

Genesis

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

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Forward by Eugene H. Merrill, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament,
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LESLIE M. FRAZIER: “The principle of Progressive Revelation is portrayed clearly in this Biblical Theology of Genesis. In this foundational book of Scripture Dr. Lin displays not only hermeneutical principles but emphasizes the spiritual teachings and their development. It will prove useful for both pastors and laymen in understanding Genesis and the whole Bible. I have given my son Mike, the senior pastor of a large church, copies of all three of Dr. Lin’s books.”

Leslie M. Frazier, Ph.D., Far East Director, Baptist International Missions, Inc.

Scripture quotations are from either the Authorized Version of the Bible or by the author's own translation. When the author began this work there were few good versions of the Bible available to quote.

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Other books by Dr. Lin

How the Holy Spirit Works in Believers' Lives Today
The Kingdom and What It Means to the Life of the Believer
The Secret of Church Growth

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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DR. TIMOTHY LIN

Dr. Timothy Lin was born to a minister's family in Chekiang, China. He was taught to read the Bible when he was 6, began to preach when he was 15, but was not born again until age 19. Having left Central Theological Seminary of Nanking in 1934 due to its modernistic teaching, he served as the pastor of Jubilee Church in Shanghai until 1937. In 1938-39 he was principal of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Bible Institute of Kwangsi. In 1940 he came to the United States for the first time to study Hebrew and Greek at Concordia Theological Seminary and Washington University.

During World War II, Dr. Lin was in charge of Bethel Orphanage as well as being the principal of Bethel High School. He was also the dean of Shanghai Bible College. After the war, Dr. Lin was invited to be the president of the East China Theological College of Hangchow, which was cosponsored by the China Inland Mission. Then in 1948 he came again to the United States for advanced study, receiving a B.D. and S.T.M. from Faith Theological Seminary, then in Wilmington, Delaware, and a Ph.D. from the College of Hebrew and Cognate Learnings of Dropsie University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In addition, he holds several other earned and honorary degrees.

Dr. Lin was a member of one of the Old Testament translation committees for the New American Standard Bible. He was also a professor in the graduate school of Bob Jones University, in South Carolina, where he taught Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology, Old Testament Hebrew, Biblical Aramaic, Classic Arabic, and Peshitta Syriac. Moreover, he was a professor at Talbot Seminary, Los Angeles, and Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Chicago, and the president of China Evangelical Seminary in Taiwan.

In 1961 the Lord led him to become interim pastor of the small struggling First Chinese Baptist Church of Los Angeles, and in 1962 the permanent pastor. When he retired as Senior Pastor a few years ago, the church had eight pastors, more than 2,200 in regular Lord's Day attendance, and in addition had started several mission churches with more than 300 in regular attendance.

Dr. Lin has also been a popular teacher and Bible conference speaker, being in great demand by ministers, teachers, and church leaders for training in biblical interpretation and church growth in the Far East as well as in North America.

PREFACE

When a layman opens a theological book he often finds that it is like half-cooked rice, since most books of this nature are written from a scholarly standpoint, emphasizing the intellectual approach rather than giving a spiritual application for the reader's edification. The latter is what most laymen desire and need.

For a long time I have desired to make available a book on Genesis that could be understood by laymen and still be used as a reference book for theological students. In the winter of 1962 I began to prepare a biblical theology of Genesis. But due to the pressing schedule in the years following, teaching at Talbot Theological Seminary, serving on the translation committee of the New American Standard Bible, plus a full-time job pastoring a church, little energy was left for the book. The desire to publish the book came to mind again when duties on the committee and at the seminary were completed. Original manuscripts were revised, suggestions from friends were added, and the present volume became a reality.

This book contains two parts. Part one serves as an introduction. Without it the latter part may not be appreciated in full. Part two contains the three periods of Genesis, the Adamic Period, the Noachian Period, and the Patriarchal Period. In each of these periods the revelation of God and the revelation of man are respectively and progressively discussed. I have assumed that the reader has some basic knowledge of Genesis. If not, it is recommended that each Scripture passage be read before considering the corresponding discussion in this book.

I wish to express gratitude to my late wife, Gracie, and to Joanne Kimble for their invaluable literary and grammatical help, for designing the format and book cover, and for doing the word processing. Without them this book would not have been written.

Since this book is designed for laymen as well as theological students, technical terms are avoided, simplified or explained, and references to other authors are reduced. May the Lord of self-revelation grant each reader progressive illumination in the reading of this book, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

Timothy Lin, Ph.D.

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Eugene Kimble, Ph.D.
Carmel, IN, 1998

Part One: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

Mohammed called Christians “the people of the Scripture” (Koran, 16:43; 21:7). In one sense he was right, since “what Christianity is” does depend on how Christians look at Scripture. If Christians believe that Scripture is the very word of God and infallible, Christianity will be the religion which hell itself cannot prevail against. But if Scripture is treated as only a collection of human writings, Christianity will be like a house built on sand, and sooner or later will collapse. This, then, is why it is important that a biblical view of the inspiration of the scriptures should be presented, so that genuine Christians may unquestionably know where they stand.

The word “inspiration” is derived from the Latin verb *inspiro* which means “to breathe on” or “to breathe into.” Theologically this identifies the Holy Spirit’s task, which is to make certain that the inspired one speaks or writes what God Himself would have spoken or written. Although inspiration is not a biblical term, it is often used to translate the Greek word *theopneustos*, which means “inbreathed of God” or “God-breathed.”

According to Webster, inspiration is “a supernatural influence which qualifies men to receive and communicate divine truth.” This definition is very concise, but rather superficial. Numerous questions are left unanswered. What kind of supernatural influence is in view? Is it Delphic or from the Holy Spirit? What kind of men? Are they soothsayers or “holy men of God?” How does one receive and communicate truth? Is this person in his right mind or is he in an ecstatic state? What does divine truth mean? Does it pertain to God or gods? Among the many definitions given for inspiration, Charles Hodge, the noted Princeton theologian, probably gave the most definitive one. He said, “. . . inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will.”¹ The previous questions are all answered by this definition: the Holy Spirit is the one who influences; the influence was over select men only; and the purpose was to use the writer for infallible communication which is to reveal what the Author thinks and has in His mind.

Inspiration may be explained in two different senses. In the broad sense, inspiration may be applied to any cooperation of the Holy Spirit within the spiritual perception of men. But in the restrictive sense discussed here, it applies only to the writers and to their biblical writings. Although many would take either the writers or their writings as being inspired, the truth is that both are inspired. Jesus said, “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matt. 7:18). If the writer was not inspired at the time of his writing, how can his writing be inspired? Human agents cannot produce heavenly things without heavenly inspiration.

Because Scripture teaches that both the writer and the biblical writings are inspired, it is worthwhile for us to examine both truths closely.

¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), Vol. I, p. 154.

A. The Writers Are Inspired.

The Apostle Peter said in his second epistle, “For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: But holy men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). “Prophecy,” in the New Testament, is a combination of *pro* and *pheteia*. The prefix *pro* can mean “for, in place of” or “beforehand.” *pheteia* is derived from the verb “to speak.” Thus by combining the prefix and noun, prophecy then refers to whatever the holy men spoke for God, or spoke in place of God, or spoke beforehand. In the passage above, the verb “came” and the participle “being moved” are both from the verb *phero*, which means “to carry” or “to bring.” The verb “came” is a first aorist passive which may be literally rendered “was carried,” while “being moved” is a present passive participle which may be translated “being carried.”

The meaning of “being carried” may be seen from the drifting of Paul’s ship in the Mediterranean Sea, since the verb, *phero*, is used twice in that passage (Acts 27:15,17). Having lost control over the ship, the people on board could only give way to the wind and allow themselves and their ship to be carried about by it. The verbs in these two verses are both imperfect passives which are translated as “let drive” and “were driven” respectively. In addition to these two verbs, a present passive participle of the same verb, prefixed by the preposition *dia*, is also used in Acts 27:27 where it is translated as “were driven up and down.” These verbs give a clear picture of the operation of the Holy Spirit within the minds of holy men. When holy men were speaking or writing, the Holy Spirit bore their minds along the avenues in which He wanted them to go and obtained the precise result He desired.

A similar instance occurred on the day of Pentecost at the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was rushing (*pheremones*) all through the house, and everyone who was in it broke forth with other tongues. They spoke languages which were beyond their current knowledge and understanding. The participle “rushing” is from the same verb “to carry.” A. T. Robertson commented, “It was ‘an echoing sound as of a mighty wind borne violently’ (or rushing along the whirl of a tornado).”² No wonder the languages themselves were tremendously powerful and caused three thousand people’s hearts to be pricked and converted.

Another instance is found in the Old Testament. When Balaam was moved by the Holy Spirit, he spoke only what he was moved to speak (Num. 22:20; 23:12; 24:2). Of this historic occasion Josephus commented, “Thus did Balaam speak by inspiration, as not being in his own power, but moved to say what he did by the divine spirit.” Then he continued with what Balaam said:

O Balak, if thou rightly considered this whole matter, canst thou suppose that it is our power to be silent, or to say anything, when the Spirit of God seize upon us?—for he puts such words as he pleases in our mouths, and such discourses as we are not ourselves conscious of.³

In short, “being moved” is simply the description of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit within the spiritual perception of holy men. He simply took the biblical writers and

²A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, n.d.), Vol. III, p. 111.

³William Whiston (trans.), *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1854), p. 111.

carried them to the goal which He had chosen. B. B. Warfield said concerning the use of *phero*:

The term here used is a very specific one. It is not to be confounded with guiding, or directing, or controlling, or even leading in the full sense of that word. It goes beyond all such terms, in assigning the effect produced specifically to the active agent. What is “borne” is taken up by the “bearer,” and conveyed by the “bearer’s” power, not its own, to the “bearer’s” goal, not its own. The men who spoke from God are here declared to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of His choosing. The things which they spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs.⁴

It does not mean, however, that the writers were beside themselves. They were always on their own, for “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32). As long as they were obeying, inspiration belonged to them (Acts 5:32). Since the Holy Spirit was the one who carried the inspired authors to write whatever He willed, two common mistakes in reference to inspiration should now be corrected.

First, inspiration is not produced by copying. Many so-called scholars of modern times are copyists rather than writers. When they write, the more books they copy, the better the scholarship they think they have. They take it for granted that ancient writers did the same. However, those who have an adequate knowledge of ancient literature know that real scholars in ancient times were ashamed to copy from others. They emphasized creative thinking. They read books, studied facts, and examined materials much as modern scholars do; then they digested them, committed them to memory, and made them their own possession. When they wrote, they did not look at others’ books but wrote from their own mind. In regard to quotations, they were accustomed to quoting freely from memory and felt no obligation to mention their sources. They took it for granted that the reader would know the origin of their quotations, and that if a reader did not know the source, he could blame only himself for his ignorance. If Western Bible students understood these attitudes of ancient scholars, they would not dogmatically say Genesis 1 and 2 were copied by a compiler, neither would they be excited when they found a New Testament writer quoting freely from the Old Testament.

Critics often point to Luke’s introduction, “to write unto thee in order,” and think that Luke had all kinds of manuscripts all over his house—some on the floor, some on his operating table, and some even in his child’s crib. They imagine that while he was writing he would go to the table to copy a sentence or two, to the crib to copy another sentence, and then down to the floor to copy a paragraph. They overlook his previous clause, “having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.” Luke had studied all available documents and understood all things perfectly before he sat down and wrote. While writing, he was carried by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus wrote in his own vocabulary and style whatever the Holy Spirit showed him.

Second, inspiration has no obligation to include all the historical details or scientific data. The Holy Spirit, as editor, had the right to choose one portion or an item from the

⁴Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), p. 137.

whole or to summarize or polish a fact, in order to meet the need of revealing His truth. Suppose a writer is penning an article on justification, and he wants to use the history of the Reformation to illustrate or to support his arguments. He has no obligation to mention all the historical data, nor is he obliged to record the events chronologically. He is quite free to use only those historical happenings that illustrate his points. He is not duty bound to elaborate on the historical events nor to present them in order of occurrence, as if he were writing a history of the Reformation.

Just so, Genesis is a book of God's revelation, in fact the beginning of God's self-revelation to man. It is neither a strictly scientific report nor a complete historical record. The Holy Spirit had no imperative to put all the scientific and historical details into the book. Scientific materials and historical events are used in Genesis only to illustrate or to reveal God's love and justice to His creatures. Nevertheless, the materials employed in Genesis, which may have been simplified, summarized, or condensed to serve specific purposes, are never, never myths.

B. The Writings Are Inspired.

Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16). Numerous views have been put forth about the first two words of this verse. As a matter of fact, the debate of whether *pas graphe* should be translated as "all Scripture" or "every Scripture" is no matter of importance, since "every Scripture" can mean "every passage of Scripture." The important question here is where should we put the copula "is" since it is absent in the Greek. Some have accurately suggested that "is" should be placed before the phrase "inspired by God" to read: "All Scripture (or every passage of Scripture) is inspired by God and profitable." Certainly, as A. T. Robertson said, "In this form there is a definite assertion of inspiration."⁵

To go on, the phrase "given by inspiration of God" in Greek is a single word which is a combination of *theos* (God), and *pneustos*, a derivation from the verb "to breathe." Hence it means "God-breathed." As this is the only occurrence of *theopneustos* in the New Testament, further study is necessary.

The interpretations of this word are manifold. L. Gaussen took it to be equal to God's Word uttered by His divine authority.⁶ B. B. Warfield interpreted it as "the symbol of His almighty power, the bearer of His creative Word."⁷ Hodge treated it as a synonym of *theophoros*, "bearing a God" or "possessed by a God."⁸ Strong referred to *theopneustos* as alluding to God's original inbreathing of life.⁹ All of these authors ascribe "God-breathed" to the biblical writers rather than to their writings. But the Scripture says here, "All Scripture is God-breathed," not the writers.

Since "God-breathed" occurs only once in the New Testament, it is necessary for us to find elucidation from preceding revelation. In the Old Testament there is a prominent passage that refers to God's breathing which says, "The Lord God . . . breathed into his

⁵Robertson, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 627.

⁶L. Gaussen, "Theopneustia" (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1888), p. 27.

⁷Warfield, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁸Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 158.

