, or more likely, the Angel of Jehovah, i.e., the pre-incarnate Logos who appears so frequently in the Old Testament.

### 3. *Abraham the Intercessor* (18:16-33).

16 *And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17 And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do; 18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20 And Jehovah said, Because the cry of*

*Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.*

*22 And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before Jehovah. 23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? 24 Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? 26 And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. 27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord who am but dust and ashes: 23 peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five. 29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the forty's sake. 30 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. 31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.. 32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake. 33 And Jehovah went his way, as soon as he had left off communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.*

(1) *The Announcement of Impending Doom* to be visited on Sodom and Gomorrah. V. 16—The two "men" as distinguished from Yahweh who stays with Abraham. In 19:1 we shall be told that they were angels. Vv. 17-21: "By God's *inquiring* into things, is meant either his bringing the persons concerned to a proper sense of their condition and conduct (Gen. 3:9; 4:9, 10; 16:8; 1 Ki. 19:9, 13; John 4:4, 9); or it marks the wisdom, patience, and equity of his procedure (Gen. 11:5, 7; Exo. 3:8, 33:5; Mic. 1:3)" (SIBG, 241). The Three have left Abraham's tent and turned their steps eastward toward Sodom. Abraham accompanies them, and on the way one of them, in whom he recognizes no other than the *Angel of the Covenant*, informs him of the real purport of this visit to the cities where Lot had taken up his abode. The sin of these cities is very great, they tell him, and their cup of iniquity is now full; their inhabitants have wearied themselves with wickedness, their licentiousness and iniquity call to Heaven for a visible demonstration of Absolute Justice, and divine judgment is now *even at the door*. (Cf. Gen. 15:16).

(2) *The Perennial Problem of Absolute Justice*. Thus informed of the impending judgment, the Friend of God draws near, and with amazing boldness properly blended with the deepest humility, pleads with the Almighty for the guilty cities. Peradventure there might be found therein at least fifty, or forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even *ten* righteous souls, *would the Lord of all the earth spare* them for ten's sake? Thereupon he is assured that if only ten righteous souls can be found the cities will be spared. While he is thus pleading with God, the two other angels have entered Sodom and are being hospitably entertained by Lot. (Cf. Isa. 1:9, 1 Ki. 19:18, Rom. 11:4, Jer. 18:5-10). Sanders (HH, 35, 36): "The importance of the message which came to Abraham concerning his son is measured by the various ways in which

a promise of his future greatness had been made (13:14-17; 15:5; 17:6-8) and by the Divine purpose which was to be fulfilled through him (18:19). But how characteristic of the knightly chieftain that all thought of his own future was supplanted by anxiety to save the few in Sodom who were not hopelessly depraved." Vv. 22, 23—"Abraham's *standing before* and *drawing near* to the Lord, imports his bold and familiar intercession with him (1 Sam. 14:36, Psa. 73:28; Heb. 7:19, 10:22; Jas. 4:8)." We have here what Cornfeld calls "a charming tradition" which "illustrates how Abraham, on intimate terms with the Lord, dared to intercede with him, in the famous dialogue over the problem of the wicked people of Sodom and its few, hypothetical righteous men" (AtD, 67). In the same context is the incident of Sarah's laughter [18:11-15], says Cornfeld, adding: "Sarah, who was eavesdropping on the conversation (between Yahweh and Abraham) is reported to have laughed heartily to herself, knowing that she had reached the age when this was physically impossible. Certainly this intimacy of men with gods and the reaction of God to Sarah's and Abraham's laughter [cf. 17:17], would be unthinkable among later generations who had a different attitude towards divine manifestations. But comparative evidence from Canaanite literature tends to justify and explain the meaning of this ancient story in its true context. . . . God was not conceived as impersonal in patriarchal times, and if we are to understand properly the biblical texts, we must develop a feeling for a social phenomenon of the times, the closeness of men to gods, and of the Hebrews to God. In our society a man who claims to have divine visitors is regarded as queer. That is why it is not easy for every modern reader, who is not familiar with the ancient background and literatures, to understand that aspect of Hebrew society. For the ancient Hebrews, the human and divine intermingled freely. The early direct relationship between men and gods is common

to all the epics: Ugarit, Mesopotamian, Greek and proto-patriarchal. The simple personal contact between men and God was gradually eliminated" (AtD, pp. 66-67).

V. 25—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right"? The perennial problem: *Must the good suffer along with, and because of, the wicked?* Is God to be understood as Absolute Justice? What is the relation of Divine Love to Divine Justice? Is Mercy compatible with Absolute Justice? How does the principle of Equity come into this problem? (Equity is defined, NWCD, s.v., as "any body of legal doctrines and rules similarly developed to enlarge, supplement, or override a system of law which has become too narrow and rigid in its scope.") Cf. v. 23—"Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?" Skinner (ICCG, 305): "This question strikes the keynote of the section—a protest against the thought of an indiscriminate judgment. . . . In OT, righteousness and clemency are closely allied: there is more injustice in the death of a few innocent persons than in the sparing of a guilty multitude. The problem is, to what limits is the application of this principle subject? . . . Unrighteousness in the Supreme Ruler of the world would make piety impossible." Whitelaw (PCG, 249): "Assuming it as settled that the fair Pentapolis is to be destroyed, Abraham practically asks, with a strange mixture of humility and boldness, if Jehovah has considered that this will involve a sad commingling in one gigantic overthrow of both the righteous and the wicked." "The patriarch appeals not to Jehovah's covenant grace, but to his absolute judicial equity" (*ibid.*, 250). Again, Abraham regarding it as impossible that the entire population of Sodom was involved in common ruin, kept modifying the conditions of his appeal, believing that the city might be spared, even if only a few should be proved to be righteous. It was inconceivable to him that Jehovah would do anything to tarnish His divine righteousness, such as destroying even ten righteous persons in order to punish the

entire population; that is, overwhelming the innocent in order to bring retribution on the guilty. But Abraham did not know how universal the corruption of Sodom really was. The stark naked truth that stands out as the dark background of this sordid story, the reality that vitiated all pleas for clemency, was the fact that *Sodom had become a vessel fit only for destruction*. (It should be understood that Sodom in this story is the name that describes the complete moral corruption of all the Cities of the Plain.) It turns out later that Lot (but only by implication, two of his daughters) was the *only* person considered relatively worthy of Divine clemency, and that partially in response to the plea of Abraham, God's Friend. What a tremendous lesson here for men of all generations!

(SIBG, 241-242): "Whenever the righteous are cut off with the wicked in public calamities, it manifests them to have been partakers with them in their sins (Amos 3:2; Rev. 18:4), and yet it is in everlasting mercy to their souls (Isa. 57:1, Phil. 1:23)." "The conviction of collective responsibility was so strong in ancient Israel that the question does not here arise whether the just may be spared individually. God will, in fact, save Lot and his family, 19:15-16; but the principle of individual responsibility is not deduced until Deut. 24:16, Jer. 31:29-30, Ezek. 14:12 ff., Ezek. ch. 18. Abraham, therefore, supposing that all are to share a common destiny, asks that a few just men may win pardon for the many wicked. Yahweh's answers approve the part the saints have to play in saving the world. But Abraham's bid for mercy does not venture below the number ten. According to Jer. 5:1 and Ezek. 22:30, God would pardon Jerusalem even if only one just man could be found there. Finally, in Isa. 53 it is the suffering of the one servant that is to save the whole race, but this prophecy was destined to remain unintelligible until it was fulfilled in Christ" (JB, 35). (This comment, however, is based on the critical view that Deuteronomy—rather,



the Deuteronomic Code—was a kind of pious fraud foisted on the people to restore the power of the priesthood, as late as the reign of Josiah (2 Ki. ch. 22). We do not accept this view; rather, we find every reason to hold that the entire Torah was the handiwork of Moses and that Deuteronomy was what it purports to be, namely, addresses delivered to Israel by Moses just before his death. Hence, in Exo., ch. 20, we have the doctrine of the *consequences* of sin, and in Ezek., ch. 18 we have the doctrine of the *guilt* of sin. We see no reason for assuming that the doctrine of individual justice was such a late development. There is not now, there never was, in Biblical religion, any notion of *salvation by proxy*. C.C.). In Rom. 3:6 ff., it is made clear that it would be injustice to condemn the innocent, however few in comparison with the many sinners.)

V. 21—Leupold (EG, 547): “‘I am going down’ in this case involves a mere descent from the higher spot where these words were spoken, to the low-lying cities. In reality only the two angels (19:1) go directly to the city. The statements of the verse in no wise imply that God’s omniscience is curtailed and that so He is under necessity of securing information as men might. God chooses this mode of procedure to make apparent the fact that He, as Just Judge of all the earth, does nothing without first being in full possession of all facts. The subsequent experience of the angels in Sodom displays the moral state of Sodom far more effectually than could many an explanation besides. God practically claims that the facts of the case have come up before Him already. But He does nothing until facts warrant interference.” Again (*ibid.*, p. 248): “The boldness of faith betrayed by this [Abraham’s] intercession may well astound us. It surely is not based on the assumption that God might deal unjustly. . . . But Abraham recognized that there was a possibility of the perishing of righteous men in this impending catastrophe, even his own relatives also. Much

as he hopes that Lot and his family might be rescued, he is not so narrow or selfish as to think only of these. One might almost say that with a heart kindled by the love that God imparts to faith, Abraham ventures to plead the case of God's love over against God's righteousness. We may never know how these attributes of God are reconciled to one another, except in so far as they blend in Christ. But the boldness of this act of faith is acceptable with God inasmuch as it is really born out of God's heart. This attribute is the 'importunity' Christ refers to in the parable of Luke 11:8." On v. 25 (*ibid.* p. 550): "Most amazing is the free address of faith at this point. Yet, though it strikes a responsive chord in every heart, hardly anyone would be capable of venturing to address God thus. Behind it lies absolute confidence in God's fairness. Besides, that grand and correct conception of God that was characteristic of the patriarchs appears very definitely here. God is far from being a tribal God; he is 'the Judge of *all the earth*.' The critics have failed to evaluate this fact properly."

It has been rightly said that the three most important questions for man to ponder are these: What am I? Whence came I? and, Whither am I bound?—that is to say, the problems respectively of the nature, origin, and destiny of the person. In Gen. 18:25 we face the problem of *the correlation between merit and destiny*. Speiser (ABG, 135): "In Yahweh's soliloquy (vss. 17-19), and the colloquy with Abraham which follows . . . what the author sets down is not so much received tradition as personal-contemplation. The result is a philosophical aside, in which both Yahweh and the patriarch approach the issues of the moment as problems in an enduring scheme of things. Specifically, the theme is the relation between the individual and society. For Yahweh, the individual who matters is Abraham. Having chosen Abraham as the means for implementing His will, and as the spearhead in the

quest for a worthy way of life ('the way of Yahweh,' vs. 19), should he not now take Abraham into his full confidence? The patriarch, on the other hand, in his resolute and insistent appeal on behalf of Sodom, seeks to establish for the meritorious individual the privilege of saving an otherwise worthless community." Concerning the correlation between merit and destiny, this author goes on to say: "The basic issue is only one aspect of the theme of the Suffering Just, which Mesopotamian literature wrestled with as early as the Old Babylonian age (cf. AOS 38, 1955, 68 ff.); the OT has treated it most eloquently in the Book of Job." The answer given here, Speiser goes on to say, "is an emphatic affirmation of the saving grace of the just. And even though the deserving minority proves to be in this instance too small to affect the fate of the sinful majority, the innocent—here Lot and his daughters—are ultimately spared." (AOS—American Oriental Society, Monograph Series)

(HSB, 30): "God is love (1 Jn. 4:8), but because He loves holiness and truth, He is also just (Ps. 89:14, 145:17). His judgments are (1) according to truth (Rev. 19:2); (2) universal and certain (Rom. 2:6); (3) impersonal and impartial (Rom. 2:11); (4) concerned with motive as well as outward conduct (Rom. 2:16; Luke 12:2, 3). Three major judgments are mentioned in Scripture: (1) the judgment of believers' sins, which is past, having been inflicted on the Christ at Calvary (Jn. 5:24, Rom. 8:1); (2) the believers' judgment for rewards (2 Cor. 5:10, Rom. 14:10, 1 Cor. 3:10-15); (3) the judgment of unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15)." (Cf. motivation as Biblically presented, according to which the *fully completed intention is made equivalent to the overt act* (Matt. 5:28; 1 John 3:15, 4:20). Again, Does not Scripture teach that our Lord willingly accepted His role in redemption, which included, of course, the death on the Cross, "for the joy

that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2), that is, for the sheer joy of redeeming lost souls?) (For a full discussion of the problem of v. 25, see *infra*, "The Covering of Grace.")

What does Abraham's "Dialogue" with Yahweh teach us about prayer? Note the following pertinent comment (HSB, 31): "Six times Abraham beseeches God to spare Sodom. Each time God grants his petition. This incident should encourage believers to intercede effectively and to expect responses to prayer. It is a solemn commentary on the awful condition of Sodom that there were not even ten righteous people to be found within its gates." To this we might add the obvious and significant fact that in all of his petitions Abraham never importuned God to save the people of Sodom *in their sins*. Yet this is precisely what is expected by all humanists, moralists, cultists, and nominal church members, who, if they think of God at all, look upon Him as a kind of glorified bellhop whose sole business is to attend to their desires. *There is not the slightest indication in Scripture that any man is saved outside the Covering of Grace, the Atonement planned by the Father, provided by the Son, and ready to be applied by the Holy Spirit to all obedient believers* (Rom. 3:21-27, Eph. 2:8).

#### 4. *The Problem of the Heavenly Visitors.*

Jamieson's treatment of this problem is thoroughgoing, as follows (CECG, 159): "With reference to the three persons who figure so prominently in the details of this narrative, two opposite views have been advanced. Some have held that these were the three Persons in the Trinity who manifested themselves in a visible incarnate form. But this is a hypothesis which not only implies a development of doctrinal mysteries beyond what was made in the patriarchal age, but it is at variance with Scripture (John 1:18, Col. 1:15). Others maintain that they were all three created angels, who came on the business, and spoke in the name, of their Divine Master, founding this

opinion on the fact, as Kurtz expresses it, that their mission was not merely to promise, but to punish as well as to deliver. Others maintain that it was the Lord who appeared, speaking through the medium of his messengers. But this view is open to many and strong objections:—

1. Because the superiority of the one whom Abraham addressed is acknowledged through the whole interview, whilst his two attendants, as his inferiors, observe a respectful silence.
2. Because he speaks and undertakes to act as a Divine person, whilst the other two claim only to be messengers (19:13).
3. Because Scripture does not give any instance of an address being presented to God as represented by a created angel.
4. Because, not to mention the name Adonai, which is used six times, that of Jehovah is applied eight times to him in this passage.
5. Because he ascribes to himself the right and power of independent judgment in the case of Sodom.
6. Because, on the hypothesis that they were all three created angels, it is impossible to account for the third not taking part in the judicial work at Sodom; whereas the cause of his absence, if he was the angel of the Covenant, is perfectly explicable.
7. And only this view affords a satisfactory explanation of the circumstance that throughout this chapter the three are called *men*, while in the next chapter, the two are designated angels—viz., to prevent a confounding the Lord with the angels who attended Him. The condescending familiarity of the visit accords with the simplicity of the early patriarchal age, and with the initial education of Abraham in religious knowledge. It is probable that in some of the past revelations with which Abraham was favored, a visible appearance had been vouchsafed: and that he who must have been incapable of rising to the conception of a spiritual Being would become familiar with the idea of an all-powerful mysterious man, who both in Chaldea and Canaan had repeatedly manifested himself, promising, guiding, protecting, and blessing him as a

constant and faithful Friend. Accordingly, this last manifestation, on the occasion of which he became a guest of Abraham was not an isolated event in the patriarch's experience, but one of a series, in which the Divine Mediator appeared, spoke, and acted, in condescending accomodation to the simple and childlike feelings of Abraham, and as a preluding of the incarnation, when 'God manifest in the flesh' would 'tabernacle with man.' . . . The idea of this narrative being a myth, invented by some Jewish writer for the gratification of national pride, is utterly groundless; for, once admit the peculiar relation in which Abraham stood to God, and this visit is in perfect accordance with his position. As little ground is there for putting this narrative in the same category as the heathen fable of Philemon and Baucis, for, though many of the details in that mythological fable are similar to those of the Scripture narrative, it wants the covenant relations—the grand peculiarity of the patriarchal story—which no poetic imagination could have invented." In a word, the Third Personage in this narrative of Abraham's Intercession was surely the Angel of Jehovah who appears so frequently through the old Dispensations, and who appeared as God's Only Begotten in the manger of Bethlehem (cf. Mic. 5:2, John 17:5).

Speiser's comment about the "Biblical process" becomes pertinent here (ABG, Intro., 52): "The question has often been posed whether the course of recent history would have changed much if on August 15, 1769, Letizia Bonaparte had given birth to a girl instead of a boy. The answer is obvious when limited to decades. But would it still be true a hundred years later, or a hundred and fifty? The chances are that it would not, and that the deviation from the original course which the advent of Napoleon brought about would have been righted in due time. Now let us ask the same kind of question about the biblical process and its presumed originator. The answer can be

ventured with much greater confidence because the measuring span is twenty times as long. That distant event altered history irrevocably. In the case of Napoleon, the detour rejoined the main road. But in the case of Abraham, the detour became itself the main road."

5. *The Problem of Intercessory Prayer* (in relation to that of Absolute Justice) is a most difficult one. (1) In Abraham's case, it was presented from the most profound humility: "I . . . who am but dust and ashes," v. 27. Murphy (MG, 317): "This may refer to the custom of burning the dead, as then coexistent with that of burying them. Abraham intimates by a homely figure, the comparative insignificance of the petitioner. He is dust at first, and ashes at last." (Cf. Gen. 2:7, 3:9; Psa. 103:13-16; Eccl. 12:7; Jas. 4:14, etc.). The patriarch's prayer here surely indicates genuine humility arising from realization of his insignificance and weakness in the presence of his Creator. Yet, *there is realism in it, for if man is no more than body, life has very little meaning for anyone, and without the Breath of Life infused into him by God Himself, he truly is dust and ashes, and in the long run, only that.* Dr. John Baillie, in his impressive book, *And the Life Everlasting*, calls attention to the notion so widespread in our world today, not just that there is no such thing in prospect as life eternal, but *that such a destiny is not even desirable.* He points up the fact that this view, to the Christian is fundamentally contrary to human being as such; that it is derogatory to human dignity to fail to want for our fellows all that Divine Love has done and can do for them. "I insist," he writes, "that to love my brother for God's sake is the same thing as to love him for his own deepest sake, because the deepest thing in him is not his either by inherent right or by conquest, but only by the gift of God. It is only in the possibility which is open to it of personal intercourse with God that the value of the individual human personality can be held to reside

—even as it is upon this possibility alone that its claim to immortality rests.” Again: To the Christian spirit “the ultimate fact is not death but life, not the Cross but the Resurrection and the Crown. It is what it is only because it is persuaded that the sting of death has been drawn and the grave robbed of its victory; so that death has no more dominion over us. It is frankly recognized that in its own self-enclosed and untransfigured nature, as it must present itself to those who do not share any such persuasion, death must be a ghastly and terrible thing; and indeed it is thus that death always *has* presented itself to sincere and profound unbelief. To see one’s beloved stamped into the sod for his body to rot and the worms to eat him . . . and then be of good cheer! No, there can be no good cheer unless it be true that that to which this dreadful thing has happened is not really one’s beloved *himself* but only his earthly tabernacle; unless it be true that ‘the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever’ (1 John 2:17). Whereas, therefore, it would be nothing but shallowness of spirit for one who had no hope beyond the grave to cease to be obsessed by the fact of death (whether by facing it cheerfully or by refusing to make it the object of his too constant thought), such a result in the soul of a Christian must be the mark of a great depth and maturity. . . . I have quoted Spinoza’s saying, spoken in defiance of Plato, that ‘the free man thinks of nothing less than of death; his wisdom is a meditation not upon death but upon life.’ Let me now say that of the man who stands fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free this may well be true—truer than Plato’s ‘studying nothing but dying and being dead’; since he can now cry with St. Paul, ‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’” (Rom. 8:2). (See Baillie, *op cit.*, 341-342). (2) Lange (CDHCG, 441): “In regard to the thought of Abraham’s intercession, we



would make the following remarks: (a) His intercession takes more and more the form of a question. (b) He does not pray that the godless should be freed from punishment, but for the sparing of the righteous, and the turning away of the destructive judgment from all, in case there should be found a sufficient salt of the righteous among them. (c) His prayer includes the thought that God would not destroy any single righteous one with the wicked, although the number of the righteous should be too small to preserve the whole." Gosman adds, *ibid.*, "The righteous, of course, are not destroyed, although they are often involved in the punishment of the wicked." (3) Jamieson (CECG, 158): "The continued and increased urgency of Abraham's pleading with God, which almost rises into shamelessness (Luke 11:5-8), assumes an entirely different character, from the consideration that he is not a suppliant for any benefit to himself, nor even to his nephew Lot, but an intercessor for the people of Sodom generally. 'His importunity was prompted by the love which springs from the consciousness that one's own preservation and rescue are due to compassionate grace alone; love, too, which cannot conceive of the guilt of others as too great for salvation to be possible. The sympathetic love, springing from the faith which was counted for righteousness, impelled him to the intercession which Luther thus describes:—He prayed six times, and with so much ardour and depth of emotion that, in gradually lessening the numbers, in order to ensure the preservation of the wretched cities, he seems to speak almost foolishly. This seemingly commercial kind of entreaty is the essence of true prayer, which bridges over the infinite distance of the creature from the Creator, appeals with importunity to the heart of God, and ceases not until its point is gained' (Keil and Delitzsch)."

6. *Pagan Imitations of this story.* Lange (CDHCG, 433): "Delitzsch thinks that Abraham recognized the unity of the God of revelation, in the appearance of the three

men. . . . He adds: 'One should compare the limitations of this original history among the heathen: Jupiter, Mercury, and Neptune, visit an old man, by name Hyricus, in the Boeotian city Tanagra; he prepares them a feast, and, though childless hitherto, receives a son in answer to his prayer (Ovid's *Fasti*, V, 494, etc.).' And then, further, the heathen accompaniment to ch. 19: 'Jupiter and Mercury are journeying as men; only Philemon and Baucis, an aged, childless wedded pair, receive them, and these, therefore, the gods rescue, bearing them away with themselves, while they turn the inhospitable region lying around the hospitable hut into a pool of water, and the hut itself into a temple (Ovid's *Metam.* 8, 611 ff.).' But the essential distinction between our ideal facts and these myths, lies in this, that while the first lie in the center of history as causal facts or forces, having the most sacred and real historical results, these latter lie simply on the border ground of mythology." To this Gosman adds: "How completely and thoroughly these words dispose of the whole mythical supposition in this as in other cases!"

#### 7. *The Quality of Mercy*

In Genesis the wickedness of Sodom (the city which obviously exercised hegemony of a kind over all the Cities of the Plain (frequently designated a Pentapolis) is set forth so realistically that its very name has become proverbial—"a very Sodom"—and its various kinds of lust are given a single name, "sodomy." Yet here we find Abraham interceding for these people: the righteous man, the Friend of God, is pleading for mercy for the wicked. One is reminded of Portia's eloquent encomium on mercy in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*:

The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as a gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd:  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
 The throned monarch better than his crown.  
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
 The attribute to awe and majesty,  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,  
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
 It is an attribute to God himself;  
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
 That in the course of justice, none of us  
 Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy:  
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
 Deeds of mercy."

Let us consider in this connection, the following pertinent suggestions (from IBG, 622, 623): 1. Who is most likely to come to the help of evil men? Can those who are evil trust their own kind for support? Of course not. "Men who are thoroughly bad are as merciless to others of their kind as a wolf pack is merciless to the wounded wolf. . . . It is the consistent badness in the bad and the inconsistent badness in the hypocritically good which make them cruel, and the generosity of those whom the respectable may class as bad men is due to the great warm fact that there is so much actual goodness in them. So also the highest generosity and compassion are in those who are neither all bad, nor half bad, nor half good, but who, like Abraham, come as near to thoroughgoing goodness as human nature can. The most merciful men all through the Bible are the best men—Joseph, Moses, David, Stephen, Barnabas. Supremely so was Jesus, who in his perfect righteousness could be the friend of publicans and sinners. There is no more corrupting sin than censoriousness and self-righteousness. Let church members examine their own hearts. The

truth which applies to individuals applies to nations also. . . . It is easy for the proud and for those who are drunk with power to consider the enemy as men of Sodom, deserving of nothing but destruction. They like to arrogate to themselves a supposed right to the favor of God and to act as though fanatical revenge had the merit of religion. If Abraham had been like them he would have gloated over Sodom. Being the man he was—an example sorely needed—he was moved with pity.”

2. A second truth stands out in this story: “the sacred worth of individuals, and the evil of involving the innocent minority in a judgment visited on the mass.” “The deepest depravity and moral perversion of war lies here; and war with modern weapons makes this evil more monstrous than ever.” It is a tragic fact that even good people can grow callous to these things. “Atrocities which first shocked the conscience may come to be accepted with only lukewarm questioning or none at all. But a world in torment will begin to have a better hope only when there shall be many men like Abraham.” Should even ten men be caught in a general destruction and given no chance to escape? “To Abraham it seemed to be intolerable that this should be allowed to happen. So much for the instincts which made Abraham the type of a great soul. But observe the further and more important fact: Abraham believed that what was highest in his own heart was his right clue to the nature of God. That which to his own conscience seemed lifted above all doubt must be divine in its authority. That is the meaning of the vivid story of Abraham in the dialogue with God and of his question which he was sure could have only one answer.”

3 The final suggestion of the story of Sodom is a truly somber one. “Not even five righteous persons were left in Sodom to justify its being spared destruction. Here is an eternal picture of the corrosive possibilities of a bad environment. Those who accustom themselves to the ways

of an evil society may themselves at last be evil. What is happening now to people who make no effective protest against the wrongs they live with every day?"

*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Even the old pagans, in particular Socrates and Plato, repudiated the poetic tales of the immoralities of the gods, and insisted that all such tales should be censored so that immature children would not be led astray by them. Plato said expressly (*Republic*, II, 379ff.), "Few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him"; again, "God is perfectly simple both in word and deed; he changes not; he deceives not, either by sign or word, by dream or waking vision"; and again, "the gods are not magicians who transform themselves, neither do they deceive mankind in any way." This apparent antinomy between God's goodness and His omnipotence is resolved only by the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. See *infra*, "The Covering of Grace." Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were definitely repudiating the polytheistic deities of the pagan "religions."

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### *The Covering of Grace*

Gen. 18:25—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Many are the passages of Scripture which state positively that the only remedy for sin is the blood of Christ. (Cf. 1 John 1:7, 2:2; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:25; Matt. 26:28; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 9:22, 9:14; Rev. 1:5, etc.). This blood-theme first appeared when animals were slain to provide a *covering*—note this word carefully—for our first parents when they discovered their nakedness, Gen. 3:21. It appeared again in Abel's pro-

pitiatory sacrifice, Gen. 4:4—it was an offering of blood (cf. Heb. 11:4). It appeared in the sprinkling of the blood on the people, on the book of the covenant, on the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry when the Old Covenant was ratified at Sinai (Heb. 9:17-22). It appeared on the door-post of every Jewish habitation in Egypt on the memorable night when God “passed over” that stricken land (Exo. 12:22). It appeared in all the ceremonial cleansings of the Old Covenant. It appeared in the Cup sanctified by the lips of our Lord at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:28). It appeared in the fullness of its efficacy when Christ bled and died on the Cross, thus ratifying the New Covenant and at the same time abrogating the Old (Heb. 9:11 ff., Col. 3:13-15). From that day to this it has appeared in many parts of the world in the Memorial Feast appointed for God’s saints to keep, “the communion of the blood and of the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16). That Christ died is a fact of *history*: that He died for our sins is a fact of *revelation* (1 Cor. 15:3).

These fundamental truths have been proclaimed by all who are worthy of the name Christian, in all ages of the Christian era. Yet they are being challenged in our day by the atheists, agnostics, positivists, demythologizers, and analytical critics, and indeed all the nitpicking self-styled “intellectuals.” The doctrine has been assailed in all ages—by bitter opponents of the Faith—as “vulgar,” “barbaric,” a fantasy of man’s wishful thinking, and the like. The only efficacy of our Lord’s ministry, we are told, if any at all, is that of the power of His example. His death thus becomes only a martyrdom, and the doctrine of the Atonement is thrown profanely out of the window. This is all very soothing, of course, to the “I-love-me” spirit that is so prominent in the human makeup. This is an age in which intellectual pomposity is going its merry way. Let me say here that if there is anything in this world that

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I despise most of all, except sin, it is this spirit which all too often turns a good thinker into a pompous ass. This worship of erudition is precisely the thing—the desire to be as wise as God, Gen. 3:6, the determination to play God—that swept man into the maelstrom of sin and suffering in the first place, and the foremost factor in keeping him in that environment today.

*1. In discussing the significance of the Blood of Christ, we are dealing, of course, with the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement.*

1) This word "atonement" occurs only once, in the Authorized Version. In various other renderings the Greek word used here, *katallage*, is given as meaning "reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11). The Hebrew *kaphar*, translated "atonement," is found many times in the Old Testament; rendered literally, it means "covering." It seems rather unfortunate that this meaning was not brought over into the Greek and English of the New Testament. For certainly, from whatever point of view one approaches the subject, one finds Biblical teaching to be crystal clear, namely, that our Lord in shedding His blood, and so offering His life—for the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11)—was providing for all mankind God's Covering of Grace, (John 1:29). On the divine side, everything that God has done and will do for sinful man is inherent in the word grace ("unmerited favor"). The Atonement, therefore, is God's Covering of Grace. By coming by *faith*, that is, in God's own way, as that way is revealed in the New Testament, the sinner puts himself under the blood, under this divine Covering of Grace. Thus divine grace and human faith "meet together" and the result is, in a legal sense, *remission* or *justification*, and in a personal sense, *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. The simple fact is that man is alienated from God, not as a consequence of the sin of Adam, nor of the sins of his fathers, but as the consequence

of his own sins ("lawlessness," 1 John 3:4; Rom. 3:23; Col. 1:21; Eph. 1:2). He has mortgaged himself to sin, sold himself under sin (Rom. 7:14, 6:6; Gal. 4:3). In this state it was necessary for his original Owner to buy him back, redeem him, lest he be lost forever. God Himself, the original Owner of the Totality of Being (Psa. 24:1, 89:11; 1 Cor. 10:26), loved man too much to allow him to perish forever, and therefore made provision to buy him back. He gave His Only Begotten (John 3:16), the Son gave His life by shedding His blood. He paid the ransom price; He provided the Covering of Grace whereby the majesty of the moral law was sustained, and at the same time everything was done that could be done to woo the sinner back into covenant relationship with Him. (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). Those who ridicule the Blood simply close their eyes to the lawlessness which has always pervaded man's realm of being. To deny or to ignore the facts of sin and suffering, of love and redemption, is sheer stupidity.

*II. In what sense does the Blood of Christ cleanse us from sin?*

One "school" answers that Christ's blood was shed as an example to impress upon man the magnitude of God's love for him; that it was not designed in any way to affect the attitude of God toward man, but to affect only the attitude of man toward God. But to make this the sole objective of Christ's death is to make sheer nonsense the many Scriptures that speak of His dying "the just for the unjust," "as a propitiation for our sins," "as a ransom for us all," etc. (1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:2; Eph. 1:7; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6, etc.)

Another "school" of "theologians" would have us believe that Christ "died in the room and stead of the sinner," i.e., that He paid the penalty demanded by the moral law, paid it in full, and so freed man completely from the curse of sin. If this is true, obviously, the sinner owes no debt, no obligation: he goes "scot free." This is



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completely refuted by the Apostle's words in Rom. 3:23-26, "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, *through faith*, in his blood . . . that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." This language is plain, and there is no point in making a riddle of it. It means simply that God was under the necessity of imposing the penalty of sin unless something could be done to sustain the majesty of the broken law. Because of His ineffable love for His creature, all this God did for him, lest he perish forever.

### *III. How is the Blood necessary to save us from sin?*

Reflect, if you will, on the Mystery of Blood. What is blood? What is the Mystery of the Flowing Blood? The Mystery of the Flowing Blood is the Mystery of Life itself. How fitting the wonderful metaphor, "the river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street" of the Holy City (Rev. 22:1). The life any human being enjoys flowed into him from his parents, their life flowed into them from their parents, and so on back and back to the first life which God breathed into the lifeless body to make of the man a living soul (Gen. 2:7). What a mystery—this red river of life, the Mystery of the Flowing Blood, the Mystery of Life itself!

Man has been from the beginning a creature under law. To deny this fact is absurd. One who violates the laws of the physical world suffers the penalty here and now. One who jumps out of a twenty-story building, thus defying the law of gravity, breaks his neck. One who picks up a live coal, burns his fingers. One who indulges physical appetites unduly will sow disease in his body. Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap, sooner or later. Because law is not law without its penalty and without its enforcement. Why do we assume, then, that we can flout

the moral laws of God and get away with it? As it has often been said, man actually does not break the moral law; on the contrary, *that law, if violated, breaks him.* God who is holy can do anything He wills to do that is consistent with His character as God. But for Absolute Holiness to accept a man in his sins would be a contradiction in itself: it would be putting a premium on sin; it would be accepting sin and all the anarchy that proceeds from sin. Therefore the problem before the Divine Government can be stated in rather simple terms: it was that of sustaining the majesty of the violated law while at the same time manifesting divine mercy and compassion toward the sinner—a demonstration of love designed to woo the sinner back into fellowship with God.

God is holy. God hates sin. God cannot condone sin, and be God. God had to deal with sin. He could not be God were He to fail to deal with it. Calvary was the demonstration not only of the indescribable love of God for man, but also of the awfulness of sin. Never forget it—our sins nailed the Son of God to the Cross.

How, then, did God resolve the apparent antinomy between His goodness and His omnipotence? This problem was raised in ancient times by Epicurus, if I remember correctly. If God is all good why does He permit evil to prevail in His world. Since, however, it is apparent that evil does prevail in the world in which He has put us, obviously it prevails because God is not sufficiently powerful to eradicate it. This is the age-old problem of the balance between the goodness of God and the power of God.

We reply to this dilemma by affirming that God Himself has resolved the antinomy. He Himself provided the Covering of Grace—the Gift of His Only Begotten—essential to the sustaining of the majesty of His law and will violated by human sin, and by the same Gift has extended general amnesty to sinful man on the terms of the

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Gospel. The Blood is the remedy for sin, the Gospel is the method of application, and eternal life is the reward, the ultimate Highest Good.

In a word: *Divine Justice required the Atonement, and Divine Love provided it.* God freely gave His Son, who—"for the joy that was set before him," the sheer joy of redeeming lost souls, Heb. 12:2—endured the cross, despising shame, and "hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." As stated so clearly by W. Robertson-Smith (*The Religion of the Semites*, p. 62) "To reconcile the forgiving goodness of God with His absolute justice is one of the highest problems of spiritual religion, which in Christianity is solved by the doctrine of the Atonement." The design of the Atonement must be regarded as twofold, namely, to vindicate God's justice and so sustain the majesty of the moral law, and at the same time to woo man back into a state of reconciliation by a demonstration of His ineffable love and compassion sufficient to overcome—in every honest and good heart—the rebellion engendered by sin. To omit either of these objectives is to distort the doctrine of the Atonement. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-20, Luke 8:15, Rom. 3:26, 1 Cor. 6:2, Rom. 2:4-16, Rev. 20:11-15, 22:1-5, 10:15, etc.).

*IV. Where does the penitent believer meet the efficacy of the Blood of Christ?*

Denominationalized preachers proclaim glibly that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ (which, to be sure, is true), but they never tell the inquiring penitent how and where to meet the efficacy of that blood; that is, they never tell him in Scripture terms. In fact the great majority seem to have no conception of what the New Testament teaches about this important matter, even though the teaching is clear. We must accept and confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. We must repent of our sins; then we meet the cleansing blood of Jesus when, as penitent believers, we *actually enter into the*

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*covenant which has been sealed with His blood* (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Acts 16:31, 2:38; Matt. 16:16; Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:10; Luke 13:3; Gal. 3:27). The blood of Christ flowed when He died. Therefore, in order to come under the efficacy of His blood, *we must die with Him*. We must commit ourselves to His Cross—that of self-crucifixion (Gal 2:20, 6:14). Where does this transaction take place? It takes place when we are inducted into Christ. When and where are we inducted into Christ? When, as penitent believers, *we are baptized into Christ*. When the Roman soldiers came to the Cross, one of them plunged a spear into His side to make sure that He was dead, and out of the wound flowed blood and water. The only place divinely appointed in which we meet the efficacy of the blood of Christ is the *grave of water*. (Gal 3:27; John 3:5; Acts 22:16; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:26). The efficacy is in the fact that Divine grace has made this appointment and human faith meets it, making it possible for the pardon to take place where it must take place, namely, *in the mind of God*. These facts are all made too clear for us to be in doubt, in the sixth chapter of Romans.

Shame on those who would speak of Christian baptism as a “mere outward act,” “mere external performance,” “mere form,” etc. There are no “mere forms,” no “non-essentials,” in Christianity. It is an insult to our Lord to accuse Him of establishing “mere forms” or “non-essentials.” We need to learn that in baptism we die, not just *symbolically*, but *literally* to the guilt of past sin. And we do well to make the words of the grand old hymn our favorite baptismal litany,

“O happy day! happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away.”

*Beloved, if we are saved at all, we are saved by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. There is no other way—no other remedy for the sin of the world.* (Acts 22:16;

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John 1:29). *And, according to plain Scripture teaching, the only place where the believer appropriates the efficacy of Christ's Blood is in the baptismal grave* (Gal. 3:27, Rom. 6:3-11, Tit. 3:5, Matt. 3:13-16; Acts 2:38-41, 8:12, 8:38, 10:47, 16:31-33, 22:16).

## REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-ONE

1. Explain the Oriental ritual of hospitality as exemplified by Abraham in Genesis 18.
2. How explain Sarah's laughter on hearing the announcement that she would bear a son? What kind of reaction did this indicate on her part?
3. Why did she subsequently resort to deception when faced with the facts?
4. What reasons have we for holding that of the three heavenly Visitants to Abraham's tent two were angels? Cf. Heb. 1:14.
5. What reason do we have for believing that the third Visitant was God Himself in the person of the Logos?
6. Review the Old Testament teaching concerning the Angel of Jehovah. Correlate Micah 5:2.
7. What announcement did these heavenly Visitants make concerning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?
8. Explain what is meant by "the perennial problem of Absolute Justice."
9. How is this problem stated, in the form of a question, in v. 23, and again in the same way in v. 25?
10. How account for the "boldness" of Abraham's intercession? Would you say that it lacked humility?
11. How does Cornfeld explain the apparent familiarity of Abraham's approaches to God?
12. How refute the claim that these cultures had not yet attained the ideal of individual responsibility, but were concerned only with collective righteousness and responsibility?

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13. Did Abraham's intercession include any effort to benefit himself?
14. Did he ask God to save the people of Sodom *in their sins*? Could God have done this and really been the living and true God?
15. Why is the notion completely untenable that the narrative in chapter 18 is in any sense a myth?
16. Comment on the patriarch's declaration in v. 27 that he was "but dust and ashes." In what sense only can this be said to be realistic?
17. Show how the notion widespread in our day that a future life is *not even desirable* is a violation of the noblest characteristic of man and a complete repudiation of the law of love? Summarize Baillie's treatment of this view.
18. Restate Lange's treatment of "pagan imitations" of the story of Abraham and his heavenly Visitants.
19. In what way does this narrative point up the nobility of "the quality of mercy"?
20. In what way does it emphasize "the sacredness of the individual"?
21. Why is the final suggestion of the story of Sodom designated "a truly somber one"?
22. What according to Scripture is the only remedy for sin?
23. In what facts is this remedy foreshadowed in the Old Testament?
24. What forms do present-day denials of this fundamental truth take?
25. With what great doctrine of Christianity are we dealing when we discuss the Scriptures having to do with the Blood of Christ?
26. What is meant by the Covering of Grace? How is it related to our redemption?
27. In what sense does the Blood of Christ cleanse us from sin?

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28. How is the Blood of Christ necessary to save man from sin?
29. What is meant by the antinomy of God's justice and His goodness?
30. How is this resolved by the Christian doctrine of the Atonement?
31. What is the twofold design of the Atonement?
32. Explain how the justice and love of God are both involved in the efficacy of the Blood of Christ.
33. Where does the penitent believer meet the efficacy of the Blood of Christ? Explain fully.
34. Where in the process of conversion does pardon take place?
35. Is there any such thing taught in Scripture as "baptismal regeneration"? Explain.
36. Explain what is meant by the Mystery of the Flowing Blood.
37. Is it conceivable that our Lord as Head of the Church would ordain "non-essential" institutions?
38. In the light of our present study review the question of Genesis 18:23, "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?"
39. In the light of the present study review the question of Genesis 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"
40. What did Abraham do at the conclusion of his "dialogue" with God?

## PART THIRTY-TWO

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: LOT'S LAST DAYS

Genesis 19:1-38

#### 1. *Lot's Hospitality* (vv. 1-3)

1 *And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth; 2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3 And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.*

While Abraham had been pleading with God, the other two heavenly Visitants had entered the doomed city. Note, *the two angels came*. Speiser (ABG, 138): "This identification is meant for the reader, who knows that Yahweh stayed behind with Abraham (18:22) in order to tell him of the melancholy mission. The author was equally direct in introducing the other visit (18:1). But Lot must discover the truth for himself, as Abraham did earlier." It was in the light of the miracle (v. 11) that the "men" (vv. 5, 8, 10; cf. 18:22) were now clearly revealed as angels. *It is at this point that the text becomes more specific.* "By thus viewing the action through the eyes of the actors, the spectator also is caught up in the unfolding drama, in spite of his advance knowledge." Note that the angels arrived at Sodom "at even," that is, *in the evening*. Now the southern tip of what is now the Dead Sea is some forty miles from Hebron. Normal traveling time for that distance in the patriarchal age



would have been about two days; supposing these visitors had left their sumptuous meal at Abraham's tent toward mid-afternoon, they must have had superhuman powers to have made the journey in such a short time. Note the following suggestions, from Jewish sources (SC, 93), in which they are treated as angels: "It would surely not have taken them so long to go from Hebron to Sodom; but they were merciful angels, and they waited until Abraham finished his pleading, in the hope they would not have to destroy the place. . . . Similarly, they came there immediately after they left Abraham, but did not enter the city until even, hoping that Abraham's prayers would be efficacious." (The first of these suggestions is from the medieval commentator Rashi (d. 1105), the second from Sforino, who died at Bologna in 1550). (We must remember that angels are represented in Scripture as having superhuman knowledge, but not omniscience).

