

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.

1. 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 be-
hold 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?

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

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-

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 millennium 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

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); Manoah’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*.

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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-lahai-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 reproveth 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 swore 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. 9:9-20, 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 cannot 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

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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

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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.

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 Zobar,* 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 a 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 pall. 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 hasted, 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 hasted, 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 Milcah, 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-lahai-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 Hanoah, 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.

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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

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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 Beer-sheba?
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.

* * * * *

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. 1 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.

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.

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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

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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

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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

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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. 5:1).

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!'"

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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."

* * * * *

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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THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

(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?