⁹Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1947), p. 197.

nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). Here, Scripture tells us the function and the result of God’s breathing. Its function is to give life and the result is to make man a living soul so that he might have power to manage on his own. “God-breathed” bears the same meaning in reference to Scripture as it does to man. All Scripture is “God-breathed”; therefore, all Scripture has God’s life. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Again He said, “And I know His [God’s] commandment is life eternal” (John 12:50). Scripture is not dead literature. It has God’s life in it. Whenever the Holy Spirit opens the sluice, the water of life will pour forth, and the light and power of it will rebuke the sinner, animate the dead, strengthen the weak, refresh the fatigued, and edify the saints.

As a general principle, spiritual truth has two aspects: objective and subjective. “God-breathed” is no exception. To have God’s breath in Scripture is objective. To make Scripture profitable to believers is the subjective function of God’s breath. No matter how powerful Scripture is, without the subjective function of God’s breath within us, Scripture will never be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness. In other words, the Holy Spirit has to operate within us in order that His objective truth will be made subjective to us. Believers have spiritual perception. When the Holy Spirit operates upon the truth within our spiritual perception, the life of God’s truth in Scripture and His life within us meet together and sound forth a heavenly Hallelujah!

One of the main differences today between orthodox Christians and the followers of Karl Barth is their emphasis regarding two aspects of spiritual truth. The followers of Barth treat God’s objective truth as only man’s word. Yet they believe that the Holy Spirit will operate on man’s word and transform it into God’s word. Like trying to make six out of two plus three, this is beyond the bounds of reason! There is a Chinese saying, “It is impossible for even a skillful woman to cook rice without rice.” Or we may say, “It is impossible for an American woman to bake bread without any flour.” If, as the Bartheans hold, the account that is not God’s word becomes God’s word by a transforming power, then it is magic rather than truth.

Many orthodox Christians, on the other hand, recognize the objective reality of the inspired Word, but they neglect the importance of the subjective operation of the Holy Spirit within themselves. They study the Scriptures and memorize the catechism. They learn the stories of the Bible and recite golden texts. Yet they do not realize that what they have learned intellectually is not necessarily grasped spiritually. They do not know that intellectuality and spirituality are two different categories. One may know all about Scripture and yet lead a very poor Christian life. On the other hand, a believer may be unable to read the Scriptures himself and can obtain spiritual edification only by listening to preaching and Christian testimonies, yet he may discern spiritual truths and lead an excellent Christian life. In short, to know the truth intellectually is one thing but to see the same spiritually is another. **Faith does not come from intellectual knowing but from spiritual seeing.**

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize again the fact that Biblical inspiration does not refer to the writers alone, but to the writings of Scripture as well. Inspiration does not necessitate copying, nor has inspiration the obligation to present all the historical details or scientific data. All Scripture is God-breathed. It has God’s very life. Yet, without

God's breath **on the reader**, Scripture will never be profitable to him for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. On the one hand, "the opening of Thy words gives light" (Ps. 119:130); on the other, "Open my eyes that I may behold" (Ps. 119:18).

HERMENEUTICAL RULES FOR PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Introduction

To interpret the Bible properly, one's hermeneutical principles must be based upon a correct understanding of biblical revelation. For some years now, God has been illuminating His Church with the understanding that biblical revelation is progressive.¹⁰ However, an unbiblical view of progressive revelation has been proposed by the religious evolutionists, who recognized the progressive waves upon the surface of the divine ocean, but viewed evolutionary development as the cause.¹¹ They assumed that Israel's religion, along with that of the pagans, arose from polytheism and then gradually progressed in the minds of the Israelites into a monotheistic concept. This view is advocated by W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, who say, "Hebrew religion, as the study of Semitic Comparative Religion abundantly proves, was very closely related to the religion of all the Semitic nations; indeed it was made up of elements common to the religions of all early Semites."¹² Thus they believe that biblical revelation is a record of man's search for God and not the scriptural view of God's revealing Himself to man in infallible words.

Neither does neo-orthodoxy rise higher than classical liberalism in its view of biblical revelation. For example, Karl Barth's view of the inspiration of Scripture closely parallels that of Oesterley and Robinson.

Not for all ages and countries, but certainly for our own, it is part of the stumbling-block that like all ancient literature the Old and New Testament know nothing of the distinction of fact and value which is so important to us, between history, on the one hand, and saga and legend on the other...But the vulnerability of the Bible, *i.e.*, its capacity for error, also extends to religious or theological content...It amounts to this, that, as we see it, many parts, especially of the Old Testament, cannot be accepted as religious and theological literature, but only as documents of secular legislation and history and practical wisdom and poetry, although the Synagogue and later the Church claimed to find in them witness of revelation.¹³

¹⁰ Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, reprint, 1953), II, 91; Thomas Dehany Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament – Eight Lectures Delivered before the University of Oxford on the Bampton Foundation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961); John Edward Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 52-64; James Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 18-19; Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1956), 101-104; W. Graham Scroggie, *Ruling Lines of Progressive Revelation* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, Ltd., n. d.); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 14; and "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," www.bsmi.org, 7; Daniel B. Wallace, "New Testament Eschatology in the Light of Progressive Revelation: Special Focus on the Coming Kingdom," www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/nteschat; Benjamin B. Warfield, "Revelation," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), IV, 2576, 2577.

¹¹ On page 24 of his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), Harry Emerson Fosdick uses the term "progressive revelation." What he really means by it, however, is the evolutionary development of man's religious thinking, as he makes plain in *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), ix.

¹² *Hebrew Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), xvii.

¹³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Part 2 The Doctrine of the Word of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), I, 1, 203.

Both of these views hold that man's search for God evolved from much error mixed with little truth to less error mixed with some truth. J. Barton Payne comments, "The Old Testament is thus made [by liberal theologians] to conform to the contemporary thought patterns of the pagan world and to an assumed evolutionary progress."¹⁴ So, neither classical liberalism nor neo-orthodoxy has any concept of an authoritative, final revelation of God to man in infallibly recorded words, for both maintain that revelation is imperfect and still continues.¹⁵

In contrast to classical liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, biblical progressive revelation with its organic unity of Scripture requires perfection of doctrine at every stage, from Genesis to Revelation. A valid, that is to say, biblical, definition of the proper attitude toward progressive revelation is given by Bernard Ramm and Geerhardus Vos:

By progressive revelation we mean that the Bible sets forth a movement of God, with the initiative coming from God and not man, in which God brings man up through the theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament.¹⁶

The truth of revelation, if it is to retain its divine and absolute character at all, must be perfect from the beginning. Biblical Theology deals with the product of a supernatural divine activity, and is therefore bound by its own principle to maintain the perfection of revealed truth in all its stages.¹⁷

Both definitions firmly reject any evolutionary development of biblical truths by describing revelation as God's action, not man's quest.

Organic Growth of Revelation

As other growth, progressive revelation is (1) organic, (2) periodic, and (3) climactic. By being organic, revelation is understood to be absolutely perfect at all stages of progression; therefore, it can increase in complexity and quantity but not in quality as Vos notes:

It is sometimes contended that the assumption of progress in revelation excludes its absolute perfection at all stages. This would actually be so if the progress were non-organic. The organic process is from seed form to the attainment of full growth; yet we do not say in the qualitative sense the seed is less perfect than the tree. The feature in question explains further how the soteric sufficiency of the truth could belong to it in its first stage of emergence: in the seed form the minimum of indispensable knowledge was already present.¹⁸

The DNA in the apple seed has all the information needed to progress from a seed to a seedling to a sapling to a mature, apple-bearing tree. Because of its organic nature, the seed is not less perfect than the full-grown tree. An untrained eye examining a seed might not conclude that it would develop into a fruit tree. But it will, because of the indispensable minimum of information contained in its DNA. Similarly, the first revelation has in seed form all the truth of later stages. Apple seeds and God's revelation both grow just as Jesus illustrated the growth of God's Kingdom:

¹⁴ Payne, *op. cit.*, 527, 528.

¹⁵ Barth, *op. cit.*, 23; Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, *op. cit.*, xiv.

¹⁶ *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1956), 102.

¹⁷ "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," *op. cit.*, was Dr. Vos' inaugural address as Professor of Biblical Theology in Princeton Seminary, May 8, 1894.

¹⁸ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 15-16.

This is what the Kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head, (Mark 4:26-28, NIV).

Moreover, Scripture’s organic nature is demonstrated by the progressive revelation of salvation through the Lamb of God from Genesis to The Revelation:

In Genesis the lamb is a **necessity**. The lamb is the sacrifice slain by an offended, yet compassionate, LORD God to provide salvation for our guilty ancestors (“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them,” 3:21). Then, Abel “brought of the firstlings of his flock,” (4:4; *cf.* Heb. 9:22). Later, God provided a lamb as a substitute to die in the place of Isaac whom his father Abraham had been instructed to slay, ([God] “said, take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering...and Abraham went and took the **lamb** and offered him up for a burnt offering **in the place of his son,**” 22:1-19).

In Exodus the lamb has **efficacy**. God had promised that when He came in judgment upon the land of Egypt, if He saw the lamb’s blood sprinkled upon the doorpost, “When I see the blood I will pass over you” (12:13). The sprinkled lamb’s blood effects deliverance from God’s judgment for all who take refuge under it, then and now.

In Leviticus the lamb has **purity** (without blemish): “take two male lambs without blemish and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish...and the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness” (14:10, 19). This unblemished yearling male represented the perfection of the species, even as did Christ who was “a lamb unblemished and spotless” (1 Peter 1:19) and “who has been tempted in all things as we *are*, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). The blood of both the type (the lamb) and the reality (Christ) made atonement for sin, which was not merely a covering for sin (the older sense) but a true “at-one-ment” of man with God.¹⁹

In Isaiah the lamb has **personality**. At this point in God’s progressive revelation, the Lamb becomes a man: “He was pierced for our transgressions,” (53:5, NIV) and “led like a lamb to the slaughter” (v. 7, NIV) and “cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people” (v. 8). The personified Lamb’s “grave was assigned with wicked men” (v. 9), after which “the LORD will prolong His days” (v. 10) by resurrection to life, followed by great honor from God (v. 12).

All earlier revelation of the lamb reaches its full maturity and development in the New Testament. H. D. McDonald concurs, “All the ideas surrounding the figure of the lamb built up through the progressive revelation of the Old Testament may indeed go into the concept as it occurs in the New Testament.”²⁰

In the Gospel of John the Lamb is **identified**. The personified lamb in Isaiah is revealed by John the Baptist to be the promised “Messiah” (John 1:41), even

¹⁹ See R. H. Harrison, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 67.

²⁰ “Lamb of God,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 618-619.

“Jesus...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). Heaven itself testifies to the power of the Lamb’s blood to cleanse from sin. “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count...clothed in white robes...These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9, 13, 14). Thus both John the Baptist and John the Apostle took all guesswork out of our quest for a personal Savior.

In the Gospel accounts, the Lamb is **crucified**, telling us in what manner His blood would be “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28; *cf.* Is. 53:5; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and as a result His death would establish God’s “new covenant” with His Church (Luke 22:20).

In the Epistles the lamb is **typified**. To instruct us that the Passover lamb with its efficacious blood pointed directly to Jesus, the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). Peter also under the Spirit’s inspiration added more detail to the effectiveness of the Lamb’s blood to cleanse every sin, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

In Revelation five the Lamb is **magnified** with worship (vv. 8, 14) and praise from all creation (vv. 11-13), because “with your blood You purchased men for God” (v. 9).

In Revelation twenty-two the Lamb Jesus is **glorified** because of His own inherent worth and obedience in bringing mankind into rulership in God’s Kingdom through the cross. He and the Father sit upon one “throne of God and of the Lamb” as co-rulers over the eternal Kingdom of God, (v. 3).

In this manner, salvation through the Lamb progressed from seed form in Genesis (“the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife,” 3:21) to the attainment of full growth and development in The Revelation (“worthy [is the Lamb]...because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God,” 5:9, NIV; and “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads...and they will reign forever and forever,” 22:3-5). This last revelation in which the Lamb rules jointly with His bond-servants over the eternal Kingdom of God clearly shows that justification is not an end in itself, but that salvation through the Lamb is God’s means to bring fallen, sinful men into rulership in His eternal Kingdom (*cf.* Rom. 8:16-17; Rev. 5:9-10), where God had intended for man to be from the very beginning (Gen. 1:26; Heb. 2:5-8).²¹

Geerhardus Vos likewise illustrated the organic nature of Scripture by demonstrating the progressive revelation of salvation through the covenants.

Although the knowledge of God has received material increase through the ages, this increase nowhere shows the features of external accretion, but throughout appears as an internal expansion, an organic unfolding from within. The elements of truth, far from being added one to the other in lifeless succession, are seen to grow out of each other, each richer and fuller disclosure of the knowledge of God having been prepared by what

²¹ This is the revised form of a previous article I wrote on “The Lamb of God,” with thanks to H. D. McDonald for help with assonance in the Old Testament part. *Ibid.*

preceded, and being in its turn preparatory for what follows...each subsequent increase consisted in what was germinally contained in the beginning revelation. The Gospel of Paradise is such a germ in which the Gospel of Paul is potentially present; and the Gospel of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of Isaiah and Jeremiah, are all expansions of this original message of salvation, each pointing toward the next stage of growth, and bringing the Gospel idea one step nearer to its full realization. In this Gospel of Paradise we already discern the essential features of a covenant relation, though the formal notion of a covenant does not attach to it. And in the covenant-promises given to Abraham these very features reappear, assume greater distinctness, and are seen to grow together, to crystallize as it were, into the formal covenant. From this time onward the expansive character of the covenant-idea shows itself. The covenant of Abraham contains the promise of the Sinaitic covenant; the latter again from its very nature gives rise to prophecy; and prophecy guards the covenant of Sinai from assuming a fixed, unalterable form, the prophetic word being a creative word under the influence of which the spiritual, universal germs of the covenant are quickened and a new, higher order of things is organically developed from the Mosaic Theocracy, that new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke, and which our Savior brought to light by the shedding of His blood. So dispensation grows out of dispensation and the newest is but the fullest expanded flower of the oldest.²²

Scripture further manifested its organic nature through the progressive unfolding of the doctrine of the Trinity: beginning in Genesis (“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness,” 1:26); continued by the Angel of the LORD in Exodus (“My name is in him,” 23:21); and further developed in the virgin-born Son (Is. 7:14) who would be the “Mighty God, Eternal Father,” (9:6). The perfect seed form of earlier revelation concerning the Trinity burst into full bloom in the New Testament which identified Jesus Christ as the “only begotten [Son, Himself] God” (John 1:18, author’s translation), who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of the coming virgin-born Son who would be God in human flesh (Is. 7:14; 9:6; cf. Matt. 1:23). Later revelation associated Jesus with the manifested Trinity (Matt. 3:16-17) and then furthered the progression by revealing the glorified Jesus Christ in heaven receiving equal worship with the Father (Rev. 5:13-14) and the two reigning co-equally upon one “Throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:3) over the universal kingdom of God “forever and forever” (22:5). Robert H. Mounce comments on Revelation 5:13, “The praise of the entire created order is addressed to the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb. Throughout the Apocalypse the two are regularly joined.”²³ Leon Morris concurs with Mounce,

This song ends by linking Him that sitteth upon the throne with the Lamb. The two are joined in a way which is characteristic of this book (6:16; 7:9, 10, 17; 14:1, 4; 21:22, 23; 22:1, 3). There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Lamb is to be reckoned with God and as God.²⁴

The Holy Spirit, of course, appears in The Revelation as the One who speaks to the churches through Christ’s Word (2:7; *etc.*) and is manifested there as the “seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (4:5, cf. Zech. 4:1-6 where the seven lamps are equated to the one Spirit).