"*Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.*" The "gate" was the usual resort of all, and especially of the elders, of whatever city. There legal issues were adjudicated, transactions completed, bargains made, everyday affairs discussed. The gate was "the focal point of all communal activities in an urban center like Sodom." Lot arose to meet his visitors, and bowed himself "with his face to the earth" (the manner in which courtiers and clients address their superiors in the Amarna letters; in the corresponding case of Abraham (18:2), the term for "face" is significantly missing, ABG, 138).

*Lot's hospitality* was, in the main, according to the usual ritual, but *with significant overtones*. (1) He urged them to "turn aside," etc. Having gone out to meet them, he invited them to come to his house (in contrast to Abraham's tent, 18:1, 6, 9, 10), suggesting that they *turn aside* to get there, that is, take a roundabout way. At the same time he invited them to "tarry all night" at his house, adding, "and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early,

and go on your way." Customarily, this order would have been reversed, that is, the washing of feet should have been the first act of the ritual. But, according to Rashi, "Lot feared that if they washed their feet first, and would then be discovered, the Sodomites would accuse him of having harboured them already for a few days. He therefore asked them to spend the night there without washing their feet, to make it appear that they had only just arrived" (SC, 93). When the celestial visitors modestly declined Lot's invitation, stating their preference to "abide in the street all night" (for the purpose, it seems, of evaluating realistically the abhorrent vices of the Sodomites), Lot is said to have "urged them greatly": evidently he pressured them as courteously as possible not to do this, because he knew well the lust and violence to which they would be subjected (undoubtedly a point in his favor). (To pass the night in the street was not an unusual thing. The climate permitted such a course; wrapped in their cloaks, travelers frequently spent the night sleeping in the street, especially "in the broad place," the enlarged area just within the city gate which served as the market place and the concourse for all types of people). In response to Lot's urgency the angels "turned in unto him, and entered into his house": that is, *they took a circuitous path* to get there. Safely within the house, Lot proceeded with true, Oriental hospitality to bake unleavened bread and make a feast, "and they did eat." The same excellent courtesy which we have noted in Abraham still characterizes the nephew.

We may well ask, *Why was Lot in the gate of Sodom in the first place?* Whitelaw (PCG, 252): "In what capacity Lot was sitting in the gate is not narrated. That he was on the outlook for travelers on whom to practice the hospitality he had learned from his uncle (Poole, Willet, Calvin, Lange) is perhaps to form too high an ideal of his piety (Kalisch); while the explanation that he had been

promoted to the dignity of one of the city judges, though not perhaps justified as an inference from v. 9, is not at all unlikely, considering his relationship to Abraham." Jamieson (CECG, 160), concerning the "gate": "In eastern cities it is the market, and is often devoted to other business transactions (Ruth, ch. 4), the administration of justice, and the enjoyment of social intercourse and amusement; especially it is a favorite lounge in the evenings, the arched roof affording a pleasant shade." Or, *was Lot's presence at the gate of Sodom a further proof of his moral and spiritual degeneracy?* As Leupold puts it (EG, 555-556): "Lot's presence here will hardly be accounted for on the assumption that he was on the lookout for guests in order to afford his hospitality an opportunity to welcome chance strangers. Strangers cannot have been so common in those days. Rather, Lot's presence in the gate constitutes a reproach to the otherwise good and 'righteous' man (2 Pet. 2:8). After having first moved into the Plain of Sodom (13:11), he presently chose Sodom itself as his dwelling place (13:12); and now finally he has arrived at the point where the activities, the bustle and stir, are looked upon with a more or less tolerant interest. This much cannot be denied in the reference to Lot, that when the approach of the strangers is noticed by him, he promptly advances to them with a gracious invitation. He is not ignorant of the danger that threatens chance visitors in such a town. He arises to meet them and bows with the customary respectful oriental salutation. . . . With anxiety for their welfare—for he knows what men in the open must face—and, perhaps, consciously at no small risk to himself, he makes his invitation as attractive as possible." (It should be recalled here that, according to Scripture, God does not look with favor on the concentration of population. His command was, at the first, "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," Gen. 1:28. "Replenish" here means "to

stock" the whole earth with progeny. But the rebellious race took the opposite course: they concentrated on a plain in Shinar and presumed to build a city and a tower—a tower whose top would reach "unto heaven"—making it necessary for God to confound their speech and thus scatter them abroad: Gen. 11:1-9. Concentration of population invariably breeds vice, crime, violence, and strife of every kind.)

## 2. *The Violence of the Sodomites* (vv. 4-11)

4 *But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 5 and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men that came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6 And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. 7 And he said; I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. 8 Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing, forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof. 9 And they said, Stand back. And they said, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door. 10 But the men put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door.*

Before Lot and the members of his household and his celestial visitors "lay down," that is, could retire for the night, the men of Sodom surrounded the house, "both young and old," all of them "from every quarter," i.e.,

"from one end of the city to the other, there not being even one righteous man to protest" (SC, 94). The mob cried out to Lot to bring his visitors out to them "that we may know them." *i.e.*, "vent our lust upon them" (Rashi, *et al*). This demand was, of course, "the basest violation of the sacred rite of hospitality, and the most shameless proclamation of their sin" (COTP, 233). (The verb "know," as used here, is used in the same sense as in Judg. 19:22-26, namely, as having reference to such perversions of the sex function as homosexuality (including Lesbianism), pederasty, bestiality, etc., practices everywhere prevalent among the Canaanites (Lev. 18:3, 18:22-23, 20:13, 15), and according to the Apostle Paul, Rom. 1:24-27, the curse of heathenism generally. It will be recalled that the Cult of Fertility, worship of the Sun-father and the Earth-Mother, which characterized the entire ancient pagan world, featured ritual prostitution, phallic worship, etc., and sanctioned all forms of individual sex perversion as well). It was at this point that Lot committed the egregious error of offering as a substitute his two virgin daughters to be used as the attackers might want to use them to satisfy their unnatural lust. But the immediate response was even more threatening. This fellow (Lot), they cried out, who is only a sojourner in our city, has been trying to play the role of a judge all this while (undoubtedly this means that he had been wont to reprove the people for their iniquitous ways), so now let us be rid of him. In exasperation they threaten to deal with him severely, that is, not just to abuse him sexually as they sought to abuse his guests, but actually to kill him. To the heavenly visitors all this was the final proof that Sodom was fit only for destruction; and so they pulled Lot back into the house, closed the door, and smote the men outside with blindness. "What is involved here is not the common affliction, not just 'total blindness,' but a sudden stroke . . . a blinding flash emanating from angels

—who thereby abandon their human disguise—which would induce immediate, if temporary, loss of sight, much like the desert or snow blindness” (ABG, 39). Thus, as has often been the case, human violence was frustrated by divine intervention.

### 3. *Lot's Degeneracy*

This has already been pointed out (1) as beginning in his move to the Plain of Sodom (13:11) being motivated by the prospect of material prosperity and ease, (2) as continuing in his choice of the city itself as a dwelling-place, and thus (at least tacitly) accepting the activities of his urban environment “with a more or less tolerant interest,” (3) is now accentuated by his willingness to allow his two virgin daughters to be victims in a sexual orgy by the lustful male Sodomites (19:8). About all that can be said in his favor is that he did adhere closely to the prescribed cult of hospitality and did try in his own weak way to protect his guests from the unnatural vice with which the Sodomites threatened them. But—did fidelity to the law of hospitality justify his willingness to make scapegoats of his daughters? For example, note this comment: “At that period the honour of a woman was of less account, 12:10f. than the sacred duty of hospitality” (JB, 35). Cf. Skinner (ICCG, 307): “The unnatural vice which derives its name from the incident was viewed in Israel as the lowest depth of moral corruption (cf. Lev. 18:22ff; 20:13, 23; Ezek. 16:50, Judg. 19:22). Lot’s readiness to sacrifice the honor of his daughters, though abhorrent to Hebrew morality (cf. Judg. 19:25, 30), shows him a courageous champion of the obligations of hospitality in a situation of extreme embarrassment, and is recorded to his credit.” The over-all consensus is, however, that Lot’s action in the offer to sacrifice his daughters on the altar of human male lust was, whatever mitigating circumstances might be offered in his defense, morally *without excuse*. Thus Delitzsch (COPT, 233): “In his

anxiety, Lot was willing to sacrifice to the sanctity of hospitality his duty as a father, which ought to have been still more sacred, and committed the sin of seeking to avert sin by sin. Even if he expected that his daughters would suffer no harm, as they were betrothed to Sodomites (v. 14), the offer was a grievous violation of his paternal duty." "While the narrative reveals Lot's hospitality, it also reveals his wickedness" (SC, 94). Murphy (MG, 322): "How familiar Lot had become with vice, when any necessity whatever could induce him to offer his daughters to the lust of these Sodomites! We may suppose it was spoken rashly, in the heat of the moment, and with the expectation that he would not be taken at his word. So it turned out." (This fact surely points up the infamy of the men of Sodom: they would not be satisfied with what females could offer; they had to have males to serve their purposes.) Leupold (EG, 559-560): "The kindest interpretation of Lot's willingness to sacrifice his daughters to the depraved lusts of these evildoers stresses that it was done with the intent of guarding his guests. To that certainly must be added the fact that under the circumstances Lot was laboring under a certain confusion. But Delitzsch's summary still covers the truth, when he describes Lot's mistakes as being *an attempt to avoid sin by sin*. In days of old, when an exaggerated emphasis on hospitality prevailed, we might have understood how such a sacrifice could be made by a father. But in our day we cannot but feel the strongest aversion to so unpaternal an attitude. Luther's attempts to vindicate Lot's character are quite unconvincing: for Lot could hardly have anticipated with a certain shrewdness that the Sodomites were so bent on this particular form of vileness as to refuse any substitutes. *In fact, their refusal to accept Lot's substitute argues for an intensity of evil purpose that surpasses all comprehension.*" Jamieson (CECG, 160): "The offer made by Lot was so extreme as plainly shows that

he had been thrown into a state of the most perturbed and agitated feeling, between fear of the popular violence and solicitude for the safety of the strangers that were under his roof." The incident (IB, 626-627) "is recorded to Lot's credit as one who was concerned at all costs to fulfill the sacred obligation of a host to protect his guests. At the same time, such treatment of the daughters would have been abhorrent to Hebrew morality." Again, (*ibid*): "Compared with the general population of Sodom Lot was a decent person. The writer of Second Peter (2:6-8) could even think of him as 'just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.' The moments came when, as in the vile events described in this chapter, he was more than vexed. He tried to resist the extreme outrage which the lustful gang in Sodom were about to perpetrate upon the men who had harborage in his house. He would go to great length to fulfill the obligation of hospitality—an obligation which in his world and time was one of the supreme laws of honor. But he had got himself into a place where there could be no decent way out of the crisis that had caught him. All he could think of was the desperate and shameful alternative of sacrificing his own daughters. Even this would not avail. The gang that assaulted his house wanted the men who were his guests there—wanted them for sodomy, the vileness to which the city of Sodom gave its name. In the day when Lot made what he thought was his smart decision to select the neighborhood of Sodom, in the choice Abraham offered him, he did not foresee that the place would prove so evil. But because he did not care enough to consider that, he took the chance and reaped the consequences. Like many another man since, he learned that early choices which seem clever when they smother conscience must pay their heavy reckoning: *There is no guarantee of limited ability for a wrong act.*"—(italics mine-C.C.)



There are three summarizations of Lot's acts and their motivations which are worthy of being presented here to bring to a close this phase of our subject. The first is by Whitelaw (PCG, 253): "The usual apologies—that in sacrificing his daughters to the Sodomites instead of giving up his guests to their unnatural lust, Lot (1) selected the lesser of two sins (Ambrose); (2) thereby protected his guests and discharged the duties of hospitality incumbent on him (Chrysostom); (3) believed his daughters would not be desired by the Sodomites, either because of their well-known betrothal (Rosenmuller), or because of the unnatural lust of the Sodomites (Lange); (4) acted 'rough mental perturbation' (Augustine)—are insufficient to excuse the wickedness of one who in attempting to prevent one sin was himself guilty of another (Delitzsch), who in seeking to be a faithful friend forgot to be an affectionate father (Kalisch), and who, though bound to defend his guests at the risk of his own life, was not at liberty to purchase their safety by the sacrifice of his daughters ('Speaker's Commentary')."

A second excellent summarization is that of Speiser (ABG, 143): "Lot is dutiful in his hospitality. His manner with the visitors, however, appears servile ('with his face to the ground,' vs. 1), as contrasted with the simple dignity of Abraham (18:2), and both his invitation and subsequent preparations lack his uncle's spontaneity. But true to the unwritten code, Lot will stop at nothing in order to protect his guests. Presently, the identity of the visitors is revealed in a flash of supernatural light (v. 11). The angels' intercession serves to bring out the latent weaknesses in Lot's character. He is undecided, flustered, ineffectual. His own sons-in-law refuse to take him seriously (14). He hesitates to turn his back on his possessions, and has to be led to safety by the hand (16), like a child—an ironic sidelight on a man who a moment earlier tried to protect his celestial guests (von Rad).

Lot's irresoluteness makes him incoherent (20). Small wonder that his deliverance is finally achieved without a moment to spare. Had the sun risen an instant sooner, Lot might have shared the fate of his wife; for God's mysterious workings must not be looked at by man." In addition to all this, Lot's degeneracy is further underscored, in his declining years, by intoxication and incest (vv. 30-38). Though neither of these were of his own making, they surely do point up his failure as a father, by proving that he allowed his offspring to suffer the contaminations of the environment in which he had placed them by his own choice and had allowed them to grow up, to become promised to men of Sodom, and so to become infected by the moral rot with which the Cities of the Plain fairly stank. It is significant—is it not?—that after this last-recorded disgraceful incident, the name of Lot disappears completely from sacred history, not even his death being recorded. "Here is an eternal picture of the corrosive possibilities of a bad environment. Those who accustom themselves to the ways of an evil society may themselves at last be evil. What is happening now to people who make no effective protest against the wrongs they live with every day?" (IBG, 624). As Alexander Pope has put it so succinctly:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

A final summation here is of special interest, even though it takes the form of a contrast: "Lot and Abraham both were righteous men (15:6, 2 Pet. 2:7, 9), and both enjoyed similar backgrounds and advantages. Abraham, however, looked forward to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Lot, on the contrary, looked toward the city without

heavenly foundations, choosing for the present time without concern for eternity (13:5-18). Lot's misfortune should be a warning for all" (HSB, 31).

#### 4. *The Iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah*

The iniquity of the Cities of the Plain included certain corollary practices, such as (1) lack of social justice (Isa. 1:9-17), (2) reveling in the indulgence of all kinds of vice openly (Isa. 3:4-12: note tendency in our day to assume that there is a certain virtue in "unblushing openness" in the practice of vice—a sophisticated kind of hypocrisy; (3) priestly (ecclesiastical) heresy and moral corruption (Jer. 23:14-15); complete disregard of the poor, in an affluent society: poverty in the midst of plenty (Ezek. 16:49); preoccupation with things of the secular world (Luke 17:26-32); obsession with sex (Jude 7: note the phrase, "gone after strange flesh," that is, a departure from the order of nature in the corruptions practised). (In our day the ancient Cult of Fertility has been superseded by the by-products of libidinal psychology).

It was the city's *sexual depravity*, however, that provided the basic reason for its utter destruction. On this fact the consensus is practically universal. E.g., "The sin of Sodom was unnatural vice" (IB, 627), as is evident from the fact that Lot knew all too well what remaining in the street all night would have meant to his visitors. "The unnatural vice that takes its name from this incident was an abomination to the Israelites, Lev. 18:22, and was punished with death, Lev. 20:13; but it was rife among their neighbors, Lev. 20:23; cf. Judg. 19:22ff" (JB, 35). The unnatural vice alluded to here was, undoubtedly *homosexuality*, in all likelihood accompanied by all forms of sex perversion. (It should be noted that *bestiality* is also specifically mentioned in the Scripture references: cf. Lev. 18:22, 23; 20:13-16.) *Lesbianism* (female homosexuality) was probably common also; the name derives from the

island of Lesbos where Sappho the Greek poetess, maintained the first "finishing school" in history for young women, which achieved the reputation of having been a disseminator of this vice among the women of Lesbos and the surrounding Greek states.)

Young men and women of our time need to be warned against these unnatural practices. In this category belong the *solitary sex acts* (voluntary in origin and involving sex satisfaction through some method of erotic stimulation of the sex organs). These are *unnatural* in that they involve the abuse of the sex function; they are *harmful* in that they tend to become habitual and hence gradually to weaken the will. In this category we put the following: *masturbation*, commonly called "self-abuse," sometimes erroneously called *onanism* (cf. Gen. 38:8-10). (Onan's act was an offense against the theocratic family, not an act indulged for erotic pleasure). The act, however, if it becomes habitual with young boys, certainly tends to vitiate the will; if persistently practised, undoubtedly it contributes to impotence in later life. *Bestiality*, coition of a human being with a brute; *necrophilia*, erotic satisfaction obtained by physical sexual contact with a corpse (a practice prevalent in ancient Egypt especially, where mummification of corpses of the nobility, both male and female, was common); *fetishism*, an act in which the person obtains sexual gratification "onanistically" with the aid of a symbol, usually a symbol of the loved object; *transvestism*, putting on the clothing of the opposite sex for purposes of erotic satisfaction; *scoptophilia*, the avid viewing of the external sex organs or of actual sex acts for the purpose of obtaining sex excitation; *voyeurism*, defined as "pathological indulgence in looking at some form of nudity as a source of gratification in place of the normal sex act." Under this heading we must also include *obscenity*, *pornography*, *lasciviousness* (Gal. 5:19), *lewdness*, *exhibitionism* (indecent exposure), etc.

*Homosexual activity*, even though it involves another person, belongs in the category of solitary sex acts because the erotic pleasure is confined to the one who plays the role of the active agent in the perversion. Homosexuality may stem from a glandular dysfunction; generally, however, it seems to be psychological in origin, that is, a habit formed in adolescence which results in such a weakening of the will that the victim, in adulthood, lacks the mental and physical strength to cast it off. In the end, its effect, like that of alcoholism, is often pathological; obviously, it is *not* a natural use of the sex function. Many eminent authorities speak of it as a "congenital anomaly" rather than a disease. Usually the homosexual possesses characteristic psychic and physical traits of the opposite sex. *Pederasty* is carnal copulation of an adult as the active partner with a boy as the passive partner. *Sodomy*, basically, is defined (WNCD) as "carnal copulation with a member of the same sex or with an animal, or unnatural copulation with a member of the opposite sex." As a matter of fact, however, the term has come to be used in many legal codes for all kinds of sex perversion. History proves that in cultures in which homosexuality has become a practice woman has never been accorded any particularly honorable status; moreover, that the spread of the perversion throughout the population, as in the days of the so-called "Enlightenment" in Athens and in those of the Empire in Rome, is an unfailing mark of national decadence. The morale of a people depends upon the national morality; and the national standard of morality depends very largely on the nation's sex morality. Socrates, in Athens, had his "beloved"—his name was Alcibiades. Plato winked at the practice. Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, on the other hand, despised it. And Aristotle deplored it, criticizing Plato for his seeming tolerance of the perversion. It is amazing to discover how many eminent persons in the field of literature in particular have been

enslaved by it, and one might well say, haunted by the enslavement. (See Paul's list of the vices of the pagan world, Rom. 1:18-32). Parents have a solemn obligation in our day to instruct their children about these unnatural uses of the sex function; moreover, this instruction should begin even before the child reaches adolescence. Let it never be overlooked, as Dr. Will Durant has stated so pointedly, that "the control of the sex impulse is the first principle of civilization,"—to be blunt, the first step out of the barnyard.

Any act of sex perversion is a selfish prostitution of the sex function: it gives pleasure only to the one who performs the act, and physical pleasure only. In the true conjugal union, however, one that is sanctified by mutual love, the participants enjoy the planned sharing of the bliss, one with the other; indeed this bliss is enhanced by the fact that each participant is thinking in terms of what is being contributed to the enjoyment of the other: the satisfaction thus becomes spiritual and not exclusively physical. There is a vast difference here, difference which evinces the sanctity of the conjugal union and the superiority of monogamy as a selective institution. Let us remember that "love is a permanent and fixed attitude which puts the interest of the one loved above the interests of the lover; the reversal of this sacrificial quality is the fallacy which permeates Fletcher's so-called "situationist ethics," which in essence is the advocacy of sheer selfishness.

The physiological sex union of husband and wife in the conjugal relation has by divine ordination a twofold purpose: it is *procreative*, i.e., it guarantees the preservation of the race; and it is *unitive* in that it enhances the intimacy of the conjugal relation. Obviously, because homosexuality thwarts these ends of marriage, it is *unnatural*. On the basis of the Principle of Universalization, namely, that the moral validity of a human act is to be

realistically tested by considering what the consequences would be if every human being did it under the same or similar circumstances, indubitably homosexuality would destroy the race in short order. Hence the Divine pronouncements recorded in Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18, 21-25. It simply is *not good* for the man to be alone: under such conditions his potentialities could never be realized and the race would die "aborning." Moreover, in every case of addiction to the practice, it could serve only to debase the intimacy of the marriage relation and so to vitiate the very character and design of the conjugal union. Sexual coition without love is simply that of the brute. On the other hand, coition sanctified by love, is treated in Scripture as an allegory of the mystical relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. (Cf. the entire Song of Solomon; also Eph. 5:22-33, 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:1-4, etc.). (Suggested reading: *The Sexual Offender and His Offenses*, by Benjamin Karpman, M.D., Julian Press, Inc., New York, 1954).

In view of all these facts, we are not surprised to find that *sodomy* is anathematized throughout both the Old and New Testaments as an abomination to God, and that the terrible judgment which descended on Sodom and Gomorrah is repeatedly cited as a warning to all people who would tolerate such iniquity. Thus the name of Sodom itself has become a byword among all peoples whose God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. See, on sodomy, Exo. 22:19, Judg. 19:22ff; Lev. 18:22-23, 20:13-16, 20:23; Rom. 1:24-27, 9:29; 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10; on sodomites, Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Ki. 14:23-24, 15:12, 22:46; 2 Ki. 23:7; on the divine judgment visited on the Cities of the Plain, Deut. 29:23, 32:32; Isa. 1:9-10, 3:9, 13:19; Jer. 20:15, 49:17-18, 23:13-15, 50:40; Ezek. 16:46-51, 53:58; Lam. 4:6; Amos 4:11, Hos. 11:8, Zeph. 2:9; Matt. 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12, 17:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:6; Judge 7, Rev. 11:8.

## 5. Lot's Deliverance (vv. 12-17)

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law; and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of the place: 13 for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxed great before Jehovah; and Jehovah hath sent us to destroy it. 14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for Jehovah will destroy the city. But he seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that mocked. 15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters that are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16 But he lingered; and the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, Jehovah being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

As the night wore on, filled with clamor, no doubt, and violence, the heavenly visitors vehemently assured Lot that the city faced certain destruction and warned him to gather together with all speed every member of his family if he would save them from the impending catastrophe. Lot did as he was advised, but his warning was lost on his sons-in-law, whose thinking was so debased that they did not take him seriously; indeed they seemed to get the idea that he was making sport of them (cf. Judg. 16:25). Note v. 12, "son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, (and whomsoever thou hast in the city." Cf. v. 14, "sons-in-law who married his daughters." Various suggestions have been made to clarify these relationships: (1) that he



had no sons, only daughters, and the reference in v. 12 is to the sons of his married daughters; (2) that v. 12 had reference to sons-in-law whom Lot regarded as sons. How can this be clarified in the light of v. 14, "sons-in-law, who married his daughters," marginal rendering, "were to marry," hence only prospective sons-in-law? Rashi holds that there were two sets of sons-in-law; Ibn Ezra also explains that other sons-in-law are intended, namely, married to daughters who had died, as supported by the phrase, "thy two daughters that *are here*," which implies that there were others who were no longer *here*, i.e., no longer alive. (See SC, 95). Speiser points up the ambiguity of this phrase, "two daughters that are here," meaning, literally, "within reach, present, at hand," which, he says "could mean either pledged but still at home, or unattached altogether" (EG, 140). (KD, COPT, 234): V. 15 "refers not to the daughters who were still in the father's house, as distinguished from those who were married, but his wife and two daughters who were to be found with him in the house, in distinction from the bridegrooms, who also belonged to him, but were not yet living with him, and who had received his summons in scorn, because in their carnal security they did not believe in any judgment of God (Luke 17:28-29). If Lot had married daughters, he would undoubtedly have called upon them to escape along with their husbands, his sons-in-law." There need be no significant dilemma here: as stated (SIBG, 242): "either Lot's virgin-daughters had been only betrothed to them [his sons-in-law, v. 14], or Lot had other daughters who perished in the flames." Lange (CDHCG, 438): "We may add that there is no intimation that Lot had warned married daughters to rise up." The consensus seems to be that the two virgin daughters (v. 8) who were with Lot in his house, and who later escaped, were about to be married to men of Sodom.

*Lot's Reluctance.* "When the morning arose," that is, just before the sunrise, "the angels hastened Lot," etc. Why the haste? "So that Sodom's destruction might take place at sunrise, the sun being their chief deity; thus its impotence to save its worshipers would be demonstrated" (SC, 95). But "Lot lingered." Still tied to his possessions! Lange, *ibid.*, 438): "It is clear in every way that Lot, from his spiritless, half-hearted nature, which made it difficult to part from his location and possessions, was rescued with the greatest difficulty." Lot, like Ephraim (Hos. 7:8, Ephraim being the name commonly given to the northern kingdom of Israel) was "a cake not turned." That is, he had never truly forsaken the world, the flesh, and the devil. Like many church members in our day, he—somewhat reluctantly, to be sure—kept one face turned toward the God of Abraham, but he lived much of his life with his real face always turned in the direction of the allurements of this present evil world (2 Tim. 4:10); he had just enough religion probably to make him uncomfortable, but not enough to make him genuinely happy. Hence, when the day dawned, his heavenly visitors broke off any further delay by laying hold of him, and his wife, and his two daughters, and literally dragging them out of the doomed city, bidding them flee to the neighboring mountains of Moab for safety. "*Jehovah being merciful unto him*": Does this mean that the angels sought to speed him while God was still merciful? Or does it mean that he was delivered, not on the ground of his own merit, but solely through God's mercy? A third view: "Although he was to be saved for Abraham's sake, through his lingering he might have forfeited this privilege but for God's mercy" (SC, 95). This completes the work of the two angels in saving Lot: now the divine judgment is ready to be executed.

6. *The Flight to Zoar* (vv. 18-22)

18 And Lot said unto them, *Oh, not so, my lord: 19 behold now, thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy lovingkindness, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest evil overtake me, and I die: 20 behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape thither (is it not a little one?), and my soul shall live. 21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which thou hast spoken. 22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.*

Note in v. 17, Lot's mode of address, "my Lord," marginal rendering, "O Lord." Does this mean that Yehwe Himself has arrived on the scene (cf. again, 18:1, 3, also 22, where Jehovah is represented as remaining behind to converse with Abraham, after the two angels had gone on their way, etc.), or that He has been present all along in the person of *the Angel of Yahweh*? (Read Lange on "The Angel of Jehovah," *infra*.) Whitelaw (PCG, 255): "*Adonai*, which should rather be translated Lord; whence it would almost seem as if Lot knew that his interlocutor was Jehovah. Keil admits that Lot recognised a manifestation of God in the angels, and Lange speaks of a miraculous report of the voice of God coming to him along with the miraculous vision of the angels. That the historian uses 'them' instead of 'him' only proves that at the time Jehovah was accompanied by the angels, as he had previously been at Mamre (18:1)." Concerning the address, "my Lord," the Rabbis construe this as God (SC, 96).

It seems that even now Lot could not tear himself away altogether from his worldly environment. This reluctance,

coupled with fear that those who had been his fellow-citizens might hunt him down and kill him, caused him to plead that one of the five cities might be preserved as his dwelling-place, because it was a little one; whence this city, previously known as *Bela*, (was called Zoar "tiny place," "little"). (Cf. Gen. 13:10; 14:2-8). This petition, though evidently "a singular display of moral obtuseness and indolent selfishness," was granted, and Lot and his daughters entered Zoar at sunrise. "Lot bases his plea on the favor that has been bestowed on him. He reinforces it by a plea of physical inability to reach the mountains. He claims the evil from which God is delivering him will overtake him nevertheless—not a very commendable attitude. Finally, he makes the smallness of the place that he has in mind a plea for sparing it, in case he flees thither. It almost taxes the reader's patience to bear with this long-winded plea at a moment of such extreme danger. Lot appreciated but little what was being done for him" (EG, 566). (Cf. also Gen. 36:32-33, 46:21; Num. 26:38-40; 1 Chron. 1:43-44, 5:8, 7:6-7, 8:1, 3). This town, Bela, or Zoar, which was well known in Old Testament times, lay to the southeast of the Dead Sea (Gen. 13:10, Deut. 34:3, Isa. 15:5, Jer. 48:34). During the Roman hegemony an—perhaps *another*—earthquake occurred and the town was flooded, but it was rebuilt farther up from the shore and inhabited until the Middle Ages.

#### 7. *The Divine Judgment Executed* (vv. 23-29)

23 *The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar.* 24 *Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven;* 25 *and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.* 26 *But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.* 27 *And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had*

*stood before Jehovah: 28 and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.*

*29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.*

(1) At sunrise "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven," etc. "Fire from Jehovah": probably for emphasis to make it clear that this was a judgment *from the Lord* and not a natural phenomenon. (SIBG, 243, comment on v. 17): "The Angel *Jehovah* has now come up from Abraham, and charged Lot and his companions to depart with the utmost haste, and without the smallest regret, from that rich country abounding with sensual indulgence (Luke 9:62; Phil. 3:13, 14; Matt. 24:16-18)." The Divine command was, "Escape for thy life," that is, "it is enough that you save your life; do not try to save your wealth also."

(2) Obviously, from correlation of various Scriptures, the cities destroyed were not only Sodom and Gomorrah, but also Admah and Zeboiim (cf. Amos 4:11, Isa. 1:9, 10; Gen. 14, Deut. 29:23, Hos. 11:8), Bela, or Zoar, of the five cities of the Jordan circle being exempted, in response to Lot's appeal, vv. 21, 22. Note v. 22: the catastrophes wrought by God are always under His control: "this one is not unleashed until Lot has safely reached Zoar; by that time the sun has fully risen."

(3) The nature of the catastrophe has been a matter of much speculation. The means causing the destruction are said to have been "brimstone and fire" ("sulphur and fire") poured out so plentifully on the doomed cities that God is said to have "rained" them down "out of heaven."

Was this divinely-sent infliction "burning pitch," or lightning which ignited the bituminous soil, or a volcanic eruption which overwhelmed the whole area? Whitelaw (PCG, 256): "Whatever it was, it was clearly miraculous in its nature, and designed as a solemn punitive infliction on the cities of the plain." The account has been properly designated that "of one of the most horrifying events in all history," and is presented as such throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The lesson is inescapable, namely, *that when a city, or nation, becomes given over wholly to iniquity, that city or nation forfeits its right to exist, because its very existence inevitably spreads this moral pollution to all neighboring peoples and even those of the regions beyond. There is no limit to the infection of concentrated vice. Therefore, there is but one step for Absolute Justice to take, that is, to destroy utterly. History proves that repeatedly, in the account of man's sojourn on earth, the destruction of a nation, or at least of a nation's power, has become a moral necessity.* (Cf. Ezek. 21:27, Jer. 18:5-10, Exo. 17:14-15, Deut. 25:17-19, 1 Sam. 15, Rev. 19:11-16, etc.). Lange (CDHCG, 438): "The decisive execution of the judgment proceeds from the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, in company with the two angels, but the source of the decree of judgment lies in Jehovah in heaven."

Some authorities hold that an earthquake caused the catastrophic destruction of these doomed cities. E.g., "The text enables us to locate the catastrophe (an earthquake) in the southern part of the Dead Sea. The subsidence of the southern half of the Dead Sea bed is known to be recent as geologists reckon, and the whole district is geologically unstable" (JB, 37). Others think that an earthquake may have accompanied the burning, and others suggest a volcanic eruption may have been used to effect the divine judgment. Still others would have it that the area in question was submerged beneath the waters of

the Dead Sea (cf. Gen. 14:3). However, the Genesis account says nothing about the drowning of lands or cities (although the idea is found in writings of Hellenistic-Roman times). The expression "brimstone and fire" does suggest volcanic phenomena, such as swallowed up the Roman Pompeii. "But geologists tell us that the most recent volcanic activity in that area took place ages before Abraham's time" (Kraeling, BA, 72). Again, the language of Gen. 19:29 certainly does suggest, at first glance, an earthquake; however, the narrative itself attributes the cataclysm to some kind of igneous agency. "Sulphur and fire," writes Speiser, should be "sulphurous fire," adding, "the context points plainly to hendiadys" (ABG, 141). Writes Leupold (EG, 568): "Nothing points directly to a volcanic eruption; nor do lava remains happen to be found in the immediate vicinity. Nor does the expression 'overthrow' necessarily point to an earthquake. The 'fire' which rained down from heaven may have been lightning. The 'sulphur' may have been miraculously wrought and so have rained down together with the lightnings, although there is the other possibility that a huge explosion of highly inflammable materials, including sulphur, deposited in the ground (cf. 'bitumen pits' of 14:10) may have cast these materials, especially the sulphur, high into the air so that they rained upon these cities, causing a vast conflagration. Besides, it seems quite likely that after these combustible materials once took fire, the very site of the cities was literally burnt away to quite a depth, and so the waters of the northern part of the Dead Sea filled in the burnt-out area. For it is a well-known fact that the southern end of the Dead Sea hardly exceeds a depth of twelve feet and usually runs much less, *i.e.*, three or four feet. In fact, at certain points it is by no means difficult to wade across the lake. On the other hand, the northern portion reaches a maximum depth of 1300 feet. To assume, then, that the entire lake is the result of this 'overthrow,' as some

have, hardly seems reasonable or in conformity with the Biblical account. A conflagration that would have burnt out the ground to a depth of 1,300 feet cannot be conceived. An earthquake, causing so deep and so broad a fissure in the earth's crust, would at least have called for the use of the term 'earthquake' in this connection, for, apparently, in violence it would have surpassed all earthquakes of which man has a record. Equally difficult would be the assumption that the Jordan once flowed through this delightful valley of the Pentapolis and poured its water into the Elanitic Gulf." Again, with reference to the word "overthrow," v. 29: "Only that which stands up can be 'overthrown.' Consequently the verb connotes something of the idea of proud men and institutions being brought low by the Lord who 'throws down the mighty from their seats' and lays iniquity prostrate." (Cf. Deut. 29:23; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 49:18, 50:40; Amos 4:11).

It has been rightly said that "an air of mystery hovers over the location of the cities of the plain." Tradition had it for centuries that they were immediately north of the Dead Sea, a notion arising no doubt from the vague identification of the Vale of Siddim with the "Salt Sea" (Gen. 14:3). (See Part 27 *supra*). However, the names of Sodom and Zoar continued, even down to Roman times, to be associated with the area south of the Dead Sea. The archaeologists, G. Ernest Wright, assumes, with W. F. Albright, that the destroyed cities were buried beneath the shallow waters of the *southern* tip of the Dead Sea. Recently E. G. Kraeling has questioned this identification. He writes (BA, 70-71): "Recent writers of the highest competence have been willing to assume that Sodom and Gomorrah lay by the Dead Sea shore and that they were submerged by the rise of the waters. However, the land suitable for agriculture was precious in a country like Palestine, and was reserved for that purpose. *One must therefore look for the sites of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar*



*on higher ground and back from the lake.* Their destruction would have been due to other agencies than the waters of the Dead Sea. The names of the cities are certainly not invented. Sodom and Zoar, furthermore, still occur as names of inhabited places south of the Dead Sea area in the fourth century A.D., and the former name clings to *Jebel Sudum*, as local natives called it, or *Jebel Usdum*, as it has become known since Robinson to this day. These Christian towns may not have stood on the identical sites of the ancient ones, but presumably were close enough to them to preserve the old names. All indications point to their having lain near the southern end of the Dead Sea. . . . If one looks at the area on the south end of the Dead Sea, one notes first of all that on the west side there is no suitable location for any habitations, because the brooks that enter in here near the *Jebel Usdum* are salty. Far different, however, is the situation *on the eastern side of the south end of the Dead Sea.*" Kraeling goes on to show why this region may well have been the original site of the doomed cities, concluding that "only further exploration and some excavation can shed light on the old cities of this neighborhood." Cornfeld writes (AtD, 68) that at the southern end of the Dead Sea there is "the deepest rift valley in the world, which lies 1290 feet below sea level." He goes on to say that "earthquakes or some other destructive agents seem to have wiped out a civilization that had existed near the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan from the Stone Age (4000 B.C.E.) down to the Bronze Age (around the 20th century):" "This," he says, "is the area which included the 'five cities of the Plain,' or 'the circle of the vale of Siddim.' . . . It is thought by those who favor the geological theory, that these cities were situated south and east of the Dead Sea, most of them being now covered by the water. We know also that nomadic peoples settled down in villages and towns before the 20th century B.C.E., just at the time when the dark age was settling over Palestine,

due, apparently, to Amorite invasions, and that these sites were abandoned about the 20th century B.C.E., as were other towns and villages in southern Transjordan for some mysterious reason, the people returning to nomadic pursuits." Note also this comment in similar vein (BWDBA, 543): "The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the valley may have been the result of lightning igniting the petroleum seepages and the gas which was plentiful in the region. About five miles from the shore of the Dead Sea at an elevation of five hundred feet, southeast of the Lisan peninsula is 'Bab ed-Dra,' which served as a religious shrine for inhabitants of the area. Pottery indicates that the site was frequented from ca. 2300 B.C. to ca. 1900 B.C. This seems to indicate that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed ca. 1900 B.C., during the lifetime of Abraham. From near Hebron, Abraham looked in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah and he saw that 'the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.'" To sum up here, we may indeed have in this narrative a picture of an event that was both natural and supernatural (miraculous): God may have used natural means of bringing about the catastrophe which fell on these doomed cities; it can hardly be denied, however, that the *timing* and the *design* of the event lay outside the realm of the natural. (We use the word "natural" here in its proper sense, *i.e.*, as simply the name we give to observed phenomena).

*Lot's Wife.* The Divine command had been clear and the urgency of it unmistakable: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee," etc. We cannot, of course determine whether the woman was motivated by "longing, pity, or curiosity" (Delitzsch) when she did "look back." Note that she looked back "from behind him," *i.e.*, her husband. This seems to indicate that she was bringing up the rear and it certainly bespeaks her reluctance to leave behind her the "flesh-pots" of Sodom. (Cf. Exo. 16:1-3).

"Evidently her heart was in the city. She appreciated but little what the delivering angels had done for her. Almost escaped, she allowed her vigilance to relax. So she became a warning example to all who do not make a clear-cut break with the life of wickedness, as Jesus' remarkable warning designates her (Luke 17:32). God's punishment overtook her on the spot, apparently through the agents already operative in the destruction" (EG, 571). *It is most interesting to note here that Lot's wife is the only woman—of the many who appear in Biblical story—whom we are exhorted to "remember," and that by our Lord Himself. (Cf. Matt. 26:13).*

The woman became "a pillar of salt." At the time, Lot and his daughters could not have seen this: they did have sense enough (and some faith, it seems) to have realized that looking back would have meant their destruction. We see no reason for assuming that Lot's wife was instantaneously transformed into a pillar of salt: a more probable interpretation would be that she was overcome by the sulphurous vapors and afterward became encrusted with salt. It would be most unreasonable for us in this twentieth century to assume that this tragic—one might say, mummified—figure could have survived the elements for any great length of time, much less for a time-span of four milleniums. It is a matter of common sense to hold that attempts at identification, either past or present, must be fruitless. (Cf. the apocryphal book of Wisdom [10:7, "a pillar of salt . . . a memorial of the unbelieving soul"] ). We would agree, however, with Leupold (EG, 572), that "in the days shortly after the catastrophe the salt-encrusted, crudely pillar-like remains of the unhappy woman were to be seen."

*Abraham's Last View* of the evidences of the catastrophe is portrayed in a few poignant sentences. Very early in the morning he returned to the spot whither he had accompanied his celestial visitors the day before (18:22),

and from which, in the vicinity of Hebron, he could look to the east, across the Jordan plain, to the hill country and mountainous region beyond (later the home of the Moabites). What was his purpose? No doubt to satisfy himself as to whether ten righteous men had been found in Sodom and the city spared; in general, to see what actually had happened. And what was the sight that greeted him? It was total destruction; only the smoke of the land of the plain where once these thriving cities flourished "went up as the smoke of a furnace." Whitelaw (PCG, 257): "Thus the appalling catastrophe proclaimed its reality to Abraham; to subsequent ages it stamped a witness of its severity (1) *upon the region itself*, in the black and desolate aspect it has ever since possessed; (2) *upon the page of inspiration*, being by subsequent Scripture writers constantly referred to as a standing warning against incurring the Almighty's wrath . . . and (3) *upon the course of ancient tradition*, which it powerfully affected." (See esp. Tacitus, *Histories*, V. 7; for traditional references to the event, see Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Ovid, etc.). Jamieson (CECG, 164): "From the height which overlooks Hebron, where the patriarch stood, the observer at the present day has an extensive view spread out before him towards the Dead Sea. A cloud of smoke rising from the plain would be visible to a person at Hebron now, and could have been, therefore, to Abraham as he looked toward Sodom on the morning of its destruction." What an awesome spectacle this was that was spread out before the eyes of Abraham on that fateful morning!