²² Vos, “The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline,” *op. cit.*, 7.

²³ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 150.

²⁴ *The Revelation of St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 102.

Further still, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments should not be viewed as inferior old covenant empowering by God's Spirit in believers' lives versus a richer, fuller new covenant empowering. One is the earlier and germinal revelation of the Spirit's work, and the other is a later, fuller, and more detailed revelation of the earlier universal principle.²⁵ After all, Old Testament believers were indwelt by the Spirit (1 Peter 1:11), filled with the Spirit (Ex. 35:31; Num. 27:18), empowered by the Spirit (Judges 13:25; 14:19), spoke by the Spirit's power (Num. 11:25-26; *cf.* Luke 1:67), wrote by the Spirit's inspiration (Acts 4:25-26), and at times grieved the Holy Spirit (Judges 16:17-20; Ps. 51:11). Can anyone really find a major difference between Noah's Spirit-empowered preaching to the wicked people of his day (1 Peter 3:18-20; *cf.* 4:6; 2 Peter 2:5) and that of Spirit-filled Peter's proclaiming the Gospel to his rebellious countrymen at Pentecost, or between Isaiah's divine inspiration and that of Paul? It seems somehow a little bit out of place to think that if Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, *et al.*, had by the Spirit what we have today, they would have really been blessed and more effective in God's work. God's revelation and progressive illumination have always been divinely given to meet the current needs of His people for further enlightenment and spiritual strength. God's grace in giving advanced revelation in the New Testament and then later progressive illumination upon particular aspects of certain truths might mean nothing more than our present rebellion against God and the darkness of our spiritual understanding is much greater than that of earlier generations.

Divine revelation is also periodic with its growth periods corresponding roughly to God's giving of the several biblical covenants. These divinely revealed truths develop organically in cycles of varying degrees and times, with the degree of doctrinal growth depending upon the need for that particular truth in the lives of God's people. Lastly, revelation is also climactic, which is to say, the doctrine reaches a stage where it is fully developed. There may be later reflection upon it but nothing new is added. The periodic and climactic characteristics of progressive revelation are self-evident and require no further proof.²⁶

Progressive Revelation Is the Key to Biblical Hermeneutics

"The concept of progressive revelation is the Key to Biblical hermeneutics," wrote Edward John Carnell.²⁷ He then set down five hermeneutical rules to interpret progressive revelation:

- (1) The New Testament interprets the Old Testament,
- (2) The Epistles interpret the Gospels,
- (3) Systematic passages interpret the incidental,
- (4) Universal passages interpret the local, and
- (5) Didactic passages interpret the symbolic.²⁸

Carnell's rules are basically sound; but it is best to condense his five rules into two, to add an entirely new one, and then to explain clearly their proper use. Carnell's first two

²⁵ Neither is there a difference in principle in the Old Testament statement ("the Spirit came upon, fell upon") and the New Testament phrase ("filled with the Holy Spirit"). See Timothy Lin, *How the Holy Spirit Works in Believers' Lives Today*, www.BSMI.org, 23.

²⁶ Vos, *ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 52.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-64.

rules can be shortened into one: (1) Later revelation interprets earlier revelation. One principle of interpretation should be added to Carnell's list: (2) Earlier revelation elucidates later revelation. Otherwise, the Old Testament would be unable to aid in interpreting the New Testament. Then Carnell's last three rules can be condensed into one: (3) Individual instances, local application, and symbolic passages in biblical revelation are to be interpreted according to universal principles.

As deduced, therefore, from the progressive and organic nature of revelation, three Hermeneutical Principles²⁹ by which to interpret Scripture are:

Principle One. Earlier revelation (*e.g.*, the Lamb personified in Isaiah fifty-three) should be interpreted according to later revelation of the same truth (*e.g.*, the Lamb identified and crucified in the Gospel accounts). Further, not only should the "Lamb" in the New Testament interpret the "Lamb" in the Old Testament, but within the Old Testament itself, Isaiah fifty-three interprets the Passover Lamb in Exodus twelve, and both interpret God's salvation implied by "garments of skin" in Genesis 3:21. Further still, within the New Testament, the revelation that the atonement of Christ makes possible our own justification, sanctification, and glorification³⁰ interprets more fully what Christ Himself said, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" and what Peter preached at Pentecost, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins," Acts 2:38. Hence, we should conclude, I would suggest, (1) there was progression in biblical revelation before as well as after Christ's earthly ministry, and (2) all later revelation concerning a certain truth sheds light upon earlier revelation of the same truth. Concerning the first conclusion Daniel B. Wallace says, "I am simply arguing that we need to read the Bible in light of the progress of revelation—not only between the testaments but also within each testament. Even within the New Testament there is progressive understanding."³¹ Concerning the second conclusion, I will later argue in another work that instead of using earlier revelation to interpret the Apocalypse, as is frequently done, that book should govern and guide all earlier interpretations of the same truth. This principle applies to many truths (*e. g.*, personal salvation through the Lamb of God, the Trinity, the millennium, the full deity of Christ, the believers' rulership in the eternal Kingdom of God, *etc.*). However, I will use the Apocalypse primarily to interpret earlier revelation concerning the fact of the Rapture, the judgment seat of Christ, and His Second Coming in the light of progressive revelation.

This principle, that later revelation of a particular truth interprets earlier revelation, extends from The Revelation to Genesis. For example, the full revelation of God's intention for man to be joint-heir with the Lord Jesus Christ over the universal Kingdom of God is given in The Revelation ("To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery—just as I have received authority from my Father,"

²⁹ These principles relate only to the progressive nature of revelation as it touches upon hermeneutics. Other rules and approaches must also be utilized to arrive at a proper understanding of Scripture.

³⁰ See all of Romans 4:24-8:29, but especially, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification," Rom. 4:25, NIV; "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin," 6:6, NIV; "For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son," 8:29.

³¹ Wallace, *op. cit.*, 2.

2:26-27; see also, 3:21, 5:10, 12:5; 20:4, 21:7, 22:5); and clearly shows that God's original plan for man ("Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule...,' Gen. 1:26) has been brought to a triumphant conclusion, despite man's sinfulness and Satan's schemes.

Principle Two. Conversely, earlier revelation (e.g., the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament, Gen. 1:26 and subsequent passages) elucidates later revelation of the same truth (e.g., the Kingdom in the synoptic Gospels and The Revelation). Moreover, the sacrificial, atoning death of the Lamb in Exodus twelve and Isaiah fifty-three strengthens the truth that Christ's crucifixion for sin was more than a mere moral example of selflessness, and that it certainly was not just a first century method of explaining Christ's death, which, as a doctrine, is no longer binding.³² Rather, the Old Testament truth of the Lamb's substitutionary atonement (e.g., Is. 53:5-7) strengthens the later revelation that Christ willingly gave Himself upon the cross to die for us (Matt. 26:42) and then presented His Own blood to God the Father to placate His holy wrath against our rebellion and sin (Heb. 9:11-28). In fact, "Hebrews nine and ten show that the same basic system of sacrifice underlies both testaments."³³

The book of Hebrews' description of the Old Testament institution as a "figure," a "copy," and a "shadow"³⁴ has reference to their illustrating by visible means eternal realities which the New Testament further explains through Christ's death; however, the illustration (earlier revelation) is by no mean inferior to the explanation (later revelation), for both are simply means of revealing to man the eternal truth of God's plan of salvation completed before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

The Old Testament serves as an illustration to the New Testament in two ways. (1) It taught spiritual and moral principles that are equally applicable to every age through the use of historical events and symbolical ceremonies. (2) It prepared for New Testament revelation through prophesying future events as well as illustrating them by types. Old Testament history and poetry are written for didactic example for every age ("Now these things happened [to Israel] as examples for us," 1 Cor. 10:6; cf. 10:11; Rom, 15:4) and are a rich source for devotional and homiletical study. For example, the lives of the main Genesis patriarchs vividly portray the Christian's spiritual life from beginning to end with Adam representing the sinner saved by grace, Cain and Abel indicating the distinction between lost and saved, Noah showing the deliverance from great destruction that God's grace brings ("But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD," Gen. 6:8 NKJV), Abraham demonstrating the trials and triumphs of faith, Isaac suggesting the life and growth of sonship, Jacob evidencing the responsibility of serving God through one's life and work as a servant, and finally Joseph representing the reigning with the powerful king (Gen. 41:38-43) which awaits every good and faithful servant of Christ ("He who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS," Rev. 2:26). Old Testament prophecy of Messiah's virgin birth (Is. 7:14, 9:6-7), Spirit-filled ministry (11:1-5; 42:1-4), and death by crucifixion as the Suffering Servant (52:13-53:12) clearly prepared the way for the Gospels. The Passover and the tabernacle served as dramatic symbols of the future work of Christ as God's Paschal Lamb slain for sinners ("For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed," 1 Cor. 5:7) and as the

³² Ramm, *op. cit.*, 101.

³³ Ramm, *ibid.*, 229.

³⁴ Hebrews 9:9; 9:23; 10:1.

victorious High Priest Who entered the eternal Holy of Holies once for all on every sinner's behalf ("He entered the holy place once for all...who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God," Heb. 9:12, 14; *cf.* 9:1-28; 10:10-14, 19-22). By keeping in mind the organic nature of progressive revelation and carefully avoiding allegorical or typological extremes, the Christian exegete can use the historical and poetic sections of the Old Testament to illustrate eternal principles for spiritual and moral living and can use Old Testament prophecy and types to illustrate vividly Christ's work. Because of its tremendous importance in laying the foundation for the New Testament, it may be validly asserted that no man can fully understand New Testament theology without an adequate understanding of its Old Testament background.

Therefore, it is not hermeneutically sound to say that the New Testament interprets the Old, without stating the converse, that the Old Testament elucidates the New. In other words, later and earlier revelations of the same truth strengthen and clarify each other. Without this second principle, the Old Testament becomes useless as our authority for theology, preaching, and practical living. Regarding this point, Ramm states as one of his rules of hermeneutics, "The Old Testament must be continuously searched for help in interpreting the New Testament."³⁵ J. C. K. von Hofmann adds:

Just as the Old Testament would lose its saving significance if its contents were interpreted as ordinary history rather than as holy history, so also the spiritual value of the New Testament would be diminished by such a purely historical interpretation in which the antitypical character of its events and the Old Testament forms of expressing its message were not appreciated.³⁶

Jesus never discredited the Old Testament but exalted it as the inspired eternal Word of God whose basis principles are valid in every age. Anyone who disregards the earlier revelation God gave in the Old Testament in any way is not following the example of Christ.

Thus the organic nature of progressive revelation insures its perfection and saving sufficiency at every stage. A lesser degree of detail does not mean inferiority of revelation, neither should any part of Scripture ever be exalted above another, but each should be treated as an integral part of an organic whole that mutually strengthens and interprets each part.

Principle Three. Individual instances, local application, and symbolic passages³⁷ of revelation are to be interpreted according to universal principles. Later revelation (*e.g.*, the Epistles) elucidates earlier revelation (*e.g.*, the Gospels) in two ways: (1) by giving the divine interpretation of the significance of the facts recorded in the Gospels and (2) by further applying the ethical principles of Christ to the local problems of the church. This rule, however, should not be applied in such a way as to consult only the Epistles for a doctrine, because in every case to properly interpret a doctrine or moral principle every reference to it in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles in a progressive order should be collected and examined in order to establish the complete biblical teaching.

The organic whole of revelation is made up of all the systematic passages and individual instances and thereby forms certain universal principles that must be followed

³⁵ Ramm, *op. cit.*, 116.

³⁶ *Interpreting the Bible*, trans. Christian Press, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), 169.

³⁷ The interpretation of individual instances, local application, and symbolic passages are Carnell's rules 3 through 5.

in interpreting each particular revelation. Whereas certain passages deal with specific truths in a systematic way (e.g., justification by faith in Romans and Galatians), other passages deal with these truths only incidentally (e.g., 1 Peter 1:18-25; Rev. 5:9). All of the passages related to a specific truth, whether systematic or incidental, together make up the universal principle. This means that the unity of the whole of revelation is tremendously important to proper interpretation. J. C. K. von Hofmann's comment is instructive:

“It is in its totality and intrinsic unity that [Scripture] forms the object of Biblical hermeneutics. The foremost question is how the activity of the interpreter of Holy Scripture is determined by the specific way in which he is confronted by the Bible in its totality.”³⁸

Further, the systematic passages in the Epistles (e.g., justification by faith in Romans and Galatians) should interpret all the incidental references to this doctrine (e.g., Phil. 3:6-9; Titus 3:5-7). But they cannot be used to explain all other doctrines. Neither Romans nor Galatians systematically teaches reigning with Christ; yet this is the ultimate end of justification.³⁹

To teach justification as the ultimate goal and chief emphasis of Christianity shows a two-fold error of failing to understand the general theme of Scripture and of neglecting the progression of illumination. The Kingdom is the theme of all Scripture from Genesis 1:26 to Revelation 22:5, and justification is actually the means to the end of reigning with Christ. Failure to emphasize the end leaves the Christian life after justification with only a vague indefinite purpose. Since justification by faith was the Reformation doctrine used by God at that time to be especially stressed to correct the Catholic Church's concept of justification by works, to insist that it should be the chief doctrine emphasized in every age is to deny progressive illumination, for in successive ages, as Strong has pointed out, God has illumined men to explain certain doctrines never understood before to meet the particular need of the times.⁴⁰ Finally, the systematic principle of various doctrines must be properly related to each other by comparison of their biblical revelation; for example, the purpose of justification by faith, sanctification, and glorification is to prepare the redeemed to reign with Christ (“His bondservants will serve Him...the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and forever,” Rev. 22:3, 5). Hence, these doctrines can never be completely understood except in light of their relation to the Kingdom.