Skinner (ICCG, 310): "Abraham's morning visit to the spot where he had parted from his heavenly guests forms an impressive close to the narrative . . . an effective contrast to 18:16." Speiser (ABG, 143): "As Abraham peered anxiously at the scene of the disaster, from the distant heights of Hebron, he had his answer to the question he had posed the night before. A pall of dense vapors

was all that could be seen. All life was extinguished. The author is much too fine an artist to spell out the viewer's thoughts, and the close of the narrative is all the more eloquent for this omission." This is a characteristic of the Bible throughout: in so many instances it tends to speak more forcefully by what it omits than by what it tells us. The most impressive example of this is in the Lord's narrative of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32).

It is charged by the critics that the Genesis story of Lot's wife's inglorious end is just another version of an ancient folk tale. Alleged similarity of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice is cited as a corresponding example. According to this legend, after his return from the Argonautic expedition, Orpheus lived in Thrace, where he married Eurydice. His wife having died as a result of the bite of a serpent, Orpheus followed her into Hades, where his sweet music alleviated temporarily the torments of the damned, and enabled him to win her back. His prayer was granted, however, on one condition, namely, that he should not look back at his wife until they had arrived in the upper world. At the very last moment "the anxiety of love" overcame the poet and he looked around to make sure that his wife was following him, only to see her snatched back into the infernal regions. The mythological tale of Niobe is another example of the case in point. As the alleged wife of the king of Thebes, Niobe, filled with pride over the number of her children, deemed herself superior to Leto, who had given birth to only two (Apollo and Artemis, by Zeus). Apollo and Artemis, indignant as such presumption, slew all her children with their arrows, and Niobe herself was metamorphosed by Zeus into a stone which during the summer always shed tears. We can only affirm here that to find any parallels, in *motivation* especially, between these fantastic tales and the fate of Lot's wife, must require the activity of a profane mentality. The awesome manifestation of Divine

judgment (though tempered with mercy where possible) on a population given over wholly to iniquity, one in which Lot's wife perished because of her unwillingness to break with her environment, cannot reasonably be put in the same category with these folk tales which reflect only human passion, pride, jealousy and revenge. Leupold (EG, 565): "Because the command not to look around is met with in heathen legends . . . that fact does not yet make every command of that sort in Israelitish history a part of a legendary account. We ourselves may on occasion bid another to look around without being on our part involved in some legendary transaction."

*Recapitulation*, v. 29. The interesting fact in this statement is the change in the name of God from Jehovah to *Elohim*. The total destruction of the hotbeds of iniquity—the Cities of the Plain—was a display of Divine Powers which causes men to fear the Sovereign of the universe; therefore "Elohim" and not "Yahweh." (Cf. Gen. 28:17, Heb. 10:31, 12:29, etc.). The destruction of the cities of the plain was not at this moment viewed by the writer as an event related to the Abrahamic covenant and intercession, but as a sublime vindication of Divine (Absolute) Justice. Nor should the fact be overlooked that in this transaction "God remembered Abraham," that is, Lot was not delivered simply for his own sake, but primarily for Abraham's sake. "The blessings that go forth from one true-hearted servant of God are incalculable," Cf. Jas. 5:16-18.

*The Import of the Account of the Catastrophe that befell the Cities of the Plain* is clearly indicated by the repeated references to it throughout both the Old and New Testaments, as a warning against incurring the wrath of the Almighty (Deut. 29:22-23; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 49:18, 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Amos 4:11; Luke 17:32; 2 Pet. 2:6, Jude 7). Cf. J. A. Motyer (NBD, 1003): "The story of Sodom does not merely warn, but provides a theologically

documented account of divine judgment implemented by 'natural' disaster. The history is faith's guarantee that the Judge of all the earth does right (Gn. 18:25). Being personally persuaded of its justice and necessity (Gn. 18:20, 21), God acts; but in wrath He remembers mercy, and in judgment discrimination (Gn. 19:16, 29)." "The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is referred to by Jesus as a warning to those who are inhospitable to the Gospel, Matt. 10:15. Sodom is a symbol for dead bodies lying in the street of a city, Rev. 11:8" (HBD, 692). "The plain in which the cities stood, hitherto fruitful 'as the garden of Jehovah,' became henceforth a scene of perfect desolation. Our Lord Himself, and the Apostles Peter and Jude, have clearly taught the lasting lesson which is involved in the judgment: that it is a type of the final destruction by fire of a world which will have reached a wickedness like that of Sodom and Gomorrah" (OTH, 77). Cf. Luke 17:29, 2 Pet. 2:6, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 10:27, 12:29; Jude 7; Rev. 14:10 20:14-15; cf. Exo. 3:2, 19:18; Isa. 66:15-16; Ezek. 1:13ff.; Dan. 7:9, Matt. 25:41, etc. The partial judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, like the universal judgment of the flood, serves as an example—and a type—of all the divine judgments, and especially of the Last Judgment; hence in Scripture the two are closely associated (Luke 17:26-32, 2 Pet. 2:4-9). The Last Judgment is the Second Death (Rev. 20:14, 21:8).

8. *Lot's Last End* (vv. 30-38)

30 *And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave; he and his two daughters.* 31 *And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: 32 come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie*

*with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father: and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yester-night with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37 And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.*

*The Flight to Zoar.* Lot and his two daughters reached Zoar some time after sunrise. Evidently he did not stop there, however, but kept on going until he found a cave where he continued to dwell, for how long we do not know. "Lot's rescue is ascribed to Elohim, as the Judge of the whole earth, not to the covenant God, Jehovah, because Lot in his separation from Abraham was removed from the special providence of Jehovah. In his flight from Sodom he seems to have been driven by a paralyzing fear: just how much of the obedience of faith was involved it is impossible to say. (We must remember that *fear is the opposite of faith*). Evidently a kind of paralyzing terror gave way to a calculating fear which has been properly designated an "unbelieving fear." At any rate he kept on until he could bury himself and his daughters in a cave. Caves are said to be numerous in these mountains of Moab. He knew, evidently, that it had been decreed that Zoar also was to be destroyed and had been



spared only because he could not reach the mountain in time. Now that there was time to go on, naturally he feared that the decree would be fulfilled. Or it is possible that the inhabitants of Zoar who had been spared did not feel too hospitably inclined to this family who had once been inhabitants of the cities now lying in ruins. Lange (CDHCG, 442): "The chastising hand of God is seen in the gravest form, in the fact that Lot is lost in the darkness of the mountains of Moab, as a dweller in the caves. But it may be questioned whether one is justified by this, in saying that he came to a bad end. . . . His not returning poor and shipwrecked can be explained upon better grounds. In any case the testimony for him, 2 Pet. 2:7-8, must not be overlooked. There remains one bright point in his life, since he sustained the assaults of all Sodom on his house, in the most extreme danger of his life." To this Gosman adds (*ibid.*, 442): "It may be said, moreover, that his leaving home and property at the divine warning, and when there were yet no visible signs of the judgment, and his flight without looking back, indicate the reality and genuineness of his faith." This again raises the question: Was Lot's flight *without looking back* entirely an act of faith, or was it indicative primarily of a paralyzing terror? Of course it may be that the inhabitants of Zoar, panic-stricken, had fled from the region of danger and dispersed themselves for a time in the adjacent mountains. At any rate Lot is now far from the habitations of men, with his two daughters as his only companions.

*The Origins of Moab and Ammon* (vv. 30-38). There is great variability of opinion as to what motivated Lot's daughters to resort to deception to cause themselves to be impregnated by their father. These, of course, were incestuous unions, severely condemned even by primitive peoples extant in our own day. It is not difficult to see how repugnant such an act was to the Israelites of a later age. At some point in this phase of Lot's life, his daughters

resolved to procure children through him, and for that purpose on two successive evenings they made him intoxicated with wine, and then lay with him through the night, one after the other, that they might conceive seed. "To this accursed crime they were impelled by the desire to preserve their family, because they thought there was no man on earth to come in unto them, *i.e.*, to marry them, 'after the manner of all the earth.' Not that they imagined the whole human race to have perished in the destruction of the valley of Siddim, but because they were afraid that no man would link himself with them, the only survivors of a country smitten by the curse of God" (BCOPT, 237). We can hardly agree with the charge that these young women "took advantage of Lot's inebriation to indulge incestuous passion" for the simple reason that the text does not justify such a conclusion. Of course, even though it was not lust which impelled them to this shameful deed, "their conduct was worthy of Sodom, and shows quite as much as their previous betrothal to men of Sodom, that they were deeply imbued with the sinful character of that city." In all likelihood, incest was not under any taboo in Sodom. As for Lot himself, vv. 33 and 35 do not state that he was in an unconscious state: they simply tell us that in his intoxicated condition, though not entirely unconscious, yet he lay with his daughters without clearly understanding what he was doing. It surely would be stretching the truth, however, to say that his behavior in this instance was that of a strong man. "Lot's daughters are, like Tamar, not here regarded as shameless; their ruling motive is to perpetuate the race" (JB, 37). Jamieson summarizes as follows (CECG, 165): The theory is suggested that "the moral sensibilities of Lot's daughters had been blunted, or rather totally extinguished, by long and familiar association with the people of the Pentapolis, and that they had already sunk to the lowest depths of depravity, when they could in concert deliberately plan the

commission of incest with their own father. But this first impression will soon be corrected or removed by the recollection that those young women, though living in the midst of a universally corrupt society, had yet maintained a virtuous character (v. 8); and therefore it must be presumed that it was through the influence of some strong, overpowering motive they were impelled to the adoption of so base an imposture. It could not be, as has been generally supposed, that they believed themselves to be the sole survivors of mankind; for they knew that the inhabitants of Zoar were still alive, and if they were now residing in a cave in the Moabite mountains, they must have seen multitudes of laborers working in the vineyards with which those heights were extensively planted. They could not be actuated, therefore, with the wish to preserve the human race, which, in their view, was all but extinct. Their object must have been very different, and most probably it was this. Cherishing some family traditions respecting the promised seed, and in expectation of which Abraham, with Lot and others, had migrated to Canaan, they brooded in despondency over the apparent loss of that hope—since their mother's death; and believing that their father, who was descended from the eldest branch of Terah's family, and who was an object of God's special charge to the angels, had the best claim to be the ancestor of the distinguished progeny, they agreed together to use means for securing the much-longed-for result. This view of their conduct is strongly confirmed by the circumstance that, instead of being ashamed of their crime, or concealing the origin of their children by some artfully-contrived story, they proclaimed it to the world, and perpetuated the memory of it by the names they bestowed upon their children; the eldest calling her son *Moab*" (meaning, "from my father"), "and the younger designating her son *Benammi*" ("son of my people"). It is evident from the text that these sexual relations of Lot's daughters with their father

occurred only *this once*: there is no intimation that it was a continuous affair or even repeated. That they used subterfuge (their father's intoxication) to accomplish their purposes seems to be additional evidence that they themselves regarded what they did as repugnant, but under the circumstances as the only means possible to secure the perpetuation of the family. The whole affair apparently is a case in point of the old—and *false*—cliche, that "the end justifies the means." We might add that Lot's susceptibility to inebriation certainly does not add one iota of glamor to his character. We feel that Speiser's treatment of this incident (ABG, 145) should be given here as follows (even though we cannot fully agree with it): "As they are here portrayed, Lot and his two daughters had every reason to believe that they were the last people on earth. From the recesses of their cave somewhere up the side of a canyon formed by the earth's deepest rift, they could see no proof to the contrary. The young women were concerned with the future of the race, and they were resolute enough to adopt the only desperate measure that appeared to be available. The father, moreover, was not a conscious party to the scheme. All this adds up to praise rather than blame." (Note that incest is defined and strictly forbidden in Scripture: Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17, 19-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20, 22, 23; Ezek. 22:11; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1. Cases of incest: Lot with his daughters, Gen. 19:31, 36; Reuben, Gen. 35:22, 49:4; Judah, Gen. 38:16-18, 1 Chron. 2:4; Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:14; Absalom, 2 Sam. 16:21, 22. Cf. also Gen. 20:12, 13; Gen. 11:29; Exo. 6:20). Note the following significant paragraph: "Grace, in conversion, seldom takes away the original character of the natural man, but merely overrules its deficiencies to humble him and warn others; and refines and elevates its excellencies; and thus, by the Spirit, mortifies the old while it quickens and establishes the new man" (SIBG, 244).

Finally, this comment of Skinner (ICCG, 312), who follows rather closely the so-called "analytical" interpretation of Genesis, "Whatever truth there may be in the speculations," *i.e.*, about the origins and character of the patriarchal stories, "the religious value of the biblical narrative is not affected. Like the Deluge-story, it retains the power to touch the conscience of the world as a terrible example of divine vengeance on heinous wickedness and unnatural lust; and in this ethical purpose we have another testimony to the unique grandeur of the idea of God in ancient Israel." But let us not forget that "vengeance" on God's part is *not revenge, but vindication*, that is, the vindication of God's absolute justice in not permitting His purposes and laws to be violated with impunity. Penal infliction of the right kind must have for its primary end the sustaining of the *majesty of law* against all transgressors. This, we are told, will be the essential character of the Last Judgment (Rom. 2:5, Rev. 20:11-12).

*The History of Lot ends here.* According to Robinson, the Arabs have a tradition that he was buried on Beni-Naim, the elevated spot where Abraham stood before the Lord interceding for Sodom and from which next morning he viewed the smoke rising from the distant destruction. "Lot is never mentioned again. Separated both outwardly and inwardly from Abraham, he was of no further importance in relation to the history of salvation, so that even his death is not referred to. His descendants, however, frequently come into contact with the Israelites; and the history of their descent is given here to facilitate a correct appreciation of their conduct toward Israel" (BCOTP), 238).

#### 9. *The Moabites and Ammonites*

The story of Lot, which is a kind of drama within a drama in relation to the story of Abraham, has now come to a rather inglorious end. The inspired writer "never loses sight of the fact that history, in the last analysis, is

made by individuals. But the individual, in turn, mirrors larger issues and events" (ABG, 142). Apparently the narrative is designed to lead ultimately to the story of the Moabites and the Ammonites, two ethnic groups whose history becomes interrelated to a considerable extent with the history of Israel. (The Moabites occupied the area east of the Jordan directly opposite Bethlehem, extending from Edom on the south northward to the river Arnon. Their capital city was Ar, the site of which is unknown today (Num. 21:15, 28; Isa. 15:1). The Ammonites occupied the region east of the Jordan northward from the river Arnon to the watershed of the Jabbok, on the banks of which their capital, Rabbath-Ammon (Deut. 3:11), was situated. This city lives on in our day in Amman, the capital of the Kingdom of Jordan: it was rebuilt by Ptolemy Philadelphus in the 3rd century B.C., and was named Philadelphia (cf. Rev. 3:7). The Ammonite territory was bounded on the north by Gilead, which lay almost exactly opposite Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, to the west of the Jordan.)

Generally speaking, the Moabites and Ammonites repeatedly were sources of annoyance, and at times of outright opposition to the Israelites. Their idolatrous practices are said to have been *abominations* to Jehovah. Ammon's abomination was the worship of the god Moloch, and that of Moab was the worship of the God Chemosh (1 Ki. 11:7, Num. 21:29): these were the tribal gods around whom the customary ritual of the pagan Fertility Cult was centered, an integral phase of which usually was human sacrifice (cf. 2 Ki. 3:27; Lev. 18:21, 20:2-4; Jer. 32:34-35; 2 Ki. 23:10; Amos 5:26, Acts 7:43). Their idolatrous practices included also the worship of pagan gods of surrounding peoples (Judg. 10:6). Both the Moabites and the Ammonites are frequently portrayed in Scripture as being a constant snare to the Children of Israel (as rejoicing in the latter's misfortunes and taking delight in

spreading their "abominations" of false gods among the Israelites and debasing their moral ideals through inter-marriage). (Cf. Num. 25:1-5, 1 Ki. 11:1-8, 2 Ki. 23:13, 1 Chron. 8:8, Ezra 9:1-4; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-27). Note also the predictions of divine judgments on the Moabites and the Ammonites (Isa., chs. 15, 16; Jer., chs. 48, 49; Ezek. 25:5, 8-11; Amos 2:1-2; Zeph. 2:9). As for political and military maneuvers and battles, cf. Judg. 3:12-30, 11:17-18, 11:25; Num., chs. 22-24; Josh. 24:9; Judg. 11:17-18, 11:29-33; 1 Sam. 14:47, 22:3-4; 2 Sam. 8:2; 1 Ki. 11:1-7, 2 Ki. 1:1, 3:5-27, 13:20; 2 Chron., ch. 20; Mic. 6:5, etc.).

There is another side to this coin, however, which cannot be ignored, as follows: (1) Yahweh did not permit the Israelites to distress the Moabites and Ammonites in passing through their territories because those lands had already been allotted to the children of Lot for a possession (Deut. 2:2, 9, 19). (2) Moses died in the land of Moab, where from the summit of Pisgah he was given a view of the Land of Promise, from Dan and Gilead on the North to the valley of Jericho even unto Zoar, on the South; "and the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days" (Deut. 34:1-8). (3) The book of Ruth indicates free travel and friendly relations between Judah and Moab. (4) The king of Moab brought aid to David against Saul and provided shelter for David's parents in a time of crisis (1 Sam. 22:3-4). (5) The Moabites and Ammonites are represented as having been used by Jehovah as instruments for the punishing of Judah (2 Ki. 24:1-4).

In view of these scriptures, to speak of the account of the origins of the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gen. 19:30-38) as "a fiction of Israelite animosity," "a gibe at Israel's foes," etc., as the critics have done, is absurd. Leupold (EG, 576): "Again and again critics label this whole story the outgrowth of a mean prejudice on the part

of Israel against these two neighboring nations, a hostile fabrication and an attempt to heap disgrace on them. Yet passages like Deut. 2:9 surely indicate that Israel always maintained a friendly spirit toward these brother nations, especially toward the Moabites. David's history also may serve as an antidote against such slanders. We have here an objective account of an actual historical occurrence." Similarly K-D (BCOTP, 238): "This account was neither the invention of national hatred to the Moabites and Ammonites, nor was it placed here as a brand upon these tribes. These discoveries of a criticism imbued with hostility to the Bible are overthrown by the fact, that, according to Deut. 2:9, 19, Israel was ordered not to touch the territory of each of these tribes because of their descent from Lot; and it was their unbrotherly conduct towards Israel alone which first prevented their reception into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23:4, 5)."

It seems, of course, that the Ammonites did become inveterate enemies of the Children of Israel. But not the Moabites, apparently. This brings us, in conclusion, to the most significant phase of the question before us, which, strange to say, seems to be overlooked by commentators generally. *That is the fact that the Moabites did play—one might well say, an indispensable role in the development of the Messianic Line. That role was played by a Moabite maiden, Ruth by name, who in the course of human events (providentially directed, no doubt) married a wealthy, land-owning Bethlehemite by the name of Boaz, by whom she became the ancestress of Obed, Jesse, and David, in the order named genealogically, and hence of Messiah Himself. The canonicity of the Book of Ruth is determined by this genealogical connection with the Messianic Line. Cf. Matt. 1:5-6, Luke 3:31-32, Isa. 9:6-7, Acts 2:29-36, Rom. 1:3-4, etc., and especially the book of Ruth.*



The Ammonites survived into the second century B.C. Judas Maccabaeus fought them in his day (1 Macc. v. 6). Moab disappeared as a political power when Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.) subjugated the country, but it persisted as an ethnic group. The Nabataeans (capital, Petra) held and developed Moab in the first two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. (See any Dictionary of the Bible for information about the Moabite Stone).

See Gen. 19:37-38, the phrase, "unto this day." "That is, the days of Moses. They have remained Moabites unto this day, not having intermingled with strangers. Or the meaning may be: This fact is known to this day" (SC, 99). Leupold suggests "present-day Moabites" and "present-day Ammonites" as a better rendering (EG, 577).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### The Angel of Jehovah

Concerning the significance of v. 24, "Yahweh rained . . . from Yahweh out of heaven," Whitelaw writes (PCG, 256): "*From the Lord, i.e., Jehovah* (the Son) rained down from *Jehovah* (the Father), as if suggesting a distinction of persons in the Godhead (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athanasius, and others, Delitzsch, Lange, Wordsworth); otherwise the phrase is regarded as 'an elegance of speech' (Ibn Ezra), 'an emphatic repetition' (Calvin), a more exact characterization of the storm (Clericus, Rosenmuller) as being *out of heaven*."

Note also the following excellent presentation by Leupold (EG, 569-570): "But what construction shall we put upon the statement, 'Yahweh rained . . . from Yahweh from the heavens'? We consider Meek's translation an evasion of the difficulty by alteration of the text, when he renders: 'The Lord rained . . . from the sky.' . . . However, there is much truth in the claim that the name of God or Yahweh is often used in solemn or emphatic utterances in place of the pronoun that would normally be expected. K.C. [Koenig's *Kommentar* on Genesis] lists the instances of this sort that have been met with in Genesis up to this point: 1:27a, 28a; 5:1b; 8:21a; 9:16b; 11:9b; 12:8b; 18:17a; 19:13b, etc. But that would hardly apply in this case, for our passage would hardly come under the list of those 'where the divine name is used instead of the pronoun.' For how could Moses have written: 'Yahweh rained from Himself'? Yet the statement is certainly meant to be emphatic, but not merely emphatic in the sense in which Keil, following Calvin's interpretation, suggests. For both hold that the statement is worded thus to indicate that this was not rain and lightning operating according to the

'wonted course of nature,' but that it might be stated quite emphatically that more than the ordinary causes of nature were at work. We believe that the mere expression, 'God, or Yahweh, rained from heaven,' would have served very adequately to convey such an emphatic statement. But in this instance Yahweh was present in and with His angels, whom He had delegated to this task and who acted under specific divine mandate. He who had the day before been visibly present with them, was now invisibly with them. When his agents acted, He acted. Consequently we believe that the view which the church held on this problem from days of old is still the simplest and the best: 'God the Son brought down the rain from God the Father,' as the Council of Sirmium worded the statement. To devalue the statement of the text to mean less necessitates a similar process of devaluation of a number of other texts like 1:26, and only by such a process can the claim be supported that there are no indications of the doctrine of the Trinity in Genesis. We believe the combined weight of these passages, including Gen. 1:1, 2, makes the conclusion inevitable that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is in a measure revealed in the Old Testament, and especially in Genesis. Why should not so fundamental a doctrine be made manifest from the beginning? We may see more of this truth than did the Old Testament saints, but the Church has through the ages always held one and the same truth. Luther says: 'This expression indicates two persons in the Godhead.'"

Lastly, we quote Lange (CDHCG, 438): "The antithesis which lies in this expression, between the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, and the being and providence of Jehovah in heaven is opposed by Keil. [The Hebrew phrase here] is according to Calvin an emphatic repetition. This does not agree with Keil's explanation of the Angel of the Lord. Delitzsch remarks here: There is certainly in all such passages a distinction between the historically revealed, and the concealed, or unrevealed God (comp. Hos. 1:7), and thus a support to the position of the Council of Sirmium: 'the Son of God rains it down from God the Father.' The decisive execution of the judgment proceeds from the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, in company with the two angels; but the source of the decree of judgment lies in Jehovah in heaven. The moral stages of the development of the kingdom of God upon the earth, correspond with the providence of the Almighty in the heavens, and from the heavens reaching down into the depths of cosmical nature."

In relation to the foregoing, we add here the following pertinent comments by James Moffat, *The Theology of the Gospels*, 127-128 (Scribners, New York, 1924). Referring to John 12:39-40, Moffat writes: "In Matthew this follows a quotation from Isaiah, which is also cited in the Fourth Gospel, and for much the same purpose, to account for the obduracy of the public, who are no longer the Galileans but the Jews, and also to explain, characteristically, that Isaiah the prophet had a vision of the pre-existent Christ or Logos.

*These things said Isaiah because he saw his glory, and he spoke of him* [Isa. 6:1-11]. The latter conception had been already expressed in the phrase, *Your father Abraham exulted to see my day* [John 8:56]. The Fourth Gospel thus deepens and at the same time reverses the synoptic saying. The prophets and just men of the Old Testament had not simply longed to see the messianic day of Jesus Christ: they had seen it. The pragmatism of the Logos-idea enables the writer of the Fourth Gospel to believe that the saints and prophets of the Old Testament had more than anticipations of the end; their visions and prophecies were due to the pre-existent Christ who even then revealed His glory to their gaze. The *glory of Yahweh* which Isaiah saw in his vision was really the glory of the pre-existent Logos, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

"The theology of the Fourth Gospel thus elaborates the truth that the mission of Jesus had been anticipated in the history of Israel. This is the idea of the saying in 8:56, *Your father Abraham exulted to see my day*. It is the conception of Paul (e.g., Gal. 3:16f.), who also traces a messianic significance in Gen. 17:17; and Philo, before him, had explained (*De Mutat. Nominum*, 29-30), commenting on the Genesis passage, that Abraham's laughter was the joy of anticipating a happiness which was already within reach; 'fear is grief before grief, and so hope is joy before joy.' But Philo characteristically avoids any messianic interpretation, such as the Fourth Gospel presents." For Scripture affirmations of the Pre-existence of Christ, see John 1:1-14, 8:58, 1:18; John 17:3-5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1-4; Col. 1:12-23; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:14-18; Rev. 1:12-18, etc.

### Remember Lot's Wife

Luke 17:32—the words of Jesus Himself, a warning which no human being can afford to ignore.

Judging from personal experience both the ignorant and the sophisticated of this world have been inclined to worry themselves about Cain's wife, when as a matter of *practical* import, that is, having to do with the origin, nature and destiny of the person, they should be concerning themselves, and that seriously, about the fate of Lot's wife and what the example of her tragic end means for all mankind. In days gone by, every community harbored one or two old reprobates who liked to pose as "preacher-killers." One of our pioneer preachers was confronted by just such a self-appointed critic on occasion, who said to him, "Preacher, I would probably join church, if I

could find any of you fellows who could answer a question for me." "And what is the question?" asked the evangelist. "If you could just tell me where Cain got his wife, I might give more serious thought to joining church." The evangelist thought for a moment and then replied: "Old man, until you quit thinking about other men's wives, you won't be fit to join church. Besides, there is nothing in Scripture about 'joining' church. You don't 'join' church; you believe, repent, and obey Christ, and He adds you to His church. But you're not ready for that until you repent." The Lord Himself has warned us about the futility of casting pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). (The key to the problem of Cain's wife is made very clear in Gen. 5:5).

The only woman in the entire Bible whom we are admonished to remember is Lot's wife, and the admonition is from the Lord Himself. From her inglorious end we derive the following truths:

1. The manner in which an entire family can be corrupted by an evil environment. 2. The difficulty of saving a good person from an evil end (1 Pet. 4:18). What manner of woman Lot's wife was we do not know. But this truth surely applies in some measure to Lot and his two daughters. 3. The danger of looking back, when as a matter of fact God can use only those who look to the future (Luke 9:62; Heb. 5:12, 6:1). 4. The possibility of being nearly saved, yet wholly lost (Mark 12:34). 5. The inevitability of divine judgment on the disobedient (Heb. 5:9, 10:26-27; Rom. 2:5-11, Gal. 6:7, etc.).

Our text is directly related by our Lord to the account of His Second Coming. When that occurs, He tells us, it will be the concern of His saints *to escape for their lives*, as Lot and his family were told to do. They are not to look back lest they be tempted *to go back*. They are not to be reluctant to leave an environment marked for de-

struction (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; 13). Hence Luke 17:33, "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

M. Henry (CWB, 36): "With what a gracious violence Lot was brought out of Sodom, v. 16. It seems he did not make as much haste as the case required. It might have been fatal to him if the angels had not *laid hold of his hand, and brought him forth*, and saved him with fear (Jude 23). The salvation of the most righteous men must be attributed to God's mercy, not to their own merit. We are saved by grace. With what a gracious vehemence he was urged to make the best of his way, when he was *brought forth* (v. 17). He must not hanker after Sodom: *Look not behind thee*. He must not loiter by the way: *Stay not in all the plain*. He must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him: *Escape to the mountain*. Such as these are the commands given to those who through grace are delivered out of a sinful state. (1) Return not to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. (2) Rest not in self and the world, for that is staying in the plain. And (3) Reach towards Christ and heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain, short of which we must not take up."

"Let us, then, seek to pursue a path of holy separation from the world. Let us, while standing outside its entire range, be found cherishing the hope of the Master's return. May its well-watered plains have no charms for our hearts. May its honors, its distinctions, and its riches be all surveyed by us in the light of the coming glory of Christ. May we be enabled, like the holy patriarch Abraham, to get up into the presence of the Lord, and, from that elevated ground, look forth upon the scene of widespread ruin and desolation—to see it all, by faith's anticipative glance, a smoking ruin. *Such will it be*. "The earth also, and the things that are therein, shall be burned up" (NBG, 209). (Cf. Heb. 12:29; 10:27-31).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON  
PART THIRTY-TWO

1. What was the first proof that Lot's visitors were not just human beings?
2. What activities took place at the gate of these Canaanite cities?
3. What did Yahweh do when the angels went on to Sodom?
4. How account for Lot's sitting in the gate of Sodom?
5. What were the details of Lot's ritual of hospitality?
6. Why probably did Lot suggest delaying the washing of his Guests' feet until the next morning?
7. Why did Lot pressure his visitors not to "abide in the street all night"?
8. Does the Bible indicate that God favors the concentration of population? Cite Scripture evidence to support your answer.
9. How could Lot's presence at the gate have been evidence of his degeneracy?
10. What occurred at Lot's house that night?
11. What does the verb "know" (v. 5) signify?
12. What offer did Lot make to the mob in an attempt to satisfy their demands?
13. What light does this proposal throw on Lot's character? Do you consider that there was any justification for his action? Explain your answer.
14. How was Lot rescued from the mob?
15. List the steps in Lot's progressive degeneracy.
16. What did he do that might be cited in his favor?
17. How does Delitzsch evaluate his actions morally?
18. What is the evidence that Lot had "become familiar with vice"?
19. How can it be said that Lot's action was an attempt to avoid sin by sin?
20. What is the Apostle Peter's testimony concerning Lot?

## LOT'S LAST DAYS

19:1-38

21. Summarize Whitelaw's analysis of Lot's character.
22. Summarize Speiser's treatment of Lot's character.
23. How does Lot's action point up the influence of an environment?
24. Define homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, pederasty, sodomy.
25. What were the besetting sins of the Cities of the Plain?
26. Explain how homosexuality, pederasty, bestiality, etc., are *unnatural* acts.
27. What does the term "sodomy," generally speaking, include?
28. What are the two functions of the conjugal relation that are thwarted by homosexuality?
29. Explain how any form of sex perversion is an act of utter selfishness.
30. How does the true conjugal union differ from acts of sex perversion?
31. What is the prime fallacy of all so-called "situationist ethics"?
32. Of what is the true conjugal relation scripturally declared to be an allegory?
33. What is the over-all teaching of the Scriptures about sodomy?
34. What attitude did Lot's sons-in-law take in response to his warning? What does their attitude indicate about them and about Lot?
35. How correlate v. 8, v. 12, and v. 14 of chapter 19?
36. Why did Lot linger in Sodom in spite of his visitors' warning?
37. What light does this cast on his character?
38. What did his visitors have to do to get him out of Sodom?
39. In what sense is it said that God was "merciful" to him?
40. What members of Lot's family got out of Sodom?

41. To what small city did God permit Lot to go? What were his excuses for wanting to go there?
42. What was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah?
43. What are the theories as to the nature of this catastrophe?
44. What is the great moral lesson for man to learn from it?
45. When and why does moral necessity demand penal infliction by Absolute Justice?
46. What are the reasons for rejecting the view that the catastrophe produced the entire Dead Sea as it is known today?
47. What is the traditional theory as to the location of the Cities of the Plain? Why is this theory now generally rejected?
48. What is Kraeling's view of their location, and why?
49. What does Cornfeld have to say about this problem?
50. Explain how the natural and the supernatural could have been combined in producing the catastrophe.
51. What was the fate of Lot's wife? What is the most plausible explanation of what happened to her?
52. What, in all probability, motivated her reluctance to "escape for her life"?
53. What was the sight that greeted Abraham when he looked out on the evidences of the disaster?
54. In what three ways did the catastrophe witness, in subsequent times, to its severity?
55. It is stated that in many instances the Bible speaks more forcefully by what it omits than by what it tells us. Give examples.
56. To what does God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah point forward to, ultimately?
57. In what respects is the story of Lot's wife far superior to all folk tales of the kind?
58. Why the change in the name of the Deity to Elohim, in v. 29.



59. In what sense did God "remember" Abraham?
60. For what probable reasons did Lot and his daughters resort to dwelling in a cave?
61. What should we think of Lot from the fact that he did not even look back to see what was happening?
62. For what reasons may we suppose that Lot's daughters sought to produce seed by their father?
63. Can we charge their act to incestuous passion? Explain?
64. How is incest treated in Scripture?
65. What is always the chief end of penal infliction of any kind?
66. Distinguish between *vindication* and *vengeance*.
67. Where does the history of Lot end, and why does it end where it does?
68. Who were the sons of Lot's daughters by their father? What areas in Palestine did their tribes occupy?
69. What practices of the Moabites and the Ammonites were "abominations" to Jehovah?
70. What does Old Testament history indicate about the subsequent relations between the Israelites on the one hand, and the Moabites and Ammonites on the other?
71. What evidence do we have that certain friendly relations existed between the two groups?
72. What reasons have we for rejecting as absurd the critical notion that this account of the origins of Moab and Ammon, in Genesis, was "a jibe at Israel's foes"?
73. What is the chief importance of the story of the Moabites, *i.e.*, in relation to the Messianic Line and to the Old Testament canon?
74. Summarize the comments of Whitelaw, Leupold, and Moffatt, on Gen. 19:24.
75. Who has commanded us to "remember Lot's wife"? What lessons are we to derive from the story of her tragic end?

## PART THIRTY-THREE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB

(Genesis 20:1—21:34)

#### 1. *Abraham and Abimelech* (20:1-18)

1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the land of the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, because of the woman whom thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation? 5 Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. 6 And God said unto him in the dream, Yea, I know that in the integrity of thy heart thou hast done this, and I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7 Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

8 And Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this

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*place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12 And moreover she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife: 13 and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. 14 And Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men-servants and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee; and in respect of all thou art righted. 17 And Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants; and they bare children. 18 For Jehovah had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*

(1) *The Negeb*, vs. 1, "the dry," largely waterless area, which from its geographical position generally south of Judea came to be known as "the south," "the land of the south," etc. (cf. Gen. 10:19, 12:9, 26:1-6). (See Nelson Glueck's great work, *Rivers in the Desert*). The northern boundary may be indicated by a line drawn roughly from Gaza to Beersheba, thence east directly to the Dead Sea. The southern boundary can be indicated by a line drawn from the highlands of the Sinai peninsula to the head of the Gulf of Aqabah at Eilat. (This, incidentally, is the line where the political division is drawn today). Significant economically were the copper ores in the eastern part of the Negeb and the commerce which resulted in the Arabah. Control of this industry explains the wars of Saul with the Amalekites and Edomites (1 Sam. 14:47 ff.), the victories of David over the Edomites (1 Ki. 11:15

ff.), the creation of the port of Ezion-geber by Solomon, and later when these mines became too silted, the creation of a new port at Elath by Uzziah (1 Ki. 9:26, 22:48; 2 Ki. 14:22). The persistent animosity of the Edomites was motivated by the struggles to control this trade (cf. Ezek. 25:12, and the book of Obadiah). The "way of Shur" crossed this area from the central highlands (really mountains) of Sinai northeastward to Judea (Gen. 16:7, 20:1, 25:18; Exo. 15:22; Num. 33:8), the way followed by the Patriarchs (Gen. 24:62, 26:22), by Hadad the Edomite (1 Ki. 11:14, 17, 21, 22), and probably by Jeremiah in escaping to Egypt (43:6-12), and later by Joseph and Mary (Matt. 2:13-15). The route was dictated by the zone of settled land in which the presence of well water was so important; hence the frequent references to its wells (Gen. 26:18-25; Josh. 15:18-19; Judg. 1:13-15). See NBD, s.v.) This region, the Negeb, covers approximately one-half of the area of the state of modern Israel.

(2) *Abraham's Journey*. Following the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Abraham pulled his stakes, so to speak, and journeyed "toward the land of the South." Various reasons have been suggested as to the motive for this journey, e.g., in consequence of the hostility of his neighbors (Calvin); desire to escape from the scene of such a terrible catastrophe which he had just witnessed (Calvin, Murphy); impulsion by God, to remind him that Canaan "was not intended for a permanent habitation, but a constant pilgrimage" (Kalisch); but most likely, it would seem, in search of pasture, as on a previous occasion (Keil); cf. Gen. 12:9-10, 13:1. Arriving in the land of the South, it seems that he ranged his herds from Kadesh on the north (also Kadesh-barnea), some seventy miles south of Hebron, to Shur, a wilderness lying at the northwest tip of the Sinai peninsula (beside one of its springs the Angel of Jehovah, it will be remembered, found Hagar: cf. Gen. 16:7-14). (*A wilderness in the Palestin-*

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ian country of the Biblical records meant a rather wild region of scant vegetation, except at certain seasons when rainfall provided temporary pasturage for the nomads' flocks (cf. *Psa.* 106:9, A.R.V., marginal rendering, *pasture-land*). These wildernesses, unlike densely wooded wildernesses of our Americas, were treeless, except for palm-trees in the oases, bushes like acacia, and inferior trees like the tamarisk (*Exo.* 15:27, *Elim*; *Gen.* 21:33). Because of its aridity a wilderness in Scripture is sometimes called a *desert*.)

(3) *Gerar, and the Philistines.* Whatever the extent to which Abraham pastured his flocks between Kadesh and Shur, his more or less permanent tenting-ground must have been in the vicinity of Gerar, a city forty miles southeast of Gaza in the foothills of the Judean mountains (*Gen.* 10:19), hence interior to the coastal plain, and some distance from the route over which (by way of Gaza) invading armies invariably have moved to and fro between Egypt and Southwest Asia not only in ancient times, but even in our own century. (It should be noted that Armageddon lies on this military route, *Rev.* 16:16. See under "Megiddo" in any Bible Dictionary). Both Abraham and Isaac sojourned at Gerar (*Gen.*, chs. 20, 21, 26), digging wells for their flocks. The city, we are told, was situated in the "land of the Philistines" (*Gen.* 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8). This designation is said to be an anachronism: "it could be ascribed to a late editor, for the Philistines probably entered the land long after the time of Abraham" (*HSB*, 35). Archaeological evidence, however, proves that this is not necessarily so. Cf. Schultz (*OTS*, 35): "The presence of the Philistines in Canaan during patriarchal times has been considered an anachronism. The Caphthorian settlement in Canaan around 1200 B.C. represented a late migration of the Sea People who had made previous settlements over a long period of time. The Philistines had thus established themselves in smaller numbers long

before 1500 B.C. In time they became amalgamated with other inhabitants of Canaan, but the name 'Palestine' (Philistia) continues to bear witness to their presence in Canaan. Caphtorian pottery throughout southern and central Palestine, as well as literary references, testify to the superiority of the Philistines in arts and crafts, In the days of Saul they monopolized metalwork in Palestine." (The Caphtorium are said to have descended from Mizraim, Gen. 10:14, 1 Chron, 1:12; Caphtor is identified as the land from which the Philistines came, Jer. 47:4, Amos 9:7. The consensus of archaeological testimony in our day almost without exception identifies these Sea Peoples as spreading out over the eastern Mediterranean world from Crete: at its height in the second millenium, Minoan Crete controlled the larger part of the Aegean Sea.) The great cities of the Philistines in "Philistia" of the Bible were (1) those on the coastal strip, from north to south in the order named, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza; (2) those in the interior, Ekron on the north and Gath about the center and approximately west of Hebron. Gerar, though not one of the five great urban centers, was the seat of the royal iron smelting place producing iron swords, spearheads, daggers, and arrowheads (1 Sam. 13:19-22). Pottery models of iron-shod chariots have been found here. These people seem to have settled in Palestine in great numbers about the time of the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age (cf. Judg. 16:21); this would have been about 1500 B.C. Archaeology now confirms the fact that groups of these Sea Peoples began arriving in waves long before this time; that in fact these smaller migratory groups were in the Near East as early as the Patriarchal Age. Excavations at Gerar and other Philistine centers began as early as the nineteen-twenties, under the direction of Phythian-Adams and Flinders Petrie: these produced remains from the time of Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1600 to 1400 B.C. Recently an Israeli archaeologist,

D. Alon, surveyed the site of Gerar and "found evidence from potsherds that the city had enjoyed a period of prosperity during the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the Biblical patriarchs" (DW:DBA, 251). Cornfeld (AtD, 72) gives a consistent account of this problem of the origin of the Philistines in the Near East, as follows: "This designation ['Philistine'] is generally regarded as anachronistic because the name Philistine was applied to a Western people (Peoples of the Sea) which had migrated from Crete and the Aegean coastlands and isles around 1200 B.C.E., and settled in the coastal regions of southern Palestine. C. H. Gordon and I. Grinz consider that these 'early' Philistines of Gerar came from a previous migration of sea people from the Aegean and Minoan sphere, including Crete, which is called Caphtor in the Bible and Ugarit tablets, and Caphtorian is the Canaanite name for Minoan. Their earlier home was that other great cultural center of antiquity, the Aegean, which flourished throughout the 2nd millenium B.C.E., and is considered a major cradle of East Mediterranean, Near Eastern and European civilization. It has a close connection with the Hittite civilization, which stems also from an Indo-European migration into this sphere. This civilization spread by trade, navigation, and migration to Asia Minor, North Canaan (Ugarit, etc.); South Canaan (Gerar). The early Philistines who came into contact with the early Hebrews, and the Mycenaeans of proto-historic Greece, to whom the most prominent Homeric heroes belonged, were different sections of this Minoan (Caphtorian) world. By the time of the Amarna Age, or late patriarchal age, these immigrants formed an important segment of the coastal dwellers of Canaan. Vestiges of Aegeo-Minoan art, pottery, and tools abound in archaeological finds of this period. The art is remarkable for its vivacity and it injected a notable degree of liveliness into the art of the Near East, including Egypt.

The most important role of Caphtor was its impact on both the classic Greeks of a later period and the early Canaanites, so that the earliest Greek, Canaanite (Ugarit) and Hebrew literatures have a common denominator in the Minoan or Caphtorian factor. We shall see that the early histories of the Hebrew and pre-Hellenic settlements and migrations on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean, were originally interrelated in certain ways and that the classic traditions of Greece and the treasures of the Near East will illumine each other. C. H. Gordon maintains that 'the epic traditions of Israel starting with the patriarchal narratives are set in Palestine after the penetrations of the Indo-European Philistines from the west and the Indo-European Hittites from the north. When the Bible portrays Abraham as dealing with Hittites and Philistines, we have a correct tradition insofar as Hebrew history dawned in a partially Indo-Europeanized Palestine. This is reflected in Hebraic literature and institutions from the start.' *The early Caphtorian migration was one of a long series that had established various Caphtorian folk on the shores of Canaan long before 1500 B.C.E. They had become Canaanitized, and apparently spoke the same language as Abraham and Isaac. They generally behaved peacefully, unlike the Philistines of a later day, who fought and molested the Israelites. They were recognized in Canaan as the masters of arts and crafts, including metallurgy*" (italics mine—C. C.). These facts account also for the spread of the Cult of Fertility throughout the Near East. It is generally held by anthropologists that Crete was the center where this cult originated and from which it spread in every direction, through the Near East especially.

(4) *Abimelech*. The facts stated above give us a clearer understanding of this man who was king of the city-state of Gerar when Abraham moved into the area. The name, which means "father-king," is pure Hebrew,



and apparently was the common title—rather than personal name—of the kings of Gerar, as *Pharaoh*, for example, was of the rulers of Egypt, *Agag* of the kings of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15), *Caesar* of the emperors of Rome (whence such later titles as *Kaiser*, *Czar*, etc.). This fact makes it entirely plausible that the Abimelech who covenanted with Isaac later (Gen. 26) was a successor to the Abimelech who had dealings with Abraham. The latter evidently sought out Abraham on the patriarch's arrival within the region of which his capital, Gerar, was the dominant city. We must realize that the nomads of Abraham's time were not wanderers all the time; rather, they alternated between periods of migration and periods of a more or less settled life. Because water was precious and the nomadic sheiks had to have it for their flocks, they had to hunt out the area where water—usually from wells—was available. Abraham was of this class. Cornfeld suggests that Abimelech visited Abraham somewhere in the locality, probably for the purpose of concluding a treaty of mutual protection that would safeguard his descendants from Israelite encroachments. It may well be also that he took Sarah into his harem, not especially because he was infatuated with her beauty (she was now ninety years old: cf. 17:17, 21:2) but for the very same purpose of cementing an alliance with this wealthy and influential patriarch. As a matter of fact, on comparing the motives and actions of these two men, it will strike most of us, I think, that Abraham's conduct, generally speaking, was below the level of integrity manifested by the Philistine king. Certainly Abimelech's role in the entire transaction supports the view stated above that these early Philistines, unlike those of later times, as a general rule behaved honorably and peacefully. Cf. Jamieson (CECG, 166): "These early Philistines were a settled population, who occupied themselves for the most part in the peaceful pursuits of agriculture and keeping cattle.

They were far superior in civilization and refinement to the Canaanitish tribes around them; and this polish they doubtless owed to their Egyptian origin." (This author holds that they had once been connected with the shepherd kings who ruled in lower Egypt (Deut. 2:23), and had on their expulsion occupied the pasture lands which lay along its northern border. It seems, however, that their original Cretan origin has by now been firmly established.)

(5) *Abimelech's Dream* (vv. 3-7). Undoubtedly it was in the course of an earlier meeting between Abimelech and Abraham that the patriarch repeated the equivocation he had perpetrated previously on the Egyptian Pharaoh (cf. Gen. 12:10-20), namely, the declaration that Sarah was his sister, a declaration which Sarah herself confirmed (v. 5), as a consequence of which Abimelech took her into his harem. Whereupon, to protect the purity of the promised seed, God "closed up all the wombs of house of Abimelech," that is, by preventing conception (cf. 16:2, Isa. 66:9, 1 Sam. 1:5-6), or by producing barrenness (cf. 29:31, 30:22). The reaction of Abimelech surely proves that his moral life was far above the level of the idolatrous Canaanites who occupied the land and makes it possible for us to understand why God deigned to reveal Himself to him.

The *dream* was the usual mode of self-revelation by which God (as Elohim) communicated with heathen. (Cf. Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. 41:1), Nebuchadnezzar's (Dan. 4:5), as distinguished from the visions and dreams in which Jehovah manifested His presence to His people. Cf. theophanies (visible appearances of deity) vouchsafed to Abraham (12:7, 15:1, 18:1), and to Jacob (28:13, 32:24), and the visions granted to Daniel (Dan. 7:1-28, 10:5-9), and to the prophets generally, "which, though sometimes occurring in dreams, were yet a higher form of Divine manifestation than the dreams" (PCG, 264). (Note that Pharaoh's butler and baker (Gen. 40:8), the Midianites

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(Judg. 7:13-15), the wife of Pilate (Matt. 27:19), experienced significant dreams.) (Cf. also the vision granted Isaiah of the "Lord sitting upon a throne" (Isa. 6:1-5); Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9-11); the visions of the Living One, of the Door opened in heaven, of the Temple of God in heaven, and of the New Heaven and New Earth, all vouchsafed John the Beloved of the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:18, 4:1, 11:19, 21:1), all of these together, in their various details, making up the content of the Apocalypse.) The fact that God communicated with Abimelech in a dream is sufficient evidence that the latter was in some sense a believer, one who apparently feared God; however, he must have had only a limited knowledge of God, because the *dream*, as stated above, was "a mode employed for those standing on a lower level of revelation" (EG, 582). Note the conversation which occurred by means of this dream: (1) God explains that Abimelech had done a deed worthy of death, viz., he had taken another man's wife from her husband for his own purposes, whereas he should have honored the sanctity of the marriage bond (nothing was said about the other members of the king's harem, but God's silence must not be taken as approval, cf. Acts 17:30); (2) Abimelech answered by stating his fear that he, or even his subjects, however innocent in this case, might as a consequence of his sin (cf. 2 Sam. 24:17, 1 Chron. 21:17, Jer. 15:4), be destroyed as the Sodomites had been destroyed; he then protested his innocence, in view of the fact that both Abraham and Sarah had represented themselves to him as brother and sister; (3) whereupon God recognized the fact of the king's innocence and explained why he in turn—as an act of benevolence—had imposed a physical affliction on him to prevent his laying hands on the mother of the Child of Promise. (4) Finally, God ordered Abimelech to restore Sarah to her husband, "for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live," etc. Note

(1) that Abraham was divinely declared to be a *prophet*, that is, an interpreter (communicator) of the will of God (Ps. 105:15, Amos 3:7, 2 Pet. 1:21), one who speaks by divine afflatus (Deut. 13:2, 18:15-19; Judg. 6:8, 1 Sam. 9:9, 1 Ki. 22:7) either to announce the will of God to men (Exo. 4:15, 7:1) or to intercede with God for men (Gen. 20:7; Jer. 7:16, 11:14, 14:11); (2) that he, Abraham, would pray for Abimelech (1 Sam. 7:5, Job. 42:8); (3) that failing to make the required restitution, the king and all that were his would surely die. "Whatever the nature of a revelation by means of a dream may be, it surely allows for an interchange of thoughts—questions and answers, remarks and responses" (EG, 585). This teaches us, says Leupold, that "sin is sin and involves guilt, even when the perpetrator may have sinned in ignorance; such ignorance does constitute an extenuating circumstance; God acknowledges that here" (EG, 586). (God has often intimated His mind in dreams: cf. Gen. 28:12, 31:24, 37:5, 40:8, 41:1; 1 Ki. 3:51; Jer. 23, 25, 28, 32; Dan. 2:1, 4:5).

(6) *Abraham's Explanation.* Abimelech lost no time in setting things right, both in the understanding of his servants, and in the mind and heart of Abraham, protesting that the patriarch had brought on him and his kingdom near-disaster: "thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done." Abraham, apparently feeling a sense of guilt, accounted for his action on three grounds: (1) he surmised that the fear of God had been lost here as elsewhere throughout Canaan (undoubtedly a reaction from the awful scenes of the divine judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah); (2) he had not spoken a verbal untruth in declaring Sarah to be his sister; she was indeed his half-sister; (3) the action had been the result of a preconcerted arrangement between Sarah and himself, agreed upon at the time their wanderings began. (The patriarch attempts no self-justification, no exculpation: he simply states the

facts.) The view that Abraham's statement in v. 12 is directly related to his statement in v. 11, is entirely plausible; that is, as if Abraham was saying, "I spoke the truth about moral corruption in this place, because if the people had really been godfearing, they would have asked whether Sarah was also my wife, since one could marry his half-sister from the one father." The statement of the text indicates clearly that Sarah was her husband's half-sister, *i.e.*, Terah's daughter by another wife than Abraham's mother. "On the earlier levels of the development of the human race such closer relationships of those married were often necessary and so not abhorred as they came to be later. The Mosaic law would not allow such connections; see Lev. 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22. Whom Terah had first married or perhaps married after he had married Abraham's mother, we cannot determine" (EG, 589-590).

(7) *Abimelech's Response* (vv. 14-16). The king carried out the divine instructions. He gave Sarah back to Abraham with a liberal present of sheep, cattle and servants, and gave the patriarch permission to dwell wherever he pleased in his, Abimelech's, land. He gave Abraham also a thousand shekels of silver: this was usually of the character of a purchase-price for a wife; here, however, it seems to have been a compensation for injury unwittingly inflicted. To Sarah he said, "It is for thee a covering of the eyes," that is, not for a veil which she was to procure for this amount, but as an atoning gift. "*In respect of all thou art righted*": the general sense seems to be that Sarah's honor was now fully rehabilitated.

(8) *Abraham's Prayer* (vv. 17-18). The patriarch forthwith interceded in prayer for Abimelech and his people (cf. his intercessory prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah). As a result all the members of the king's court were now made capable of resuming their marital relations: *coitus* which had been temporarily suspended was now restored. This entire incident obviously was for the purpose

of protecting the purity of the promised seed. "In king Abimelech we meet with a totally different character from that of Pharaoh. We see in him a heathen imbued with a moral consciousness of right, and open to receive divine revelation, of which there is not the slightest trace in the king of Egypt. And Abraham, in spite of his natural weakness, and the consequent confusion which he manifested in the presence of the pious heathen, was exalted by the compassionate grace of God to the position of His own friend, so that even the heathen king, who seems to have been in the right in this instance, was compelled to bend before him and to seek the removal of the divine punishment, which had fallen upon him and his house, through the medium of his intercession. In this way God proved to the Philistine king, on the one hand, that He suffers no harm to befall His prophets (Psa. 105:15), and to Abraham on the other, that He can maintain His Covenant and secure the realization of His promise against all opposition from the sinful desires of earthly potentates. It was in this respect that the event possessed a typical significance in relation to the future attitude of Israel towards surrounding nations" (BCOTP, 242, 243).

(9) *Comparison of Gen. 12:10-20 and Gen. 20:1-18.* Alleged differences in these two narratives is taken by the "analytical" critics as evidence of a weaving together of two original sources, J and E. (As a matter of fact this theme of a sister-wife relationship occurs again in Gen. 26:6-11: in the first instance, involving Abraham-Pharaoh-Sarah; in the second, Abraham-Abimelech-Sarah, and in the third, Isaac-Abimelech-Rebekah). By the critics this chapter (20) is assumed to be an Elohist document; then how account for the "Jehovah" of v. 18? The answer is that v. 18 demonstrates the "fine propriety" one often encounters in relating these two names. V. 18 states Yahweh's method of rendering the mother of the promised seed safe: "the faithful covenant God in mercy watches

over the mother of the child of the covenant"; hence this verse is the complement essential to explaining v. 17. Other authorities explain that in v. 3, we have *Elohim* without the article, that is, Deity generally; but Abimelech recognizes the Lord, *Adonai*, i.e., God (v. 4); whereupon the historian represents Him as *Elohim with the article*, that is, the personal and true God, as speaking to him (Delitzsch, BCOTP, 240). Cf. Green (UBG, 251, 252): "The critics have mistaken the lofty style used in describing grand creative acts or the vocabulary employed in setting forth the universal catastrophe of the deluge for the fixed habit of an Elohist writer, and set it over against the graceful style of the ordinary narrative in the early Jehovist sections. But in this chapter and in the rest of Genesis, whenever Elohim occurs in narrative sections, the stately periods of the account of the creation and the vocabulary of the creation and the flood are dropped, and terms appropriate to the common affairs of life and the ordinary course of human events are employed by the Elohist precisely as they are by the Jehovist. Elohim occurs throughout this chapter (vs. 3, 6, 11, 12, 17), except in the last verse (v. 18) where Jehovah is used. But the words and phrases are those which are held to be characteristic of the Jehovist." Thus do the critics nullify their own "assured results."

Again, the question is raised by the critics, Why the specific inclusion of the elaboration by Abraham as regards his motivation in dealing with Abimelech, as distinguished from the narrative of his dealing with Pharaoh? That is to say, is there a reason for the explanation to Abimelech that his wife was in reality a half-sister in view of the fact that no such explanation was vouchsafed the king of Egypt? Obviously, there is a reason for this difference. Again, note Green (UBG, 257, n.): "Abraham says of his wife at the outset, 'She is my sister' (v. 2). In and of itself this is quite intelligible; and a Hebrew narrator

would certainly have told this more plainly, if he had not on a like occasion stated in more detail what moved Abraham to it (12:11-13). Was it necessary now to repeat it here? The rapidity with which he hastens on to the fact itself shows what he presupposes in the reader. But while in the first event of the kind (cf. 12), in Egypt, the narrator briefly mentions Pharaoh's gifts and plagues, he sets forth in more detail the cause of Abraham's conduct. The reader might certainly be surprised that the same thing could happen twice to Abraham. The narrator is conscious of this; and in order to remove every doubt of this sort which might so easily arise, he lets Abraham clear up the puzzle in what he says to Abimelech (vs. 11-13). Thus the narrator himself meets every objection that could be made, and by the words, 'when God caused me to wander from my father's house' (v. 13), he looks back so plainly over all thus far related, and at the same time indicates so exactly the time when he first thought of passing his wife off as his sister, everywhere in foreign lands, that this can only be explained from the previous narrative in ch. 12."

Certainly there are similarities between this episode and those recorded in Genesis 12 and Genesis 26. However, as Leupold writes (EG, 579): "It is foolish to claim the identity of the incidents on the ground that they merely represent three different forms of the original event, forms assumed while being transmitted by tradition. Critics seem to forget that life just happens to be so strange a thing that certain incidents may repeat themselves in the course of one life, or that the lives of children often constitute a strange parallel to those of their parents." Smith-Field (OTH, 79) "Here the deceit which Abraham had put upon Pharaoh, by calling Sarah his sister, was acted again with the like result. The repeated occurrence of such an event, which will meet us again in the history of Isaac, can surprise no one acquainted with Oriental manners; but it would have been indeed surprising if the author



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of any but a genuine narrative had exposed himself to a charge so obvious as that which has been founded on its repetition. The independent truth of each story is confirmed by the natural touches of variety; such as, in the case before us, Abimelech's keen but gentle satire in recommending Sarah to buy a veil with the thousand pieces of silver which he gave to her husband. We may also observe the traces of the knowledge of the true God among Abimelech and his servants (Gen. 20:9-11)." Green (UBG, 258, n.): "The circumstances are different in the two narratives. Here Abimelech makes Abraham a variety of presents after he understood the affair; there, Pharaoh before he understood it. Here God Himself appears; there He simply punishes. Here Abraham is called a prophet (v. 7), as he could not have been at once denominated when God had but just called him. The circumstances, the issue, and the description differ in many respects, and thus attest that this story is quite distinct from the former one." (Green quotes the foregoing from a work by the distinguished scholar, Ewald, *Die Komposition der Genesis kritisch untersucht*, 1823).

The following summarization by Leupold (EG, 579-580) of the striking differences is conclusive, it seems to the writer: "Note the following six points of difference: two different places are involved, Egypt and Philistia; two different monarchs of quite different characters, one idolatrous, the other, who fears the true God; different circumstances prevail, a famine on the one hand, nomadic migration on the other; different modes of revelation are employed—the one kind surmises the truth, the other receives revelation in a dream; the patriarch's reaction to the accusation is quite different in the two instances involved—in the first, silence; then in the second instance, a free explanation before a king of sufficient spiritual discernment; lastly, the conclusions of the two episodes are radically different from one another—in the first instance,

dismissal from the land; in the second, an invitation to stay in the land. We are compelled, therefore, to reverse the critical verdict: 'it is impossible to doubt that the two are variants of the same tradition.' We have here two distinct, though similar, events."

Haley (ADB, 26): "A favorite exegetical principle adopted by some of these critics appears to be, that *similar events are necessarily identical*. Hence, when they read that Abraham twice equivocated concerning his wife; that Isaac imitated his example; that David was twice in peril in a certain wilderness, and twice spared Saul's life in a cave, they instantly assume that in each case these double narratives are irreconcilable accounts of one and the same event. The absurdity of such a canon of criticism is obvious from the fact that *history is full of events which more or less closely resemble one another*. Take, as a well-known example the case of the two Presidents Edwards, father and son. Both were named Jonathan Edwards, and were the grandsons of clergymen. 'Both were pious in their youth, were distinguished scholars, and were tutors for equal periods in the colleges where they were respectively educated. Both were settled in the ministry as successors to their maternal grandfathers, were dismissed on account of their religious opinions, and again settled in retired country towns, over congregations singularly attached to them, where they had leisure to pursue their favorite studies, and to prepare and publish their valuable works. Both were removed from these stations to become presidents of colleges, and both died shortly after their respective inaugurations; the one in the fifty-sixth, and the other in the fifty-seventh year of his age; each having preached, on the first Sabbath of the year of his death, on the text: 'This year thou shalt die.'" (From Memoir prefixed to the Words of Edwards the younger, p. 34. Cf. also 1 Sam. 23:19, 26:1; 1 Sam. 24:6, 26:9, with Gen. 12:19, 20:2, 26:7.) Haley (*ibid*, 27, n.): "Observe that no one of the

above cases [in Genesis] bears, in respect to *points of coincidence*, worthy of comparison with this unquestioned instance in modern times." Again (*ibid.*, 317): "We have elsewhere seen that distant events may bear a very close resemblance. A late rationalist concedes that 'in those rude times, such a circumstance might have been repeated,' and that the 'dissimilarities of the two cases render their identity doubtful.' In king Abimelech, says Keil, we meet with a totally different character from that of Pharaoh. We see in the former a heathen imbued with a moral consciousness of right, and open to receive divine revelation, of which there is not the slightest trace in the king of Egypt. The two cases were evidently quite distinct." Again: "Whereas Abraham makes no reply to Pharaoh's stinging indictment (12:20), he has here a great deal to say to Abimelech in self-defense (20:11-13)." In passing, it should be noted that Sarah was some sixty-five years old, in the encounter with Pharaoh. As a "noble nomadic princess," undoubtedly she had led a healthful life with a great measure of freedom. (Haley, *ibid.*, 318): "In contrast to the swarthy, ugly, early-faded Egyptian women, she possessed no doubt great personal attraction. In the second instance, when she was some ninety years of age, nothing is said as to her *beauty*. Abimelech was influenced, not by Sarah's personal charms, but simply by a desire to 'ally himself with Abraham, the rich nomad prince'" (as Delitzsch puts it).

## 2. "New Light" on Abraham's "Deceptions"

(Explanatory: I have purposely withheld, for presentation at this point, certain evidence from recent archaeological findings which throws an entirely new light on Abraham's conduct toward Pharaoh and Abimelech, and have "gone along," so to speak, with the traditional concept of Abraham's "deceptions." It must be admitted that these do not portray the patriarch in a favorable light. On the basis of this viewpoint of his motives, perhaps the

best that could be said by way of extenuation is the following comment by Leupold (EG, 593): "If the case in hand is to be approached from the moral angle, then it is seen to offer an illustration how even with God's best saints susceptibility to certain sins is not overcome by a single effort. These men of God, too, had their besetting sins and prevailing weaknesses. The repetition of the fall of Abraham under very similar circumstances, instead of constituting grounds for criticism should rather be regarded as a touch entirely true to life" (EG, 593).

Dr. E. A. Speiser, in his excellent work on Genesis (Anchor Bible Series) presents an entirely different picture, as derived from Hurrian (Horite) customary law. The Horites evidently were a mixture of Semitic and Indo-European peoples who occupied East Central Mesopotamia. The chief center of Hurrian culture was Nuzi, which was east of the Tigris not too far southeast of Nineveh. (Another important center of archaeological findings was Mari, the center of the Amorite civilization; Mari was on the bend of the Euphrates, some distance northwest of Babylon, a region in which the city of Haran was located, which according to Genesis was the home of Abraham's kinsmen.) The Hurrian culture was not known until 1928-1929 when the Nuzi cuneiform documents (some 20,000 in number) were discovered. As a result we know that these people had some strange customs having to do with the sister-wife relationship.

Dr. Speiser writes (ABG, Intro., 39 ff.): "Among the various patriarchal themes in Genesis, there are three in particular that exhibit the same blend of uncommon features: each theme appears to involve some form of deception; each has proved to be an obstinate puzzle to countless generations of students, ancient and modern; and at the same time, each was seemingly just as much of an enigma to the Biblical writers themselves." These three are specifically; the problem of the sister-wife relationship

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(Abraham and Sarah), that of the transfer of the birth-right and the paternal blessing (as from Esau to Jacob), and that of a father's disposition of his household gods (images, Gen. 31:19-30). (It is the first of these problems which we deal with here; the other two will be taken up in connection with their appearance in the Scripture text.) Involved in most of these instances are the laws of inheritance, especially those involved in adoption, and certain legal phraseology in some cases. Discoveries at Nuzi have shed a flood of light on these problems. The difficulty involved, however, is that of ascertaining *the extent to which Abraham was familiar with this Hurrian customary law*. Traditionally, Abraham has been regarded as resorting to deception to "save his skin," in the three instances in Genesis in which he is represented as introducing his wife as his sister, primarily because the two—husband and wife—felt that this half-truth and half-lie was necessary to protect them from the erotic habits of their pagan neighbors. As we have already seen, the three occurrences of this episode have been used by the critics as an argument for the composite (documentary) authorship of the Pentateuch. Now, according to the light shed on the problem in the Nuzi documents, it was the custom among those of the higher social caste there (the nobility) for a husband to adopt his wife as his sister. This was designedly for social standing. Speiser (ABG, intro., 40): "In Hurrian society a wife enjoyed special standing and protection when the law recognized her simultaneously as her husband's sister, regardless of blood ties. Such cases are attested by two separate legal documents, one dealing with the marriage and the other with the woman's adoption as sister. This dual role conferred on the wife a superior position in society." The idea seems to have been that, under an old fratriarchal system, a sister had privileges that wives generally did not have. Hence, when Abraham

said of Sarah, "She is my sister," and Sarah said in turn of Abraham, "He is my brother," this meant that they were, in a sense, untouchable. But, as this interpretation indicates, when they made these representations to Pharaoh, they found them of no avail. On the other hand, as this was their best defense under Hurrian law, it would seem that Abimelech was acquainted with that particular law and hence respected the position of Sarah. The same must also be true of the Abimelech who figured in the case of Isaac and Rebekah. Speiser concludes (*ibid.*) that in the context of the customary law involved, Abraham and Sarah were perfectly honorable in their representations.

Obviously, there are some serious objections to this general interpretation. In the first place, why were the representations made by Abraham and Sarah to the Egyptian king accepted at face value with the result that he took Sarah into his harem? It must be true, of course, that he had no such knowledge of the Hurrian law governing the case. It is said, however, that Pharaoh's conduct must have been due to the fact that *in Egypt the role of sister was not highly regarded*. The difficulty with this explanation is the fact that it is not in harmony with what is known about Egyptian history and culture. (The reader is advised to read Dr. Will Durant's great work, *Our Oriental Heritage*, pp. 164-170, for reliable information about these matters.) Writes Dr. Durant: "Very often the king married his own sister—occasionally his daughter—to preserve the purity of the royal blood . . . the institution of sister-marriage spread among the people, and as late as the second century after Christ two thirds of the citizens of Arsinoe were found to be practising the custom. The words *brother* and *sister*, in Egyptian poetry, have the same significance as *lover* and *beloved* among ourselves. . . . 'No people, ancient or modern,' said Max Muller, 'has given women so high a legal status as did the inhabitants of the

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Nile Valley.' . . . It is likely that this high status of woman arose from the mildly matriarchal character of Egyptian society. Not only was woman full mistress in the house, but all estates descended in the female line. . . . Men married their sisters not because familiarity bred romance, but because they wished to enjoy the family inheritance," etc. (pp 164-166). Obviously, then, Abraham's device could have worked in Egypt only if the Pharaoh was familiar with Hurrian law and was willing to acknowledge it binding in his realm. But both of these conditions seem most unlikely.

Then, what about Abimelech? Was he aware of this Hurrian law, as far as "Philistia" was from far eastern Mesopotamia? It is possible that he could have been familiar with it. But, again, the opposite would seem to have been the truth. And again we have the difficulty of explaining why Abimelech would have been influenced by such a custom had he even known of it.

As for the Genesis story, the causes and effects involved are plainly presented. The truthfulness of the Genesis accounts of these sister-wife representations is in strict harmony with the realism of the whole Bible. And finally, the application of the Hurrian law to these cases necessitates certain pre-suppositions, namely, (1) that the redactors (apparently the possibility of Mosaic authorship is ignored) were completely ignorant of the Hurrian custom; (2) that in trying to weave together alleged varied traditions of one and the same original event, they allowed unexplainable inconsistencies to creep into the Genesis text; (3) that they must have experienced considerable embarrassment in portraying the revered patriarch and his wife as practising equivocation "to save their own skins"; that they were prompted to introduce in each case what was known in ancient times as the *deus ex machina*, i.e., the obtrusion of divine judgment to produce under-

standing, repentance and restitution on the part of the monarchs involved. Finally, and most serious of all, not only is the possibility of Mosaic authorship ignored, but *even the possibility of Divine inspiration—verbal, dynamic, or even supervisory—is completely disregarded.*

The facts of the matter are, from the present author's point of view, that the narratives under consideration in Genesis are three different accounts of three different originals; and that the accounts, as they stand, *are completely in line with Biblical realism.* The Bible is the most realistic book in the world. It pictures life just as men have lived it in the past and as they live it now. It is pre-eminently the Book of Life. It portrays both their vices and virtues, their fears and their triumphs, their temptations and frailties as well as their victories of faith. The very first principle of Biblical interpretation is that the Bible should be allowed to mean what it says and to say what it means, without benefit of over-reaching analytical criticism or the gobbledygook of speculative theology. This is simply the application of the practical norm of "calling Bible things by Bible names."

### 3. *The Birth of the Promised Heir (21:1-7)*

1 And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.



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Vv. 1, 2—Yahweh “visited” Sarah, that is, fulfilled His promise at the set time He had promised to do so: our God keeps His promises to the very letter. (Cf. Gen. 17:21; 18:10, 14). Sarah “*bare Abraham a son in his old age*: all sources emphasize the fact that Isaac was a late-born child” (Skinner, ICCG, 321). And Abraham called the son’s name *Isaac*, i.e., Laughter (cf. 17:17, 18:12). The son was “so called because of his father’s believing and his mother’s unbelieving laughter at the promise of his birth, and because of their great joy now at the fulfillment of it” (21:6; cf. Isa. 54:1). The birth, naming and circumcision of Isaac were in accord with Gen. 17:19, 12. Ishmael had been circumcised previously at the age of thirteen (17:25). Abraham was now 100 years old: thus he had waited twenty-five years for the fulfillment of the promise (cf. 12:5)—a remarkable instance of faith and patience (Rom. 4:20); and thus Isaac’s birth was a remarkable demonstration of divine power (Rom. 4:20, Heb. 11:11-12). *The several instances of miraculous conception mentioned in Scripture are the following*: Sarah (Heb. 11:11); Rebekah (Gen. 25:21); Rachel (Gen. 30:22); Manoa’s wife (Judg. 13:3-24); Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19, 20); Elisabeth (Luke 1:24, 25, 36, 37, 58); and Mary, by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:31-35).

### 4. *The Expulsion of the Bondwoman and Her Son* (vv. 8-21)

8 *And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.* 9 *And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, mocking.* 10 *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son: for the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.* 11 *And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight on account of his son.* 12 *And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because*

of the lad, and because of thy handmaid; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the handmaid will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and gave her the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he dwelt in the wilderness, and became, as he grew up, an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

(1) *Sarah's Anger* (vv. 8-10). V. 8—Isaac weaned—at about the age of three. The feast was the customary celebration of the occasion of the weaning of a child. The age of weaning in modern Palestine is from two to three years; in ancient Israel it must have been later, at least in some instances (Cf. 1 Sam. 1:22, 2 Mac. 7:27ff.). “The weaning was always regarded as a joyous occasion, as we find with Samuel, who on being weaned was taken by his mother to the Tabernacle at Shiloh” (SC, 103): (cf. 1 Sam. 1:22ff.). V. 9—Sarah saw Hagar’s son *mocking*.

Other versions (LXX, Vulgate, JB) gave it "playing with her son Isaac." Leupold translates: "Sarah observed that the son of the Egyptian woman Hagar, whom she had borne to Abraham, was (always) mocking": the frequentative participle is used here, says this writer. "Another allusion to Isaac's name, cf. 17:17f.; the one verb means 'to laugh' and 'to play'" (JB, 37, n.). The recently published Hebrew commentary (SC, 103-104) reads: "*making sport*: the verb denotes idolatry (cf. Exod. 32:6), immorality (cf. 39:17), or murder (cf. 2 Sam. 2:14f.); in all these passages the same or a similar verb occurs, and in the last-mentioned the meaning is to fight to the death. Also, he quarreled with Isaac about the inheritance, claiming he would be the heir as the eldest son; this follows from Sarah's insistence in the next verse that he should not be co-heir with Isaac. . . . Ishmael derided Isaac and jeered at the great feast, and Sarah resented that the son of a bondmaid should presume to do this, which explains her allusion to his lowly parentage." Skinner (ICCG, 322) certainly disagrees: "*playing with Isaac her son* . . . It is the spectacle of two young children playing together, innocent of social distinctions, that excites Sarah's maternal jealousy and prompts her cruel demand." Leupold takes the opposite view (EG, 599): "The writer did not want to say that he mocked *Isaac*, because, apparently, Ishmael mocked the prospects of Isaac and his spiritual destiny; in fact, just adopted a mocking attitude over against *everything* involved in Isaac's future. . . . To translate, as many would do, 'he was *playing*,' certainly imputes to Sarah the cheapest kind of jealousy, quite unworthy of this woman of faith." But, why should we not here, as elsewhere, resolve this problem in the light of New Testament teaching, on the principle that any Scripture must be in harmony with the teaching of the whole Bible? Therefore, we shall allow Gal. 4:29 to settle the question: "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after

the Spirit," etc. This is a capsule description of the never-ending warfare of the carnally minded against the spiritually minded (Rom. 8:5-9). *The Bible will never speak clearly to those who will not accept it and treat it as a whole.* Just how old was Ishmael by this time? Correlating 16:16 with 21:5, we conclude that he was about fifteen years old. It is rather difficult to think that on this occasion a fifteen-year-old would have been doing much "playing" with a two- or three-year-old.

V. 10—Sarah demands that both the bondwoman and her son should be *cast out*; this would seem to indicate that Sarah held Hagar responsible for Ishmael's mocking attitude toward Isaac. V. 11—Abraham was grieved, not so much apparently about the prospect of losing the bondwoman as about the lack of proper care and protection for the son if they were to be "cast out," for, after all, Ishmael was *his* son. Abraham's language in 17:18 seems to indicate that he had hoped that Ishmael might be recognized as the promised heir; however, this plea and God's answer in v. 19 indicate clearly that this was not the Divine will. This should teach us that *man's responses and ways of doing things (righteousness) cannot be substituted for God's way of doing things.* In the present instance (v. 11) "Abraham's displeasure may well have been a reflection of the fact that customary law of his day forbade the expulsion of a slave wife and her children" (HSB, 35). Vv. 12-13: God intervenes to reassure the patriarch, telling him to hearken to his wife's demand because she is justified in making it. God's reason for sanctioning the demand is that according to His Eternal Purpose (Eph. 1:3-14, 2:11-21; 3:1-12) the true descendants (seed) of Abraham should be found in the line of Isaac. "Since, then, Ishmael potentially is a foreign element among the offspring of Abraham, he must be removed. That being God's reason for Ishmael's and Hagar's dismissal, why should it not also have been Sarah's?" (EG, 603). "V. 12. Isaac, as thine heir, shall

bear and propagate thy name; and the promised seed and land, and the spiritual prerogatives, shall be entailed upon him, Rom. 9:7-8, Heb. 11:8" (SIBG, 246). Reassurance is now given to Abraham with respect also to the future of Ishmael and his progeny: for Abraham's sake, God tells him, He will make him expand into a great people; hence Abraham should have no misgivings as to Ishmael's survival of any or all vicissitudes that might lie ahead.

(2) *Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness* (vv. 14-17). V. 14—*Bread and water*. This is a phrase which includes "all necessary provision, of which it is probable that Hagar and her son had sufficient to have served them till they had gotten to Hagar's friends in Egypt, had they not lost their way" (SITB, 246). The patriarch put the bottle (a skin of water, or water-bag) on Hagar's shoulder, "and gave her the child, and sent her away." The critics have had a field day here, so to speak, in the indulgence of speculative sophistry, in assuming that the text indicates that Hagar put the bread, the water-skin, and *the boy*, on her shoulder. This is ridiculous, of course, because by no possible means can the notion that Ishmael was just a small boy be harmonized with previous passages, such as 17:24, 25; 21:5, etc. "Distorted tradition could hardly have grown blurred on so important a fact as the priority of the birth of Ishmael" (EG, 605). Why not accept the simplest and most obvious meaning, namely, that *he gave the bread and the water and the child* (SC, 106), that is, put the lad's hand in his mother's so that she could lead him by her side. The statement certainly does not mean that Abraham gave her Ishmael also to carry. Vv. 14-16: Hagar departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. (It seems evident that Abraham was now dwelling somewhere in the area not too far from Beersheba.) Hagar kept on wandering until her water supply was exhausted, as inevitably would occur under such circumstances; such exhaustion as that which resulted from

lack of water supply naturally affected the boy much more quickly than the mother. Haley (ADB, 418): "The English version of verses 14-18 is peculiarly infelicitous, and makes a wrong impression. The 'child' was *not* placed upon Hagar's shoulder, nor cast under the shrub, nor held in the hand, as an infant might have been. The Hebrew word here rendered 'child,' denotes not only an infant, but also a *boy* or *young man*. Ishmael was at the time some sixteen years of age. The growing boy would be much more easily overcome by the heat, thirst, and fatigue of wandering than his mother, the hardy Egyptian hand-maid. When he yielded to exhaustion she hastily laid him, fainting and half-dead, under the shelter of a shrub. Even after he was refreshed with water, he needed to be 'held,' that is, supported and led, for a time." (It should be noted that the same word *yeled*, 'child,' in vv. 14, 15, is applied to Joseph when *seventeen* years old (Gen. 37:2, 30). "For a time the mother supports the son, but her fast-failing strength cannot bear to be doubly taxed. She finds one of the bushes of the desert. Scant shade such as may be offered is often sought out by those wandering in the desert when they need protection against the sun's rays (cf. 1 Ki. 19:4). The mother desires to ease what appear to be the dying hours of the lad's life. She drops him hastily in exhaustion . . . with fine skill the author delineates how painfully the mother's love is torn by her son's distress. She must stay within sight. Yet she cannot witness his slow death. At the distance of a bow-shot . . . she hovers near. Her agonized cry rings out, 'I cannot look upon the death of the lad.'" (EG, 606). "She sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept." *Divine succor came*, vv. 17-19, in two forms, namely, the voice of the Angel of God from heaven, and the opening of Hagar's eyes. While God Himself heard the voice of the lad (perhaps his crying out for water), the medium of His revelation was *the Angel of God*. "What aileth thee?"

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—thus the Angel recalled to Hagar that she had no cause for alarm, that in fact she was forgetting what God had promised in 16:10ff.; and then He repeated the promise here that He would make of the boy a great people. (Note the tremendously dramatic portrayal of physical and emotional suffering that is given us here, and given in just a few poignant statements). God evidently opened her eyes; that is, He gave her the insight to perceive that water was to be found close at hand. She filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. Vv. 20-21: *Ishmael's Future*. The boy grew up, evidently amidst the hardships of the desert—the proof that God was with him. He became a skilful bowman (archer); indeed his descendants were all noted for their archery. (Cf. Isa. 21:17). Ishmael grew up in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from among her own people. Mohammedan Arabs all claim descent from Ishmael; they hold that the well which God revealed to Hagar was the sacred well of Zemzem at Mecca, their holy city. It should be noted that Ishmael's line soon lost all spiritual kinship with Abraham and his posterity.

*Geography*. V. 14—"the wilderness of Beersheba." The name was introduced here proleptically, unless the incident related in vv. 22-33 had already taken place. The town itself was midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the southern end of the Dead Sea some distance east of Gerar. It became known as the southern limit of Israelite occupancy, so that the entire land (Palestine) could be designated as the territory "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1). "The wilderness of Beersheba" was the name given to the generally uncultivated waste between Palestine and Egypt. It seems evident that Abraham spent much of his later life in this area (Gen. 21:34, 22:19). Isaac was dwelling there when Jacob set out for Haran (Gen. 28:10). On this way into Egypt Jacob stopped there to offer sacrifices (Gen. 46:1). In the division of

the land this area went to the tribe of Simeon (Josh. 19:2). Beersheba was some fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem; hence, down through the centuries the southern gate of Jerusalem, leading toward Hebron and Beersheba, has been known as "the gate of friendship" *in memoriam* of the close relationship that existed between God and Abraham throughout the latter's sojourn in the Negeb. It was from Beersheba that Abraham set out on his journey to offer up Isaac, the child of promise, somewhere in "the land of Moriah" (Gen. 22:2). *The wilderness of Paran* (cf. Gen. 14:6)—the region in the central part of the Sinai peninsula, east of the wilderness of Shur (cf. Num. 10:12, 12:16; 13:3, 26; 1 Ki. 11:18, 1 Sam. 25:1). Kadesh (or Kadesh-barnea) was on the eastern border of the wilderness of Paran, and hence at the western limit of the wilderness of Zin (Num. 14:32-35, cf. Deut. 2:14; Num. 33:36-37; Num. 20:1; Num. 20:10-13, 27:14; Deut. 32:51; 20:14-21; Judg. 11:16-17; Num. 34:4, John. 15:3; Ezek. 47:19, 58:28; Josh. 10:41). (The oasis of *Beer-labai-roi* was in the northern part of the wilderness of Paran: cf. Gen. 16:7-14, also Gen. 24:62).

### 5. *The Covenant with Abimelech* (vv. 22-34)

22 *And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: 23 now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24 And Abraham said, I will swear. 25 And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26 And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but today. 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen,*



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and gave them unto Abimelech; and they two made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? 30 And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them. 32 So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: and Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days.

"At that time," that is, about the time Isaac was born. Jewish scholarship explains this incident—the dialogue between Abimelech and Abraham—substantially as follows (SC, 106-107). Abimelech recognized that God was with Abraham, as evident by the latter's escape from Sodom (and his abandonment of that area as his place of residence), and the birth of Isaac in Sarah's declining years. On these grounds Abimelech sought peace between them by means of a covenant (in this sense, a pact, a treaty), not on the ground of Abraham's wealth and power. The king reminded the patriarch of his kindness in permitting the latter to live in the land surrounding Gerar, seat of the royal residence, and sought from him a formal declaration of reciprocal courtesy. To give support to this approach and to the proposed pact, the king brought with him, Phicol, the leader of his army (cf. 26:26). We now learn that the reason for Abimelech's proposal was the fact that a strained relationship had arisen; this, said he, should not be allowed to persist. Whereupon Abraham replied that his only cause of complaint was the theft by

violence of one of his wells, by Abimelech's servants. (Skinner (ICCG, 326) thinks that the right to several wells was being contested—on the basis of the frequentative used here; also on the basis of the plural 'wells' in the LXX, Brooke-McLean addition, 1906; and especially by comparison with the fuller parallel in Gen. 26:18. Skinner translates, *And as often as Abraham took Abimelech to task about the wells . . . Abimelech would answer . . .* etc.) To this the king replied that he had not been cognizant of the incident until 'today' (*i.e.*, the day on which he was meeting with Abraham to propose this mutual agreement), even chiding the patriarch for not telling him about it. (This would seem to refute Skinner: indeed Abraham might well have dug several wells, but the violence may have occurred at only one of them.) When the air had been cleared by this preliminary exchange, the covenant was actualized. (Some authorities think that the word "covenant" in Scripture should be used exclusively to signify pacts in which God is one of the parties involved). It must be kept in mind that *in these hot countries a well was of great value* (cf. 26:18-21).