Moreover, local application of revelation should be interpreted by the universal principle. This principle is necessary for the practical use of the Bible as the contemporary authority for the spiritual life, even though it was written to meet particular needs in ancient times. The distinction must be made between local application and the essential universal principle, or else Scripture has no relevance for succeeding generations and diverse cultures. For example, the solemn apostolic injunction for Christian women to have long hair and to wear veils⁴¹ was a local application to teach,

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, 18.

³⁹ Revelation 5:9-10; 22:3-5.

⁴⁰ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1958), 340. Progressive revelation must be viewed as complementary and not as contradictory to Systematic Theology. Both are tools enabling the interpreter to better understand God's Holy Scriptures.

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 11:3-16.

“The head of the woman is the man”;⁴² for in first century Corinthian society no virtuous woman wore short hair or went unveiled. To obey the essential principle of subordination to the husband, the Christian wife of Paul’s day needed to have long hair and to wear a veil; however, in the twenty-first century a Christian wife does not need to wear her hair by the first century style nor does she need to wear a veil in order to obey the universal principle of the Pauline injunction. To insist that women wear a heavy veil similar to that intended by Paul would certainly not *per se* be a public testimony to the scriptural obedience of a wife to her husband. Therefore, to understand proper application of Scripture to the present and to avoid hindering the Gospel by extreme reactionary practices, every local application must be interpreted in the light of its intended principle.

Finally, symbolic passages must be interpreted by the universal principle. The universal principle for symbolic passages is obtained by means of first understanding the symbol, then to take the definition of that symbol as clearly stated in an obviously literal passage and to apply its meaning to a highly figurative passage. For example, the Lamb who had been slain in Revelation 5:6-14 is identified by John 1:29 and 1 Peter 1:19 as Christ Jesus Himself. The explanation of the vision of one like the Son of Man in Revelation 1:12-18 is made plain by considering that over eighty times in the Gospels Christ called Himself the Son of Man. Sometimes the interpreter must go as far back as Genesis to get the incidental revelations. However, in making the final interpretation, extra weight should be given to information the author places in his own book to be sure the interpretation fits his context. Also, special attention should be given to the use of double symbols in Scripture; for example, sin is pictured as a crouching lion in Genesis 4:7, and Satan is clearly called a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8; yet in Revelation 5:5 Christ, “the Root of David,” is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” In every instance the local context of the symbolic passage must determine the validity of the identification suggested by the literal passage. Later, I will use this principle as an aid to interpret “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place where will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” (Matt. 25:30).

Conclusion

Progressive revelation is not an evolutionary development of biblical truths but a movement of God, with the initiative coming from Him and not from man, in which God makes Himself, His Word, and His plans known to mankind by a gradually advancing organic growth from perfect seed form to the full manifestation. Such disclosure is perfect at every stage because of its organic nature and the perfection of God. Because of its organic nature, possessing a minimum of soteric knowledge at every stage, later revelation interprets earlier revelation; and conversely, earlier revelation elucidates later revelation and both hermeneutical principles can be illustrated by the progression of salvation revealed through the Lamb of God, as well as through the covenant-idea existing in Eden in germinal form and fully revealed in the new covenant which was ratified at the cross by the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (“and in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood,”” (Luke 22:20).

All biblical truths progress as the historic, linear unfolding of the mind and will of

⁴² 1 Corinthians 11:3.

God—even prophetic/apocalyptic truths. Charles Augustus Briggs said more than a century ago,

The [Olivet] discourse of Jesus...is intermediate between the apocalypse of Daniel and the apocalypse of John. As it depends upon the former and advances upon the Messianic idea contained therein so it is the prelude to the latter and the key to its interpretation...We ought to expect that Jesus in His predictions would bridge the time between the apocalypse of Daniel and the apocalypse of John, and give an intermediate stage in the development of apocalyptic prophecy.⁴³

Daniel B. Wallace speaks even more specifically to the topic I will address in another work concerning the rapture and the Second Coming when he writes,

Curiously, most students of the Bible assume progress between the Testaments, but deny it within the New Testament. To be sure, the time frame is much shorter. But there is ample evidence of progressive revelation within the New Testament about several themes—that is, certain themes are not developed/recognized until after some time (including the deity of Christ and of the Spirit, the idea that our souls go immediately to heaven, the fact of the rapture, *etc.*)⁴⁴

Therefore, later I will use the first and second hermeneutical principles of progressive revelation as an aid to interpret the fact of the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Second Coming of the Son of Man primarily in the Gospels, the Epistles, and The Revelation with a glance at Daniel. Further, when I get to Revelation 12:5 (“and she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and His throne”) I will use hermeneutical principle three of progressive revelation as an aid to answer the question, “Who is this child?”

I am greatly indebted to Timothy Lin, his understanding of Biblical Theology, and his Spirit-given talent as a godly, gifted professor. This article is an expanded version of a paper I wrote for the course, Problems of Old Testament Interpretation, c. 1963. Eugene Kimble, Ph.D. August 31, 2002

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Dr. Lin continues:

Now let us test the validity of these three rules by applying them to “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14. The debate on whether *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 should be translated “young woman” or “virgin” has long been a problem. According to Hebrew semantics, *almah* can be translated either “young woman” or “virgin.” It is used nine times in the Old Testament. Without a doubt, seven of the nine times refer to a virgin; only twice can it be either way. Since it can be either way, we have a problem which should be resolved.

Applying our first rule, which is “Later Revelation Interprets Earlier Revelation,” the subsequent unfolding of this revelation is to be found in Matthew 1:23. The historic fact testifies that Mary was a virgin, but also the Greek *parthenos*, which can only mean “virgin,” is used to translate the actual quotation from Isaiah. According to the first rule,

⁴³ *The Messiah of the Gospels* (Edinburg: 1894), 132, 134.

⁴⁴ www.Bible.org/docs/soapbox/netschat, 1. In his brief article, Dr. Wallace gives the caveat, “The following *rough* essay is intended to be something to think about; it is neither a polished piece nor altogether finalized in my own thinking. I welcome interaction and criticism from all quarters.”

therefore, there is no excuse for *almah* not being translated as “virgin.”

Now consider the second rule which states that “Earlier Revelation Elucidates Later Revelation.” The precedent for Isaiah 7:14 is in Genesis 3:15 which states “her seed.” As mentioned earlier, the earlier revelation generally is more embryonic than the later revelation. “Her seed” in Genesis was later developed into “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” in Isaiah and further developed into eight verses in Matthew chapter one (vs. 18-25). “Her seed,” not his seed, is a very unusual expression in the East since in that region only the father’s line is counted in the genealogy. Surely this indicates that there would be an unusual event when an offspring would be brought forth by “her” alone. Again, there is no excuse for anyone to translate *almah* as “a young woman.”

The third rule is that “Individual Revelation Is to Be Interpreted According to the Universal Principle.” The universal principle of the doctrine of the virgin birth is that Christ is sinless. It thus follows that unless He was born of a virgin, He could not be exempt from sin! And if He is not sinless, then He is a liar, because He said, “which of you convicts me of sin?” (John 8:46). Therefore, to translate *almah* as “young woman” is unscriptural.

In conclusion, the rules discussed above are very simple ones, yet within them are all the essential rules for biblical interpretation. Keep in mind: **proper interpretation of Scripture results only when each passage is interpreted in the light of the whole of God’s revelation.**

THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHORSHIP OF GENESIS

While there is a definite need to know the dates, authorship, contents, and destination of the books of the Bible as has been researched by many good competent scholars, much of the speculative and hypothetical work of authors in the field of higher criticism ventured into areas where the critic's imagination was the only law, with ideas and opinions often influenced by and based upon evolution. In fact many of the theories rose and fell with evolution. Before World War I destructive biblical criticism was flourishing and threatened to darken the light of Scripture, but subsequently, it faded away. However, after the Second World War it revived and in recent years has risen again to attack the validity of Scripture. As a result, today the teaching of the revelation and the authority of Scripture in many conservative theological seminaries has been weakened and the truth of the inspiration of Scripture has become like a corn cob without a kernel.

The Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis assumed that Israel's religion, along with that of the pagans, arose from polytheism and then gradually evolved in the minds of the Israelites into a monotheistic concept. In other words, the proponents of this hypothesis date the concept of monotheism in the early Old Testament books no earlier than 700 or 800 B.C. To them there is no difference between natural and supernatural religions; any distinction between them is removed, leaving only natural religions produced from the imagination of man's corrupted religious perception. If this be true, "we," as Christians, "are of all men the most miserable!"

"Then I saw in my dreams," said Bunyan, "that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a place where there was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter." Having questioned the significance of this strange phenomena, Christian was led to a place behind the wall, "where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast (but secretly) into the fire."⁴⁵ This story of Bunyan's Interpreter's House, picturing the two sides of Christian's experience, matches the historical reality of Scripture very well. Through the ages Satan has used every means available to quench the flame of Scripture or even to do away with it. Yet after all these fearful storms, Scripture under God's blessing still burns as brightly as the sun at high noon.

In order to interpret a book of Scripture properly, a working knowledge of its original languages, historical background, geographical setting, and environmental conditions are necessary. But the spiritual perception necessary to understand the things of the Spirit of God within His writings is much more vital than any intellectual preparation. Scripture is not mere literature. It is the product of the Holy Spirit and is sealed by God's breath. The natural man has no way to understand it. It is only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by comparing spiritual things with spiritual that man may have spiritual discernment.

Genesis is the beginning of God's special revelation. As such, it is the foundation of God's redemptive truth. Just as a tree has its root under the ground both to support and to nourish its trunk, branches, and leaves; so Genesis, the root of God's revelation, supports and contributes to all other books of Scripture. Without Genesis the other books would

⁴⁵John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, n.d.), p. 41.

be meaningless, and God's progressive revelation would have no foundation. If the branches and the trunk of a tree are cut off, the root could still put forth buds and eventually produce a new tree. But if the root is dug out of the ground, the trunk, branches, and leaves will automatically fall and wither away. This is the reason Satan has been so energetic in attacking the inspiration of Genesis through the ages. He knows that if the root dies, the trunk, branches, and leaves will all perish as well.

The critics themselves created many of the so-called problems and discrepancies in Genesis. Some problems arose from their misunderstanding of the nature of God's revelation, some from their misinterpretation of biblical inspiration, and some simply from the enmity of their old nature against God. The alleged problems are neither as numerous nor as serious as the critics charge. When all of the problems are placed together, they give the impression that they are well grounded, but when they are examined individually in the God-given light from the Holy Spirit, all of them melt away as snow under the burning noonday sun.

The hypothesis of two creation accounts based on the use of two divine names was first proposed in 1753 by Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a royal physician of Louis XV of France, who had considerable learning but lived a profligate life. He used two of God's names to separate Genesis into two incomplete narratives and was persuaded to publish anonymously his treatise entitled "Conjectures on the Original Memoirs which Moses Seems to Have Used in Composing the Book of Genesis." To Astruc, Moses composed Genesis 1 through Exodus 2 by integrating two primary, parallel sources: one of which referred to God as "Yahweh" and the other referred to God as "Elohim." Johann Eichhorn (1752-1827) in his three volume *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1780-1783) advanced Astruc's hypothesis to include all five books of Moses. Then in 1823 Eichhorn denied the Mosaic authorship (editorship) of the Pentateuch. Eichhorn was followed by Karl David Ilgen (1768-1834) who by 1798 had come to believe that the divine names were insufficient criteria for doing critical analysis. He had concluded that Genesis was composed of 17 different individual documents that he assigned to three different authors. Then Hermann Hupfeld (1796-1866) in his book, *The Source of Genesis*, published in 1853, built upon the thesis advanced by Ilgen and stressed that the documents were put together in their present form by an unknown editor. Thus, the supposed editors and documents in Genesis came to be designated by the initials J (Yahweh), E (Elohim) and P (priestly Elohim).

This hypothesis is far from being workable. For instance, in certain J passages "Elohim," which is characteristic of E, is present (3:1,3,5; 4:25; 7:9,16; 9:27; and so on), and in certain E and P passages "Yahweh," which is characteristic of J, is found (17:1; 22:11; and so on). In order to cover this embarrassing situation, the critics cut some verses and clauses out of their context and assigned them to another document. They cut 5:29 out of P and assigned it to J, because the divine name "Yahweh" (which is translated "the LORD") is present. Yet they left 4:25 in J although "Elohim" is in this verse. They separated 7:16b that has "Yahweh" from the midst of P and assigned it to J. However, they left 9:26 and 16:13 undivided in J, but both have "Yahweh" and "Elohim." Genesis 21:1 is a dilemma to the critics because both clauses have "Yahweh." According to their theory of "doublets" they should separate them. Yet according to their usage of divine names to designate different authors, they have to place the couplets together. To cut the

knot they assigned 21:1a to J and 21:1b to P. How absurd! Genesis 21:33 was assigned to J, disregarding the presence of “Elohim” in 33b. Genesis 22:11,14 are both assigned to E, yet both have “Yahweh.” Genesis 28:21 is assigned to E, yet “Yahweh” is also found there. These examples are sufficient to show the fallacy of this hypothesis.⁴⁶

Another ground for the alleged difference of authorship in Genesis is repetition or “duplicate accounts.” Critics use them as strong evidence to prove that this book was not written by Moses but was a compilation from different writers and editors in separate ages. They assume that there are two accounts of creation: one from P (1:1-2:3), and the other from J (2:4-25); two documents of the flood were woven together: one from J (6:5-8; 7:1-5,7,10,12,16b-17,22-23; 8:2b-3a,6-12,13b,20-22), and the other from P (6:9-22; 7:6,11,13-16a,18-21,24; 8:1-2a,3b-5,13a,14-19), but 7:8-9 was put together by an unknown editor. They perceive two records of Abraham lying: J (12:10-20), E (20:1-18); God’s ratifying His covenant with Abraham from two sources: J or E uncertain (15:1-21), P (17:1-27); three documents for Hagar’s twice being expelled: P (16:1a,3,15-16), J (16:1b-2,4-14), E (21:8-21); three documents for Jacob being named and then renamed: J (32:22,24-32, 35:16), E (32:23), P (35:9-13,15); three authors of God’s promising Abraham a son: uncertain (15:4), P (17:16), J (18:10); and three accounts of the meaning of Isaac’s name being applied: P (17:17-19), J (18:12-13), E (21:6). Thus it is inferred that Genesis is a compilation of various documents written by assorted unknown authors in the distant past and pieced together by an unidentified editor or editors in an uncertain period or periods.⁴⁷ Such an “unknown” and “uncertain”

⁴⁶On this point, I recommend for further study W. Henry Green’s *Unity of the Book of Genesis* (1895) and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (1896). Although these two books are out of print, they can be secured from many good Seminary libraries.