Vv. 28-30: *The seven ewe-lambs.* Abraham's explanation of his purpose in presenting the seven-ewe lambs to the king "by themselves"—an allusion to the special end which they were intended to serve—and the king's acceptance of them, signified Abimelech's renunciation of all claim to the well in question. The gift or exchange of presents frequently accompanied the making of a covenant (cf. 1 Ki. 15:19, Isa. 30:6, Hos. 12:1-2), the exchange in this case, however, was not an integral part of the covenant. The covenant itself (*berith*) was then confirmed by the mutual oath-taking: hence the name *Beer-sheba*, meaning the "Well of the Oath," after the essential element of the covenant. "The first part of the compound means 'well'; but the second part could be either 'seven' or 'oath.' Hence an original and entirely appropriate 'Well

of Seven,' that is, Seven-Wells, lent itself to elaboration as 'Well of the Oath,' which popular etymology would be loath to ignore. As a matter of fact, all three connotations—well, seven, and oath—figure in the present episode through the medium of popular interpretation: a dispute over a well is resolved by a treaty that is solemnized by seven ewes, which in turn symbolize a mutual oath" (ABG, 159-160). But Skinner seems to insist that the seven lambs, a present or gift, was not "an understood part of the ceremony," at least on the part of Abimelech. Why can we not let the Bible say what it means and mean what it says? that is, why is it necessary to assume that Abraham himself had nothing to do with the naming of the place, in view of the plain statement in v. 31 that he did, and that he so named it with regard to the mutual oath taken by the king and himself, the "Well of the Oath"? (*Why does the ultra-academic mentality insist on reading discrepancies into Scripture passages when there is no necessity for such nit-picking? Can it be true that the ultra-educated mind has become so intellectually bogged down with minutiae that it has lost the power to think, or at least to "think straight"?*) It seems that the whole question involved here is presented with complete clarity: that the first group of animals, v. 27, symbolized the basic pact (cf. 15:9 ff.), that the second group, on the other hand, the seven ewe-lambs, was clearly labeled a gift, the acceptance of which by Abimelech was to constitute the validation of Abraham's claim to the well. (Obviously Abraham may have caused other wells to be dug *after* this occurrence, cf. 26:18). The king and his captain then returned "into the land of the Philistines," that is, "they simply returned from Beersheba where this took place, to Gerar which was the capital" (SC, 107). As Beersheba lay in the same general area it could also be described as being in the land of the Philistines. "Beersheba did not belong to Gerar, in the stricter sense; but the Philistines extended their wander-

ings so far, and claimed the district as their own, as is evident from the fact that Abimelech's people had taken the well from Abraham. On the other hand, Abraham with his numerous flocks would not confine himself to the Wady *es Seba*, but must have sought for pasturage in the whole surrounding country; and as Abimelech had given him full permission to dwell in the land (20:15), he would still, as heretofore, frequently come as far as Gerar, so that his dwelling at Beersheba (22:19) might be correctly described as sojourning (nomadizing) in the land of the Philistines" (BCOTP, 247). There are several wells in this vicinity, in our day, we are told, the largest of which is a little over 12 feet in diameter; "the digging of this well involved cutting through 16 feet of solid rock. . . . Conder found a date indicating that repairs had been carried out as late as the 12th century A.D. At the time of his visit in 1874, it was 38 feet to the surface of the water" (NBD, 138).

V. 33—*The tamarisk tree*, planted by Abraham in Beersheba, common in Egypt and in Petraea, has been found growing in recent years near the ancient Beersheba. This is a species of stunted bush or gnarled tree of desert areas. "The planting of this long-lived tree, with its hard wood, and its long, narrow, thickly clustered, evergreen leaves, was to be a type of the ever-enduring grace of the faithful covenant God." But there is no mention whatever of a cult associated with this place, or of sacrifice *in memoriam* of the treaty made there. "The tamarisk with its firm and durable wood was a fitting emblem of the Everlasting God. Why some make a fetish of this tree, or others say that the tree was only 'believed to have been planted by Abraham,' is beyond our power to explain" (EG, 614). Sacred trees, sacred wells, sacred stones, etc., each sacred by virtue of the event which it memorialized, are common throughout the Scriptures (cf. Josh. 4:7; Gen. 35:8, 13:18; Exo. 3:1-5; cf. Exo. 34:13; Deut.

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16:21-22; cf. Deut. 33:16; cf. also Gen. 2:16-17, 3:6; Rev. 22:2). "*Jehovah, the Everlasting God.*" The peculiar term here, *El Olam*, apparently is to justify the translation, *the Eternal*. (The critics assume that there was a Cult of Beersheba, among the *sacra* of which "there must have been a sacred tamarisk believed to have been placed there by Abraham." Hence the name of Deity here is explained "presumably" as being "the pre-Israelite name of the local *numen* ["presiding spirit"] here identified with Yahwe." But this whole hypothesis is based on the *apriori* determination to "explain" everything recorded in the Old Testament solely in the light of pagan mythologies and cults: hence the many such instances in Genesis. The fact seems to be that no concrete evidence exists to justify the notion that in this particular account in Genesis a *grove* was involved rather than a single tamarisk tree. Similarly, there is no real warrant, outside human speculation, for trying to tie in the name of Jehovah here with any localized *numen*. I find Lange's explanation the simplest and most convincing (CDHCG, 460): "Abraham had earlier (Gen. 14:22) designated Jehovah as El Elyon, then recognized him (17:1) as El Shaddai. It follows from this that Jehovah had revealed himself to him under various aspects, whose definitions form a parallel to the universal name Elohim. The God of the highest majesty who gave him victory over the kings of the East, the God of miraculous power who bestowed upon him his son Isaac, now revealed himself in his divine covenant-truth, over against the temporary covenant with Abimelech, as the eternal God. And the tamarisk might well signify this also, that the hope of his seed for Canaan should remain green until the most distant future, uninjured by his temporary covenant with Abimelech, which he will hold sacred." (For the tamarisk, cf. also 1 Sam. 22:6, 31:13; for *The Everlasting God*, cf. Exo. 15:18, Psa. 90:2, Jer. 10:10, Deut. 32:40, Dan. 6:26, Rom. 1:20, Eph. 3:9, 2 Pet. 3:8; Rev.

1:8, 4:9, 22:13, etc.) Speiser (ABG, 159): "This need not, however, refer to the local deity of Beer-sheba, but may be a local epithet of a deity called upon to support a formal treaty that is expected to be valid for all time."

V. 34—More and more Abraham, and later his son Isaac, saw that this southern extremity of the land (Palestine) was best suited to his *sojourning*. (This word *sojourning* is indeed the key to Abraham's life throughout: cf. Heb. 11:8-10). *Many days*—according to Rashi's calculations: "More than in Hebron: in Hebron he dwelt twenty-five years but here twenty-six years" (SC, 108). (Cf. Gen. 22:19, 26:23-33, 28:10, 46:1).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar

Gal. 4:21-31, cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-18, Rev. 21:2. An allegory is defined as a *sustained* comparison, as a "prolonged metaphor, in which typically a series of actions are symbolic of other actions" (Webster). In the allegory of Sarah and Hagar the Apostle certainly points up the principle of interpretation on which we have insisted, in this work on Genesis, from the very beginning, namely, that *no Scripture passage or incident can be clearly understood, or interpreted, except in the light of the teaching of the Bible as a whole*. Failure to recognize this norm is responsible for ninety per cent, I should say, of the doctrinal confusion that abounds in the nominal Christian world.

In our text the Apostle teaches us that in Hagar and Sarah we have an allegory of the Old and the New Covenants respectively (in stereotyped form, the two Testaments which make up the entire Bible). On the basis of this allegorical interpretation, we find the following comparisons (in this case, points of difference):

HAGAR	SARAH
("fugitive," "flight")	("princess")
—the bondswoman, slave, Gen. 21:10, 12; Gal. 4:30.	—the freewoman, the wife, Gen. 17:15-19, Gal. 4:31.
—Ishmael, "God hears," the child of bondage, Gen. 16:15, Gal. 4:21-31.	—Isaac, "laughter," the child of Divine promise, Gen. 17:19, 18:14, 21:2; Gal. 4:23.
—the Old Covenant, which engendered unto bondage, Gal. 4:24.	—the New Covenant, which engenders unto freedom, Gal. 4:26, John 8:31-32, Rom. 8:1-11, Jas. 1:25.

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- made with the fleshly seed of Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3, 17:7; Deut. 5:1-5, Jer. 31:31-34.
- mediated by Moses, Deut. 5:4-5; John 1:17, 7:19; Gal. 3:18-20.
- included Jews (and proselytes) only, Gen. 17:9-14.
- that of natural or fleshly birth (generation), Gen. 17:13.
- that of fleshly circumcision, as the sign and seal thereof, hence infants and heathen servants, who had to be taught to know the Lord after their induction into the Covenant by circumcision, Gen. 17:9-14; John 3:6, 7:22; Acts 7:8; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-12.
- that of an earthly (the Levitical) priesthood, Exo. 28:1, Heb. 5:4, 7:1-9.
- that of an earthly (the Aaronic) high priesthood, Lev. 8:1-9.
- that of Law, John 1:17, "the bond written in ordinances," Col. 2:14, Rom. 2:12-16, Luke 24:44, etc.
- that of Law written on tables of stone, Exo. 32:15, Deut. 10:4, Heb. 9:4, 2 Cor. 3:3.
- made with the spiritual seed of Abraham, those redeemed by Christ Jesus, Gal. 3:23-29, 1 Cor. 12:13, 1 Pet. 2:1-5.
- mediated by Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1-6, 9:15, 12:24.
- includes all obedient believers in Christ, both Gentiles and Jews, Eph. 2:11-22, 3:6-7; Rom. 11:28-32; Gal. 3:23-29.
- that of spiritual birth (regeneration), John 3:1-7; Rom. 5:5, 8:1-11; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Gal. 5:22-25, 2 Cor. 3:1-3, Tit. 3:5.
- that of spiritual circumcision as the sign and seal thereof, Rom. 2:29, Eph. 2:11, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:9-12. Cf. Acts. 2:38, John 3:5; Rom. 5:5, 6:1-9; Gal. 3:27, 2 Cor. 1:22, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19. (See under Part 30, "Circumcision of the Heart.")
- that of the priesthood of all obedient believers, 2 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, Rom. 12:1.
- that of the royal High Priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, *i.e.*, the King-Priest "without beginning of days or end of life," Psa. 110:4; Heb., chs. 7, 8, 9, 10.
- that of Grace (unmerited favor), John 1:27, Rom. 3:24, 7:4, 8:3, 10:4; Eph. 2:8, Tit. 3:7, Acts 20:24, etc.
- that of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8:2, 1 Cor. 15:45, John 6:63, 68; written on "tablets of human hearts," 2 Cor. 3:3 (R.S.V.); hence, by "the hearing of faith," Gal 3:2. (Cf. also Jer. 31:33, Ezek. 11:19).

- that of the “letter,” *i.e.*, of the Mosaic Law regarded as “a yoke of externalism, a system that possessed no life of its own, and inspired no life in others.” Rom. 3:19-20.
- that of the “spirit,” 2 Cor. 3:3, Rom. 3:21-27; John 6:63; Rom. 8:1-11; that which makes for freedom in Christ Jesus, John 8:31-32, Jas. 1:25; freedom both from the *guilt* of sin (Ezek. 18:19-20; and from the *consequences* of sin, Exo. 20:5-6; and from passion, pride, superstition, prejudice, etc., as well, John 6:63.
- that of the ministration of death, 2 Cor. 3:7; that is, the Law passes the death sentence on all who disobey it, 1 Cor. 15:56, Rom. 5:12.
- that of the ministration of the spirit, Rom. 7:6, 8:6; John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- that of the ministration of condemnation, 2 Cor. 3:9; the system of “thou-shalt nots,” disobedience to which was sin, and usually incurred the death penalty, *e.g.*, Num. 15:32-36; John 8:5.
- that of the ministration of righteousness, *i.e.*, justification, Rom. 5:1-11. Cf. also Rom. 2:27-29, 7:6, 8:11; Gal. 5:8, 1 Cor. 15:45. John 8:5—the Law would stone the adulteress; the Gospel said to her, “Go, and sin no more.”
- that of a system of *shadows* or *types*, Heb., chs. 9, 10; cf. Rom. 5:14, 1 Pet. 3:19-21.
- that of the antitypes, the *realities* of “heavenly things,” Heb. 8:5, also ch. 10.
- that system under which the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit were bestowed only on individuals to qualify them for tasks which God commissioned them to perform, Gen. 20:7, Neh. 9:9-30, Isa. 63:10-15; Num. 11:17, 25, 26-30; Num. 27:18-23; Exo. 35:30-35; Judg. 4:4, 3:10, 11:29; Judg. 14:6, 14, 19; 1 Sam. 11:6, 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:1-2; 1 Chron. 28:11-12; cf. Neh. 9:20, 2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Pet. 1:10-12; hence, *imperfect* in the sense that it lacked the promises connected with the Gospel, Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:7-12, 9:11-15, 10:1-18.
- that system under which all obedient believers—the church—share the indwelling of the Spirit, John 7:37-39, Acts 2:38, Rom. 5:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 14:17, 1 Pet. 1:2; hence, said to be “enacted upon better promises,” *viz.*, remission of sins, the indwelling of the Spirit, and eternal life, Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:5, 8:9-11, 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30, 5:18; Matt. 25:46, Rom. 6:23, John 3:16.

Farrar (PC, Second Corinthians, 58): “In other words, ‘not of the Law, but of the Gospel’; not of that which is dead, but of that which is living; not of that which is deathful, but of that which is



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lifegiving; not of bondage, but of freedom; not of mutilation, but of self-control; not of the outward, but of the inward; not of works, but of grace; not of menace, but of promise; not of curse, but of blessing; not of wrath, but of love; not of Moses, but of Christ. This is the theme which St. Paul develops especially in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians (see Rom. 2:29, 3:20, 7:6-11, 8:2; Gal. 3:10, 5:4, etc.)."

On Gal. 4:22-25, Mackintosh (NG, 181) writes: "'The flesh' is, in this important passage, contrasted with 'promise'; and thus we not only get the divine idea as to what the term 'flesh' implies, but also as to Abraham's effort to obtain the seed by means of Hagar, instead of resting in God's 'promise.' The two covenants are allegorized by Hagar and Sarah, and are diametrically opposite, the one to the other. The one gendering to bondage, inasmuch as it raised the question as to man's competency 'to do' and 'not to do,' and made life entirely dependant upon that competency. 'The man that doeth these things shall live in them.' This was the Hagar-covenant. But the Sarah-covenant reveals God as the God of promise, which promise is entirely independent of man, and founded upon God's willingness and ability to fulfill it. When God makes a promise, there is no 'if' attached thereto. He makes it unconditionally, and is resolved to fulfill it; and faith rests in Him, in perfect liberty of heart. It needs no effort of nature to reach the accomplishment of a divine promise. Here was precisely where Abraham and Sarah failed. They made an effort of nature to reach a certain end, which end was absolutely secured by a promise of God. *This is the grand mistake of unbelief.* By its restless activity, it raises hazy mist around the soul, which hinders the beams of the divine glory from reaching it. 'He could do there no mighty works, because of their unbelief.' One great characteristic virtue of faith is, that it ever leaves the platform clear for God to show Himself; and truly, when He shows Himself, man must take the place of a happy worshiper." Again: "Hence, therefore, a man who tells me, You must be so and so, in order to be saved, robs the cross of all its glory, and robs me of all my peace. If salvation depends upon *our* being or doing aught, we shall inevitably be lost. Thank God, it does not; for the great fundamental principles of the gospel is that God is ALL: man is NOTHING. It is not a mixture of God and man—it is all of God. The peace of the Gospel does not repose in part on Christ's work and in part on man's work; it reposes *wholly* on Christ's work, because that work is perfect—perfect forever; and it renders all who put their trust in it as perfect as itself" (p. 183). (Cf. John 1:29).

"The law addresses man, tests him, proves him a wreck, puts him under a curse. It not only puts him there, but keeps him there as long as he is occupied with it. The Gospel, on the other hand, recognizes that man is lost, in need of a Savior. So the Gospel reveals God as He is—the Savior of the lost, the Pardoner of the guilty, the Quickener of the dead. It exhibits Him as extending His ineffable grace in offers of redemption. There is nothing in man—for who could expect anything out of a bankrupt?—that might enable him to achieve redemption no matter how strenuously he might tug at his

own bootstraps. There is no provision in any law for self-redemption: redemption can occur only when the true owner buys back his own property. God is the owner of all things—the earth and the fulness thereof, all things non-living and living, including man. Therefore, since man has chosen to mortgage himself in sin, he simply cannot be redeemed unless and until his original owner pays the ransom price and so buys him back: that ransom price was paid on Calvary. God must independently exhibit His own grace to the fallen creatures (Rom. 3:23, Col. 1:21-22; Rom. 6:6, 7:14; Eph. 2:1, Gal. 4:3, Heb. 2:17, Matt. 20:28, 1 Tim. 2:5-6, etc.). And the Galatians, like Abraham of old, were going away from God, and depending upon the flesh. They were returning to bondage, and to go back unto the Law was to put themselves back under the curse of sin, cf. Gal. 3:1-14.

"While the birth of Isaac filled Sarah's heart with laughter, it also brought out the true character of the bondwoman's son. So the inauguration of the New Covenant brought out by way of contrast the true character of the Old. The Old was the tutor leading us unto Christ: it served the ideals of its day. But the New is of Christ, and therefore we who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1) are no longer under the Old. The birth of Isaac proved to be to Abraham's household what the implantation of a new heart is to the soul of the sinner. The son of the bondwoman could never be anything but that. He might become a great archer; he might dwell in the wilderness; he might become the ancestor of twelve princes—but he was still the son of a bondwoman. On the other hand, no matter how despised, how weak, how powerless Isaac might be, he was still the son of the freewoman. Their very natures were different (cf. John 3:6, Rom. 8:1-11).

The bondwoman represents the Covenant of Law, and her son represents the works of the Law. This is very plain. The former genders only to bondage; she can never bring forth a free man, because *she herself* is a bondwoman. The Law of Moses never gave liberty, as long as the individual was alive and it ruled him. I can never be truly free if I am under the dominion of the Law. I can be free only under *grace*, appropriated by *faith* (Acts 15:11, Eph. 2:8, Tit. 2:11, Rom. 3:26). Wherefore, when the New Covenant was ratified, it was necessary that the Old be cast out (abrogated). (Cf. Col. 2:13-15, Heb. 8:13, Gal. 3:23-25). Thus, in the casting out of the bondwoman, Hagar, the allegory of Sarah and Hagar is complete." (See again art., "The Two Covenants," Part Thirty, *supra*. Read also Augustine's great work, *The City of God*; cf. Gal. 4:26, Rev. 21:1-4.)

### "Infant Baptism"

(Review "Circumcision of the Heart," Part Thirty, *supra*. The following is added verbatim from the dialectic of the little book, *On the Rock* (pp. 43, 44), by D. R. Dungan, pioneer preacher of the Restoration Movement. It should be considered as complementary, and conclusive (I should say) to any study of the Covenants.)

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I will give you a few, as I think, valid reasons for not baptizing infants:

1. It is without Scriptural authority. Neither Christ nor any one of the apostles ever commanded it.

2. It supplants believers' baptism, which the Lord did command.

3. It has a tendency to subvert true conversion, by bringing persons into the church in infancy, causing them to trust to that for salvation.

4. It deprives one of the pleasure of obedience.

5. It involves uncertainty as to having been baptized.

6. It teaches baptismal regeneration. Indeed, baptismal regeneration gave rise to infant baptism.

7. It changes the order of Christ's commission to His apostles; their first duty according to that, was to teach, or preach the gospel; but, according to this doctrine, their first duty was to baptize.

8. To be baptized is an act of obedience, but an infant can not obey an authority it knows nothing about.

9. Peter says that baptism is the answer of a good conscience, but the infant can have no conscience in the matter.

10. Baptism is coupled with repentance and faith, but infants are incapable of either.

11. Baptism was coupled with calling on the name of the Lord by those who were baptized, but infants can not do that.

12. Those baptized by divine authority gave satisfactory evidence of faith, by a confession, before they were baptized, but infants can not.

13. Infant baptism is generally employed to bring them into the church, a place in which they are in no way qualified to be. Church members in the days of the apostles, first, gave heed to the apostles' teaching; attended to the fellowship; third, partook of the Lord's Supper; fourth, engaged in prayer; fifth, did not dare to wilfully

neglect the assembly of the saints; sixth, exhorted one another; seventh, engaged in the public charities that were imposed upon them at the time; eighth, exhibited the fruits of the Spirit. Now infants can do none of these things, and hence can not be members of the church.

14. It set at naught all change of heart as necessarily preceding baptism.

(To this we add: infant "christening," commonly called "infant baptism," is really infant *aspersion* (sprinkling), or infant *affusion* (pouring). Real infant baptism is infant *immersion*, the practice of Greek Orthodoxy from the first.)

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-THREE

1. Locate the Negeb, Gerar, "the way of Shur." What mining operations were carried on in this area in patriarchal times?
2. To what area did Abraham migrate after the destruction of the Cities of the Plain? What probably prompted this move?
3. What evidence do we have that the Philistines were in this area even before patriarchal times?
4. From what Mediterranean areas did the Philistines come?
5. Explain "Caphtor" and "Caphtorian."
6. What did the word "Abimelech" signify?
7. What probably was Abimelech's motive for taking Sarah into his harem?
8. What affliction did God put on the house of Abimelech because of this action?
9. What does this account indicate about Abimelech's general moral standards?
10. Name the outstanding dream experiences related in the Bible.

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

11. List some of the more important Biblically-related vision-experiences.
12. How did these differ from theophanies?
13. What were the functions of a prophet? In what sense was Abraham a prophet?
14. What did God order Abimelech to do by way of restitution for the wrong he had committed?
15. How did Abraham account for his own action with respect to Abimelech and Sarah?
16. What were the details of Abimelech's response (restitution)?
17. What was the result of Abraham's intercession for Abimelech?
18. How does Abimelech compare with Pharaoh in the similar incident recorded in ch. 12?
19. What seems to have been God's over-all design in His dealing with the persons involved?
20. In what three chapters of Genesis do we find this theme of a sister-wife relationship recorded, and who were the persons involved in each case?
21. What added explanation did Abraham make to Abimelech that he had not made to Pharaoh? How account for this added disclosure?
22. On what grounds do we reach the conclusion that these three accounts involving sister-wife relationships were accounts of three different episodes?
23. List the circumstantial differences in the two narratives.
24. Is it reasonable to assume *a priori* that similar events are necessarily identical?
25. How does Dr. Speiser relate Hurrian customary law to these sister-wife episodes?
26. What are some of the objections to this view?
27. In what sense was Isaac's conception and birth a special demonstration of Divine power?

28. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? How long had he waited for the fulfillment of the Divine promise?
29. What did the name "Isaac" mean? What was the basis for giving the boy this name?
30. What aroused Sarah's resentment against Hagar and her son? What did she demand of Abraham?
31. How does Skinner's explanation of Sarah's attitude differ from that of Leupold *et al*?
32. How does Gal. 4:29 give us the determination of this problem?
33. What was Abraham's personal reaction to Sarah's demand that Hagar and her son be cast out?
34. What reassurance did God give Abraham about the future of Ishmael and his progeny?
35. What is the simplest and obvious meaning of v. 14?
36. How does Haley explain verses 14-18?
37. How does Genesis describe Hagar's and Ishmael's condition in the "wilderness of Beersheba"?
38. How did Divine succor come to Hagar and her son? What did God promise with regard to Ishmael's future? What circumstances of his future are disclosed here?
39. Locate geographically the Wilderness of Beersheba, the Wilderness of Paran, and the Wilderness of Zin.
40. What role does Beersheba play in the story of the patriarchal age?
41. How long did Abraham continue to sojourn in the region of Beersheba?
42. What kind of covenant did Abimelech now seek with Abraham? What apparently prompted him to propose this covenant?
43. What seems to have been the cause of the strained relationship between the patriarch and the king?
44. What was the importance of wells in these countries?

# SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

45. In what way was the covenant confirmed in this instance?
46. What was the purpose of Abraham's gift of the seven ewe-lambs?
47. Give Dr. Speiser's explanation of the etymology of the name "Beersheba."
48. What claim apparently was validated by Abimelech's acceptance of the seven ewe-lambs?
49. In what sense is Beersheba said to have been "in the land of the Philistines"?
50. Explain the significance of Abraham's planting of the tamarisk tree in Beersheba. Is there any significant evidence that this was in a grove or that the place was the locus of a pagan cult?
51. What general forms do *memorials* take in Scripture? That is, what are the different kinds?
52. Explain the significance of the name *El Olam*.
53. Restate Lange's exposition of the significance of this name.
54. How many years did Abraham spend in this region, in comparison with the length of his sojourn near Hebron?
55. Why is the word "sojourn" so significant in explaining Abraham's movements?
56. Explain what is meant by the Allegory of Sarah and Hagar. List the essential features of this allegory.
57. Review the section of Part Thirty which has to do with "circumcision of the heart," showing precisely what Scripture teaches spiritual circumcision to be.
58. What reasons are given by Dungan for not practising what is called "infant baptism"? How is "infant baptism" related to "spiritual circumcsision"?

## PART THIRTY-FOUR

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT

Genesis 22:1-24

#### *The Sacrifice of Isaac (1-24)*

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 3 And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? 8 And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 12 And



# CONFIRMATION OF COVENANT 22:1-24

he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided. 15 And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, 17 that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. 19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children unto thy brother Nabor: 21 Uz his first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 and Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. 23 And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight did Milcah bear to Nabor, Abraham's brother. 24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she also bare Tebah, and Gaham, and Tahash, and Maacah.

## 1. The Divine Command, vv. 1, 2

Skinner (ICCG, 327-328): "The only incident in Abraham's life expressly characterized as a 'trial' of his faith is the one here narrated, where the patriarch proves his readiness to offer up his only son as a sacrifice at the

command of God. The story, which is the literary masterpiece of the Elohist collection, is told with exquisite simplicity; every sentence vibrates with restrained emotion, which shows how fully the author realizes the tragic horror of the situation." "For many years had Abraham waited for the promised seed, in which the divine promise was to be fulfilled. At length the Lord had given him the desired heir of his body by his wife Sarah, and directed him to send away the son of the maid. And now that this son had grown into a young man, the word of God had come to Abraham to offer up this very son, who had been given to him as the heir of the promise, for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which should be shown him. The word did not come from his own heart—was not a thought suggested by the sight of the human sacrifices of the Canaanites, that he would offer a similar sacrifice to his God; nor did it originate with the tempter to evil. The word came from *Ha-Elohim*, the personal, true God, who tried him, *i.e.*, demanded the sacrifice of the only, beloved son, as a proof and attestation of his faith. The issue shows, that God did not desire the sacrifice of Isaac by slaying and burning him upon the altar, but his complete surrender, and a willingness to offer him up to God even by death. Nevertheless the divine command was given in such a form, that Abraham could not understand it in any other way than as requiring an outward burnt-offering, because there was no other way in which Abraham could accomplish the complete surrender of Isaac, than by an actual preparation for really offering the desired sacrifice. This constituted the trial, which necessarily produced a severe internal conflict in his mind. . . . But Abraham brought his reason into captivity to the obedience of Faith" (BCOTP, 248).

V. I. Speiser puts it: "God put Abraham to the test" (ABG, 161). God tempts no man by enticing him to sin (Jas. 1:13). "Nor does the word here signify any such

## CONFIRMATION OF COVENANT 22:1-24

thing, but to *try exquisitely*; nor doth God try men in order to promote or to confirm his own knowledge of them, but to manifest what they are, to themselves and to the world, that his rewarding or punishing them may appear the more wise and equal, or his blessing them the more gracious (Deut. 3:2, 13:3; Judg. 2:22; 2 Chron. 32:31; Psa. 139:23, 24; 1 Cor. 10:13; Exo. 15:25, 16:4; Jas. 1:12; 1 Sam. 3:4, 6). By this command God tried the faith of Abraham with respect to his believing that in Isaac his *seed should be called*; and that through the death of the Messiah he and other believers should obtain everlasting salvation; and tried his obedience in the most tender point that could be conceived—his deliberate slaying of his own darling, his only son by his wife, his only son now left in his own house, ch. 21:1, 12, 14" (SIBG, 247-248). "'God put Abraham to the test'—the effect is heightened by the definite article with Elohim. The idea is thus conveyed that this was no ordinary procedure, but that God had a particularly important objective in mind" (ABG, 162).

Rashi notes how God bore down on Abraham's heart more poignantly with each successive explanatory phrase (SC, 108): "*Thy son*. 'But I have two sons,' Abraham said. '*Thine only one*,' was the reply. 'But each is the *only one* of his mother!' '*Whom thou lovest*,' he was told. 'But I love both!' and the answer came, '*Even Isaac*.' Why did not God name Isaac at once? Lest Abraham's mind should reel under the sudden shock. Further, to make His command more precious to him. And finally, that he might receive a reward for every word spoken."

The ARV gives the most satisfactory rendering: "God did *prove* Abraham." That is to say, God proved Abraham (his faith, his righteousness) *to himself*, to *his posterity*, and to *all humanity*, as the Father of the Faithful. Surely God knows whether a man's faith will be strong enough to enable him to emerge triumphantly from such an ordeal (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). Cf. Jas. 1:12-15: the real

temptation, that of Satan, occurs when one is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed, even as Eve—at Satan's suggestion—was enticed by her lust for illicit knowledge (Gen. 3:6). James gives us here the true pedigree of sin: Satan, lust, sin, death.

Note that God *said* to Abraham, etc., v. 1, possibly in a dream-vision, but surely in an audible voice which previous experience had taught him to recognize. Note the patriarch's simple response, "Here am I," a response that combined both humility and readiness: so do the righteous always respond to God's calls (cf. Acts 22:10, Isa. 6:8).

"*Into the land of Moriah,*" i.e., "*Jerusalem.*" The Rabbis explained that it was so named because from thence 'teaching' (*horaah*) went forth to the world. It was the land of the Amorite . . . the land where myrrh grew abundantly (cf. Song of S. 4:6); it was the site of the Temple," cf. 2 Chron. 3:1 (S.C., 109). "2 Chron. 3:1 identifies Moriah with the hill on which the Jerusalem temple was later built. Subsequent tradition accepted the identification" (JB, 39). As in all such cases involving the support of tradition only, modern criticism is inclined to be skeptical about this identification. It has been objected that the region of Beersheba (from which Abraham and Isaac set out) is not sufficiently distant from Jerusalem to have required a journey of three days to get there, and that a topographical feature of the city of Jerusalem is that the Temple hill is not visible until the traveler is quite close. "However, the distance from S. Philistia to Jerusalem is about 50 miles, which might well have required three days to traverse, and in Genesis the place in question is not a 'mount Moriah' but one of the several mountains in a land of that name, and the hills on which Jerusalem stands are visible at a distance. There is no need to doubt therefore that Abraham's sacrifice took place in the site of the later Jerusalem, if not on the Temple hill"

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(NBD, 842). "*Moriah* signifies 'the vision' or 'manifestation of Jehovah.' The name is here given to 'the land' on one of whose mountains the sacrifice was to be offered up; it is also given to the mountain on which the temple was built. The common belief is that these two places were identical, and we see no reason to doubt or question it. Mount Moriah is an oblong-shaped hill, or rather point of a ridge, having the deep glen of the Tyropoeon on the west, and the Kidron on the east. The glens unite at the foot of the hill on the south. The elevation of the summit above the bottom of the glens is about 350 feet. Moriah is now crowned by the Great Mosque, and is one of the most venerated sanctuaries of the Mohammedans" (SIBG, 248).

2. *The Journey*, vv. 1-8. "The accumulation of brief, sententious clauses here admirably represents the calm deliberation and unflinching heroism with which the patriarch proceeded to execute the Divine command" (PCG, 283). *Note the preparations*: these were begun early in the morning (cf. 19:27, 20:8, 21:14). The patriarch saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him—the ass for the wood, the young men for the ass; *and Isaac his son* (probably explaining to him as yet only his intention to offer sacrifice on a distant mountain). Nothing is indicated here but sublime innocence on Isaac's part and unflinching resoluteness and obedience on the part of Abraham. (Did Abraham say anything to Sarah about this journey, especially the purpose of it? We doubt it. From previous attitudes on her part we can hardly believe that she would have accepted this apparently tragic commission with the same unflinching obedience of faith that characterized Abraham's response). "While the outward preparations are graphically described, no word is spared for the conflict in Abraham's breast—a striking illustration of the reticence of the legends with regard to mental states" (Skinner, ICCG, 329). How old was Isaac at this time?

Josephus (*Antiq.*, I, 13, 2) follows the tradition which puts his age at twenty-five; other commentators would have him to be some eighteen years old at the time. (He was thirteen, it will be recalled, when he was circumcised, *Gen.* 17:25). At any rate he was intelligent enough to be a willing party to the sacrifice of his life at God's command (once the purpose of the journey was revealed to him), and strong enough to carry up the "mountain" the split wood for the offering.

Without taking counsel with anyone, the solemn procession set out from the Beersheba area—the patriarch, with his son, his two servants, and the ass that bore the wood—and on the third day they arrived within sight of the place of sacrifice. (Glueck has called attention to the fact that it would have been odd for Abraham to have carried wood from Beersheba to the wooded country around Jerusalem where he could easily have found all the wood that he needed. He suggests that the *land of Moriah* of this text might have been "in the treeless ranges of Sinai down near Kadesh." However, the three days' journey certainly is in accord with the distance of some fifty miles from Beersheba to the region around Jerusalem. At any rate, Abraham on the third day "saw the place afar off." It is evident from this statement that by this time the place had been specifically indicated by divine authority (cf. v. 2). We can hardly imagine the intensity of the pang that shot through the patriarch's heart ordering the two servants to "abide" where they were with the ass (it seems quite probable that what was about to take place would have been repugnant to them: at any rate they could hardly have thought of it as "worship"), Abraham said, "I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship, and come again to you" (v. 5). Note the "we" in this promise: "Abraham firmly believed that God would restore his son to life from the ashes into which he expected him to be burned, and cause him to come back with him, Heb.

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11:19" (SIBG, 248). So "they went both of them together" up the mountain, Isaac carrying the heavier load, the wood for the offering. The aged Abraham could hardly have carried this load, but "with resoluteness of faith he bears the two means of destruction: a container, like a censer, filled with live coals, and the fatal knife" (EG, 625). (It is curious that we do not find any allusion in the Old Testament to the method of producing fire). Vv. 7, 8: "The narrative gives free play to our imagination as it pictures father and son proceeding step by step up the hill. Isaac cannot but sense that some unwonted burden depresses his father past anything that the son had ever observed in the father before. This attitude on the father's part causes some restraint between the two, and a strange preplexity falls upon Isaac" (EG, 625). "The pathos of this dialogue is inimitable: the artless curiosity of the child, the irrepressible affection of the father, and the stern ambiguity of his reply, can hardly be read without tears" (ICCG, 330). Undoubtedly Abraham now made it clear to his son what was about to take place and why. "Isaac, though able to resist, yielded up himself, as typical of Christ's voluntary oblation of himself for us, Phil. 2:8, Eph. 5:2, Acts 8:32" (SIBG, 248). Cf. also Heb. 12:2—note, "for the joy that was set before him," *i.e.*, the ineffable joy of redeeming lost souls, "he endured the cross," etc. "God will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son." "The father devises an answer which is a marvelous compound of considerate love and anticipative faith. He spares Isaac undue pain and leaves the issues entirely with God, where in his own heart he left them throughout the journey. In the light of what follows, Abraham's answer is well-nigh prophetic, 'God will provide.' It marks the high point of the chapter, the one thing about God's dealings with His own that here receives emphatic statement" (EG, 62)." On v. 8: "God will provide the lamb; and if not, then you, my son, will be the

offering. And although Isaac was aware that he might be sacrificed, yet *they went both of them together, with one mind*" (SC, 110).

3. *The Sacrifice Averted.* Vv. 9-13. The preliminary ritual is now carried out: the altar is built, and the wood laid in order. Isaac is then bound and laid upon the altar, and Abraham lifts the deadly knife to kill. But the sacrifice is averted as again we meet the Angel of Jehovah, speaking from heaven, to stay the patriarch's hand. V. 12—"Now I know," etc. ("Now I can give a reason to all intelligent beings for my love for thee; now I have proved that thou art a Godfearing man," etc. "Now I can record in Scripture for all generations to know that you are truly my Friend.") V. 13—"The substitution of the ram "caught in the thicket" for the human victim evidently takes place without express command, the patriarch recognizing by its mysterious presence at the moment of crisis that it was 'provided.' "After lying under a sentence of death three days, Isaac was released by the orders of Heaven, as a figure of Christ's resurrection on the third day, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Matt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Luke 13:32)" (SIBG, 248). "This ram was directed hither by divine providence, as a figure of Christ appointed of God, and engaged to make atonement for our sins, 1 Pet. 1:19, Job 33:24" (*ibid.*) "In the extremities of distress God interposes as a helper and deliverer, Deut. 32:36, Mic. 4:10, Matt. 15:32. And on Mount Moriah in the temple God was long manifested in the symbols of his presence, 2 Chron. 3:1, Psa. 76:2; and there Jesus often appeared while in the flesh, Hag. 2:7; John, chs. 2, 5, 7, 10" (*ibid.*).

V. 11—"Here am I. Abraham heard God call him; he was quick to respond. Had he not been listening he *could* not have responded; had he been disobedient he would not have answered yes" (HSB, 36). V. 13—"The ram caught in the thicket was a revelatory event of God to Abraham. When Abraham prepared to offer his only



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son Isaac in obedience to God's command, his dilemma was this: how could he reconcile the command of God to slay his son with God's previous promise that through this son should come a great posterity? He did not solve the problem by deciding to disobey God's command to offer up Isaac. Rather by faith he concluded that God Himself would raise Isaac from the dead *after* he had been offered. Spiritually there is a deeper lesson. God, like Abraham, did not spare His own Son (Rom. 8:32). And, as Abraham received back Isaac as though he had been raised from the dead, so Christ has been raised by the Father from the dead" (*ibid.*)

4. V. 14. *Jehovah-jireh*, i.e., *Jehovah will see*, or *provide*. "The plain meaning is: 'the Lord will see' and choose this place for the dwelling of the Divine Presence, i.e., the Temple" (Rashi, SC, 111). (Is there contradiction between the Name used here and the statement in Exo. 6:3, where God is represented as telling Moses that He was known to the patriarchs as *El Shaddai*, but by His Name Yahwe He was not known to them?) "Certainly this is not to be taken to mean that the patriarchs were altogether ignorant of the name Jehovah. It was in His attribute as *El Shaddai* that God had revealed His nature to the patriarchs; but now [at the beginning of the Mosaic ministry] He was about to reveal Himself to Israel as Jehovah, as the absolute Being working with unbounded freedom in the performance of His promises. For not only had He established His covenants with the fathers, but He had also heard the groaning of the children of Israel. . . . On the ground of the erection of His covenant on the one hand, and, what was irreconcilable with that covenant, the bondage of Israel on the other, Jehovah was now about to redeem Israel from its sufferings and make it His own nation" (KD, BCOTP, 468). In a word, under the mediatorship of Moses He would reveal Himself fully as the Covenant-God, Yahwe.

Vv. 15-19. "When God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee," etc. Note that the promise—the Abrahamic promise—is now confirmed (by the Angel of Jehovah calling unto Abraham a second time out of heaven) by two immutable things, *his word and oath*, in which it is impossible for God to lie, etc. The promises here solemnly confirmed by oath are almost wholly related to Abraham's Hebrew and spiritual seed. *To possess the gates of their enemies* is to obtain their country, or to have dominion over them, and rule among them: Gen. 21:12, 24:60; Deut. 21:19, 22:24. The Jews had temporal dominion over their enemies in the time of Joshua, David, etc., cf. Joshua, chs. 6-19; 2 Sam., chs. 8, 10. And Christ and His people have a spiritual dominion over them, Psa. 2:8-9, 22:27-30; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 8:37, 1 Cor. 15:25-28, Col. 2:15. What a quiet, poignantly meaningful ending, to an experience unparalleled in the history of man. How striking the final word from heaven: "because thou hast obeyed my voice." Now, Abraham, his son, his two servants, and the beast of burden return to Beersheba, "and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba."

5. *The Progeny of Nahor*, vv. 20-24, a list of the Aramaean tribes. Note the division here between legitimate (vv. 23-24) and illegitimate (v. 24) sons. Concubines were women of a middle state, between wives and harlots; "a kind of half-wives, sharing in bed and board, but not in the government of the family, Gen. 25:1-6, 30:4, 35:22; Judg. 19:1, 1 Ki. 11:3, 1 Chron. 1:32. They served under the lawful wives, if alive, Gen. 16:6-7, 32:22; and their children had no title to the inheritance, Gen. 25:5, 6 (SIBG, 248). The genealogy inserted here is designed, of course, to introduce the family from which Rebekah is to make her appearance in the sacred history.

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### 6. *The Significance of Abraham's Sacrificial Act.*

One most important truth to be derived from it is that *the essence of sacrifice is the moral disposition of the suppliant*. Moreover, as the essential property of music is harmony, and that of art is beauty, so the essential property of love is sacrifice. This particular episode, however, has significance along other lines. We might well ask whether God's design in this particular case was in any way related to the pagan practice of human sacrifice. Some authorities think so. For example, from one exegete we read that "presumably" the intent of the tale was to teach that "human sacrifice has no place in the worship of the Lord the God of Israel, cf. Mic. 6:6-8" (IBG, 645). Again (JB, 39, n.): "It is the basis of the ritual prescription for the redemption of the first-born of Israel: like all 'first-fruits' these belong to God; they are not, however, to be sacrificed but bought back, 'redeemed,' Exo. 13:11. Lying behind the story, therefore, is the condemnation of child-sacrifice, see Lev. 18:21ff., so often denounced by the prophets. In this incident Abraham's faith reaches its climax—the story's second lesson, more profound than the first. In the sacrifice of Isaac, the Fathers saw a prefiguring of the Passion of Jesus, the only-begotten Son." Cf. Speiser (ABG, 165): "Was it, then, the aim of the story to extol obedience to God as a general principle? Abraham had already proved himself on that count by heeding the call to leave Mesopotamia and make a fresh start in an unknown land (12:1 ff.) The meaning of the present narrative, therefore, would have to become something more specific. And we can hardly go too far afield if we seek the significance of Abraham's supreme trial in the very quest on which he was embarked. The involvement of Isaac tends to bear this out, since the sole heir to the spiritual heritage concerned cannot but focus attention on the future. The process that Abraham set in motion

was not to be accomplished in a single generation. It sprang from a vision that would have to be tested and validated over an incalculable span of time, a vision that could be pursued only with singlemindedness of purpose and absolute faith—an ideal that could not be perpetuated unless one was ready to die for it, or had the strength to see it snuffed out. The object of the ordeal, then, was to discover how firm was the patriarch's faith in the ultimate divine purpose. It was one thing to start out resolutely for the Promised Land, but it was a very different thing to maintain confidence in the promise when all appeared lost. The fact is that short of such unswerving faith, the biblical process could not have survived the many trials that lay ahead." May we not conclude, just at this point, that one basic aspect of the Divine intention is very simply stated in the recorded affirmation, namely, that "God did *prove* Abraham"? But there was another aspect of God's purpose that cannot be omitted without vitiating the significance of the thing commanded. This is exquisitely stated, as follows (SIBG, 248): "While I admire the faith and obedience of Abraham, and the cheerful submission of Isaac—while I place these bright examples before me—my faith directs me to more glorious objects: let me with astonishment think of Jehovah bringing His only begotten Son into the world, permitting him to be laid on the altar, and through his sacrifice forgiving our sins! Let me behold Jesus caught, seasonably caught, in the thickets of men's wilful transgressions of his own compassion, and of our transgressions resting on him, and borne in our stead! Let me listen to the new testament in his blood, in which Jehovah swears that men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." *Thus we see again that the incidents of the Old Testament record are fully clarified only in the light of New Testament fulfilment.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### The Ultimate Degree of Faith

Gen. 22:1—"And it came to pass after these things, that God did *prove* Abraham," etc.