⁴⁷Particularly since the 1960s, increasing criticism has emerged against taking Genesis as exhibiting stages of composition. “This criticism ranges from minor adjustments, to major overhauling, to the suggested scrapping of the documentary hypothesis as a viable explanation of the origin of the Pentateuch in general, and of Genesis in particular.” Rolf Rendtorff (*Problems*, 148) “exhibits no restraint in his criticism of JEDP as a viable explanation of the Pentateuch’s fabric: ‘The positing of “sources” in the sense of the documentary hypothesis can no longer make any contribution to understanding the development of the Pentateuch.’” Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn (*Before Abraham Was: the unity of Genesis 1-11*) “demonstrate that the rhetorical features of Gen. 1-11 are so distinctly woven into one tapestry as to constitute an unassailable case for the unity of the section, and most likely composition by a single hand.” Gary Rendsburg (*Redaction of Genesis*, 104-5) “suggests, in the light of his study, that the documentary hypothesis is ‘untenable’ and should be ‘discarded.’” “Using the computer, Y. T. Radday and H. Shore have recently subjected the language of Genesis to a thorough word-level linguistic analysis [*Genesis: An Authorship Study in Computer Assisted Statistical Analysis*]. In essence, their work is an attempt to throw light on the authorship of Genesis by means of computer investigation. Throughout this study one question is constantly raised: to what degree may one calculate the probability that any one section of Genesis attributed, say, to J, was written by the same person to whom an E or P section is ascribed? The authors analyzed the 20,504 words in Genesis, for each of which nine pieces of information (mostly grammatical) were recorded . . . In the following sentence Radday and Shore present their final position: ‘with all due respect to the illustrious Documentarians past and present, there is massive evidence that the pre-Biblical triplicity of Genesis, which their line of thought postulates to have been worked over by a late and gifted editor into a trinity [JEP], is actually a unity.’” R. K. Harrison (“Genesis,” ISBE, 2:437) “suggests that Genesis 1-36 originally had an independent existence as eleven, distinct cuneiform tablets, each with its own identifying colophon [“an inscription usually placed at the end of a book or manuscript and usually containing facts relative to its production,” e.g. Gen. 2:4a; 5:1a; 6:9a; 10:1a; 11:10a and so on]. It would have been ‘a comparatively easy matter for a talented person such as Moses to compile the canonical books by arranging the tablets in a rough chronological order, adding the material relating to Joseph, and

assumption may be due to the critics' negligence regarding the typical style in ancient Eastern literature, which did not produce documents of either a fragmentary composition or by an integration of various sources. It may also be due to their ignorance of the progressive nature of God's revelation, the purpose of which is to make Himself known to man. He reveals Himself through nature and man's conscience, from historical events and personal lives, by the performance of the priests and the preaching of the prophets, in rewarding the righteous and judging the wicked, and so on, in order that man may perceive who He is and how He works (Heb. 1:1-2). Among these means of revelation, He has revealed Himself also through His names and titles, both of which stand for His personality, position, and authority. **The names and different titles of God in His revelation are for different emphasis rather than from different documents.**

The reason for using only Elohim in Genesis 3:1b-5 is apparent. The preceding passage denotes God's special revelation to man, whereas this passage describes Satan's tempting man. God is Yahweh to His people. But He is the great, the mighty, and the terrible God to Satan. Scripture therefore says that Satan believes that there is one God, but trembles. He dared not speak of God as Yahweh! Poor Eve, who was so excited that she forgot all about her status, called God by Elohim as did Satan (Gen. 3:3).

In the passage that follows (3:8-24), Yahweh Elohim is again predominant. Here, the man whom God had created fell into sin and was corrupted, and the only remedy for the dying man was grace from the merciful (Yahweh) and powerful (Elohim) God. Salvation comes from a balance between God's love and justice. Here God reveals Himself as Yahweh-Elohim, the God of love and justice, to prepare His redemption for Adam.

Yahweh indicates God's love and providence, while Elohim denotes God's justice and sovereignty. Only Elohim, the sovereign Creator, could appoint Seth to replace Abel (4:25). In speaking of God's being grieved, gracious Yahweh is used (6:3,6-8). Concerning Noah's generation and the corrupt earth, Elohim was employed to denote justice (6:9-22). When God spoke to Noah concerning "the end of all flesh," Elohim was talking (6:13). When He spoke concerning Noah as a righteous one, Yahweh was the speaker (7:1). When Noah was given a command, sovereign Elohim was usually the giver (6:22; 7:9,16a). When Noah was shut in the ark to keep him safe, providential Yahweh was in action (7:16b). Concerning God's reign over nature, Elohim was used (8:1-19). When He accepted sacrifice and gave a vivid demonstration of His grace, Yahweh was employed (8:20-22). The Holy Spirit knew exactly which name to use. He never makes a mistake in His truth. "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him" (Prov. 30:5).

The genuineness of Genesis does not depend solely on these points, since our so-called logical minds can be deceptive. But what Christ said is settled forever! He confirmed the genuineness of the first two chapters of Genesis by testifying to the creation of Adam and Eve as a historical fact, and not a myth or legend (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-9). When He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, He mentioned "the blood of

transcribing the entire corpus on a leather or papyrus scroll." Victor Hamilton concludes, "It is not without significance that recent studies have tended to support the essential unity of Genesis."

The information in this note was selected from Victor P. Hamilton's *Genesis in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) Vol. I, pp. 5, 24-38.

Abel” as the beginning of the Jews’ guilt (Matt. 23:35). He confirmed that Noah’s flood was a historical destruction (Matt. 24:37-39) and the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah as God’s judgment (Matt. 11:23-24). He described Lot’s time in Sodom and the judgment of his wife as a historical warning regarding the last days (Luke 17:28-32). In His preaching and teaching, He often spoke of Abraham (John 8:37-40,56-58) and repeatedly He testified of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mark 12:26) and their lives before God (Matt. 8:11; 22:32). The above references indicate that Christ testified to the truthfulness of essentially the entire book of Genesis. No other authority can give us more confidence in reference to the genuineness of the first, foundational book of Scripture!

Dr. R. A. Torrey said:

If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must of course accept everything upon which He sets the stamp of His endorsement. To say that you accept the authority of Jesus Christ, and then to throw overboard that upon which He sets the stamp of His endorsement is to be utterly irrational. And He sets the stamp of His endorsement upon the entire Bible, upon the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament; and therefore, if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ we are logically compelled to accept the entire Old Testament and the New Testament as the Word of God.⁴⁸

We have discussed briefly the genuineness of Genesis. Now, what about its authorship? Some people have tried to prove it by the contents of the book, by the qualifications of the writer, by the approval of the ancient Jewish scribes, or by the agreement among Christian churches in church history. These suggestions are good support for Mosaic authorship, but without a certain endorsement they are insufficient. Even if we were shown a gold plate engraved by an angel with a clear statement that Moses was the real author of Genesis, we could not put very much confidence in it. We accept the authenticity and authority of Genesis because Christ our authority accepted it. Without His confirmation we could never be sure that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. Even if we were sure that Moses was the author, we would never be sure that the inspiration of Moses was genuine. Ancient scribes could make mistakes. Christian churches could have the wrong idea. And even Moses might take inspiration for granted. But the Son of God would never make a mistake. In view of the fact that Christ has placed His seal on the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, who are we to say that the Mosaic authorship of Genesis is not reliable? He is the Truth. Thus He would not teach His hearers myth as if it were actual history. The one who says, “But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:37), would never accommodate the alleged ignorance of the Jews. He had authority over Satan, men, life, disease, and as a matter of fact, He even now has all authority in heaven and on earth. Whatever He says stands! Anyone who denies it is kicking against the goads and is hurting himself most of all.

“The First Book of Moses,” as Luther printed in his German Bible, does not appear in the Hebrew text. Neither, by itself, does Josephus’ statement, “and of them five belong

⁴⁸R.A. Torrey, *Soul Winning Sermons* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1925), p. 30.

to Moses,”⁴⁹ carry much weight. We honor what Christ says in the New Testament concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch, and all those who reverently honor Him as an infallible teacher will join us in accepting His word without dispute. When Christ was in this world, He tried to correct the Jews’ misinterpretation of the Pentateuch, but He never doubted its Mosaic authorship. He acknowledged that the set of books containing Exodus 3:2-6 was written by Moses (Mark 12:26). He also testified to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch by saying that the contents of Moses’ and the prophets’ writings were more authoritative than a message to the world from a person raised from the dead (Luke 16:29-31). Following His resurrection He confirmed the three divisions of the Old Testament as they stood in the Hebrew text. He said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). Without a doubt the “law of Moses” here refers to the Pentateuch; “the prophets” to the former and latter prophets; and “the Psalms” to the Hagiographa or Holy Writings. The reason why Christ called the third division Psalms was because His custom was to designate an entire division by its first book, or even the entire Old Testament by its first division. He used the first division of the Old Testament, the Law, to refer to the whole Old Testament.⁵⁰ Since Psalms is at the head of the third division, He named the entire division after it.

Aside from His calling the Pentateuch “the law of Moses,” Christ also called it “the law” (Matt. 5:17; 22:40), “the book of Moses” (Mark 12:26), and even “Moses” (Luke 16:29,31; John 7:19). In a word, the question of the authorship of Genesis can be settled by answering the question Christ asked, “Whom say ye that I am?” Is He the Christ, the Son of the living God, or was He merely a son of the carpenter Joseph? If He was the Word made flesh, His witnesses concerning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are certainly superior to the assumption of Origen, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and many so-called scholars today. He should be our final authority. If not, Christianity is but a big lie.

Furthermore, to deny the Mosaic authorship is to deny one’s personal salvation. Jesus said, “But if you believe not his [Moses’] writings, how shall you believe my words?” (John 5:47). Here, Christ speaks definitely of one’s attitude toward the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch as determining one’s attitude toward His own words. Scripture cannot be broken. One who denies the integrity of the Pentateuch essentially denies the Lord’s Word in the New Testament. Therefore, to deny the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch is not only a biblical problem but a spiritual one. Whether a person has real faith in Jesus Christ or not can be tested by whether or not he believes in the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch.

In conclusion, this brief discussion serves only as a sample for the readers to follow in their further study. In order to understand God’s truth, the believer needs spiritual perception and some time spent in diligent study. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, will help our understanding. He will teach all those who sincerely seek to know His truth. As Jesus said, “He [the Spirit] will guide you into all truth.”

⁴⁹Whiston, *op. cit.*, p. 787.

⁵⁰John 10:34 “ye are gods” was quoted from Psalm 82:6; John 15:25 “They hate me without a cause,” from Psalm 69:4; yet both of them, Jesus said, are in the Law.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION IN GENESIS

Since John Philips Gabler gave his “*De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae*” oration in 1787, a new field of biblical study has emerged and has gained increasing interest and activity over the years. This new field of study is Biblical Theology, which is that branch of Exegetical Theology dealing with God’s special revelation, progressively and organically given in the Bible. Progressively, it is like a tree growing from the seed to the sprout, to the seedling, to the sapling, and finally to a mature tree with its beautiful foliage and delicious fruit. God, due to the progressive corruption of man’s spiritual perception, adapted His special revelation time after time from the incidental, or local, to the universal, to meet the need of ever-degrading mankind that they might know Him and be saved. God’s special revelation to man was not given in one single act but rather unfolded in a long series of successive acts, that no person in all the ages may be excused. Concerning the organic growth of God’s revelation, Geerhardus Vos said, “The organic progress is from seed-form to the attainment of full growth; yet we do not say that in the qualitative sense the seed is less perfect than the tree.”⁵¹ No matter how small a seed is, it contains all the substance necessary for its future growth and is perfect in all stages of its development. Likewise the quantity of revelation increased from time to time, but not its quality. Just as the apple seed bears in its DNA all the characteristics of the apple tree, so God’s revelation contained the characteristics of the whole from the very beginning. Just as the complicated characteristics of a seed are not so easily distinguished during its early stages, so it is with God’s revelation. Although one should not read into the earlier revelations, yet one should let the earlier revelations be reflected or interpreted by those which follow.

God’s salvation was perfect from the very beginning. Its sufficiency had been prepared before the foundation of the world and was present in the Garden of Eden in seed form. Had Adam eaten of the tree of life, he would have had eternal life and saved the world from all its troubles. God’s plan of progressive and organic revelation was rooted in Genesis, proceeded through the Old Testament, and culminated in the New Testament in the person of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Genesis plays a fundamental part in this development of God’s revelation.

The difference between biblical theology and systematic theology is not that the former is biblical and the latter unbiblical. Theology cannot exist apart from Scripture, since Scripture is the only source of the true knowledge of God. No matter how liberal a person is, when theology is being discussed, he will, even unconsciously, base his discussion on Scripture; otherwise, his discussion would not be about theology, but rather ethics, philosophy, psychology, or some other study. The difference between these two theologies is the difference in their approach. Systematic theology takes what is called the “vertical” approach, that is, the Scriptures are approached topically from the viewpoint of the different theories of theologians throughout the ecclesiastical history of Christendom. Biblical theology, on the other hand, takes what is called the “horizontal” approach, that is, theology is presented within the framework of the progressive, organic

⁵¹Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1954), p. 15.

disclosure of God's truth in the Scriptures. To discuss who God is and what attributes He has belongs to systematic theology. To study how God made Himself known progressively throughout the various stages in Scripture is biblical theology. The nature and universality of sin are discussions for systematic theology. How sin developed from the incidental and local to the universal is the study of biblical theology.

Most authors of biblical theology have sensed the need for this approach as they have stated in their introductions. Yet in the body of their discussions, consciously or unconsciously, they have invariably adopted the systematic approach. It is not easy to discuss theology as it is in Scripture, since man's so-called logical mind cannot be compared to God's. Yet such a study is necessary in order that God's revelation may be understood according to its actual presentation in the Bible, and that His Church might be blessed through both approaches.

A proper understanding of the progressive nature of God's revelation is needed to solve many so-called problems of Scripture, because many of these problems cannot be properly understood without a clear understanding of the true nature of God's revelation.

For instance, in Genesis 1:1-2:3 God revealed Himself as the Creator, creating the heavens and the earth. He is the sovereign God: "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). He manifested Himself as "the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God" (Deut. 10:17), and required all the earth to fear Him, and all the inhabitants to stand in awe of Him. Thus it was natural for Him to name Himself Elohim. But in Genesis 2:4-25 where God dealt with man in particular, He revealed Himself as the gracious God. He created, formed, and made man in His image and after His likeness, and crowned him with glory and honor. In this passage, man is the center of God's attention. He, therefore, revealed Himself as Yahweh, who is "the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6). Since in chapter two of Genesis the name Yahweh is quite new to man's creation, God, in order to properly identify Himself, named Himself Yahweh, together with Elohim from the preceding chapter that man might know Yahweh who cared for him was the same Elohim who created the heavens and the earth. Hence "Yahweh [namely] Elohim" was employed in the record of man's creation in Genesis two instead of Elohim alone as in Genesis one.

Chapter one states after what pattern man was going to be created, that is, in God's image, after God's likeness. Chapter two tells how man was created after that pattern, that is, "God formed man . . . and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The beginning of the present earth as the dry land emerging from the water is recorded in chapter one. In chapter two the reason for its dryness, which was no rain upon the earth, is explained. In chapter one man was to be the climax of God's creation. Chapter two indicates that man was the center of it. The order of the statements in chapter one is chronological, and that in chapter two is logical. The *waw* consecutive at the beginning of Genesis 2:19, translated as "And" in most translations, is an indication of the sequence of the following action rather than the consequence of the preceding events. Therefore the correct translation of this verse should be: "After Yahweh God had formed every beast of the field . . . then He brought . . ." Thus the process of events in chapter two is different in presentation from the chronological order as given in chapter one. This also explains why the descriptions of God in chapter two and in subsequent history are more

anthropomorphic than those in chapter one. Since man was the object of God's dealing, God chose to be more "man-like" than He had previously been.

The religious evolutionary theory of destructive Old Testament critics is due largely to their ignorance of the progressive nature of God's revelation in the Old Testament. Their assumption is that the Old Testament is not the Word of God, supernaturally and verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit, but is rather the intellectual product of the religious ideas of the Hebrews. To them the Old Testament is only the religious record of men of ancient times, and the progressive nature of Scripture found in the Old Testament is a sign of man's evolutionary development rather than of God's special progressive revelation to man. In other words, they hold that the concept of God was developed in the minds of the Hebrews rather than advanced by God Himself in the history of the Hebrews. Their assumption, as well as their thinking, is man-centered rather than God-centered. Denying the supernatural purpose and plan of God's revelation, they fail to properly perceive His truth given to men in the Old Testament. The origin of many cults, and of much other misunderstanding of Scripture, may rightly be attributed to the failure to understand the concept of the organic and progressive nature of revelation.

For instance, the Seventh Day Adventists have not yet seen the truth in Scripture of the progressive revelation of the Sabbath. The purpose for observing the Sabbath was changed, even in the Pentateuch, from the recognition of creation (Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:11) to that of deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Psalm 118:22-24 refers to the day of the resurrection of Christ and may well be taken as the prophetic note on the changing of the Sabbath to that day in which "the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of this corner," that is, Sunday, the resurrection day of our Lord. Truly, "this is **the day** which the Lord has made [emphasis added]."

It is true that there is no commandment in the New Testament in respect to changing the Sabbath day. Yet the change is clearly progressive. It started from Christ's statement that He was the Lord of the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:8). He had the right and authority to interpret it and to do with it whatever He liked for man's wellbeing. The importance of the day is not in being either the last day of the week (Saturday) or the first (Sunday) but in being a day that the Lord chose for "the day" predicted in the Old Testament. Since the Lord was resurrected and appeared to the disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:1,19), and appeared again to the apostles at worship on the following first day of the week (John 20:26), undoubtedly the first day of the week is "the day." What greater happening ever occurred in the entire history of the earth than the Lord's resurrection, which was repeatedly confirmed by His many appearances. And what an important day must be "the day" on which this greatest of events occurred.

Furthermore, when Paul and his companions stayed at Troas for seven days, one Sabbath passed by, yet there is not a single mention of their having observed it. On the other hand, when the first day of the week came, the disciples gathered together to break bread, and Paul preached (Acts 20:5-7). Why had they waited until the first day of the week? Obviously, by then Sunday had already become the formal day for Christians' gathering to worship. Besides the importance of the day, the Lord further disclosed the program for commemorating or worshipping on the day, which should include gathering together, breaking bread, and preaching. A few years earlier, the Lord had disclosed another program concerning the believers' offering which should be collected on that day

(1 Cor. 16:1,2). Thus the authority, the importance, and the program of worship of the day had all been progressively disclosed; but not the name of the day, which was not revealed until the last book of Scripture.

When John was on Patmos, he received a revelation from the Lord on the first day of the week. The Lord suddenly appeared to him, and in his inspiration John named “the day” as “the Lord’s Day,” which means “belonging to the Lord” (Rev. 1:10). Christ has done so much for the world. Does He not deserve a special day for Himself? After all, He should have “the preeminence in all things” (Col. 1:18).

A proper concept of the progressiveness of God’s revelation is important for both the reception and the understanding of God’s progressive revelation in Genesis, which will be discussed in three stages: chapter one, the Adamic Period; chapter two, the Noachian Period; chapter three, the Patriarchal Period.

Part Two: THE REVELATION OF GOD AND MAN IN GENESIS

Chapter One—THE TIMES OF ADAM

THE REVELATION OF GOD

From the very beginning, God revealed Himself in two ways: through nature and by supernatural action. “Through nature” means God disclosed Himself both within man in his innate religious and moral consciousness and outside man in the whole of the magnificent nature of the universe. “By supernatural action” means God, as the author of history and the ruler of the universe, made use of the events of those nations in the Middle East, especially in the kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and above all, Israel and Judah, to progressively unfold His plans, demands, and program to the world. He utilized many material means, spiritual resources, personal lives, and even demonic and evil doings to disclose His will. Finally, He manifested Himself in Jesus Christ to make His reality, nature, and presence known to all people. All revelation is divinely initiated because man, with his corrupted nature and perverted mind, is never able to search out God. God must reveal Himself to man. In this Adamic Period (Gen 1:1-3:24), He progressively revealed to man His nature, His attribute, His person, and His character as the Eternal, the Creator, the Omnipotent, the Holy One, the Revealer, and the God of goodness, mercy, and justice.

A. God Is the Eternal—“In the beginning, *b^ereshith*” (Gen. 1:1).

The first of the three major questions in philosophy (How did things come into existence?) was answered accurately by the Holy Spirit in the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, and that is, “In the beginning God created” Things did not just “come into existence” as Immanuel Kant suggested in his nebular hypothesis, nor did our universe grow out of the blast of a single dense core of elementary particles, as George Gamow stated in his “big bang” theory. It was simply God’s doing, which is marvelous in all our eyes.

The very first phrase in the Bible has been badly handled by many critics. The Revised Standard Version dared not translate it other than “In the beginning” Nevertheless, their footnote reads, “When God began to create” which is a rather absurd note. Nowadays, the translator’s moral obligation to remain faithful to the text has been forgotten. Often when a passage in the text is beyond the translator’s understanding, he blames the biblical writer and emends the text to fit his own superficial understanding or prejudice rather than delving into it to find the answer. No sincere student of Hebrew would ever take this verse as a temporal clause. It is simply an independent clause referring to God’s absolute creation.

The idea of making Genesis 1:1 a temporal clause goes back to Ibn Ezra and Rashi in the Middle Ages. Ibn Ezra made verse one a dependent clause subordinate to verse two.

Rashi made verse one subordinate to verse three and put verse two in parenthesis.⁵² Although these manipulations make it possible to translate verse one “When God began to create . . .,” the verb *haythah* (was) in verse two either has to change positions with the subject according to Rashi or be dropped out of the text according to Ibn Ezra. In other words, it is impossible to make verse one a temporal clause without emendation. Such a translation is a desperate venture. No wonder even Wellhausen admitted that it is *verzweifelt*, that is, desperate.

Some modern Bible students claim they have found a parallel in the opening line of the Babylonian account of creation, known as *enuma elish*. As a matter of fact, the Babylonian statement has nothing to do with “In the beginning . . .” in Genesis. *E-nu-ma e-lish* has an entirely different grammatical structure, context, and expression than *b^e reshith*, which is unique. The former literally reads, “on-the-day (when) above not named were heavens; below earth a name not was called.” Compare this with the biblical account, “In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.” Whether or not a person knows Babylonian, having read both literal translations above, he will immediately sense their differences without any further explanation.

Although there are numerous creation stories in the literature of different nations, one essential point is universally the same in all of them: the universe was created and did not come into being by itself. All the accounts probably emanated from one genuine source and became corrupt in different ways according to the varying degradation of different people. In comparing other creation stories with that of Genesis, it is apparent that Genesis is pure and genuine, while the others are superstitions. All serious Bible scholars need to study all the extra biblical sources of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Canaanite origin for a clearer understanding of the Old Testament setting; yet to use those polytheistic stories to disprove the creation record in Genesis not only puts the cart before the horse but insults Christianity.

Furthermore, to translate Genesis 1:1 as a temporal clause endangers the foundation of the Christian faith, because such a translation declares that when God began His creative activity, matter was already in existence. If the material was co-existent or co-eternal with God, then Christianity is dualism and the universe was made from a chaotic mess instead of being created out of nothing by God. Thus God would not be the absolute Creator, Christians would become Alexandrian gnostics, and Christianity would be transformed into the school of theosophy.

The assumption that the translation in the English Bible is not of the regular Hebrew order, or is not demanded by the grammar, is not true. This same construct, *reshith* (beginning of) with the preposition *b^e* (in) and without a definite article, occurs four other times in the Old Testament. They are in Jeremiah 26:1, 27:1, 28:1, 49:34, and all are translated “In the beginning of.” Although the construct in the above passages is followed by a noun, while the same construct in Genesis 1:1 is followed by a finite verb, such a construction is genuine in Hebrew and even in some other Semitic languages. In 1 Samuel 25:15 “as long as” or “all [the] days” is a construct before the finite verb “we

⁵²Abraham Ben Isaiah and Benjamin Sharfman (ed.), *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary* (Brooklyn: S. S. and R. Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 4.

were conversant” or “we went about.” In 1 Samuel 5:9 “after” is a construct before the finite verb “they had carried.” In Psalms 81:5, “the language” is a construct before the finite verb “I understood not.” A Greek phrase in John 1:1 corresponds to that used by the Septuagint translators in translating Genesis 1:1, and all the Jewish translators of the New Testament adopted the phrase in Genesis 1:1 to translate John 1:1. But never to date has it been suggested that John 1:1 should be translated “When God began to be.” In brief, the reader may be assured that the English translation “In the beginning God created . . .” gives every indication of being an accurate translation.

God is eternal. Before the beginning of time and the existence of space, He was. In Him there is no beginning nor end. Time and space were begun and will be ended in Him, but He is God from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 90:2).

B. God Is the Creator—“created, *bara*” (Gen. 1:1).

In the Hebrew text, Genesis 1:1 begins “In the beginning” and the verb “created” immediately follows it. By the phrase “in the beginning,” God indirectly reveals His nature as the Eternal One who was the giver of time. However, concerning His attribute in the creative operation and His omnipotence in bringing forth so complicated yet so orderly a universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), the initial phrase does not give us very much information, but the verb *bara* (created) does.

Bara in the general form (*qal* stem) is used 38 times in the Old Testament. Etymologically, it does not imply “to create something out of nothing.” For instance, the Lord “created [a person to be] the smith” (Is. 54:16), “create the fruit of the lips” (Is. 57:19), and “create . . . a clean heart” (Ps. 51:10) do not refer to creation *ex nihilo*. They do, however, indicate that something new was created which did not previously exist. A few examples are sufficient to verify this meaning: Moses said, “But if the Lord make [“create” in Hebrew] a new thing” (Num. 16:30); Jeremiah said, “for the Lord has created a new thing” (Jer. 31:22); the Lord said to Moses “such as have not been done [“created” in Hebrew] in all the earth” (Ex. 34:10); and in Isaiah the Lord said, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (Is. 65:17). In the same way, the heavens and the earth created in Genesis 1:1 were entirely new products created by God at the beginning of time without pre-existent material.

Syntactically, however, *bara* does imply the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing). This verb, in its general form, is exclusively used with reference to divine activity.⁵³ It is always used with God as the subject, with the product being created as the object, and is never followed by an accusative of the material used. In Genesis 1:27 this form is used three times to emphasize that man was newly created, not only male but female as well. However, when the material for making man’s body is mentioned (Gen. 2:7), the verb *yatsar* (formed) takes the place of *bara*. In other words, *bara* in Genesis 1:1 does indicate the idea of “creation out of nothing” from the context. By using the verb *bara*, God revealed Himself to man as the originator of all things, even the creator who brought things into being that had no previous existence.

⁵³When it is used with man, its intensive form (*piel* stem) is employed. Both “cut down” in Joshua 17:15,18 are its intensive form. In comparison with Genesis 1:1, it indicates that God’s creative activities were much easier for Him than are man’s in cutting down a tree.

In summary, grammatically *bara* here is the finite verb of an independent clause. It is a perfect in general form, standing alone and describing the one act of creation that was performed at the beginning of time and was completed in the past. Its state is complete, and its time is determinate past. It gives no hint of a further creative act. In context, this verse indicates one Person's magnificent action as a part of the narrative; yet it is a narrative by itself and complete in itself. Here God revealed Himself as the absolute creator, "He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. 148:5). By His creative fiat the heavens and the earth were created and completed in Genesis 1:1. Unless the translator emends the text, the syntax of this verse permits no other interpretation.

C. God Is the Omnipotent—"Elohim" (Gen. 1:1).

Herbert Spencer said there are five unknowable things: time, force, action, space, and matter. However, at the very beginning of Scripture, philosophically unknowable items are knowable because, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Time is not eternal. It was created by God and has a beginning. Force in the universe is not blind but comes from the personal and powerful Elohim. Action is the creative performance of the Creator. Space and matter are exhibited by the heavens and the earth, that God created. He is the cause of all things (except sin): the knowable and unknowable alike.