By *ultimate* we mean the highest, that degree of faith beyond which one cannot go. This implies, of course, that there are lesser degrees of faith. Note that faith is defined scripturally as "the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction with respect to things not seen," Heb. 11:1; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

A *moral* command of God requires that a thing be done *because it is right in respect to the very nature of things*. The Decalogue is a code of moral law: to identify it as such one needs only to follow the principle of universalization, namely, that a man in contemplating a certain action, by asking himself what the effect would be if every person would do the same thing under the same circumstances, can surely see for himself whether his contemplated action is right and good or wrong and bad. Tested by this principle, it becomes obvious that idolatry (of whatever kind), false swearing (blasphemy, perjury), disrespect for parents, murder, adultery, theft, false witness (slander, libel), covetousness, etc., if universalized would destroy social order, and in all likelihood the human race itself. (Recall the venerable doctrine of the Seven Deadly Sins: pride, covetousness (avarice), lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth.) The only exception, of course, is the law of the Jewish Sabbath: this was a *positive* institution, and was superseded, with the establishment of the church, by the Christian Lord's Day, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1-2, Mark 16:9, Rev. 1:10).

A *positive* command, in Scripture, requires a thing to be done because Divine authority orders it. The chief characteristic of this kind of command is that there is no necessary logical connection between the thing commanded

and the end in view. The primary reason for such a command is simply that God has ordained it, for a specific purpose; and He is to be obeyed if the divine purpose is to be actualized. Unbelief will ask, Why, and Wherefore, when confronted with a positive command, but faith obeys without asking questions. (Of course, such a command has always the moral virtue (excellence) of obedience inherent in its fulfilment). One who obeys a positive command does so solely out of faith in God and love for God; the obedience is a manifestation of the faith and love which motivate it. Positive commands are designed to *prove* the faith of the professing believer. (Cf. Matt. 7:24-27; John 15:14, 14:15, 8:31-32, Heb. 5:9, etc.). There are three degrees, we might well say, in obedience to a positive command in attaining the supreme (ultimate) manifestation of faith: (1) To obey when one can see clearly that there is no logical connection between the thing commanded and the end in view; (2) to obey a divine command when one can see clearly that the thing commanded cannot do any good in itself; (3) to obey when one can see clearly that the thing commanded is in itself wrong, that is, in relation to the structure of the moral life. Now for some examples:

1. *Exodus 12:1-14*. Can one see any logical connection between the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb on the side-posts and lintel of every Israelite habitation in Egypt and the preservation from death of the firstborn in all those households? What was there in the blood of a lamb to save anyone? Why did it have to be the blood of a male lamb, one without blemish, a male a year old? Why did the blood have to be sprinkled on the side-posts and lintels of all the habitations of the Israelites? Could not God have discerned where His own people were dwelling without all this "unnecessary" "irrelevant" "claptrap"? What an opening here for fulminations about "non-essentials," mere forms," "mere outward acts," etc.! Had

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our modern "clergy" been present, no doubt they would have started an argument with God right on the spot. But how did it all turn out? Precisely as God had said it would: those Israelites were not so unbelieving as to refuse to take God at His word, especially in the exigencies under which they were suffering, and the next morning it was discovered that in every house where the blood was present as God had commanded there was salvation, there was life; and that in every house where the blood was not present as God had ordered, there was death, lamentation, suffering, on account of the death of the firstborn.

2. 2 *Sam.* 6:6-7: Note the statute in the Mosaic Law that forbade anyone who was not a Levite to touch the Ark of the Covenant: Num. 15:51; 3:10, 38; 4:15, 19, 20. The penalty for the violation of this law was *death*. But why should it hurt for *anyone* to touch the Ark, whether of the tribe of Reuben, Gad, Judah, Benjamin, or any of the other tribes, anymore than for a Levite to do it? Surely, the mere touching the ark in itself could not have harmed anyone! But what did happen when a non-Levite did put out his hand, as he thought, to prevent the Ark from falling off the new cart on which David was having it transported to Jerusalem? He fell dead on the spot, 2 *Sam.* 6:7. Does this mean that the Ark was a fetish, that it had magical power of some kind? Of course not. The tragic death which Uzzah suffered was for disobedience to God. Even his good intentions in doing what God had forbidden did not protect him from the infliction of the penalty! Uzzah followed his own wisdom (which should have told him that God Himself would have protected the Ark from any kind of hurt) and not the wisdom of God, as multiplied thousands have done in all ages and are doing today in greater numbers than ever before in the history of the race. What a warning this incident is against trifling with God's Will and Word!

3. *Numbers 21:4-9*. The story of the brazen serpent. One can see at a glance here, that there was no efficacy in the thing commanded, that is, *in itself*. What was there in a piece of brass to heal a human being of disease? Did it have magical power of some kind? Of course not. The efficacy was in the willingness of the people to take God at His word; when their faith became active, God kept *His* promise. It was God who did the healing, not the serpent of brass; the latter was only the means of eliciting their obedience of faith. It will be recalled that this brazen serpent became in itself an object of worship to the Israelites in a later age: they burned incense to it, we are told (2 Ki. 18:4-5). Whereupon King Hezekiah, calling it Nehushtan, "a piece of brass," ordered it broken into pieces and utterly destroyed.

4. *2 Kings 5:1-14*. What an array of details having no power in themselves to effect the healing of Naaman, of his leprosy! What possible connections between the things commanded and the end in view? Was there some special cleansing power in the water of the Jordan River? Why should Naaman have to dip himself *seven* times: Could not God have healed him without all this "fol-de-rol"? Certainly, that is, had He chosen to do so? But God could not have *proved* Naaman's willingness to take Him at His word without some sort of procedure such as He ordered. How did things turn out for the Syrian chieftain? Precisely as God said that it would: when Naaman had fully completed the required details, arising from the Jordan after the seventh dipping, "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

5. *Joshua 6:1-21*. What a war strategy this was, that Yahwe gave to Joshua to capture the city of Jericho! What an array of "mere forms," "mere outward acts," which apparently had no necessary connection with the end in view! What was there in all this marching to bring down walls that withstood battering rams and other



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engines of destruction? What special kind of power was generated by the marching of Joshua's army, with the Ark at the center of the procession, once each day for six successive days and seven times on the seventh day? What could the people inside Jericho have been thinking about these repeated military parades? Why the final blowing of trumpets and shouting by Joshua's soldiers on the seventh day? We have heard in recent years of "pious" and "praying" and "Bible-reading" generals, but we doubt very much that any of them would have had the faith to carry out the war program that Joshua executed which brought about the fall of Jericho. Joshua took God at His word. He carried out the Divine strategy to the very letter, not expecting that what he and his army were doing would bring down the walls, but fully believing that if he did his part in faith, God would do the rest. And his faith was rewarded: "the wall came tumbling down."

What an array of "non-essentials" in all these instances of positive law! Think what the response would have been if our "theologians" had been on the ground when these orders were given by the Ruler of the universe! Why would God authorize all this "nonsense"? Why all these "mere forms," "mere outward acts," "mere external performances," etc., etc. What is all this but "blind obedience" to ordinations that are "without rhyme or reason"? Oh yes, the theologians, the clergy, the "princes of the church," all would have had a field day had they been recipients of the Divine instructions in these various instances of the operation of positive divine law.

6. We now come to the ultimate of all proofs, surely the noblest manifestation of the obedience of faith that is recorded in Scripture. This occurred when God did prove Abraham by commanding him to offer up Isaac for a burnt-offering (Gen. 22:1-3). Here was a thing commanded which by the universal judgment of mankind was wrong: no nation has ever been known to have been

without a distinction between justifiable and unjustifiable killing, and the kind of killing that is always reckoned to be unjustifiable is *murder*, the taking of another man's life by one's own authority "with malice aforethought." (Of course, in this instance no "malice aforethought" was involved; nevertheless, by all human standards the act was wrong.) Moreover, it was surely wrong to deliberately kill a son, and the only son at that. And it was doubly wrong, in this instance, to kill the one who had been born "out of due season" as the Child of Promise. What an argument Abraham might have offered against obedience to this command! How could such an order proceed from the God who is infinite goodness? Was not this ordination a complete disavowal by God Himself of all the promises He had made respecting Abraham and his seed? No such unbelieving talk, however, fell from Abraham's lips. With him there was no occasion for argument: Yahwe had spoken and it was his portion simply to obey. We know the rest of the story, up to the very point of the patriarch's poisoning the deadly knife above his son, lying bound and helpless on the altar. No doubt he would have carried out the divine order fully, even to the killing itself, because, we are told, his faith was such that he "accounted God able to raise Isaac up, even from the dead, from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (Heb. 11:19). It was in this manner that God did actually *prove* Abraham and the depth of his faith, not only to himself, but to all mankind.

What is the application? In consequence of this incident, the name of Abraham has gone down in sacred history as the Father of the Faithful and the Friend of God (John 15:14, 2 Chron. 20:7, Jas. 2:23, Rom. 4:11, 16). Moreover, our salvation under the New Covenant is contingent not on our having the blood of Abraham coursing through our veins, but on having the faith of Abraham in our

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hearts (John 3:1-8, Rom. 4:13-17, Gal. 3:23-29, Jas. 2:20-26).

Unbelief will call this obedience of Abraham an act of *blind* faith. It is blind faith, of course, to obey another *man* implicitly without question. It is never blind faith to obey God, for the reason that *God never commands men to do anything simply to benefit Him. His commands are always, ultimately, for our good. Therefore, anything that God commands is made right by the fact that He commands it.*

In the process of becoming a Christian on the terms laid down by apostolic authority, the penitent believer is confronted with one basically *positive* institution. That institution is baptism, as ordained by the Great Commission. It is the only positive institution the Holy Spirit has seen fit to associate with conversion under the New Covenant. That baptism is essentially a *positive* institution (although it does carry with it the *moral* excellence of obedience to God) is evident from the following considerations. One can readily see that belief in Christ, repentance from sin, confession of Christ—all these are necessary to becoming a Christian. Belief is necessary to change the heart; repentance is necessary to change the will, the disposition, the course of life. Confession is necessary as a public commitment and testimonial in the presence of, and for the benefit of, all those who themselves need divine redemption without which they are lost, both in this world and in the world to come. Confession is a public commitment to the new life which the penitent believer has espoused.

*But why be baptized?* What moral change is effected in baptism, other than the moral benefit that always follows obedience to God? We reply that baptism effects no basic moral change: that change comes in faith and repentance in order that the baptism may be efficacious. Baptism is essentially *transitional* (1 Pet. 3:20-21). It is the abandonment of the old man and the putting on of the

new (Rom. 6:1-11). It is the relinquishing of the old life of alienation, and the assumption of the new life of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17, Tit. 3:5). It is the transitional act in which the believing penitent renounces allegiance to the world, the flesh and the devil, and accepts the authority of the Prince of righteousness. It is the formal act of obedience in which the one who was formerly an alien, is adopted into the family of God and thus made an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:16-17) of that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:4, 2:22-25; Acts 26:18). Hence, baptism is administered "in the name of Christ" (*i.e.*, by His *authority*), according to the formula, "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). It is the divine appointment wherein the repentant believer receives pardon of his sins (in the mind of God) and is formally inducted *into Christ* (Acts 2:38, Col. 2:11-12) and sealed "with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13, 2 Cor. 1:21-22; cf. discussions of *spiritual circumcision*, in foregoing sections herein).

It is evident that the dipping of a person in water could not *per se* have efficacy unto salvation. It is equally evident that there is no power in water *per se* to take away the guilt of sin. And it is quite evident that God could pardon a believer without baptism as easily as with it, had He chosen to do so. The fact remains, however, that in the light of New Testament teaching, we have no indication that He has chosen to do so. Baptism is said to be for remission of sins (Acts 2:38), for induction into Christ (Gal. 3:27) and is therefore a prerequisite of pardon (Acts 10:47-48). This is sufficient for the man of faith. Unbelief will persist, however, in speaking of baptism as a "non-essential," a "mere outward act," a "mere external performance," etc. The Apostle Paul, on the contrary, writes of it as an act of obedience "from the heart" (Rom.

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6:17), hence an act of faith; and the Apostle Peter describes it as the "appeal of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21).

Here, then, at the very entrance into the Kingdom, at the door to the Fold, the issue is placed squarely before each alien sinner, as to whether he has sufficient faith to obey a positive command which he can see clearly has no logical connection, in itself (*i.e.*, as an immersion in water) with the end in view. Here he must make a choice whether he will do, or not do, what the Lord commands. Here he must decide whether he will yield to the authority of the Head of the Church. The tragedy today is that there are so many to whom religion is little more than a ritual, a sort of insurance policy against hell-fire; so many who follow the line of least resistance in everything they do, who have so little conviction and courage, so little love for God and so little faith in the Lord Jesus, that when they reach the baptismal pool, they will stop and argue the case, and in so many instances will turn aside to accept a meaningless substitute which human theology has provided for the sake of convenience. What a tragedy! "Oh ye of little faith!" Jesus was willing to go all the way from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan River, some seventy to eighty miles, to submit to this divine institution and thus do the Father's will to the full (Matt. 3:15). This He did, He who was without sin, to please the Heavenly Father and to set the right example for all who would follow in His steps. If we expect to be called His disciples, we certainly will not start an argument at the baptismal pool! If we do hesitate, or turn aside, we not only fall short of that obedience which is necessary for justification, but we also lose the rich spiritual experience which always accompanies the walk of faith such as Enoch walked, such as Noah walked, such as Abraham walked, such as Moses walked, such as all the faithful have walked. Preachers fulminate so glibly about faith, justification by faith, etc. But faith is precisely the thing

that is lacking in the professing church of this day and age. We simply cannot be the spiritual children of Abraham unless we have the faith of Abraham in our hearts, the faith that prompts us to realize that we are strangers and pilgrims here, that this world has no rest for us, that we journey to a better country, that is, a heavenly country, where there *remaineth* eternal rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

Note that the life of Abraham is the story of the continuous expansion and intensification of the covenant and the covenant-promise. There was the initial promise to which Abraham responded in complete obedience (Gen. 12:1-3). As God enlarged the promise, Abraham responded in faith which was reckoned to him for righteousness (15:6): at this communication the land of Canaan was specifically pledged to the patriarch's fleshly seed. With the promise of the son, God appointed fleshly circumcision to be the sign of the covenant (ch. 17). Both the promise and the covenant were officially sealed as a result of Abraham's obedience of faith in which he *proved* his faith by his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac, the Child of Promise, accounting that God would raise him from the dead (ch. 22; cf. Heb. 11:9-19).

Any one who has faith deep enough to prompt him to meet the appointments ordered by Divine grace can be absolutely sure of receiving the blessings which that Grace has connected with the specific appointment. We can be absolutely sure that our God, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will actualize His "precious and exceeding great promises" (2 Pet. 1:4) if and when we, both as sinners and as saints, meet the conditions, by our obedience of faith, which Divine Grace has stipulated. "The firm foundation of God standeth" always (2 Tim. 2:19, Isa. 46:9-11).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON  
PART THIRTY-FOUR

1. In what way, according to Chapter 22, did God *prove* Abraham? What does the verb *prove* signify in this connection?
2. Show how each successive phrase in the Divine command here intensified the significance of the command (according to Rashi).
3. What indicates that God had a particularly important objective in this instance.
4. What was the patriarch's response to what God said to him?
5. Where is the land of Moriah traditionally? What facts seem to justify this tradition?
6. What reason does Glueck give for questioning this tradition?
7. What preparations did Abraham make for the journey?
8. Do you suppose that Abraham said anything to Sarah about the purpose of the journey? Explain your answer.
9. How old probably was Isaac when this incident occurred?
10. From what place did they start on their journey? How far was it from this place to Jerusalem?
11. How much time did the journey require? Is this in harmony with the distance traveled, that is, if the place of sacrifice was near Jerusalem?
12. On reaching the place of sacrifice, what did Abraham and Isaac do? Why did the two go alone to the place of sacrifice?
13. What did Isaac carry to the place of sacrifice? To what New Testament fact does this point directly?
14. When, probably, did Abraham explain to Isaac what was to be done? How did Isaac respond? What does this suggest as to Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross?

15. Did Abraham show that he was prepared to make the actual sacrifice of his son? What does the writer of Hebrews tell us about what Abraham thought actually would happen? What is meant by the statement that this did happen "in a figure"?
16. How did Abraham reconcile God's command to sacrifice Isaac, with His promise that through Isaac there should come to Abraham a great posterity?
17. What did the Angel of the Lord do to avert the sacrifice?
18. What did the name *Jehovah-jireh* mean? How can this name be harmonized with what is revealed in Exo. 6:3?
10. How and in what ways did God renew His divine promises with respect to Abraham and his seed? Explain the twofold significance of the Promise.
20. What reason did God give for His renewal of the Promise at this time?
21. Why was the record of Nahor's progeny introduced at this point?
22. What was the basic significance of Abraham's sacrificial act?
23. Is it reasonable to conclude that this incident was for the purpose of showing God's disapproval of human sacrifice?
24. In what ways did the Sacrifice of Isaac prefigure the Sacrifice of God's Only Begotten?
25. What is Speiser's explanation of the significance of Abraham's supreme trial?
26. What is meant by the *ultimate* degree of faith?
27. Distinguish between God's moral and His positive commands?
28. What are the ascending degrees of faith manifested in obedience to a positive divine command? What is the essential character of the ultimate or highest degree?



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29. Give examples of positive commands which involve the lesser degrees of faith?
30. What great lesson is derived from the history of the Brazen Serpent?
31. Why cannot what is called "*blind faith*" be involved in obedience to God's commands?
32. Explain how Christian baptism, that which is authorized by the Great Commission, is basically a *positive* command.
33. What is the distinctly spiritual reason for obedience to Christ in baptism?
34. Explain what is meant by the *transitional* significance of baptism?
35. Why, according to His own statement, was Jesus baptized in the Jordan?
36. In there any ground on which one can rightly assume that our Lord ever ordained a "non-essential" act? Would not such a claim be in itself blasphemy?
37. Review at this point what is meant in Scripture by spiritual circumcision.

## PART THIRTY-FIVE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: HIS PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY

Genesis 23:1—25:18

#### 1. Provision of a Burial Place (23:1-20)

1 And the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 And Sarah died in Kiriatharba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. 3 And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, 4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. 5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, 6 Hear us, my lord; thou art a prince of God among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. 7 And Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. 8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in the midst of you for a possession of a burying-place. 10 Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the children of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. 12 And Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land. 13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the

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land, saying, *But if thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.* 14 *And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,* 15 *My lord, hearken unto me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.* 16 *And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.*

17 *So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about, were made sure* 18 *unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.* 19 *And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan.* 20 *And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the children of Heth.*

(1) *The Death of Sarah* is the next recorded event in the life of Abraham. At the age of 127 years Sarah died at Hebron (the earlier name of which was Kiriath-arba). The fact that Sarah died at Hebron indicates that Abraham had returned from Beersheba to his old home there; or he could have sojourned back and forth repeatedly between Beersheba and Hebron throughout the intervening years. (It could have been, too, that Sarah was away from Beersheba, possibly on a visit to her former home, when she died, vv. 1, 2). "It so happens that Sarah is the only woman whose age and death are reported in the Scriptures, as commentators have observed from days of old. This cannot be without design. She is the mother of all be-

lievers, according to 1 Pet. 3:6, and so deserving of some such distinction" (EG, 640). (For Kiriath-arba, cf. Num. 13:28; Josh. 15:13-14, 21:11; Judg. 1:20). Abraham *mourned and wept for her*: "a reference to formal rites, which has no bearing, one way or another, on the survivor's personal feelings; just so, a Nuzi adoption document provides that 'when A dies, B shall weep for him and bury him'" (ABG, 69). But "such demonstrations of grief are as natural and as proper to the Oriental as is our greater measure of restraint to us" (EG, 642); and we must therefore believe that this mourning and weeping was the expression of deep and sincere sorrow on Abraham's part.

(2) *Negotiations for a Burying-place* (vv. 3-16). As burial within one day's time after death was the rule in this land, Sarah's death made necessary the purchase of a burial ground. Hence we now have the story of how Abraham becomes the owner of the field and cave of Machpelah, by formal purchase from the Hittites, and there proceeds to bury his dead. Although the land had been promised to Abraham and his seed, up to this time God had "given him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5). Now, however, the sanctity of the desired burying-place demanded that it be his own. "Abraham acquires proprietary rights in Canaan: the promise of the Land, 12:7, 13:15, 15:7, is beginning to be fulfilled" (JB, 39). Abraham enters into negotiations with "the sons of Heth," that is, the Hittites. The transaction was conducted "with punctilious regard to all the necessary formalities, and these are recited in detail" (UBG, 292). "Abraham wanted to purchase a burying-place in Canaan, and to have the claims thereunto ascertained, that he and his nearest relatives might have their dust laid there apart from the heathen natives; and might have it as a pledge and earnest to confirm their faith in God's promise of their possession of the whole country in His due time, cf. 25:9, 47:29-30, 49:31, 50:13, 24-26"

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(SIBG, 249). *The Sons of Heth* were the Hittites. (The Hittite Empire was founded about 1800 B.C. by an Indo-European people who had settled in Canaan and throughout the Near East in city-states at a much earlier time. Hence the name is given to an ethnic group living in Canaan from patriarchal times and until after the Israelite occupation (cf. Josh. 1:4; Gen. 15:20, Deut. 7:1, Judg. 3:5). These were called the "children of Heth" (23:5) after their eponymous ancestor Heth, a son of Canaan (Gen. 10:15). The center of the great Hittite empire was in what is now Turkey; their capital city was Hattusas (or Boghazkoi) located in the bend of the Halys River. The discovery of iron is reported to have occurred in this area, in the region of the Black Sea, during this period of Hittite hegemony.)

Abraham instituted the negotiations with the frank statement that he was a sojourner and a stranger in the land, that is, a kind of resident-alien (a settled sojourner, so to speak, a long-term resident, but one who lacked the usual privileges of a citizen, notably, the right to own land). (Cf. Gen. 12:10, 19:9, 20:1, etc.). The concession that the patriarch seeks is simply the acquiring of enough land to serve as a burial site. In the course of the entire transaction, he behaves, and is treated by the inhabitants, as a generous and powerful prince. Finally he strikes a bargain with Ephron the Hittite, in the presence of the entire populace. (It seems obvious that behind their generosity "there lurked an aversion to the idea of a purchase" Skinner, ICCG, 337). Courteously refusing the use of their sepulchres, and the offer of a burial-place for his own use as a gift, Abraham finally succeeds in buying for its full value of 400 shekels' weight of silver ("current money with the merchant") the Cave of Machpelah, close to the oak of Mamre, with the field and "all the trees that were in the field," in which the Cave was located. Here Abraham buried Sarah (v. 19); here Abraham himself

was buried later by Isaac and Ishmael (25:9); here also were buried Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah (35:27-29, 47:29-30, 49:31, 50:13).

(3) *The Cave of Machpelah*, vv. 17-20. Literally, "the cave of double." Some hold that it consisted of two stories; others that the name indicated that several couples were to be buried there; still others, that it was a double cave, one within the other, etc. Many interesting facts have been brought to light by recent archaeological findings which authenticate the details of the purchase of this burial-place. Wiseman writes (NBD, 765): "Recent comparisons of the details of Abraham's purchase of Machpelah with Middle Assyrian and Hittite laws support the antiquity of Gen. 23. Thus M. R. Lehmann draws attention to the inclusion of the number of the trees, the weighing of silver at the current merchant valuation, and the use of witnesses at the city-gate where the transaction was proclaimed (verses 16-18). These accord with Hittite laws which fell into oblivion by c. 1200 B.C. The desire of Ephron to sell all the property rather than 'the cave at the edge of the field' (verse 9) may be linked with legal and feudal requirements of the time." "At the present day in many of the outlying villages of Palestine, where primitive customs are still kept up, I have seen the elders sitting in the gates conducting public business. In ancient times the gate of a town or village was the place where the elders or judges sat, where cases were heard and adjudicated, and where all matters affecting the public welfare were discussed, Gen. 34:20, Deut. 16:18, Ruth 4:1" (SIBG, 249). "Hittite real estate transactions made specific reference to the trees on the property" (HSB, 37). "Verses 17, 18 are in the form of a legal contract. Specifications of the dimensions and boundaries of a piece of land, and of the buildings, trees, etc., upon it, are common in ancient contracts of sale at all periods" (Skinner, ICCG, 338).

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The modern site of this burial cave is in the famous sanctuary of Haram (Gunkel, *Genesis*, 273) at Hebron, under the great Mosque. It is one of the holiest shrines of Mohammedanism, and is venerated also by both Jews and Christians. Machpelah is mentioned in the Talmud. Entrance is forbidden Jews and Christians unless they can secure permission from the Moslem Supreme Council. "Visitors who have been admitted to the mosque describe the cenotaphs of Abraham, Isaac, and their wives, as being covered with elaborately ornamented palls. The cenotaphs of Jacob and Leah are in a small adjacent structure. The tombs are said to be in the cave below the cenotaphs. Moslems claim that the tomb of Joseph is just outside the Cave of Machpelah, represented by a cenotaph West of the Mosque of the Women. But see Josh. 24:32" (HBD, 409). The whole enclosure, we are told, "is jealously guarded by massive stone walls, probably of Herodian work, though the antiquity of the cave itself and its furnishings has not been verified by archaeological research" (NBD, 765). "The cave below has never been examined in modern times, but it is stated by its guardians to be double. There is no reason to doubt that the tradition as to the site has descended from biblical times; and it is quite probable that the name Makepelah is derived from the feature just referred to" (Skinner, ICCG, 339).

### 2. Provision of a Wife for Isaac (24:1-67)

*1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age; and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said unto his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3 and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4 but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my*

son Isaac. 5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. 7 Jehovah, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and who spake unto me, and who sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. 8 And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only thou shalt not bring my son thither again. 9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning this matter.

10 And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed, having all goodly things of his master's in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nabor. 11 And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water. 12 And he said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. 13 Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water: 14 and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master. 15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nabor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. 16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin,



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*neither had any man known her: and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. 17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher. 18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she basted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. 19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20 And she basted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man looked steadfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not. 22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, 23 and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? 24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcab, whom she bare unto Nabor. 25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. 26 And the man bowed his head, and worshipped Jehovah. 27 And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his loving-kindness and his truth toward my master: as for me, Jehovah hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren.*

*28 And the damsel ran, and told her mother's house according to these words. 29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the fountain. 30 And it came to pass, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he was standing by the camels at the fountain. 31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah; wherefore*

*standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. 32 And the man came into the house, and he ungirded the camels; and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men that were with him. 33 And there was set food before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. 34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant. 35 And Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. 37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: 38 but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son. 39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. 40 And he said unto me, Jehovah, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house: 41 then shalt thou be clear from my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give her not to thee, thou shalt be clear from my oath. 42 And I came this day unto the fountain, and said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: 43 behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden that cometh forth to draw, to whom I shall say, Give me, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher to drink; 44 and she shall say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. 45 And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the fountain, and*

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*drew: and I said unto her. Let me drink, I pray thee. 46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. 47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nabor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands. 48 And I bowed my head and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. 49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.*

*50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. 51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken. 52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah. 53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. 54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. 55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. 56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. 57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. 58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. 59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. 60 And they blessed*

*Rebekah, and said unto her, Our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them.*

*61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 And Isaac came from the way of Beer-labai-roi: for he dwelt in the land of the South. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel. 65 And she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master: and she took her veil, and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

(1) *Abraham's steward commissioned* (vv. 24:1-9). After the death of Sarah, Abraham returned to the region around Beersheba. He was now in his declining years: "well-stricken in age" must, by way of contrast to 18:11, emphasize that the infirmities of age were becoming more and more evident. Hence, there was a most important matter for the patriarch to attend to without delay, namely, to arrange a marriage for his son Isaac. There is nothing here to indicate that Abraham's death was imminent. Evidently the need for taking steps along this line had been suggested by Sarah's death and by the fact that the patriarch felt the need of attending to this duty while he was still well enough physically and mentally to do so. He felt, too, that the step was necessary lest, in case he should die, Isaac might take a wife from among the idolatrous Canaanites (vv. 3, 4). (The Canaanites—a term

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used collectively here as in many other places for any number of different ethnic groups—were heathen given over to destruction and so very improper to be matched with Isaac (cf. 26:34-35, 27:46. Exo. 34:16, 2 Cor. 6:14-15), but Abraham's friends in Mesopotamia worshipped the true God, although they also served their idols: (vv. 31, 50; 31:19, 30). "The father's sole initiative in this direction and the entire passivity of Isaac on the occasion are to be accounted for by the fact that, first, it was primarily the function of parents to provide for the marriage of their children in those days; and, in the second place, Isaac was by character and disposition much inclined to be passive and unaggressive" EG, 656). "Abraham was induced to provide for this [Isaac's marriage] in a mode in harmony with the promise of God, quite as much by his increasing age as by the blessing of God in everything, which necessarily instilled the wish to transmit that blessing to a distant posterity" (BCOTP, 257).

*What follows here is one of the most idyllic stories in all human literature.* "The chapter is one of the most perfect specimens of descriptive writing that the Book of Genesis contains. It is marked by idyllic grace and simplicity, picturesque elaboration of scenes and incidents, and a certain 'epic' amplitude of treatment, seen in the repetition of the story in the form of a speech. These artistic elements so predominate that the primary ethnographic motive is completely submerged. It may be conjectured that the basis of the narrative was a reinforcement of the Aramean element in the Hebrew stock, as in the kindred story of Jacob and his wives. But if such a historical kernel existed, it is quite lost sight of in the graphic delineation of human character, and of ancient Eastern life, which is to us the main interest of the passage. We must also note the profoundly religious conception of Yahwe's providence as an unseen power, overruling events in answer to prayer" (Skinner, ICCG, 339-340).

Abraham's steward, "his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had," is usually taken to have been the Eliezer of Damascus (15:2), who some sixty years previously was regarded as the *heir presumptive* to Abraham's house. However, "it seems a rather rare case that one servant should be in another man's employ for such a length of time. In fact, it would seem that Eliezer must have been in Abraham's employ more than twenty years to arrive at a position of such influence as he held according to 15:12. That would necessitate by the time of this chapter eighty consecutive years of service!" Still and all, this man of ch. 24 had the complete management of Abraham's household; he was "the one ruling" all that Abraham had. Surely this indicates ripe experience and great trustworthiness!

(2) *The Oath*. Abraham put the steward under oath in order that his wishes might be inviolably fulfilled, even if he (Abraham) should die in the interim. He made the steward swear that he would not take a wife for his son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, but would bring back a wife from his (Abraham's) native country and his kinsfolk. "*Put thy hand under my thigh*," etc. "This custom, which is only mentioned here and in chap. 47:29, the so-called bodily oath, was no doubt connected with the significance of the hip as the part from which the posterity issued (46:26), and the seat of vital power; but the early Jewish commentators supposed it to be especially connected with the rite of circumcision" (BCO TP, 257). (Cf. 35:11, Exo. 1:5). For the Jewish view, note the following: "When one swears, he takes a sacred object in his hand, such as the Scroll of the Law or the phylacteries. The circumcision was the first precept of God to him [Abraham], and had also come to him only through great pain; hence it was particularly precious to him, and so he ordered his servant to put his hand upon it when taking the oath (Rashi). This is done when a

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superior adjures an inferior, such as a master his servant or a father his son who also owes him obedience: cf. 47:20 (Rashbam). It was the custom in those days for a servant to take an oath in this manner, placing his hand under his master's thigh, the latter sitting upon his hand. This signified that the servant was under his master's authority. It is still the practice in India (Abraham Ibn Ezra)" (SC, 122). "The same gesture as in 47:29; contact with the genital organs is intended to make the oath inviolable" (JB, 41). "A reference to an oath by the genital organs, emblems of the life-giving power of deity" (IBG, 652). "The symbolism of this act is not clear. At any rate, the pledge thus elicited was evidently a most solemn one, for it carried with it a curse or ban in the event of non-compliance. Since sons are said to issue from their father's thigh (46:26, Exo. 1:5), an oath that involved touching this vital part might entail the threat of sterility for the offender or the extinction of his offspring. The only other instance of the same usage in the Bible, 47:29, is linked, like the present, to a man's last request—always a solemn occasion" (ABG, 178). "Note passages such as 46:26, Exo. 1:5, Judg. 8:30. Consequently, this form of oath has particular regard to the descendants and is taken in reference to them. But we cannot stop short with this correct statement. For when we consider how eagerly from the time of Adam believers looked forward to a Savior that was to be born, and also how Abraham (12:3) knew and believed that from his own line such a Savior was to follow, we cannot but accept the orthodox view held by the churchfathers from days of old, that this oath was administered in view of the Savior to come from Abraham's line. The whole course of procedure builds upon this prominent fact. This same form of oath is found besides only in 47:29. Consequently, we do not find here a remnant of some old custom now no longer understood, nor is this a remnant of some phallic cult, nor was this an oath by the *membrum virile*, for the

hand was placed under the *thigh*, nor are the present-day analogies referred to by commentators as still obtaining among Arabs and Egyptians a good illustration or parallel. Here was a godly oath by a godly man taken and administered in the light of his greatest hope, the coming Savior. 'Yahweh,' as the covenant God, is most appropriately referred to as the one by whom the servant is to swear" (EG, 659).

(3) *The God of heaven and the God of the earth*, v. 3. This phrase is an affirmation of the Divine omnipotence. It is especially in keeping with the spiritual theme of God's providence which pervades the narrative throughout. We must understand that it was not because the people in Canaan did not wish to give their daughters in marriage to Issac that Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia; Abraham was a wealthy man and could have made any marital arrangement for his son that he desired. He simply did not want the covenant-heir to become entangled with a Canaanite woman and her idolatrous background. He was looking toward the protection of the purity of the Seed (Gal. 3:16). Scripture tells us that he had all things, wealth, honor, long life and children, and now he lacked only grandchildren. "Being old and wealthy, he feared that in the event of his death someone might bribe Eliezer to select an unfit wife for Isaac; hence he had to adjure him" (SC, 122). "The motive is a natural concern for the purity of the stock." We surely have here evidence "of the exalted conception of God prevailing among the patriarchs."

Vv. 5-8. It was necessary that the steward should know the full meaning of the oath before he took it (Jer. 5:2, Prov. 13:16). The servant's fear seems to be, not that he would fail to find a bride for Isaac, but that the maiden selected might not be willing to be separated such a distance from her relatives; in the event of such a development, he asked, would the patriarch want Isaac to be returned to



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the land of his fathers? Would the oath bind him to take Isaac back to Haran? The suggestion elicited from the patriarch "a last utterance of his unclouded faith in God." Yahwe, said Abraham, had taken him from his father's house and had promised him and his seed under oath that they should have the land (Canaan) for a possession. He also discharged the servant, in case of failure to procure a bride and bring her back willingly to his place of sojourning, from the oath he had taken, being fully assured himself that Yahwe, the God of heaven, *would send His angel* to providentially guide events in such a way that the Divine promise would be fully actualized. There was no doubt in Abraham's mind that the servant would bring back the bride-to-be, because all this was God's doing in fulfilment of His eternal purpose. "God had ordered Abraham's departure from Mesopotamia; it was therefore improper that either he or his son should return thither, where they would be tempted to a partial idolatry" (SIBG, 251). To sum up Abraham's faith: on no account, said he, must Isaac leave the land of promise, because such a move would be a final act of unbelief and disobedience, v. 8. Whereupon the servant, understanding clearly the nature of his mission, and feeling satisfied in all matters that impinged on his conscience, "put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning the matter," v. 9.

(4) *The Servant at the Well*, vv. 10-15. Taking ten camels to bring home the bride-to-be and her attendants and "all goodly things" sent by his master to be presents to the bride and her relatives, the steward of Abraham's house traveled to Mesopotamia, "to the city of Nahor," evidently Haran (11:31, 12:4). where Nahor dwelt. (Note the Hebrew for Mesopotamia, *Aram-naharaim*, i.e., "Aram of the two rivers." This was Central Mesopotamia, originally the region within the great bend of the Euphrates. The area was also known as Paddan-Aram, "field of

Aram" (25:20, 28:2). Some authorities think that "the city of Nahor" was a town near Haran, with slightly different spelling in Hebrew from Nahor, Abraham's brother, v. 15). On arriving at his destination, the servant "made his camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water" (v. 11). *Note his prayer for a sign, again evidence of dependence on the leading of Yahwe* (cf. Judg. 6:36-40, 1 Sam. 14:8ff.) All authorities are agreed on the fidelity of this picture to Eastern life.

(5) *The Servant and Rebekah*, vv. 15-27. V. 14—"This token the servant asked not from presumption or distrust, but as directed by the Spirit of God": Judg. 6:17, 37, 39; 1 Sam. 6:7-9, 14:8-10; 20:7; 12:17; Isa. 7:11-14, 38:7, 8; Exo. 4:2-9). "The personal humility and fidelity displayed by this aged servant are only less remarkable than the fervent piety and childlike faith which discover themselves in the method he adopts for finding the bride. Having cast the matter upon God by prayer, as a concern which specially belonged to him, he fixes upon a sign by which God should enable him to detect the bride designed for Isaac" (PCG, 301). "The matter in hand is of extraordinary importance. A wife is to be found for the heir of promise. This was a special concern of God, and so the single-hearted follower of Abraham makes it. He takes upon himself the choice of a maiden among those that come to draw, to whom he will make the request of a particular act of kindness to a stranger, and he prays God that the intended bride may be known by a ready compliance with his request. The three qualifications, then, in the mind of the venerable domestic for a bride for his master's son, are a pleasing exterior, a kindly disposition, and the approval of God" (MG, 354). "*And it came to pass, before he had done speaking,*" that the answer came, in the form of a "damsel, very fair to look upon, a virgin," then as if to emphasize this last-stated fact, the added

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statement, "neither had any man known her," v. 16. (This was of great importance, of course, in guaranteeing the ethnic purity of the promised seed, and hence of the Messianic Line.) Thus did the maiden satisfy the first criterion demanded by the servant. The damsel, we are told, and she herself confirmed the fact (vv. 24, 47), was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor by Milcah, and the sister of Laban (v. 20, also 11:27-29, 22:20-24). Cf. 29:5, "Laban, the son of Nahor": "Laban is called by Jacob the son of Nahor, that is, his grandson, with the usual latitude of relative names in Scripture, cf. 28:13," MG, 391). Rebekah "*went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*" In Eastern wells there were steps down to the surface of the water. The servant was watching her in silence, no doubt delighted by her modest and gracious demeanor; then he ran to meet her and presented his request with which she complied at once, giving him water to drink from her pitcher. But she did even more: she graciously drew water for the camels until their thirst was fully slaked. The servant must have been waiting in wonder and silence as he took note of the ample fulfilment of the sign. This maiden presented a pleasing exterior, and a kindly disposition, and in everything she did was manifesting the approval of Yahwe. He then presented the maiden with the nose-ring of gold (Ezek. 16:11-12) and the bracelets, not as the bridal gifts but as a reward for the service she had rendered. He wants to know who her kindred were and whether they had the means and the inclination to entertain a stranger (as inns were not yet in existence). Whereupon she introduced herself as the daughter of his master's nephew and assured him of the hospitable accommodations which were at his disposal. And the old man, overwhelmed, *bowed his head and praised God for all the manifestations of His providence.* Rebekah, in wonderment herself, reported the startling news to her mother's house, i.e., tent: "the

daughter's course naturally tends to the mother when such startling news is to be communicated; besides, the women had their separate compartments, as we gather also from 31:33f.—a separate tent" (EG, 672). (Such notions as that this was a relic of a matriarchy, or that the father was dead, are entirely gratuitous.)

(6) *The Servant's Narrative*, vv. 28-49. Laban now apparently takes over the formalities of hospitality, "inspired by the selfish greed for which that worthy was noted in tradition." "Laban was better known through his grandfather (Nahor) than through his father Bethuel. It may also be that Bethuel was of little account, as we find Laban answering before him, cf. 24:50" (SC, 168). When Laban saw the presents which the steward had given his sister, he recognized that the envoy was from some man of wealth and position and became almost obsequious in his attentions. He invited the servant (whom we believe to have been Eliezer) into his house, unmuzzled the camels, gave "straw and provender" for them, and then washed the feet of the servant and the feet of the men who were with him. The crowning act of hospitality in an Eastern household was the presentation of food to the visitors. In this case, however, the faithful servant insists that he must deliver his message before partaking of the friendly meal with his host. It should be noted that Laban addressed Eliezer with the words, "Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah," etc. Evidently the name of Jehovah was not entirely unfamiliar to Laban's ears: "the knowledge and worship of the living God, the God of truth and mercy, was still retained in the family of Nahor" (MG, 355), or at least it would seem so. Or, it is possible that Laban addressed Eliezer as the blessed of Jehovah, as a result of hearing the words of the latter, who had called Abraham's God Jehovah.