Although God is comprehensible to man through nature and history, He is willing to make it easier for man to find Him. In order that many may come to know Him, He has given many forms of revelation. In Genesis He especially revealed Himself through His divine names and titles. Oehler said it very well:

Man can imagine names for false gods, but the true God can be named by man only so far as He reveals Himself to man and discloses to him His nature. . . . God does not name Himself to man after the compass of His Perfections . . . but according to the relation in which He has placed Himself to man, according to the attributes by which He wishes to be acknowledged, known, and addressed by man, in the communion into which He has entered with him. In short, God names Himself, not according to what He is for Himself, but to what He is for man; and therefore every self-presentation of God in the world is expressed by a corresponding name of God.⁵⁴

Generally, there are three main views of the root meaning of Elohim. Some Bible students regard it as the plural of *El*, which is derived from a root *alah* meaning "to be strong." *El* is translated as God when it is used as a proper noun, and "power" or "might" when a common noun. The "God" in Genesis 31:13 or 35:1, 3, the "power" in Genesis 31:29 or Proverbs 3:27, and the "mighty one" in Ezekiel 31:11 are all *El* in Hebrew. Others think it is the plural of *eloah* derived from an Arabic root *waliha*, "to fear," hence "the object of fear" or "the revered one" which seems to fit the teaching of the Old Testament very well, since "fear of the Lord" in the Old Testament has the same importance as "believing in Jesus Christ" in the New Testament. Others take Elohim in its Old Testament adjectival meaning that signifies "great" or "mighty." For instance, in Genesis 23:6 "mighty prince" is "prince of elohim" in Hebrew; in Genesis 30:8 "great

⁵⁴Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. George E. Day (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1889), p. 125.

wrestling” is “wrestling of elohim.” This seems to be the reason for applying this same title to the judges in Israel, since they were counted as being great or noble among the people.⁵⁵ A statement in Deuteronomy might be the biblical definition for Elohim: “The LORD your God [Elohim] is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the fearful God” (Deut. 10:17). This full definition, however, was not precisely revealed in Genesis chapter one, although the germinal idea of the great, the fearful, and the mighty One was disclosed during the act of creation.

The plural form of Elohim also indicates God’s power and might. The plural form in Hebrew, besides its ordinary characteristic as a numerical plural, has a great many collective indications. It may denote the idea of extension as *shamayim* (heaven) or *olamim* (eternity), both being plural forms in Hebrew. Or it may express the sum of several parts of an action, as does *kippurim* (atonement) and *tachanunim* (supplication), and so on.⁵⁶ It may also indicate the idea of abstraction and intensification that undoubtedly applies to the plural form of Elohim. God is invisible, yet all things are from Him, through Him, and unto Him. To say that Elohim is an evidence of Hebraic polytheism in ancient Israel reveals ignorance of Hebrew grammar rather than scholarship. Moreover, the singular verb *bara* confirms the singularity of the plural form of Elohim.⁵⁷ Thus in Genesis 1:1, Elohim has revealed Himself as the Eternal who created new things without pre-existent material and who is the great, fearful, and mighty God.

Omnipotence is one of God’s three attributes related to creation. The other two are omniscience and omnipresence. Although these three are related to one another in creation, each of them has its own particular relational aspect. Omnipresence of God is related to space; omniscience to time; omnipotence to creation, preservation, redemption, man’s conversion and resurrection, and establishment of the coming kingdom. Omnipotence is God’s almighty power related to action, which is divided by theologians into *potesta absoluta* (absolute power) and *potesta ordinata* (ordinate power). Absolute power refers to the power of God inherent in Himself; whereas ordinate power denotes the power of God that is now being exercised in God’s providence. In sum, He is the powerful One and He is able to do whatever He has decreed. The creation of man was first planned and then carried out in accordance with that plan. The virgin birth of Christ was first promised and then fulfilled in due time. Likewise, the coming of the kingdom has been precisely predicted and will surely arrive in its own time. The demonstration of His ordinate omnipotence in the Old Testament is varied, yet the nature of His demonstration is always the same: by the operation of the Holy Spirit and the declaration of the Word, that is, “the Spirit of God moved upon. . . . And God said.” In brief, the creative acts in Genesis 1:1 are a demonstration of the omnipotence of Elohim.

⁵⁵”Judges” in Exodus 21:6; 22:8 are “Elohim” in Hebrew.

⁵⁶Compare A.E. Cowley (rev.), *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), pp. 396-401.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 462-463.

D. God Is the Holy One—“without form and void, *thohu wabhohu*” (Gen. 1:2).

The eternal purpose of God’s creating the earth was “not in vain” or “without form,” but to be inhabited. No matter how wicked the inhabitants of the earth become, God’s promise that “they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid” will certainly be fulfilled one day (Mic. 4:4).

In Hebrew, the plural form of “heavens” in Genesis 1:1 implies the plural of extension and amplification, denoting the idea of a whole composed of innumerable separate parts. “Heavens” refers to the heaven and all things and beings within it, including space, galaxies, and angelic beings. These were first created. Then while the earth was being created, the angels admired the beauty and orderliness of the earth by singing and shouting (Job 38:4-7). However, in Genesis 1:2 the Holy Spirit suddenly changed His expression by saying, “And the earth was without form and void.” An accurate translation of the phrase would be “Now the earth was deserted and waste.” The heavens were all right, **but the earth** was deserted and waste.

The cause of the earth being “deserted and waste” has been much discussed and argued among Bible students. Most of them would argue from the meanings of *thohu* (without form) or *bhohu* (void) separately, and neglect the importance of interpreting them together as a pair. Each writer has his own diction and wording. It is incorrect for one to interpret an author’s words separately when they should be together or in pairs, nor is it fair to put them together when they are used separately. The interpretation of “the heavens and the earth” should be different from the interpretation of “the earth” alone. Likewise, the significance of Elohim alone is certainly different from the combination of Yahweh Elohim. Since *thohu* and *bhohu* is a pair, an accurate interpretation cannot be reached without interpreting them together.

This pair is used together only three times in the Old Testament: Genesis 1:2, Isaiah 34:11, and Jeremiah 4:23. The exact significance in Genesis 1:2 is difficult to determine, since the statement is extremely brief. In order to interpret accurately, we must go to the other two passages for comparison. Chapter 34 of Isaiah talks of the Lord’s judgment upon the Edomites. Verses 1-7 speak about the judgment, 8-15 about the desolation after the judgment, and 16-17 about the surety of God’s word. In the midst of illustrating the desolation, *thohu* and *bhohu* are used in parallel to state the result of God’s judgment. Here *thohu* is translated “confusion” and the parallel *bhohu* is translated “emptiness” to describe the horrible destruction upon Edom. Jeremiah 4:1-31 can likewise be divided into three sections: warning (vv. 1-18), mourning (vv. 19-22), and wasting (vv. 23-31). Wasting is Jeremiah’s vision of desolation after God’s judgment comes upon the land of Judah. Thus when *thohu* and *bhohu* are used as a pair, it appears that they portray the desolation following God’s judgment and therefore, Genesis 1:2 should indicate a situation following God’s judgment.

After God had created the heavens and the earth, there could have been a long time before His holiness as “a consuming fire” fell in judgment upon the earth. The passage in Job 9:5-7 may well be the record of that judgment. He would not tolerate any iniquity even in the first world. No one knows how long the earth had been desolate and covered with water before God began His recreation. The period of time in Genesis 1:2 could

have been a long one, since a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday or as a watch in the night.

E. God Is the Revealer—The Trinity (Gen. 1:1-2:3).

God's making the earth anew revealed more than did His initial creation of the heavens and the earth. Here, for instance, He began to suggest the existence of the other two of the three eternal distinctions in His nature.

He revealed Himself as the Spirit who was hovering over the face of the waters preparing the disorganized matter for His coming creative acts. During Moses' time, polytheism was prevalent everywhere. Recognizing the ignorance of the people, the Holy Spirit chose to omit here His usual name for Himself as the third person of the Trinity but revealed Himself as the *ruach* (Spirit) of God. Nevertheless, He indicated that the *ruach* is able to perform the personal action of hovering, which is translated as "moved" in Genesis 1:2. In Hebrew, "moved" is a feminine participle in the intensive form. Feminine gender denotes tenderness, a participle expresses continual action, and the form indicates intensive power. It is from the verb which means "to hover with outstretched wing" like a bird hovering affectionately over its young. This same verb is also used in Deuteronomy 32:11, translated as "fluttereth," to illustrate the loving care of the mother eagle over her chick. Thus was the Holy Spirit hovering over the chaotic jumble and working tenderly, continually, and powerfully to bring the disordered mess into order. Milton describes it:

. . . but on the water calm
His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,
And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth,
Throughout the fluid mass⁵⁸

After the Holy Spirit's hovering over the chaotic mass had accomplished its purpose, one day a series of "God said . . . God said," followed by a series of "and it was so . . . and it was so," with a series of God's approvals of "it was good . . . it was good," resounded and the present earth came into existence. God's saying is God's Word, which is the revelation of the whole mind and will of God, and which was "with God" and "was God" in the beginning. John tells us, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and that life was the light of man" (John 1:3-4). He was the Wisdom set up from everlasting, and He acted as the engineer of God's creation (Prov. 8:22-31). "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). God's Word in making this earth anew disclosed God's goodness and God's omniscience.

God's Word indicates the personality of Elohim. Words cannot be produced from nothingness; intellect, sensibility, and volition are all needed. In this creation chapter, God uses the jussive mood in all His creative commands except one. Jussive in Hebrew expresses a definite desire something should happen.⁵⁹ Such a desire was fulfilled and approved by God's repeated statements, "It was good." In His creation of man, God uses

⁵⁸Robert Vaughan (ed.), *Milton's Paradise Lost* (New York: Collier, n.d.), p. 170.

⁵⁹Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

the cohortative mood, “Let us make,” which expresses the determination underlying the action and the personal interest in it,⁶⁰ indicating that man’s creation was unique and different from that of all other creatures. These two expressions of God’s Word plus God’s action, “saw,” “called,” “made,” “set,” “created,” and “blessed” testify vividly to the personality of Elohim in the very beginning of the Scriptures.

Now the work of creation was finished, and God ceased from all His work on the seventh day. He expressed His satisfaction in His work by blessing the seventh day and setting it apart from other days, to signify the climax of His creative work and to typify the culmination of His redemptive purpose (See Heb. 4:4-10). “Rested” (Gen. 2:2) in the original denotes the opposite of acting or laboring rather than weariness. In Assyrian it means “to be completed.” God Almighty needs no rest. “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4). Resting one day from a week’s work was an example to man for man’s good. As our Lord says, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27).

Thus, in this beginning chapter of Genesis, God revealed His nature, attribute, and character progressively as the Eternal, the Creator, the Omnipotent, the Holy One, and the Trinity. He originated time, created everything that exists out of nothing, manifested His power and greatness, administered justice over iniquity, revealed Himself in three persons, and gave the earth light and life. He did all this for man. Even His rest on the seventh day was not for Himself. The psalmist stated the truth in Psalm 84:11 when he says, “Grace and glory will the Lord give; He will not withhold any good from those that walk with integrity [retranslated].”

F. God Is Love—His Goodness—“Yahweh Elohim” (Gen. 2:4-25).

Titles and names in the Scriptures are meaningful, and knowing them is often the first step to knowing the individual. Through his name, we know that Esau, the older son of Isaac was physically hairy (Gen. 25:25). Jacob, who took the heel of his brother at his birth, was a supplanter (25:26). Samuel, which signifies “heard of El,” was God’s answer to his mother’s prayer (1 Sam. 1:20). These names, though given at birth or on the eighth day after birth, often proved to be true epithets of the characteristics of the persons named. Esau, as a man of the field, was interested in hunting. Jacob led a casuistic life, that is, one based on the philosophy that the end justifies the means, until his total commitment to God at Bethel. Samuel was the man of God all his life, and God always answered his prayers. Nabal (fool), the husband of Abigail who later became David’s wife, lived and died a fool (1 Sam. 25:25). John, which is the combination of “Yahweh” and “grace,” was surely the last grace of God to Israel. Jesus, which is a combination of “Yahweh” and “causing to be free,” came not only to forgive our sins but also to deliver us out of our sin-bondage. He says, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Thus a name in Scripture often portrays the person. In light of this, let us now consider the true name of God.

God’s name is first mentioned in Genesis 2:4, “in the day that the LORD [Yahweh] God [Elohim] made the earth and the heavens.” Here Elohim revealed Himself to be

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 319.

Yahweh. This divine name is translated as “the LORD” throughout the Authorized Version (except Gen. 22:14; Ex. 6:3; 17:15; Judg. 6:24; Ps. 83:18; Is. 12:2; 26:4), and as “Jehovah” throughout the Revised Version. Both of them are improper translations, and their history is an interesting story.

God revealed His name to Moses written with four Hebrew consonants (YHWH, called the tetragrammaton). Gradually this divine name became regarded as too sacred to be uttered, lest the speaker take the name of God in vain (Ex. 20:7). Thus after the Exile (6th century B.C.) the four letters which probably were originally pronounced as Yahweh were replaced vocally in the synagogue worship by the Hebrew word Adonai (“the Lord”). The first Hebrew text was composed solely of consonants without vowels, with the pronunciation of the words being passed on from generation to generation orally, as the Chinese people do even today. From about the 6th to the 10th century A.D., the Masoretes (Jewish scholars who worked to reproduce and preserve the original text of the Hebrew Bible) adopted a set of gradually developed vowel signs to vocalize each word in the biblical text. Since the real pronunciation of God’s name YHWH had been lost because the Jews refrained from vocalizing it out of respect for its sacred nature, the Masoretes followed oral tradition and wrote YHWH with the vowel signs for Adonai. Thus, in the text the original YHWH became YeHoWaH, to indicate that this name should be read as Adonai, as it is still read today by all orthodox Jews. The translators of the Authorized Version usually adopted the traditional reading and translated it “the LORD”; while the Revised Version improperly adopted the artificial name Jehovah. Thus it is plain that the vowels from Adonai combined with the consonants YHWH came from tradition and have nothing to do with the original and actual pronunciation of God’s name.

Not only should God’s name be pronounced accurately but to know its precise pronunciation is also important because His very nature is revealed in this name. God is too great and wonderful for any man to name Him. People might single out any one of His characteristics, attributes, or manifestations, and name Him as such; but only God knew what name would reveal Himself best. The pronunciation and meaning of this name may be ascertained from Exodus chapter three. When God called Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses asked God saying, “They shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Ex. 3:13-14). Here, God named Himself “I AM,” which is of course in the first person, since God Himself was speaking. “I AM” is *ehyeh* in Hebrew. Its third person, singular, masculine is *yihyeh*, of which the North Palestinian form of *hawah*, which was an archaic form of *hayah* (to be), could be Yahweh, which means “HE IS.” Hence, the preferred meaning of Yahweh is simply “HE IS.” The difference between “I AM” and “HE IS” is that the former is viewed from God’s own standpoint and the latter from man’s standpoint. (Actually, God’s proper name is Yahweh, and other so-called names are really titles [Ex. 3:15]. Common usage, however, has applied the term “name” both to God’s name and to His titles. As a general rule, I will follow that common practice.)