The servant now discharges his commission before partaking of the food set before him. Beginning with the account of his master's possessions and family affairs, he

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describes with considerable minuteness his search for a wife for Isaac and the success which he had met with thus far. Then, v. 49, he pressed his suit, emphasizing the providential guidance which Yahwe had seen fit to give him, even to the granting of the "sign" which was to him proof that Rebekah was the desired bride, both desired and divinely identified. Laban and Bethuel also recognized in all this the guidance of God, saying, "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good," that is, we cannot add a word, cannot alter anything (Num. 24:13, 2 Sam. 13:22). "That Rebekah's brother Laban should have taken part with her father in deciding, was in accordance with the usual custom (cf. 34:5, 11, 25; Judg. 21:22, 2 Sam. 13:22), which may have arisen from the prevalence of polygamy, and the readiness of the father to neglect the children (daughters) of the wife he cared for least" (KD, BCOTP, 260). V. 52—After receiving the assent of Laban and Bethuel to the union, the servant "bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah" (vv. 50-52). He then gave all the presents to Rebekah and her kinsmen which Abraham had sent; then, when this ceremony was all finished, they partook of the feast provided by the host.

(7) *Rebekah's departure*, vv. 50-67. Obviously the matter is settled in accordance with custom. In the gifts for Rebekah's relatives, it has been said that we could have a survival of the practice of purchase-price of a wife (34:12, Exo. 22:16, 1 Sam. 18:25); in this narrative, however, what is done takes place from a more refined idea of marriage, "from which the notion of actual purchase has all but disappeared" (ICCG, 346). In Islam, we are told, these customs have come to be synonymous with the dowry.

The next morning Eliezer expressed his desire to set off at once on the journey home. The relatives, however, wished to keep Rebekah with them for "a few days, at least ten." But when the maiden herself was consulted,

she decided to go without delay. So "they blessed Rebekah," and said to her, "Be thou the mother of thousands of ten thousands," etc., that is, of an innumerable offspring, and "let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them" (cf. Gen. 22:17). Thus did Rebekah and her "damsels" start the long journey back to the Land of Promise, escorted by Eliezer and his accompanying retinue of male servants. The long trip from "the city of Nahor" back to Hebron and evidently on to the region of Béersheba must have taken a month at least. When the caravan arrived in the vicinity of "the land of the South" (the Negeb), Isaac was just returning from a visit to the well Be-er-la-hai-roi (15:14); and "at the eventide" (the coming on of the evening), we are told, he went out in the field "to meditate," v. 63. Had he been to the well of Hagar "which called to mind the omnipresence of God, and there, in accordance with his contemplative character, had laid the question of his marriage before the Lord"? Or had he merely traveled to that region to look after his flocks and herds? Certainly the purpose of his going into the field *to meditate* must have had something to do with his marriage and subsequent future life. Just at a certain moment of time, the caravan from Mesopotamia arrived at the very spot where Isaac was meditating; and Rebekah, as soon as she saw the man in the field coming to meet them, hastily descended from her camel to receive him, "according to Oriental custom, in the most respectful manner." Certainly her premonition had been that this must be her future husband, and verifying her insight by actual inquiry and identification, she immediately "enveloped herself in her veil, as became a bride when meeting the bridegroom" (BCOTP, 261). "The servant then related to Isaac the result of his journey; and Isaac conducted the maiden into the tent of Sarah his mother, and she became his wife, and he loved her, and was consoled after his mother, *i.e.*, for his mother's death" (*ibid.*, p. 261).

## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

It seems obvious (from v. 67) that Sarah's death had affected Isaac deeply. Rebekah's arrival proved to be a source of solace and strength. (As a matter of fact, subsequent events show that the wife was the stronger willed of the two: to say that Isaac was not characterized by aggressiveness is putting it mildly: it would be more nearly right, we think, to speak of him as "henpecked.") It seems that "out of respect for Sarah, her tent remained dismantled after her death until Rebekah came" (SC, 132).

Dr. Speiser again calls our attention to the fact that the details recorded about Isaac's marriage can no longer be regarded as doubtful; any notion that the story was invented, he says, should be dispelled by what we know today about Hurrian marriage practices—which were normative in the region of Haran—when the brother acted in place of the father. "The pertinent marriage contract would then come under the heading of 'sistership document.' A composite agreement of this kind would embody the following specifications: (a) the principals in the case, (b) nature of the transaction, (c) details of payments, (d) the girl's declaration of concurrence, (e) penalty clause. A close study of vss. 50 ff. should show that what we have there is virtually a restatement, in suitable literary form, of such a 'sistership document.' For principals we have this time, on the one hand, Abraham's servant as the spokesman for the father of the groom, and, on the other hand, Laban as the responsible representative of the prospective bride. The transaction is thus necessarily of the 'sistership' type, since it is the girl's brother who acts on the request. The emissary gives presents to the girl, but does not neglect the 'gifts' for her brother and mother, which must cover the customary bride payment. Most significant of all, in view of the detailed evidence from Nuzi, is the statement that Rebekah herself should be consulted (57); her reply is in the affirmative, 'I will go' (58). The Nuzi text says in similar cases . . . 'myself

and my brother (agree to this marriage)' . . . or '(I do this) of my own free will.' The only thing, then, that is missing is the penalty clause, which would surely be out of place in a literary transcript" (ABG, 184-185). This author takes the position, of course, that "there can be little doubt that Bethuel was no longer alive at the time, which is why Laban was free to exercise his prerogatives as brother." The evidence cited to support this view, by way of contrast with those suggested above, is (1) that in v. 50, the listing of the father after the son is irregular; (2) that what is worse, no gifts for the father are mentioned in v. 53, although Rebekah's "brother and mother" are mentioned as recipients; (3) similarly, in v. 55, it is again "her brother and her mother" who ask that the prospective bride postpone her journey, whereas nothing is said about the father. Various genealogical references to Bethuel (vv. 15, 24; also 22:22, 23, and 15:20) present no difficulty, however. Speiser concludes: "The inclusion of Bethuel in vs. 50 is due either to a marginal gloss inspired by the genealogical references, or to some textual misadventure" (*ibid.*, 184). We have tried to present all aspects of this problem: the student may draw his own conclusions. It should be kept in mind that in any and all such trivia no question of the fundamental integrity of the Bible is involved.

### 3. *Abraham's Provisions for His Various Lines* (25:1-18)

#### (1) *The Line by Keturah* (25:1-4)

1 And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian: Ephah, and Ephher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.



## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

A chronological problem arises here. The following excerpts will suffice to make it clear. "Abraham's marriage to Keturah is generally supposed to have taken place after Sarah's death, and his power to beget six sons at so advanced an age is attributed to the fact, that the Almighty had endowed him with new vital and reproductive energy for begetting the son of the promise. But there is no firm ground for this assumption; as it is not stated anywhere, that Abraham did not take Keturah as his wife till after Sarah's death. It is merely an inference drawn from the fact, that it is not mentioned till afterwards; and it is taken for granted that the history is written in strictly chronological order. But this supposition is precarious, and is not in harmony with the statement, that Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines with gifts during his own lifetime; for in the case supposed, the youngest of Keturah's sons would not have been more than twenty-five or thirty years old at Abraham's death; and in those days, when marriages were not generally contracted before the fortieth year, this seems too young for them to have been sent away from their father's house. This difficulty, however, is not decisive. Nor does the fact that Keturah is called a concubine in ver. 6, and in 1 Chron. 1:32, necessarily show that she was contemporary with Sarah, but may be explained on the ground that Abraham did not place her on the same footing as Sarah, his sole wife, the mother of the promised seed" (KD—BCOTP, 261-262).

Murphy (MG, 358-359): "According to the laws of Hebrew composition, this event may have taken place before that recorded in the close of the previous chapter. Of this law we have several examples in this very chapter. And there is nothing contrary to the customs of that period in adding wife to wife. We cannot say that Abraham was hindered from taking Keturah in the lifetime of Sarah

by any moral feeling which would not also have hindered him from taking Hagar. It has also been noticed that Keturah is called a concubine, which is thought to imply that the proper wife was still living; and that Abraham was a very old man at the death of Sarah. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that these sons were in any case born after the birth of Isaac, and therefore after Abraham was renewed in vital powers. If the renewal of vigor remained after the birth of Isaac, it may have continued some time after the death of Sarah, whom he survived thirty-eight years. His abstinence from any concubine until Sarah gave him Hagar is against his taking any other during Sarah's lifetime. His loneliness on the death of Sarah may have prompted him to seek a companion of his old age. And if this step was delayed until Isaac was married, and therefore separated from him, an additional motive would impel him in the same direction. He was not bound to raise this wife to the full rights of a proper wife, even though Sarah were dead. And six sons might be born to him twenty-five years before his death. And if Hagar and Ishmael were dismissed when he was about fifteen years old, so might Keturah when her youngest was twenty or twenty-five. We are not warranted, then, still less compelled, to place Abraham's second marriage before the death of Sarah, or even the marriage of Isaac. It seems to appear in the narrative in the order of time." "The promise (17:4-6) that Abraham should be exceedingly fruitful and the father of many nations, looks beyond the birth of Isaac, and finds its fulfilment in other descendants as well. This, like most other alleged discrepancies, is found not in the text itself, but in arbitrary critical assumptions." (UBG, 308). There is no way of determining with any degree of certainty whether Abraham was still living when Isaac and Rebekah were married, or, if so, how long he lived after that event.

## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

As for the tribes that descended from these six sons of Keturah, efforts to identify them have not been very successful. (Cf. 1 Chron. 1:32-33.) (Incidentally, who was Keturah? Rashi identifies her with Hagar "who received the name because her deeds were as comely as 'incense' (*ketoreth*); also, because she kept herself 'chaste' (*kasher*, cognate root to *katar*, of which Keturah is the passive participle), from the time that she separated from Abraham" (SC, 32). Such an identification, however, cannot be harmonized with the plural, "concubines," 25:6.). It seems obvious that these tribes, descendants of Keturah and her sons by Abraham, peopled a considerable part of Arabia to the south and the east of the Promised Land, under the name of Midianites (Exo. 2:15) among whom Moses took refuge, the Sabaeans (Sheba, Job 1:15, 6; 19; 1 Ki. 10:1), the Shuhites (Job 2:11), the Dedanites, etc. "The Arabian tribes with whom the Israelites acknowledged a looser kinship than with the Ishmaelites or Edomites are represented as the offspring of Abraham by a second marriage, cf. 1 Chron. 1:32 ff." (ICCG, 349). There are named here six sons of Abraham, seven grandsons, and three great-grandsons, making sixteen descendants by Keturah.

(2) *Abraham's Final Disposition of His Property* (vv. 5-6).

*5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.*

Isaac, the child of promise, the only son of his wife, Sarah, received all his possessions. The son of the concubines (Hagar and Keturah) were sent away with gifts, into the east country, that is, Arabia in the widest sense of the term, to the east and southeast of Palestine, to what

is known as the Syro-Arabian desert. The Keturean stock divided into six branches, of which only one, Midian, ever attained importance. In allocating his possessions, it is to be assumed that Abraham provided the sons of the concubines with an abundance of flocks and herds sufficient to provide for their future growth and sustenance.

(3) *The Death and Burial of Abraham* (vv. 7-11).

*7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10 the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son: and Isaac dwelt by Beer-lahai-roi.*

Abraham died at the good old age of 175, and *was gathered to his people* (cf. 15:15, Judg. 2:10). "This expression which . . . is constantly distinguished from departing this life and being buried, denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death, as a presentiment which the promises of God had exalted in the case of the patriarchs into a firm assurance of faith (Heb. 11:13)" (BCOTP, 263). "An old man, and full of years," literally, "satisfied." "He saw all the desires of his heart fulfilled, and was satisfied with all that he wished to see and do. He was granted the privilege of seeing in his lifetime the reward stored up for him in the world to come" (SC, 133). Note that the burial of the patriarch in the cave of Machpelah was attended to by Isaac and Ishmael, "since the latter, although excluded from

## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

the blessings of the covenant, was acknowledged by God as the son of Abraham by a distinct blessing (17:20), and was thus elevated above the sons of Keturah" (*ibid.*, 263). It is significant that both sons shared in the service of interment. "Funerals of parents are reconciliations of children (35:29), and differences of contending religionists are often softened at the side of a grave" (PCG, 314). What a glorious setting of the sun on an ineffably glorious pilgrimage of faith! After Abraham's death, the divine blessing was transferred to Isaac who returned to his abode by Hagar's well (cf. 17:20).

### (4) *The Line of Ishmael* (vv. 12-18).

*12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: 13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 15 and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15 Hadad, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16 these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments; twelve princes according to their nations. 17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people. 18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: he abode over against all his brethren.*

The usual procedure of the inspired historian is repeated here: the future of Abraham's eldest son is traced briefly before proceeding with the primary theme—the Messianic Line—as continued in the line of the Child of Promise. The one name in this line which may be of significance is Nebaioth, v. 13. "Nabajoth was the progenitor of the Nabathaeans, who, about four centuries

before the Christian era, drove the Edomites out of Petra, and constructed most of those rock tombs and temples whose splendor astonish the modern traveler" (SIBG, 253). "The Nabataeans held possession of *Arabia Petraea*, with *Petra* as their capital, and subsequently extended toward the south and northeast, probably as far as Babylon; so that the name was afterward transferred to all the tribes to the east of the Jordan, and in the Nabataean writings became a common name for Chaldeans (ancient Babylonians), Syrians, Canaanites, and others" (BCOTP, 265). (Cf. Gen. 28:9, 36:3; Isa. 60:7).

V. 16. Note "encampments": that is, premises hedged around, "then a village without a wall in contrast with a walled town," Lev. 25:31. "Twelve princes, according to their nations." (Note in connection also the twelve tribes of Israel). The Ishmaelites (various Arabian tribes, the Bedouins in particular) trace their beginnings to these twelve princes. It is interesting to note that these peoples are the foremost protagonists of Mohammedanism (even as the twelve princes of Israel and their posterity are the protagonists of Judaism).

Ishmael died at the age of 137, and his descendants dwelt in Havilah, the area on the borders of Arabia Petraea and Felix, as far as Shur, to the east of Egypt, "in the direction of Assyria" (x. 29, 16:7), from which they extended their nomadic excursions into the northeast to the land of the Euphrates: *i.e.*, dwelling from the Euphrates to the Red Sea (Josephus, *Ant.* I. 12, 4). Thus Ishmael abode (settled) "over against all his brethren" (cf. 16:12, also Judg. 7:12).

(For archaeological studies, look up material under *Mari*, *Nuzi*, *Ugarit*, *Amarna*, *Larsa*, *Alalakh*, *Boghazkoi*, *Ur*, *Babylon*, *the Moabite Stone*, *the Code of Hammurabi*, etc. See *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Archaeology*, edited by Pfeiffer, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

## REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-FIVE

1. Summarize the various provisions which Abraham, in his last years, made for his numerous progenies.
2. How explain the fact that Sarah is the only woman whose death and burial are related in Scripture.
3. Where was Sarah buried? What other Bible personages are buried there?
4. Summarize Abraham's negotiation proceedings for the acquirement of a burial place. Why did he seek this in Canaan?
5. Who were the Hittites?
6. How much did Abraham pay for the field and cave of Machpelah?
7. What does the name (*Machpelah*) mean? What does the meaning suggest?
8. In what details did Abraham's negotiations for Machpelah follow Middle Assyrian and Hittite law?
9. Where is this cave supposed to be today?
10. Why did Abraham in his last years make provisions for a wife for Isaac?
11. Whom did he commission to procure this prospective bride?
12. Where did he send this person, and why did he send him to that area?
13. What oath did Abraham exact from this person whom he commissioned?
14. What was the bodily form of oath which the patriarch required?
15. With what do Jewish commentators correlate this oath?
16. What is the critical (anthropological) explanation of the import of this oath?
17. What evidence do we have that both Abraham and his steward relied on Divine Providence to direct them?

18. What seems to have been the status of religious faith and practice among Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia?
19. Is it possible to verify the notion that the kind of oath taken by the steward had reference to generative powers?
20. How does Leupold explain the far-reaching significance of this oath?
21. What was the steward's fear especially about the possible failure of his mission?
22. What did Abraham promise in case those fears should prove to have a real foundation?
23. For what divine token of identification of the prospective bride did the steward pray?
24. Whom did the steward meet at the well? What was her ancestry?
25. What three characteristics does Murphy hold to have been those which this prospective bride should manifest?
26. In what ways did the maiden at the well manifest these characteristics?
27. For what did the steward praise God?
28. Who was Laban? What light did this incident throw on Laban's character?
29. How account for the fact that Laban conducted these negotiations?
30. Do we have intimations that Rebekah's father might have been deceased? What are these intimations?
31. What were the details by which the negotiations were concluded?
32. What decision did Rebekah herself make? Does not her action in this respect prove that she "had a mind of her own"?
33. Explain what a "sistership document" was under Hurrian law.



## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

34. In what ways did these negotiations for Rebekah as the prospective bride parallel the chief characteristics of the "sistership document"?
35. What is the significance of Rebekah's apparently unexpected meeting with Isaac on the return to Beersheba?
36. Where did the meeting take place? What was Isaac doing at the time?
37. What is the chronological problem involved in chapter 25, vv. 1-4?
38. On what ground do we give Keturah the status of a concubine?
39. What disposition with respect to his property did Abraham make for the sons of his concubines?
40. What disposition of his property did Abraham make for Isaac and why?
41. Where was Abraham buried? What significance is there in the fact that both Ishmael and Isaac participated in their father's burial?
42. Which of the sons of Keturah figured later in Old Testament history?
43. What territory did the Ishmaelites occupy? How did their subsequent history fulfil the oracle of Gen. 16:12?
44. Who were the Nabataeans? What and where was Petra?
45. Who are the Bedouins in relation to the descendants of Ishmael?
46. What was an Ishmaelite "encampment"? How old was Ishmael when he died?
47. What present-day religion glorifies, so to speak, the twelve princes of Ishmael as the ancestors of the people by whom it is espoused?
48. What religion looks back to the twelve princes of Israel as its original source?

49. List the analogies that occur between the life of Isaac and the life of Christ.
50. List the various steps in Abraham's pilgrimage of faith.
51. What Scriptural evidence have we that Abraham believed in the future life?
52. What does the Bible tell us about Abraham's last days?
53. Does Abraham's pilgrimage justify the notion that he had succumbed to idolatry while living in Ur of the Chaldees? Explain your answer.

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## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

*Analogies: Isaac and Christ*

Gen. 22:1-14, Heb. 11:8-19

Trace briefly the early life of Abraham and Sarah; their journey into Canaan, brief sojourn in Egypt, the separation from Lot. Abraham's communion with God relative to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, the blessing of Melchizedek, and the material prosperity of the patriarch. In honor of his fidelity to the will of God, the name of Abraham has gone down in all ages as "father of the faithful" (Rom. 4:16-22, Gal. 3:6-7, Heb. 11:8-10, James 2:20-24).

In the midst of Abraham's prosperity, however, there was one heartache. Both Abraham and Sarah were growing old, and no child had blessed their household. There was no outward indication of the fulfilment of God's promise, and Sarah had passed the age of child-bearing (Gen. 17:1-4; 18:11-14). But

"God moves in mysterious ways  
His wonders to perform"

and a child is promised to the faithful twain. In time, Isaac is born, Heb. 11:11. In many respects Isaac was a type of Christ.

## PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

1. Isaac was "a child of promise", Gen. 17:1-8, 17:19, Heb. 11:8-10, 17:19.

2. Isaac was the "only begotten son" of Abraham and Sarah. Gen. 17:19, 22:16, Heb. 11:17.

3. The offering of Isaac upon Moriah, Gen. 22:1-14. A case where the positive law of God superseded moral law. Picture the sentiments and emotions of the patriarch in this trial of faith. God "proved" Abraham. He named the place Jehovah-jireh, "the Lord will provide."

4. Isaac carried wood for the offering of himself. Gen. 22:6.

5. Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Gen. 22:7.

6. Isaac was three days in coming to his figurative resurrection. Gen. 22:4. Heb. 11:17-19.

7. Abraham sent his servant, Eliezer, Gen. 15:2, 24:1-9, into a far country to find a bride for Isaac, from among his kindred.

8. The servant said: "Hinder me not," that he might hasten to present Rebekah to Isaac. Gen. 24:55-56.

9. Rebekah said, "I will go", Gen. 24:58.

1. Jesus was The Child of promise. Gen. 3:15, 22:18, Isa. 7:14, 11:1-2, 9:6-7, Micah 5:2, Matt. 1:18-23. Luke 1:26-33. John 1:15-18, 1:29.

2. Jesus is the "only begotten Son of God". John 3:16, Psalm 2:7, Acts 13:33, John 1:14.

3. The offering of Jesus upon Calvary, John 3:16. Heb. 9:27-28. This was in obedience to the eternal purpose of God. 1 Peter 1:18-20. Thus the Lord has provided sufficient atonement for sin, and a way of reconciliation between man and his heavenly Father. Rom. 3:22-26, Col. 1:18-23.

4. Jesus bore His own Cross. John 19:16-18.

5. This suggests the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. Matt. 26:39. We would not consider this an antitype however.

6. Jesus was three days in coming to His literal resurrection. Mark 16:1-8. I Cor. 15:1-4.

7. After the resurrection and glorification of the Son, the Father sent the Holy Spirit into the world to find a Bride for Jesus. John 7:39, 14:16-17, 16:7, Luke 24:46-49, Acts 1:8, 2:1-4. Through the Holy Spirit, God is today visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people "unto His name," Acts 11:18, 15:14.

8. The Holy Spirit is today striving with the world, and pleading with cold-hearted professors of religion that He may hasten the presentation of the Bride to the Bridegroom. Matt. 22:2-10, Acts 7:51-53, Rom. 8:1.

9. So the Bride of the Redeemer should be yearning to meet the Bridegroom, Matt. 25:6. God has prepared the feast. Blessed are they that will be ready for the coming of our Lord, and will meet Him in the air, and partake of the marriage feast of the Lamb.

1 Thess. 4:16-17, Rev. 19:7-9.  
There is not a single exhortation  
in the New Testament to prepare  
for death, but ever to meet the  
Bridegroom at His second coming.  
John 14:1-3, 2 Peter 3:8-12.

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We return to the scene on Mount Moriah, in conclusion, to recall that self-sacrifice is the supreme test of faith, and that implicit obedience is the only testimony of it. In either respect, Abraham was not found wanting. But when we come to the climax of the story on Mount Moriah, where a voice from Heaven says, "Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad," the type is lost. There was no voice like that on Calvary, no heavenly edict to cry, "Spare thy Son." He gave Him freely for us all, "the innocent for the guilty, the Just for the unjust." All of this was done that you might heed and accept the precious invitation,

"Come to Calvary's holy mountain,  
Sinners, ruined by the fall;  
Here a pure and healing fountain,  
Flows to you, to me, to all,  
In a full, perpetual tide,  
Opened when our Saviour died".

## PART THIRTY-SIX

### RECAPITULATION: SURVEY OF THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

From *A Class-Book of Old Testament History*, pp. 73-76

by G. F. Maclear, D.D.

Published by Macmillan, London, 1881,  
now long out of print.

With the death of Joseph the Patriarchal Age of Israel's history may be said to close. The *Family* had now thrown out many branches and was now on the point of emerging into the *Nation*. At this juncture, then, it may be well to look back, and review some of the chief features of the Patriarchal Life.

1. And the first of these that claims attention is its *Nomadic character*. Unlike the founders of Egypt, of Babylon, of Nineveh, the Patriarchs were not the builders of cities and towns, but *pilgrims and sojourners, dwellers in tents* (Heb. 11:9). But they were very different from rude hordes, like the Amalekites and other "sons of the desert," abhorring any higher mode of life. Abraham was no stranger to the highest form of civilization that his age afforded. He was acquainted with Ur, with Nineveh, with Damascus, with Egypt; he had left his home in one of the chief cities of Mesopotamia, not from choice, but in consequence of a direct personal call from God. Moreover, so far from regarding his present mode of life as an ultimate end, he and Isaac and Jacob were ever looking forward to a time when it would close, when their descendants should be *settled* in the Land of Promise, and become a great *nation*, when the portable *tent* should give way to the *city that had foundations* (Heb. 11:10, 13-16; comp. Gen. 24:7, 28:4, 49:4, 50:24). Hence, from time to time, as opportunity offered, we see the wandering life freely and willingly laid aside. Lot settled in Sodom (Gen. 13:10-12); Abraham in Egypt went direct to Pharaoh's

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court (Gen. 12:14); at Hebron he settled and became a "prince of God" in the midst of the Hittites (Gen. 23:6); Isaac not only lived near the Philistines, but occupied a *house* opposite the palace (Gen. 26:8), and practised *agriculture* (Gen. 26:12); and Joseph's *dream of the sheaves* points out that this was also continued in the time of Jacob (Gen. 37:7).

2. The *Family* was the center of the Patriarchal commonwealth. Its head was the source of authority and jurisdiction; he possessed the power of life and death (Gen. 38:24); he united in himself the functions of chief and priest; he offered the burnt-offering; he had his armed retainers (Gen. 14:14, 48:22, 34:25, 33:1); his intercourse with his wives (for polygamy was not forbidden) was free and unrestrained; the wife's consent was asked before wedlock (Gen. 24:57, 58); love hallowed the relations of Abraham with Sarah, of Isaac with Rebekah, of Jacob with Leah and Rachel; woman, indeed, did not occupy the position since conceded to her, but her position was far from degraded, and the sanctity of the marriage-bond was defended by severe laws, which made death the punishment for adultery (Gen. 38:24). Slavery, it is true, existed, but in the tents of Abraham the slave was ever treated with consideration, and not excluded from, but made a partaker of religious privileges (Gen. 17:13). The fidelity and attachmen of Eliezer the steward of Abraham's house, the mourning for Deborah, Rebekah's nurse (Gen. 35:8), are pleasing proofs of the peace that reigned in the Patriarchal household.

3. *Civilization*. The life of the Patriarchs was chiefly that of the shepherd, and their wealth consisted in their flocks and their herds. But besides practising agriculture they were not unacquainted with money and the precious metals. Abraham paid for the field of Machpelah with coin (Gen. 23:9-20), and the sons of Jacob took money with them into Egypt (Gen. 42:25, 35); while the gold

## THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

ring and armlets presented to Rebekah by Eliezer (Gen. 24:22), the bracelet and signet ring of Judah (Gen. 38:18), the ear-rings of Rachel (Gen. 35:4), the many-coloured coat of Joseph, indicate an acquaintance with the luxuries of life.

4. *Religion.* While other nations were rapidly learning to deify the powers of nature, the Patriarchs believed not only in a God above and beyond nature, but in a God Personal, Omnipotent, and Holy. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was no mere abstraction, no mere law. He could and did reveal Himself by angelic appearances, by visions, by dreams; He could console, strengthen, encourage; He could punish, rebuke, and on repentance forgive. Abraham, the *Friend of God* (Jas. 2:23), intercedes with Him in behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:23-33); Isaac is warned by Him against going down into Egypt (Gen. 26:2); Jacob is consoled by Him at Bethel when setting out into the land of exile (Gen. 28:13-15), and wrestles with Him by the fords of Jabbok till the break of day (Gen. 32:24); Joseph believes in His invisible but ever-present help in prison and in a strange land, and ascribes to Him all his wisdom in the interpretation of dreams (Gen. 41:16). The Divine Promise of a great future Abraham believed under circumstances of greatest trial, and his faith was *counted to him for righteousness* (Rom. 4:3). Moreover, the God of the Patriarchs was not a mere "national or household God." His sphere of operation was not restricted to the Patriarchs and their families; He is the God of all the earth (Gen. 24:3), the God of Righteousness and Holiness. He punishes the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-25); He plagues Pharaoh's house (Gen. 12:17); He is the God of the priest-king Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), and of the Philistine Abimelech (Gen. 20:3); He protects not only Isaac the "child of promise," but the outcast Ishmael the "child of the bond-

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woman" (Gen. 21:13); He is with Joseph in prison, but He sends dreams to Pharaoh, and through Joseph He saves Egypt from famine (Gen. 50:20).

5. The *Religious Worship* of the Patriarchs was in keeping with the simplicity of their creed. The head of the family was also the priest of the family. Whenever Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, reached any new spot in their pilgrimage, they invariably erected an altar, generally of stone and on a high situation (Gen. 22:9, 26:25, 35:7); there they called on the name of Jehovah, there they presented their burnt sacrifice, there they offered up their prayers. Their history also proves the existence of offering covenant-sacrifices, and celebrating covenant-feasts (Gen. 15:9-18); the making and paying of vows (Gen. 28:23); the erection of memorial pillars, and the consecration of them by pouring upon them oil and wine (Gen. 28:18); the rite of circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14); and the paying of tithes (Gen. 14:20).

6. The *Character of the Patriarchs* is never represented as perfect; their faults are freely exposed; theirs is no ideal history. If we compare the four most eminent amongst them, we seem to trace in (i) *Abraham*, "the faith that can remove mountains" in its power and in its fulness, revealing itself in unfaltering trust and unquestioning obedience under the most trying circumstances conceivable; in (ii) *Isaac*, the faith that can possess itself in patience, and discharge the ordinary duties of life in quietness and waiting; in (iii) *Jacob*, the violent contest of faith with the flesh, the higher with the lower nature, till by hard discipline the latter is purified, and the "Supplanter" becomes the "Prince," the "Prevailer with God"; in (iv) *Joseph*, the fidelity and perseverance of faith, revealed not only in the patient endurance of the most grievous trials, but in energetic action, and at length crowned with victory. "He unites in himself the noble



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trust and resolution of Abraham, with the quiet perseverance of Isaac, and the careful prudence of Jacob." He is moreover an eminent historic type of Christ, in (1) his persecution and sale by his brethren, (2) his resisting temptation, (3) his humiliation and exaltation, and (4) his dispensing to a famine-stricken people the bread of life, and (5) in the fulness of his forgiving love.

## ADDENDA

### LANGE: ON THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

(CDHCG, 389-390, verbatim)

Between Abram's connection with Hagar and the next manifestation of Jehovah there are full thirteen years. But then his faith is strengthened again, and Jehovah appears to him (17:1). The most prominent and important theophany in the life of Abram is the appearance of the three men (ch. 17). But this appearance wears its prevailing angelic form, because it is a collective appearance for Abram and Lot, and at the same time refers to the judgement upon Sodom. Hence the two angels are related to their central point as the sun-images to the sun itself, and this central point for Abram is Jehovah himself in his manifestation, but not a commissioned Angel of the Lord. Thus also this Angel visits Sarah (21:1; compare 18:10). But the Angel appears in the history of Hagar a second time (21:17), and this time as the Angel of God (Maleach Elohim), not as the Maleach Jehovah, for the question is not now about a return to Abram's house, but about the independent settlement with Ishmael in the wilderness. The person who tempts Abram (22:1) is Elohim—God as he manifests himself to the nations and their general ideas or notions, and the revelation is effected purely through the word. Now, also, in the most critical moment for Abram, the Angel of the Lord comes forward, calling down to him from heaven since there was need of a prompt message of relief. In the rest of the narrative this Angel of the Lord identifies himself throughout with Jehovah (vers. 12, 16). To Isaac also Jehovah appears (26:2), and the second time in the night (ver. 24). He appears to Jacob in the night in a dream (28:12, 13). Thus also he appears to him as the Angel of God in a dream (31:11), but throughout identified

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with Jehovah (ver. 13). Jehovah commands him to return home through the word (31:3). Laban receives the word of God in a dream (31:24). The greatest event of revelation in the life of Jacob is the grand theophany, in the night, through the vision, but the man who wrestles with him calls himself God and man (men) at the same time. According to the theory of a created angel, Jacob is not a wrestler with God (Israel), but merely a wrestler with the Angel. It is a more purely external circumstance which God uses to warn Jacob through the word to remove from Shechem (35:1). In the second peculiar manifestation of God to Jacob after his return from Mesopotamia (35:9), we have a clear and distinct reflection of the first (32:24). In the night-visions of Joseph, which already appear in the life of Isaac, and occur more frequently with Jacob, the form of revelation during the patriarchal period comes less distinctly into view. But then it enters again, and with new energy, in the life of Moses. The Angel of Jehovah (Ex. 3:2) is connected with the earlier revelation, and here also is identified with Jehovah and Elohim (ver. 4). But he assumes a more definite form and title, as the Angel of his face, since with the Mosaic system the rejection of any deifying of the creature comes into greater prominence, and since it is impossible that the face of God should be esteemed a creature.

The reasons which are urged for the old ecclesiastical view of the Angel of the Lord, are recapitulated by Kurtz in the following order: 1. The Maleach Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah. 2. Those to whom he appears recognize, name, and worship him as the true God. 3. He receives sacrifice and worship without any protest. 4. The biblical writers constantly speak of him as Jehovah. We add the reasons. 1. The theory of our opponents opens a wide door in the Old Testament for the deifying of the creature, which the Old Testament everywhere condemned;

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and the Romish worship of angels finds in it a complete justification. 2. The Socinians also gain an important argument for their rejection of the Trinity, if, instead of self-revelation of God, and of the self-distinction included in it in the Old Testament, there is merely a pure revelation through angels. As the fully developed doctrine of the Trinity cannot be found in the Old Testament, so no one can remove from the Old Testament the beginnings of that doctrine, the self-distinction of God, without removing the very substructure on which the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity rests, and without obscuring the Old Testament theology in its very centre and glory. 3. It would break the band of the organic unity between the Old and New Testaments if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation is a creature-angel, and that the New Testament revelation passes at one bound from this form to that of the God-man. The theory of the creature-angel in its continuation through a colossal adoration of angels, points downwards to the Rabbinic and Mohammedan doctrine of angels which has established itself in opposition to the New Testament Christology, and is bound together with that exaggerated doctrine of angels in more recent times, which ever corresponds with a veiled and obscure Christology. On the other hand, it removes from the New Testament Christology its Old Testament foundation and preparation which consists in this, that the interchange between God and men is in full operation, and must therefore prefigure itself in the images of the future God-man. 4. The doctrine of angels itself loses its very heart, its justification and interpretation, if we take away from it the symbolic angel-form, which rules it, as its royal centre, *i.e.* that angelic form which, as a real manifestation of God, as a typical manifestation of Christ, as a manifestation of angels, has the nature and force of a symbol. But with the

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obliteration of the symbolic element, all the remaining symbolic and angelic images, the cherubim and seraphim, will disappear, and with the key of biblical psychology in its representation of the development of the life of the soul, to an organ of revelation, we shall lose the key to the exposition of the Old Testament itself. 5. Augustin was consistent when, with his interpretation of the Angel of Jehovah as a creature-angel, he decidedly rejects the interpretation which regards the sons of God (ch. 6) as angel-beings; for the assumption of angels who, as such, venture to identify themselves with Jehovah, and notwithstanding they are in peril, abandon themselves to lustful pleasures and a magical transformation of their nature, combines two groundless and intolerable phantoms. We hold, therefore, that Old Testament theology, in its very heart and centre, is in serious danger from these two great prejudices, as the New Testament from the two great prejudices of a mere mechanical structure of the Gospels, and of the unapostolic and yet more than apostolic brothers of the Lord. (See the defence of the old ecclesiastical view in the Commentary by Keil, also with a reference to Kahnis, *de Angelo Domini diatribe*, 1858. The assertion of the opposite view held by Delitzsch in his Commentary, meets here its refutation).

6. The aspect of all theophanies as visions. It is a general supposition, that divine revelation is partly through visions, or through inward miraculous sights and sounds. We must, however, bring out distinctly the fundamental position, that every theophany is at the same time vision, and every vision a theophany; but that in the one case the objective theophany and in the other the subjective vision, is the prevailing feature. The subjective vision appears in the most definite form in dream-visions, of which Adam's sleep, and Abram's night-horror (chs. 2 and 15.), are the first striking portents. It develops itself with great

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power in the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and is of still greater importance in the lives of Samuel and Solomon, as also in the night-visions of Zechariah. We find them in the New Testament in the life of Joseph of Nazareth and in the history of Paul. It needs no proof to show that the manifestations of God or angels in dreams, are not outward manifestations to the natural senses. In the elements of the subjective dream-vision, veils itself, however, the existing divine manifestation. But what the dream introduces in the night-life, the seeing in images—that the ecstasy does in the day or ordinary waking life (see Lange: "Apostolic Age"). The ecstasy, as the removing of the mind into the condition of unconsciousness, or of a different consciousness, is the potential basis of the vision, the vision is the activity or effect of the ecstasy. But since the visions have historical permanence and results, it is evident that they are the intuitions of actual objective manifestations of God. Mere hallucinations of the mind lead into the house of error, spiritual visions build the historical house of God. But in this aspect we may distinguish peculiar dream-visions, night-visions of a higher form and power, momentary day-visions, apocalyptic groups or circles of visions, linked together in prophetic contemplation, and that habitual clear-sightedness as to visions which is the condition of inspiration. But that theophanies which are ever at the same time Angelophanies and Christophanies, and indeed as theophanies of the voice of God, or of the voice from heaven, of the simple appearance of angels, of their more enlarged and complete manifestations of the developed heavenly scene—that these are always conditioned through a disposition of fitness for visions, is clear from numerous passages in the Old and New Testaments (2 Ki. 6:17, Dan. 10:7; John 12:28-29, 20:10-12; Acts 9:8, 12:7-12, 22:9-14).

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## THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

### THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

(by H. Christopher, *The Remedial System*, pp. 146-150)

The promise that God would bless the whole world through him [Abraham] had reference to Christ, the son of Abraham, through whom God would fulfill his promise of blessing the whole world through the offspring of Abraham. Whilst it was the first and chief promise made to Abraham, it was the last in fulfillment. Nearly two thousand years intervened. It was ratified and covenanted by the blood of Christ, and looked to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to a circumcision that cut off the heart from all that is worldly and sensual, and to a seal that became the pledge of the purchased possession, and its settlement in the heavenly Canaan, by the resurrection from the dead, when the spiritual people of God cross the Jordan of death, and take possession of the land of promise, for which even Abraham looked, when he sought "a city whose maker and builder is God."

This promise and its blessings have no connection with the others made to Abraham. They differ as widely as flesh and spirit, and as earth and heaven. They connect or coalesce nowhere. The first were but preparatory and necessary to the last. When the last appeared, the first had served their chief, if not all their, purpose. The first had chief reference to man's body, while the last has chief reference to man's spirit. And as the spirit of man is superimposed, as it were, upon the body, and is capable of a separate and independent existence, so was the last promise superimposed upon the first, and is capable of existing, and does exist, independently of it. Hence, the promises and the covenants by which they were ratified, connect with each other only as the flesh connects with the spirit. Between them lies an impassable gulf. There is no possible passage from the first to the last. The Jew has no rights and privileges under Christ by virtue of his

being the son of Abraham according to the flesh; for the promise was; "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and he was the child of promise and of faith. The christian is the child of promise and of faith, and hence is reckoned through Isaac as a special creation of God, and is, therefore, himself a new creation. The last creation supersedes all former ones, and by this supersession abrogates them. The adoption of the children of Abraham as the special and peculiar people of God, set aside the adoption by creation, and during the time of their adoption, the natural adoption was set aside, and the rest of mankind ignored, and treated as an uncovenanted people. So when the christian adoption came in, the Jewish was set aside, and all the rest of mankind, not embraced in the new adoption, were ignored and treated as uncovenanted. Hence, under christianity there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; but all the families, nations, and races of mankind are *one in Christ*, in perfect fulfillment of the promise: "*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"

All this is necessarily true. The Remedial System is developed by differentiations which mark the boundaries of the development. The patriarch had no privileges, special and peculiar, after the calling of Abraham. By that call God isolated a part from the whole, and made this part his special care. By the new creation through Christ another isolation was made, which placed Jew and Greek on the same plane before God, and abrogated all special and peculiar rights or privileges claimed by the Jews.

This is necessarily true from another consideration. The claim of the Jew rested on an explicit covenant. That covenant recognized him as the chosen of God, through a means wholly different from that by which he had recognized the patriarch, and does now recognize the Christian.



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This consideration or means was his *birth*. He was the son of Abraham according to the flesh, and entitled, consequently, only to the rights and privileges guaranteed by the covenant ordained to grant and secure these. He could claim only under the stipulated grants of his covenant. Under other and different covenants, and made with other people, he could, of course, have no claim or right whatever. His circumcision effected all it was designed to effect, and meant more than the Jew was willing to accept. It cut him off from all the rest of the world, and also from all other covenants of God, but according to the flesh. His circumcision bound him down to the provisions and obligations of that covenant, and confined him within its prescribed limits. What claim, therefore can a Jew have to the grants and blessings of a covenant that has no special reference to him whatever, and that was not made with him as a Jew? The European had as well claim equal rights with the American under the constitution of the United States. The Jew was the chosen of God only according to the flesh, and entitled only to blessings of his covenant. He is not the chosen of God according to the spirit, or the seed of Isaac according to the promise, and hence he can have no right with those who are.

There are four things necessary to make a nation the peculiar and chosen people of God, and all these obtained in the case of the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. These things are, 1. A creation. This we have in the birth of Isaac. His conception was a miracle, and hence a creation. 2. A seal. This we have in circumcision. 3. A purchase. This we have in the deliverance of this people from Egypt. And 4. A covenant. And this we have in the covenant made before Mt. Sinai. All these are peculiar and consistent, and perfectly harmonious with all that God has promised, or has done for, the Jews. They

were all equally necessary, and they follow each other as necessary results one of the other. The seal came to ratify the creation, the purchase, in demonstration of the fulfillment of the promise, and the covenant, in order that the people might also pledge themselves by covenant. By this the people became cemented and organized into a nation. As such they needed laws and institutions for their government and welfare as a people; and as the people of God, religious institutions for the various purposes which God had in view with that people.

It will be observed that this covenant made with Abraham's descendants arose under that which covenanted them as the peculiar people of God, and was, consequently, entirely Jewish. The covenant of Mt. Sinai was made with that people, and the institutions subsequently given, were given to that people, and to no other. The Jewish institution, in all its entirety, was as verily circumcised as were the people for whose benefit it was ordained. It was as completely isolated from all other religions and peoples, as were that people. Hence, it had no connection with any other, nor relation, except that of opposition.

The covenant stipulated and embraced no more than did the promise under which it was made. It was a ratification, or acceptance on their part, of the stipulations of the promise. It was the covenant by which God renewed his promise to be their God, and by it the people accepted the offer, and covenanted to be the people of God. This covenant bound both parties to their pledge—God to be their God, and them to be his obedient people. It did not, and could not stipulate and grant more than did the promise; hence, all these were temporal in their nature. This completed all that God had to provide for that people. Henceforth there was naught for either party to do, but to carry out the provisions of the covenant which formulated the promise.

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But this covenant was not only temporary as respects the rights, privileges, and blessings which it secured to that people; but it was also temporary in its duration. The people broke that covenant: and "a covenant broken on one side, is broken on both." It was faulty in that it only contemplated and provided for man's temporal wants. Indeed, this was the fault of the whole Jewish fabric, from the inception to the close. This was foreseen; and not only foreseen, but the whole structure was but a means to an end; a measure to give time for the preparation and institution of a better. The promise of God under which the whole Jewish structure arose, was not the first and chief promise that God made to Abraham, nor his chief purpose in calling him. This chief and greatest promise was that through him he would bless the whole human family. This promise the apostle interprets as having reference to Christ, and consequently, it was sooner or later, to take precedence of all others. It could not be annulled by any subsequent promise, unless that promise annulled, at the same time, all former ones. But this the subsequent promises did not do, as is affirmed by the people.

The promise which had reference to Christ, preceded the ratification of that concerning the land several years, and antedated the covenant of circumcision twenty-four years. The covenant at Mt. Sinai followed the latter four hundred and six thereafter. So that nothing which transpired under the later promises could annul the first.

The first and chief promise which contemplated spiritual blessings and a spiritual offspring through Isaac, was not ratified, fulfilled, or covenanted, for nearly two thousand years. All that has grown out of this promise has no connection with what arose under the others. It differs from them in every respect. It differed from them in the beginning. It came into the world through a different line. There were two lines of descendants in

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Isaac, as two promises were fulfilled in his descendants. The one line was "the seed of Abraham according to the flesh," and the other "the seed according to the spirit," the latter of which is reckoned the true line under the covenant of the first promise. This excludes the children according to the flesh from all rights and privileges pertaining to the children according to the spirit. As respects, therefore, their nature, rights, and privileges, the Jewish and Christian institutions differ radically and entirely; to that degree as to exclude the one wholly from the other. The creation, the circumcision or seal, the purchase, and the covenant, that made the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh the people of God, have no place nor value under the Christian institution. The latter has its own creation, seal, purchase, and covenant, all of which are spiritual and eternal, and these give the christian no rights or privileges under the former. Hence, as respects institutions differing so completely and widely, there can be no community of rights and privileges; nor can the one flow out of the other so as to establish any genetic connection between them.

As the spiritual and the eternal necessarily supersede the fleshly and temporal, so does the Jewish institution, in whole and in part, give way to the christian. Under the latter arises a people of God as distinct from the former as spirit is from flesh. The christian is a new creation, and all that pertains to his creation is new. Before it the Jew and Gentile stand on the same ground. Both must become the subjects of this new creation before they can be regarded as belonging to the people of God. All the claim which the Jew once preferred, goes for naught under the operation of the new creation. A new birth is just as essential for the Jew as for the Gentile. Hence, the Jew's creation, seal, purchase, and covenant are all naught when he stands before the christian's. His birth of the

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flesh avails nothing, and neither does his circumcision. Nothing is now acceptable to God but the new creation in Christ.

These things being true, all that is Jewish has passed away. The Jews are no longer the people of God. Their whole religious service has perished; and what purpose God has now with that people remains to be seen. That he has no further purpose with them in regard to the fulfillment of his promise of blessing the world through them by Christ, is evident from the fact that christianity has superseded Judaism, and that the whole religious service of that people perished with the total destruction of their temple. Christ is the end of the law, and of all that pertained to it. It was but a pedagogue to lead the Jews to Christ; so that when he came all that was Jewish was set aside, and the pedagogue was dismissed. All now become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free; neither male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus." And all who are Christ's by virtue of the new creation, the spiritual seal, the eternal purchase, and the everlasting covenant, are "the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise": "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

(N. B. After hunting several years for a copy of Christopher's book, I found it in the Dallas Christian College Library—C. C.)

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## THE EXCELLENCE OF FAITH

(Read Rom. 5:1-11).

In the study of First Principles the term which first engages our attention is *faith*. We shall find that it occupies a prominent place in connection not only with conversion, but also with every phase of Christian activity and growth.

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Faith is one of the most far-reaching words in the vocabulary of inspiration. Without faith none of the blessings of the spiritual realm would be available to man. Contrariwise, on the ground of faith, such blessings as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived (1 Cor. 2:9), are within his power to appropriate and enjoy.

Faith is an oft-recurring word in the New Testament. Jesus had much to say about it, and the word is used repeatedly in the Epistles. Paul states expressly that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:). .

The excellence of faith is indicated in scripture by the following representations:

1. *Faith is superior to things and circumstances of this material world.*

When given full sway in the human heart it rises above the circumstances of life and controls them. The power of faith is described in such scriptures as Matt. 17:20, Mark 9:23 and 11:23, Luke 17:6. Christians of this materialistic age, in bondage as they are to the "tyranny of things," are inclined to look on these sayings of the Master with more or less skepticism. The tragedy is that we have never really learned to walk by faith. We cannot testify that these sayings are true for the simple reason that we have never learned to stand on God's promises. True, we claim to do so, and we sing "Standing on the Promises," but always with mental reservations. It is only through the exercise of implicit faith that we can throw off the fetters of anxiety and fear which enslave us to this present evil world. We are willing to obey the Lord in confession and baptism, but we certainly fall far short of His teaching in regard to such everyday matters as fear, worry, forgiveness, humility, and the like. (See Matt. 5:3-12, 21-26, 38-42; 6:25-33; 7:1-5, 7-12, etc. Cf. 1 John 4:18) He might well say to us as to His disciples of old, "O ye of little faith!"

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### 2. *Faith is the ground of our justification.*

"Being therefore justified by faith"—not by faith *alone*, or mere intellectual assent (the theologians have added the word *alone*)—"we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Not by faith *alone*, because "faith apart from works" (*i.e.*, works of faith) is dead (Jas. 2:26). The faith that is "unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39) expresses itself in works of obedience, sacrifice and service (Rom. 12:1-2). To walk by faith is to "live by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25). God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son as a propitiation for our sins (John 3:16), but we must appropriate this matchless Gift by faith. By true faith in Him we "have access into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:2). "For by grace ye have been saved through faith, and that" (*i.e.*, that *salvation*) "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

### 3. *Faith is the motivating principle of all Christian worship and service.*

True worship is (1) communion of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit, (2) on the terms of the truth as revealed in scripture (John 4:24). This can be realized only through faith. Repentance is faith *choosing*; the confession is faith *speaking*; baptism is faith *obeying*; the Lord's Supper is faith *remembering*; liberality is faith *acknowledging* God's ownership; prayer is faith *communing*; meditation is faith *pondering*; and the whole Christian life is faith *serving*. Therefore we are justified by faith. From the day of conversion to that of the putting on of immortality, the actuating principle in the life of every true Christian is faith.

### 4. *Implicit faith, along with obedience, is a necessary condition to the answer of prayer.* (John 14:12-15, 15:5-10, etc.).

(1) Acts 12:1-17. We read here that many of the early disciples were gathered together in the house of Mary,

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the mother of John Mark, praying for Peter's deliverance from prison. Yet they were "amazed" when their prayer was answered and Peter stood in their midst. Most of our praying is of this kind; it has little conviction back of it. (Matt. 21:22).

(2) The prayer of faith, *i.e.*, the petition offered in harmony with the teaching of God's word, will not go unanswered.

"Unanswered yet? The prayer your lips have pleaded  
In agony of heart these many years?  
Does faith begin to fail? is hope departing?  
And thing you all in vain those falling tears?  
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer,  
You shall have your desire, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Tho' when you first presented  
This one petition at the Father's throne,  
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking  
So urgent was your heart to make it known.  
Tho' years have passed since then, do not despair;  
The Lord will answer you, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say 'ungranted';  
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done;  
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,  
And God will finish what He has begun;  
If you will keep the incense burning there,  
His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;  
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock;  
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,  
Nor quails before the loudest thunder-shock.  
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,  
And cries, 'It shall be done, sometime, somewhere!'  
And cries, 'It shall be done, sometime, somewhere!'"



## THE NATURE OF FAITH

5. *The blessings and rewards of the gospel are all received and realized through faith.*

Among these are: (1) salvation from the guilt of sin (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 10:43, 16:31, 26:18); (2) spiritual life (John 20:31, 6:40, John 3:16, 36; 1 John 5:12); (3) spiritual light (John 1:9, 8:12, 12:36); (4) heavenly adoption (Gal. 3:26); (5) the indwelling Spirit (John 7:39, Eph. 1:13, Gal. 3:14); (6) justification (Rom. 5:1, Gal. 2:16); (7) true righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17, 10:6, 3:22); (8) true worship (John 4:24, Eph. 3:12); (9) providential oversight (1 Pet. 1:5); (10) eternal rest (Heb. 4:3). In fact the "inheritance" of all the promises of God is to be realized through faith (Heb. 6:12).

*Conclusion:* No wonder then that faith is represented to be the foundation which supports the entire pyramid of Christian virtues that true disciples build, one stone upon the other, and upon which they climb heavenward (2 Pet. 1:5-7). True Christians "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

Faith, hope and love, according to Paul, constitute the abiding trinity of spiritual virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). Of these three, love is "greatest"; because, in "the home over there," faith will have given way to spiritual knowledge, and hope to fruition, leaving only love to consummate the blissful intercourse of the redeemed with their heavenly Father (Rev. 21:1-5).

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## THE NATURE OF FAITH

(Read Hebrews, ch. 11, esp. v. 1.)

The eleventh chapter of *Hebrews* has been called "Israel's Roll of Honor." It is the great "faith chapter" of the Bible. It is an inspired discourse on the subject of faith. The discourse begins properly with the last three verses of ch. 10, in which the writer speaks of a faith that

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is "unto the saving of the soul." The subject-matter which follows, in ch. 11, is an analysis of that kind of faith, what it is, whence it is obtained, and how it operates unto salvation, as exemplified in the lives of many illustrious believers of olden times. The writer proves to be an excellent sermonizer, as we might expect in view of his having been inspired by the Spirit of God. He states his text in v. 1, and then proceeds to develop it with appropriate illustrations drawn from Old Testament history. His concluding exhortation follows, in ch. 12, vs. 1-2. We shall attempt here to evaluate the teaching of this great chapter on the *nature* (i.e., the original and essential characteristics) of faith.

Let me repeat that the kind of faith under consideration here is the faith that works "unto the saving of the soul." By some this has been called "*saving faith*." Not that faith of *itself* will save any one, because it will not; but that the right kind of faith will motivate the believer to such intelligent and sincere cooperation with God, on God's terms and according to His plan, that He may consistently save the one who so believes. It is God who pardons and saves, but always through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

*What is faith?* Considering the excellence of faith, it is exceedingly important that we know what faith is. I am profoundly thankful that the Holy Spirit has not left us in darkness regarding this essential matter. Nor has he left it to our finite minds to formulate a definition. We are not compelled to go either to philosophy or to theology for a definition of faith—we have it in clear, unmistakable terms, in the Christian Scriptures.

What, then, are the essential characteristics of faith? This question is fully answered in the words of our text, as follows:

1. *Faith is "assurance . . ."* "Assurance" is defined as "confidence inspired or expressed," "that which pro-

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duces certainty." It connotes positiveness, certainty, even *boldness*.

2. *Faith* is "assurance of things hoped for." That is, faith is the foundation of hope.

(1) *Authorized Version*: "the substance of things hoped for." The word *substance* means in our language "the stuff, material, or matter of which anything is composed." It is used here, however, in its *derivative* sense. It is derived from the Latin prefix, *sub* (under) and the Latin participle *stans* (standing). *Substance*, then is *that which stands under*. Faith is that which stands under hope. Cf. *Living Oracles*: "faith is the confidence of things hoped for." *Moffatt*: "faith means we are confident of what we hope for." *Weymouth*: "faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope." *Goodspeed*: "faith means the assurance of what we hope for."

(2) Faith is the foundation of hope. This is true in every department of human activity. It is true in the *business* world. I visited a friend on one occasion to solicit a contribution from him for a worthy cause. Having heard my case, his reply was: "I believe in your proposition, and I am sorry that I am not in a position to help just at this time. But I will do something later. I have invested a considerable sum of money in an oil well in Texas, and I am expecting returns from this investment within a few months. If you will come back about a year from this date, I will give you a substantial donation." I thanked him, and departed. About a year later I called at his office a second time, and as soon as I entered he looked at me and exclaimed: "I know what you have come for, but I can't do anything for you." "What is the trouble?" I asked, "didn't the oil well turn out satisfactorily?" And in extreme disgust he said: "I wish I had the money back that I sank in that hole in the ground." The first time I called he was extremely hopeful, because

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he believed in the enterprise in which he had invested; the second time I found him with hopes blasted, because he had lost all faith in it. Where there is no faith, there is no hope.

(3) This is also true in the *social realm*. In the course of time a young couple will fall in love, marry, and establish a home. The success of their undertaking will depend largely on their faith in each other. On this foundation of faith they will erect a structure of dreams and plans and hopes. But let the confidence of one in the other be destroyed and this structure will fall to the ground. Both marriage and home are erected on a foundation of faith.

(4) So, in the *realm of spirit*, as elsewhere, hope rests upon faith. Every act of worship and service we perform is motivated by faith. Faith underlies the pyramid of Christian virtues (2 Pet 1:5-7). And all our aspirations and hopes respecting "the home over there," "the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:4) rest on faith. In everything faith is the foundation of hope.

(5) *Illustrations from the chapter* (Heb. 11). (a) Abel's hope that his offering would be acceptable to God rested on faith, v. 4. (1 John 3:12) (b) Enoch's walk with God was a walk of faith, v. 5. (c) Faith was the foundation of Noah's hope of deliverance from impending judgment, v. 7. (d) Abraham's hope of attaining the far country which he was to receive for an inheritance was founded on faith, v. 8. Also, his hope of receiving Isaac back from the dead was inspired by faith, "from whence he did also in a figure receive him back," vs. 17-19. (e) Sarah's expectation of a son, the child of promise, rested on faith, v. 11. (f) Joseph's hope that the children of Israel would ultimately take possession of the land of promise rested upon his faith, v. 22. (g) The aspirations, hopes and plans of Moses for his people, and his matchless

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efforts in their behalf, were all inspired by his faith, vs. 24-29. In every example cited, faith is presented as the foundation of hope.

3. *Faith is a "conviction . . ."* A "conviction" is defined as a "strong belief," "something firmly believed." The faith which operates unto the saving of the soul is something more than a passive intellectual *assent*. It is a *conviction*. It *must* be a conviction, one that takes hold of the soul and determines the course of one's life. In the light of this definition, it is obvious that faith is precisely the thing that is lacking in the modern church.

4. Faith is "a conviction of *things not seen*," i.e., a conviction *with respect to* things not seen.

(1) *Authorized Version*: "the evidence of things not seen." *Moffatt*: "Faith means . . . we are convicted of what we do not see." *Weymouth*: "a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see." *Goodspeed*: "our conviction about things we cannot see."

(2) Note that faith is a conviction with respect to things *not* seen. I have never seen Paris, but I have a conviction that there is a city by that name and that it is the capital of France. My conviction is the result of satisfactory evidence. Things which are seen are matters of observation and knowledge, but things that are not seen belong to the realm of faith. God who is a Spirit (John 4:24) cannot be seen, and is therefore to be apprehended only by faith. Angels, spirit, resurrection, immortality, heaven, etc., all these realities of the unseen world are matters of faith. Faith pertains not to the things that are illusive and transitory, but to the things which are abiding. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

(3) We have never seen God, but we *believe* that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (Heb. 11:6). We were not present to see the worlds

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created, but our conviction is that they were "framed by the word of God" (v. 3). We have never seen Christ, our Elder Brother, but we believe in Him as the One who is abundantly able to save us from sin and mortality. We have never had a glimpse of heaven, but we believe that the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in us, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to our mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in us (Rom. 8:11). Therefore we are exhorted to live by faith, to walk by faith and to die in the faith.

(4) *Illustrations from the chapter* (Heb. 11). (a) Abel brought his offering to the altar with the conviction that the God whom he had never seen, but in whom he believed, would accept it, v. 4. (b) In Noah's heart there was an overwhelming conviction that judgment would come upon the antediluvian world because of its wickedness. Although summer and winter, and seedtime and harvest, continued to come and go as usual for one hundred and twenty years, he never faltered. Through all the trying experiences of this period of grace he retained his conviction. Because that during all these intervening years there was no evidence in nature of the impending catastrophe, it was a conviction with respect to things not seen, v. 7. (c) Abraham left home and kindred and friends, and started on a strange journey to a land both unknown to him and unseen by him. He had no idea how far he would have to travel in order to reach it. All that moved him was a conviction with respect to the far country and a conviction that God would give it to him for an inheritance. Vs. 8-12. (d) These fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all died in the faith, having never received the literal fulfilment of the promises. So far as we know they all died without possessing a single acre of the land of promise save the few square feet they

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had purchased for a burial ground. It seems that as they continued in their pilgrimage their faith became clearer, and they began to look beyond the *literal* to the *spiritual* fulfilment of the promise, in the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, vs. 13-16. (e) Joseph's conviction with respect to the exodus of his people from Egypt pertained to an event far in the future, an event not seen, v. 22. (f) Moses, "the man who saw an undying flame," chose to share ill treatment with the people of God, above the temporary enjoyment of the pleasures of sin, because he "endured as seeing him who is invisible" (vs. 23-29). In all these cases, faith was a conviction with respect to things not seen.

(5) As in the various cases cited from Old Testament history, so it is with respect to faith in the present dispensation and under the new covenant: (a) our faith must be something more than mere assent; (b) it must be genuine conviction in order to work "unto the saving of the soul"; (c) it must be conviction with respect to things not seen, viz., God, the Son of God, the Spirit of God, the future life, heaven, etc.; (d) this faith undergirds all our spiritual blessings, aspirations and hopes (1 Cor. 2:6-10).

*Conclusion:* 1. *This inspired definition of faith is perfect and complete.* Nothing can be taken from it without weakening its import. Nothing *can* be added to it that would give it greater force.

2. Christian faith takes in all those convictions with respect to God, the Son of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, immortality, heaven, and the like; all of which are eternal realities above and beyond the realm of time and space. Like Moses, we "endure as seeing him who is invisible," "looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Like Abraham, we realize that we are pilgrims and strangers upon this earth, that our present dwelling places are but the tabernacles of a night-

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time; and, like him, we anticipate a more glorious fulfilment of the promises than would be possible in this world of places and things (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Our ultimate goal is that heavenly country towards which he made his pilgrimage. In the words of Emily Dickinson:

"I never saw a moor,  
I never saw the sea,  
Yet know I how the heather looks,  
And what a wave must be.

"I never spoke with God,  
Nor visited in heaven;  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the chart were given."

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## THE SOURCE OF FAITH

(Read Rom. 10:1-17).

Having ascertained the essential nature of faith (1) the assurance of things hoped for, and (2) a conviction with respect to things not seen, we shall now turn our attention to the *source* of faith. Whence is the faith obtained that is "unto the saving of the soul"? We may find the answer to this important question by turning again to the cases cited in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:

1. *Abel*, v. 4. Whence did Abel obtain his conviction that the offering of a sacrifice of blood would be pleasing to God and would bring him God's blessing? Evidently *from the word of God*. It seems obvious that God laid down the law of sacrifice as soon as man fell, in order to establish the principle that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Abel, in bringing an offering in which blood was shed, obeyed the law; Cain, in bringing the "fruit of the ground," disobeyed



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it (1 John 3:12). This explains why Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's rejected.

"That this institution was of divine origin is evident from several considerations: I. We learn from Hebrews 11:4, that Abel offered his sacrifice in faith. But in Romans 10:17, we are told that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' And hence it follows that Abel could not have offered in faith without a command from God . . . II. It could not have been a human invention, because Reason can perceive no connection between the means and the end. It is evidently a *positive* and not a moral or natural institution. III. Its universality is another proof of its divine origin. Mr. Faber says that 'throughout the whole world there is a notion prevalent that the gods can be appeased only by bloody sacrifices. There is no heathen people,' he adds, 'that can specify a time when they were without sacrifice. All have had it from a time which is not reached by their genuine records. Tradition alone can be brought forward to account for its origin.' IV. The distinction between clean and unclean beasts even in the time of Noah (Gen. 7:2) proves also the divine origin of sacrifice. This is a distinction which is altogether *positive*, and which has no foundation in either reason or philosophy" (Milligan, SR, 67).

2. *Enoch*, v. 5. Enoch's walk of faith was evidently inspired and directed by the word of God (Gen. 5:24).

3. *Noah*, v. 7. How did Noah obtain his conviction that an overwhelming deluge would come upon the antediluvian world? How did he obtain the conviction that in the building of the ark a means of deliverance would be provided him and his family? Evidently from the word of God. God told him the flood would come in due time. God told him to build the ark and how to build it. God gave him the plans for it. God promised him deliverance through the instrumentality of the ark. *And Noah be-*

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*lieved God.* His conviction was inspired not by any manifestation in nature, but solely by the word of God. See Gen. 6:13-22, 7:1-5, 8:15-17.

4. *Abraham*, vs. 8-19. Whence did Abraham obtain his conviction regarding the land to which he journeyed? Whence did he obtain his belief that this land would be given him for an inheritance? From the word of God. See Gen. 12:1-4, 13:14-18, etc. It was God who told him about the "far country" and promised it to him for an inheritance. Whence did Abraham and Sarah obtain their conviction regarding the birth of the "child of promise?" From the word of God (Gen. 17:15-21). Whence did Abraham obtain his conviction that God would not allow Isaac to suffer an untimely end (Heb. 11:19)? From the word of God. Had not Isaac been miraculously conceived and born? Were not the details of the Abrahamic promise to be worked out through him? (Gen. 12:3, 13:16, 17:19, Heb. 11:18). Cf. Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6, Jas 2:23.

5. *Joseph*, v. 22. Whence did Joseph obtain his conviction that his people would leave Egypt and repossess Canaan? Evidently from God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-4, 13:14-18, 17:15-21, 26:2-5, 28:12-17).

6. *Moses*, vs. 22-29. From whom did Moses receive his commission to lead his people out of bondage? From whom did he receive the Law "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19)? From God Himself. See Exo. 3:1—4:17, 20:1-26, Deut. 5:1-33, etc. Who was his constant Guide and Protector through all those terrible marches in the wilderness? Who rained manna from heaven upon the starving people? Who guided them by means of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night? Moses constantly "endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

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7. *Joshua*, v. 29. Whence did Joshua obtain his confidence that the walls of Jericho would fall? From Jehovah's word. He went to God for a war program, in his extremity, and God supplied it (*Josh.* 6:1-20).

8. *Rahab*, v. 30. Whence did Rahab obtain her belief that she should give aid and succor to the men of Joshua's army? Evidently from her knowledge of God's promises and judgments (*John.* 2:9-21, 6:22-25, *Jas.* 2:25).

9. *The creation*, v. 3. Whence do we obtain our belief that our physical universe was the materialization of God's word? Our conviction that "what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (*i.e.*, that this universe was not fashioned out of pre-existing materials, as the evolutionists and materialists contend)? From the word of God. (See *Psa.* 33:6, 9; 148:5, etc. Note that the expression, "God *said*," is found ten consecutive times in *Gen.* 1. Cf. also *John* 1:1-3, *Heb.* 1:1-3, 2 *Pet.* 3:5-8, etc.).

10. *Other great heroes and heroines of faith*, vs. 32-39. All received their inspiration to deeds of heroism from the attractions and impulsions of God's word. So, then, belief cometh of hearing the divine word, as our text says. Believers in all ages endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

*Conclusion:* So much for the examples from Old Testament history. But what about the faith that operates unto the salvation of the soul, in the present dispensation, under the new covenant?

1. From what source do we obtain our belief that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (*Heb.* 11:6)? From the testimony about Him as revealed and recorded in Scripture. From the complete and perfect revelation of Him afforded us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whom to know aright is eternal life. *John* 15:9-11, 1 *Cor.* 2:6-16, *Heb.* 1:1-3, 1 *Pet.* 1:3-12, etc.

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2. From what source do we obtain our conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? From the testimony presented in the Scriptures, particularly that of the gospel records. This is our only source of accurate information about Him. See John 17:20, John 20:30-31, Acts 15:7, Acts 17:11-12, etc. Why should we reject the testimony of these competent eye-witnesses, these men who walked and talked and supped with Him, and listen to the quibblings of half-baked professors removed from Him by a span of twenty centuries?

3. Whence do we obtain our convictions respecting the future life and its rewards and retributions? From the testimony of Scripture? From the great and exceeding precious promises of God.

4. Rom. 10:17. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Faith does not come by feeling, nor by a direct operation of the Spirit, nor in answer to prayer, but faith *does* come by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:6-8, 1 Thess. 2:13).

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(Heb. 11:1-19, esp. v. 13)

One of the most illustrious characters of ancient times to whom our attention is called by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people.

Abraham's life and walk were so eminently motivated by faith, that his name has gone down in sacred history as the Father of the Faithful, and as the Friend of God (Rom. 4:17, Gal. 3:29, Isa. 41:8, 2 Chron. 20:7, Jas. 2:23).

1. *Note, in the first place, that Abraham's whole life was a pilgrimage of faith.*

(1) *It was by faith that he first went out from his native home, Ur of the Chaldees. As faith comes from*

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hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), so he went out *in response to God's command* (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). He did not go out in consequence of any urge within himself, but solely in obedience to God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance" (Heb. 11:8).

(2) *By faith he made his initial pilgrimage from Ur of Chaldea to the land of promise.* As faith is a conviction *with respect to things not seen* (Heb. 11:1), he therefore "went out not knowing whither he went" (v. 8). Commenting on this verse, Milligan says: "Here we have given the fact that Abraham received a call from God; that by his call he was required to leave his home and kindred in Ur of Chaldea, and go out into a strange land; that this land, though promised to his posterity, was wholly unknown to him at the time; and that he nevertheless obeyed God, and went out of his own country, not knowing whither he went" (Milligan, NTCH, in loco.)

(3) *By faith "he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own," etc.* It would seem from this that Abraham never regarded Canaan as his *home*. He knew of course, by faith, that when the Canaanites should have filled up the cup of their iniquity to the full, in the fourth generation, the land would be given to his posterity for an everlasting possession, as indeed it was in the time of Joshua (Gen. 15:12-21). But until that time neither he nor his seed, he realized, had any rights or privileges there beyond what might have been accorded other strangers under like circumstances. (Cf. Acts 7:5). Hence Abraham died without owning a foot of the land other than the cave of Machpelah, which he purchased from Ephron the Hittite for a burying-ground (Gen. 23:3-20); and hence, also, neither he, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, ever established a permanent residence in the country. They were satisfied to live in movable tents, feeling assured that "according to the promise," they were to fall heir to

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a better inheritance than any that is to be found on this earth.

(4) *By faith he looked beyond the literal to the spiritual fulfilment of the promise.* "For he looked for the city which hath the foundations," etc. (Heb. 11:9-10). "From this and other like passages we are constrained to think that God had given the patriarchs information with regard to the heavenly country, far beyond what is now recorded in Genesis or any other part of the Old Testament. What we find there at present was written for our instruction, as well as for the benefit of the ancients (Rom. 15:4). But much may have been said to them which would in no way benefit us; and which was, therefore, excluded from the Canon by Moses, Ezra and other inspired writers. The origin of sacrifice, for instance, is nowhere expressly mentioned in the Old Testament; nor is there anything said in it respecting the origin of the Patriarchal priesthood. Information, clear, full, and explicit, on all such matters, was of course needed by the ancients; but for us the more general instructions of the Bible are quite sufficient. And so, also, we think it was with respect to the heavenly country. The Patriarchs seem to have received revelations concerning it which have never been transmitted to us; for it is obvious that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived in constant expectation of entering it at the close of their earthly pilgrimage. They were satisfied to live here as strangers and pilgrims, knowing that they had in heaven a city having permanent foundations whose Architect and Framer is God. This city is manifestly the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:28, Heb. 12:22, 13:14), which for the present is located in heaven, but which will hereafter descend to the earth after the latter shall have been renovated by fire (Rev. 21). Then will be fulfilled in its full and proper sense the promise made to Abraham, that he and his seed should be the heirs of the world (Rom. 4:13)" (Milligan, *ibid.*).

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"In the land of fadeless day,  
Lies 'the city four-square';  
It shall never pass away,  
And ther is 'no night there.'  
God shall 'wipe away all tears,'  
There's no death, no pain nor fears,  
And they count not time by years,  
For there is 'no night there.'"

(5) *By faith he anticipated the birth of the "child of promise"* (Heb. 11:11-12, Gal. 4:23, Gen. 17:15-21, 18:9-15, 21:1-7). The miraculous conception and birth of Isaac, typical in respect to its *supernaturalness* of that of Jesus, were direct fulfilments of the promise of Jehovah which Abraham believed. In this respect Abraham's faith was even greater than Sarah's, who, on being told, at ninety years of age and long after she had passed the age of child-bearing, that she should give birth to a son, received the announcement at first with considerable incredulity (Gen. 18:9-15).

(6) *By faith he offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah*, "accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham's faith was such that he knew that the promise of God (Gen. 17:21, 21:12) could not and would not fail, "and as he could not anticipate that God would interfere, as He did, so as to prevent the immolation of his son, there was really left for him no alternative other than simply to conclude that God would restore Isaac to life. This conviction seems to be implied in the remark which he made to his servants, 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again.' The word rendered *come again* (*we will return*) is in the plural number, and seems to indicate a belief on the part of Abraham, that God would immediately raise Isaac up again from the dead" (Milligan, *ibid.*) The

account of this, the severest trial and consequently the supreme manifestation of Abraham's faith, is related in Gen. 22:1-14).

(7) *Having walked in faith, he likewise "died in faith,* not having received the promises but having seen them and greeted them from afar," etc. What were the "promises?" (a) That Abraham should have a numerous offspring (Gen. 13:16, 15:3-5, 17:2-4, 22:16); (b) that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. 17:1-8); (c) that He would give to him and his seed an everlasting inheritance (Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 15:18-21, 17:8); (d) that through him and his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 2:3, 22:18). With respect to these four details, Abraham looked beyond their *literal* to their *spiritual* fulfilment. "To each of these God attached a double significance. . . . They each consisted, so to speak, of two elements, one of which had reference to the carnal side of the covenant, and the other to the spiritual side; one to the type, and the other to the antitype. Thus Abraham was made the honored father of two families: to each of which an inheritance was promised, and through each of which the world was to be blessed" (Milligan, *ibid.*). Abraham, it would seem, understood all this, understood by faith that the spiritual side of the promise would be realized through his seed, the Messiah, and consequently rejoiced to "see his day, and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). (Cf. Gal. 4:21-31, 3:6-13, etc.) Hence, he died in faith, knowing that the promise in its various details would be worked out according to God's eternal purpose and plan. Hence, too, by his constant life and walk of faith, he admitted that he did not seek a home on this earth, that here he considered himself merely a stranger and sojourner, that he did not expect to enter into possession of his true home until he should have reached the end of his pilgrimage and been received into a better country than this, *i.e.*, heaven itself. Wherefore



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God approved and rewarded the faith of Abraham, and of Isaac and Jacob as well, by preparing for their inhabitation, and for all the redeemed of all ages, a city whose foundations had, even in their day, been laid prospectively in the blood of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 12:22-24).

2. *Note, in the second place, that Abraham's pilgrimage of faith was designed to be typical of the believer's journey.*

(1) *"A voyage to a distant land"—such is the life of every Christian believer.*

"Our life is like the hurrying on the eve  
Before we start on some long journey bound,  
When fit preparing to the last we leave,  
Then run to every room the dwelling round,  
And sigh that nothing needed can be found;  
Yet go we must, and soon as day shall break;  
We snatch an hour's repose; when loud the sound  
For our departure calls; we rise and take  
A quick and sad farewell, and go ere well awake."

(2) *Here we walk by faith, and not by sight, if we are true Christians.* Though in the world, we are not of the world. The worldly spirit deals with things present, but the spirit of faith anticipates the more glorious "things to come." The worldly spirit is neither far-reaching nor far-sighted. Its range is bounded by the horizon of time and sense. It has no wings with which to soar into realms invisible. It is of the earth, earthly. Whence comes the manna? why gushes the water from the rock? whither guides the pillar of cloud and fire?—these are questions it never asks. It knows not how to soar, how to anticipate and trust and wait, how to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, how to repose under the shadow of His wings, unmindful of the dangers of the wilderness and unalarmed by foes. But the heavenly-minded man walks by faith—that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and

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a conviction with respect to things not seen. And, among all the great verities which possess his soul there is none greater, none nobler, none surer, than his conviction with respect to the saints' everlasting home. All the circumstances of his present journey, all the remembrances, all his reasonings, all his aspirations, point to a Better Land. By faith he sings:

"There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign,  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.  
There everlasting spring abides  
And never-withering flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours."

(3) *We realize that as far as this present life is concerned we are but strangers and sojourners on the earth.* We dwell in tents, as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; in the tabernacles of a night-time. We are here today, and gone tomorrow. There is nothing that we possess here that we can really call our own. All that we shall have in the end is a few square feet of earth in which our mortal remains will be laid away to mingle with the dust. *This is not sentimentality—it is plain fact.* We can't take anything material with us into the next world, for the simple reason that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. No matter how diligently we may toil and strive to accumulate houses and lands and worldly goods, of what value will these things be when we reach the end of the road? We are pilgrims, nothing more, walking by faith in the direction of the heavenly country which we expect to reach beyond the swelling of the Jordan, the country that will truly be, "Home, Sweet Home." The true Christian philosophy is expressed by Phoebe Carey in these lines:

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- "One sweetly solemn thought  
Comes to me o'er and o'er:  
I am nearer my home today  
Than I have ever been before.
- "Nearer my Father's house  
Where the many mansions be;  
Nearer the great white throne,  
Nearer the crystal sea.
- "Nearer the bound of life,  
Where we lay our burdens down;  
Nearer leaving the cross,  
Nearer gaining the crown."

(4) *Observation teaches us that much in this life is inequality and injustice.* As far as this world alone is concerned, honesty is not always the best policy, Judas fares about as well as John, and Nero quaffs more of the wine of "living" than Paul. The voice of experience speaks to us that if this life is all, it is scarcely worth the living. In the words of Robert Browning:

"Truly there needs be another life to come!  
If this be all  
And another life await us not for one,  
I say, 'Tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,  
A wretched failure, I for one protest  
Against, and I hurl it back with scorn."

(5) *Life as we live it here is largely illusion.* (See F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, "The Illusiveness of Life"). *Our senses deceive us.* They deceive us with respect to distance, shape, and color. That which, afar off, seems to be oval, turns out to be circular when modified by the perspective of distance; that which appears to be a speck, becomes a vast body, on nearer approach. Stand in the middle of a railroad track, and look in either direction, and the rails

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appear to converge; but they do not actually do so. Look at what we call the horizon and it seems that the earth and sky meet, but they do not actually meet. The beautiful berry turns out to be bitter and poisonous; that which apparently moves is in reality at rest; that which seems to be stationary is in perpetual motion; the earth moves, but the sun, which appears to be moving, stands still. All experience here is but a correction of life's illusions—a modification or reversal of the judgment of the senses. *Our natural anticipations deceive us.* Every human life starts out bright with hopes that will never be realized. These hopes may be different in nature: finer spirits may look on life as an arena for good deeds, while the more selfish regard it as a place only for personal enjoyment; but the results are usually the same. Regardless of the nature of these hopes, the majority will fail of fruition. It would seem almost a satire on life to compare the youth in the outset of his career, flushed and sanguine, with the aspect of the same man when he is nearly done, worn, sobered, covered with the dust of life, confessing that its days have been few and evil. Where is the land flowing with milk and honey? Not on this earth. With our affections it is even worse. Man's affections are but tabernacles of Canaan, the tents of a nighttime, never the same, always changing. Where are the charms of character, the perfection and purity and truthfulness which seemed so resplendent in our friend? Association has rendered them sordid. They were only our conceptions and they proved false; hence we outgrow friendships. Life as we live it here is an unenjoyable Canaan with nothing real or substantial about it. *Our expectations, resting on divine revelation, deceive us.* For example, the attitude of the church with respect to the second coming of Christ. The apostles expected Him to return while they were yet here, and the early churches were vitalized by this hope of seeing the great and notable day of the Lord. John, in penning the

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last words of the New Testament, expressed this hope, "Come, Lord Jesus." The church, throughout the centuries of the Christian era, has revived and revitalized this hope many times; in fact it has never died away. And even today, if it should turn out that "we who are alive" shall "remain unto the coming of the Lord," we would consider ourselves fortunate indeed. However, He has not come. *He will come*—but not as yet. The promise, "This Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven," remains unfulfilled. *What is the meaning of all this illusiveness of earthly life?* Faith replies that it is not *delusion*, but *illusion*; that the non-fulfilment of the promises literally, is a pledge of their spiritual fulfilment later; that God, by their very non-realization, lures us onward and upward to nobler things. Suppose, for instance, that the spiritual side of the Abrahamic promise had been revealed to ancient Israel at first; suppose they had been informed at the outset that God's rest is inward, that the land of promise is to be found only in the Jerusalem which is above; not material, but immaterial; not visible, but invisible. That rude, gross people, yearning after the flesh-pots of Egypt, willing to go back into slavery so only they might have enough to eat and drink—would they have quitted Egypt on such terms? Would they have taken one step on that pilgrimage which was to find its meaning in the discipline of the ages? No—they had to be lured on by something visible, something tangible. *So we are lured on through life as upon a journey.* Could man see the route before him—a flat, straight road, unbroken by tree or eminence, with the sun's heat burning down upon it, stretching out in dreamy monotony—he could scarcely find either the inclination or the energy with which to begin his journey. It is the very uncertainty of that which is not seen, that which lies just around the bend, that keeps expectation alive. The view we think we may get from yonder summit, the landscape that may be glimpsed as

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the road winds around yonder knoll, hopes like these beguile the weary traveler on. So our heavenly Father leads us on, educating us day by day, and hour by hour, to walk in faith, ever holding up the seen as an incentive to the unseen. So He deals with us, luring us on by means of life's unsatisfactory and illusive rewards, ever schooling us in the art of waiting, of enduring as seeing Him who is invisible. Canaan first; then the hope of a Redeemer; and finally the Better Land. *It was in this manner that the ancient saints interpreted this mystery of the illusiveness of life.* They did not regard life as a dream, nor as a bubble, nor as a delusion. Though they no doubt felt as keenly as any moralist could feel, the brokenness of its promises, yet by faith they pressed on, confessing that they were pilgrims and strangers here, that they had no continuing city, never mournfully moralizing about it, but admitting it cheerfully and even rejoicing that it was so. They felt that all was right; they knew that the promise had a deeper than material significance; so they looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They even died in faith, not having received the promises, not expecting to receive them here, but hereafter. *Now observe the glorious result that comes from the indestructible power of believing and continuing on, in spite of apparent failure.* The primitive Christians, for instance, believed in their day that the millenium was at hand. They had heard the apostolic warning, brief and clear, to "watch." Now suppose, instead of this, they had been able to look into the future and see all the dreary pages of church history unfolded, with its heresies, its apostasy and divisions; suppose they could have known that even after two thousand years the world would scarcely know the alphabet of the Christian religion; knowing all these things, what would have become of their gigantic and heroic efforts, their sacrifices, their persecutions and their martyrdoms? With such knowledge of the future, do you sup-

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pose there ever would have been what we consider the heroism, the sacrifice, the passionate zeal of primitive Christianity? It is in this way that God leads His children on, on to realization and achievement through the illusiveness of the past; as a father educates his child, holding up the seen, all the while nurturing the thought of the unseen. Thus we shall continue to the end—to that day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ. *Thus the non-fulfilment of God's promises becomes to the man of faith an earnest of their deeper and nobler fulfilment.*

(6) *Finally, as in Abraham's case, heaven is the goal of our pilgrimage.* We expect to find illusion here, and we expect to find *reality* hereafter. We know that things here are seen and temporal, and we know, too, that the things we shall enjoy hereafter, the things that are now unseen, will be eternal. Interpreted, then, in the light of faith, *life's illusions are not disappointing; in fact nothing is disappointment if spiritually discerned.* Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God; for "he hath prepared for us a city" (Heb. 11:16).

"There's a land that is fairer than day,  
And by faith we can see it afar,  
For the Father waits over the way,  
To prepare us a dwelling-place there."

Just recently Dr. F. B. Meyer, one of England's greatest preachers, entered into rest. Writing to a friend just three days before his death, this is what he said: "Dear Friend: I have just been told, to my surprise, that my days on earth are numbered. It may be that before you receive this letter, I shall have passed within the Palace of the King. Do not trouble to write. I will meet you in the morning. Yours, with much love, F. B. Meyer."

"I will meet you in the morning"—"within the palace of the King." This is Christian faith. This is conviction.

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Death isn't the end, it is the beginning, the beginning of greater growth, greater progress, greater service, and greater joy. As Louise Chandler Moulton has written:

"At the end of Love, at the end of Life,  
At the end of Hope, at the end of Strife,  
At the end of all that we cling to so—  
The sun is setting—*must* we go?

"At dawn of Love, at Dawn of Life,  
At dawn of Peace that follows Strife,  
At dawn of all we long for so—  
The sun is rising—*let us go!*"

*Conclusion:* "Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." This is the promise! *And God keeps His promises!*

"How beautiful to be with God,  
When earth is fading like a dream,  
And from this mist-encircled shore  
To launch upon the unknown stream!  
No doubt, no fear, no anxious care,  
But, comforted by staff and rod,  
In the faith-brightened hour of death,  
How beautiful to be with God.

"Beyond the partings and the pains,  
Beyond the sighing and the tears,  
Oh, beautiful to be with God  
Through all the endless, blessed years—  
To see His face, to hear His voice,  
To know Him better day by day,  
And love Him as the flowers love light,  
And serve Him as immortals may."

My sinner friend, will you not turn now, and start upon your pilgrimage of faith?