“HE IS” has been interpreted in quite a few ways. Some interpret it as “The One Who Exists,” but the idea of God’s existence was never a question among the Hebrews. All of them believed in God, although some of them might have believed in numerous gods.

Furthermore, such an idea would be ineffective for Moses to use in approaching the Israelites who were in deep affliction. Others take it as the causative form (hiphil stem) and paraphrase it as “The one who caused all things or brought all things into existence.” This idea would not have impressed the Israelites, for what comfort and encouragement would it be to show an enslaved people that God was the first cause of the universe? Besides, this idea would limit God’s greatness. He is much more than just the first cause. What then does “HE IS” mean? “HE IS” simply means “He is” God did not name Himself “Power,” “Wisdom,” or any other noun, since one noun would exclude the other. He named Himself “HE IS,” an unlimited and unsearchable name bearing all the necessities of His people. If they needed redemption, “HE IS Redemption”; if peace, “HE IS the Prince of Peace”; if help, “HE IS the Counselor.” If they were sick, “HE IS the Healer”; if poor, “HE IS the Supporter”; if in trouble, “HE IS the Deliverer.”

The children of Israel were enslaved by a powerful nation, laboring under the whips of their taskmasters. They were forced to cast their babies into the Nile, and their lives were miserable and desperate. They cried for deliverance, but where could they look for deliverance? They had no weapons. They were not trained for war. Even if there had been a nation that could invade and overcome Egypt, there would have been very little probability for such a nation to set those valuable slaves free. The Israelites had probably pondered the possibility of deliverance hundreds or even thousands of times until the faintest ray of hope was extinguished. Now, Moses came and proclaimed that he had been sent by “HE IS,” which was exactly what they needed to hear. They needed a name by which all their problems would be solved and all their questions would be answered. And here it was. If they would say, “We are too weak,” the answer of this name would be HE IS your strength; “We are too poor,” HE IS your wealth; “We are too ignorant,” HE IS your wisdom; “We are not trained for war,” HE IS God Almighty. What name could be more comforting and encouraging to those faint-hearted people? No wonder when they heard “HE IS” had visited them, “they bowed their heads and worshipped” (Ex. 4:31).

No other words in the entire vocabulary of language could be better used by God to name Himself than “I AM” or “HE IS.” It is a heavenly blank check. No matter how much one needs, God has reserved more than enough in His eternal bank. David knew well the significance of this name, for he said, “HE IS [O LORD] my strength, HE IS [the LORD] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Ps. 18:1-2). Indeed, HE IS the Conferrer of all our benefits! Needs of individuals and nations may vary, but whatever the need, the age, or the circumstances may be, HE IS all that is needed and is always available to meet the need. As it is written, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The titles of God may reveal certain aspects of Him, but HE IS is applicable to all circumstances and all times, as God says, “This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex. 3:15). May all those who come to Him “believe that HE IS, and that HE IS a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6, emphasis added). Thus when God said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites that ‘I AM WHO I AM’ has sent you,” He was telling us “that I AM all that you need Me to be as the occasion arises, that is who I AM.”

This self-revelation of God as Yahweh was not fully disclosed during the Adamic

Period. Neither was it fully unfolded during the Noachian Period, nor during the Patriarchal Period when El Shaddai (Almighty God) was given the priority (17:1). However, God did reveal Himself as Love in the name of Yahweh Elohim in the Adamic Period, in anticipation of the full revelation of Yahweh in the Mosaic Period. His love was disclosed through His goodness in providing personal needs and in preparing personal education.

1. Providing Personal Needs. God's mercy and goodness were revealed in the creation through His Spirit and His Word. These were, however, natural revelations. God's supernatural revelation in reference to His goodness and mercy did not come until man was created. After Yahweh Elohim had created, formed, and made man, He "planted a garden eastward in Eden" in which man could stay (2:8). Garden originally meant "a place hedged round," and Eden meant "delight" as translated in 2 Samuel 1:24, or "pleasure" in Psalm 36:8. Used together they indicate God's concern for man's security and happiness. God is Elohim, the mighty, great, and fearful Creator. God is also Yahweh who loved man, gave him life and provided for his needs.

Having prepared man's living quarters, God made trees to grow out of the ground for the pleasure of man's sight and the satisfaction of his appetite (2:9). The former met man's emotional needs and the latter his physical needs. Had God not caused green leaves to be brought forth on the earth to charm man's eyes, his heart would, no doubt, have been more callous. Yahweh Elohim cares not only for man's life in general but for the needs of his soul and physical body as well.

Among the trees were two extraordinary ones, namely, "the tree of life" and "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Since man possessed a spiritual nature that needed to be developed, both trees were especially designated by God for this very purpose. In order to grow spiritually, man had to accept one thing and refuse the other. "The tree of life" was the positive means for man's growth. It was in the midst of the garden, a very convenient location for him to approach. By eating from it, man would live forever; just as Christ says, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (John 6:51). "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil," which may mean the tree of knowing everything ethically,⁶¹ was used negatively to test man's obedience to God as the requirement to receive God's love.

The tree of life in this period was the seed form of eternal life that God prepared for man. Salvation was not needed before Adam fell because there was no sin, but the acceptance of God's eternal life was just as necessary as at any other time. Adam was a perfect man but not a spiritual man. He was created with "eternity"⁶² (that is, Godlike spiritual perception) or "immortality" which God breathed into his nostrils; nevertheless, he did not have God's eternal life within himself. In order for the eternity within to function spiritually, he had to receive sacramentally the eternal life that God had prepared for him through the tree of life. If he had he eaten of the fruit of the tree of life before his fall, God's eternal life would have automatically entered his eternity. Through eating he

⁶¹Cyrus H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* (Ventnor, N.J.: Ventnor Publishing, Inc, n.d.), pp. 22-23.

⁶²The "world" in Ecclesiastes 3:11 should be translated as "eternity," and the whole phrase should be ". . . also He has set the eternity in their heart, without which no man can find out . . ."

would have committed an act of faith, through which God could impart His life and through which His very self might penetrate and fill Adam and make Adam virtually another Himself. This would have the genuine revelation of God's love to man as Strong quotes from Thomasius' *Christe Person und Werk*, "Love, in the true sense of the word, is living goodwill, with impulses to impartation and union; self-communication . . . devotion, merging of the *ego* in another, in order to penetrate, fill, bless this other with itself. . . ." ⁶³ In other words, the impartation of eternal life is nothing other than the inauguration of God's eternal love. Thus in the garden of Eden, Yahweh Elohim prepared not only for man's material and physical benefits but for his spiritual necessities as well.

2. Preparing Personal Education. God, having provided man's personal needs, also prepared the means for his personal education. Man was created for the purpose of exercising dominion over God's creation, however, training was needed before dominion could be exercised. For this reason God made a covenant with man. A covenant, in general, is an agreement between two or more parties, whereby all parties concerned are obliged to carry out those stipulations in the covenant that apply to them. In Scripture, however, God's covenants are monergistic, that is, they have their origin, disclosure and continuance solely in God's goodness and grace, although there are conditions that the human participants must keep. Altogether God made seven covenants with man: three in Genesis, three in other books of the Old Testament, and one predicted in Jeremiah and fulfilled in the New Testament. The first covenant is called the Adamic Covenant.

God's plan for man at the time of creation, or even prior to that, was that man should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (1:26). This was God's ultimate purpose for man from the very beginning. Since man was a creature subordinate to the Creator and man's ruling was conditioned by obedience to God, man could not reign until he had been properly prepared through a process of training. In other words, God's purpose from the very beginning of creation was to establish a theocratic kingdom upon the earth with man acting as His agent. Thus Adam, being a moral agent, had to choose between obedience and disobedience to determine whether or not he was fit to reign. This was the Adamic Covenant.

Although only embryonic in form, the Adamic Covenant possessed both the requirements and purpose in common with all the other God-given covenants throughout the ages. Its **preamble** was "And God said" (1:28-29), which indicates that God was the maker of the covenant. Its **obligation** required that man obey the charge regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, keep and dress the garden wherein he stayed, replenish the earth, and rule over all of God's creation. The **purpose** of the covenant was to test man under a perfect environment to see if he would exercise complete faith in and obedience to God. Its **curse** was death to the one who broke the covenant and **blessing** to him who kept it. In a word, the chief requirements of the covenant were obedience and faith, and the chief purpose was to rule over all God's creatures.

Although God's revelation as Yahweh was not as clearly unfolded in this period as it would be in the Mosaic Period, it did reveal God's love through His goodness. He

⁶³Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

considered man's welfare, man's physical, mental, and spiritual needs, and man's personal training to prepare him to exercise authority over God's Kingdom. Love never fails!

G. God Is Love—His Mercy—“Yahweh Elohim” (Gen. 3:1-13).

The love of God was manifested supernaturally both before and after Adam's fall. Before the fall God provided all the blessings necessary to meet the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of Adam and Eve. After the fall He prepared opportunities for them to repent and salvation for them to accept. Love manifested before the fall was God's goodness, and after it, God's mercy. God's goodness is bestowed upon those who obey Him and have close fellowship with Him. God's mercy is extended to those who are disobedient and have a breach between Him and themselves. Both are God's eternal principles in dealing with man through all the ages and both are supernatural revelations of God's love to man. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1) refers to the goodness of His love. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8) refers to the mercy of His love. The need of all God's children is “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23:6).

Having enjoyed God's goodness for a season, Adam then failed God by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thereby allowing sin to enter the world. God had created man higher than the animals so that he could be God's representative over His creation. Satan knew very well the position in the universe that God had planned for man and thought that if he could either persuade man to desire to be Godlike or cause him to fall to the level of the animals. Then God's plan for man would be thwarted. Therefore, Satan had possessed a serpent and had spoken to Eve through it. While inducing Eve to concentrate on eating, a characteristic of animals, he pretended to be helping man become Godlike, that is “as God,” which was Satan's own original conspiracy (Is. 14:14). In reality, he was trying to make man like the animals. Thus man yielded to temptation and fell from his status between God and the animal kingdom. Man had abused God's goodness, yet God's mercy was waiting for him. First, God let the sound of His walking in the garden be heard (Gen. 3:8). Walking instead of running to them was an indication of God's mercy that provided the man and his wife ample time for deliberation unto repentance. However, they took advantage of God's long-suffering by finding a place to hide from the presence of the merciful God. They chose escapism instead of facing the facts. As a result, they foolishly wasted their first opportunity to repent.

God's mercy is great. After the initial disappointment, God revealed His mercy again by asking Adam, “Where art thou?” This interrogation was certainly not an indication of God's ignorance of man's hiding place, but it was to call man's attention to his fallen status, that he might realize how far he had fallen and might repent and be restored to his first position. For this reason God now asked him, “Where art thou?” This question should have reminded Adam of his original status and led him to repentance, but the destructive power of sin had already degraded his spiritual perception. So man's second opportunity for repentance was also wasted.

As David says, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy” (Ps. 103:8). Yahweh’s mercy is plenteous. He granted Adam a third opportunity by asking him, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree?” (3:11). Yahweh certainly knew who the tempter was and whether or not Adam had eaten. God deliberately asked these two questions in order to arouse Adam’s conscience, that he might recognize the tempter and his own rebellious action and, consequently, confess his ignorance and sins before the merciful Lord. Instead he laid the blame on his wife, and even on God Himself. As a result, his stubbornness cost him every opportunity for repentance.

When Adam did not repent, God turned to Eve and gave her a chance, too. This was the fourth and last opportunity. Yahweh Elohim said, “What is this that thou hast done?” (v. 13). God used “Where” and “Who” to give Adam opportunities to repent, but Adam rejected all of them. Now He tried “What” with Eve. Had Eve said, “Yahweh, this is sin that I have committed; forgive me!” the fate of the world might have been entirely different. But she did not. Instead, she followed Adam’s steps and made excuses for herself by throwing the blame on the serpent. As a result, God’s mercies were totally rejected and the door to repentance for them in this matter was entirely shut. This was the beginning of man’s subjection to the reign of sin and death and of the whole creation’s travail in pain.

H. God Is Just—“Yahweh Elohim” (Gen. 3:14-24).

God is Yahweh, yet He is Elohim. He is love, yet He is just. He is the God who wants to make the crooked straight and the rough plain. He will not let His love endanger His justice, nor will He let His justice hinder His love. After His love had fulfilled its obligations, then His justice had its turn. He took judicial action to conclude Adam’s case so that He might make a new start. He sentenced each of the three parties according to what each deserved. Nevertheless, in the midst of His judgment, He revealed His mercy by declaring a coming redemption for man. This was the manifestation of God’s great mercy and was the first revelation of the cross in seed form. The fountain of God’s saving grace began to flow, and here the first page of His carefully planned and progressively presented salvation unfolded. The revelation of redemption is not punctiliar. It is linear. Here was its beginning, followed by progressive manifestations which were exhibited successively to the ever-degrading descendants of man until God’s revelation of redemption reached its climax in Christ. Here at the commencement of the revelation of redemption three things were revealed: a judgment of Satan, a promise for man, and an action by God.

1. A Judgment of Satan. The judgment of Satan consisted of two steps: first, to the serpent that Satan used, and then to Satan himself. The serpent was judged as being “cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field.” “Above” was translated from the Hebrew preposition *min* which expresses “the idea of separation; hence, out, from, on account of, above, than,” and so on. Contextually, it may be well to translate it as *apo*, (out of) as in the Septuagint, or “inter” (among) as in the Vulgate, since there is no indication in this passage that other animals were also cursed. Nevertheless, theologically speaking, the translation in the Authorized Version is right, since the serpent was cursed on account of its own sin and the other animals by the sin of Adam.

In other words, the serpent, a direct offender, would naturally be punished more severely than those animals indirectly involved. One day the whole creation that “groaneth and travaileth in pain together till now” will be redeemed, but not the serpents. They will carry the mark of the curse even in the Millennium (See Is. 11:8; 65:25).

The judgment upon the serpent was in two parts. The first part “upon thy belly shalt thou go” obviously is literal, and no explanation is necessary. The second part, “dust shalt thou eat,” may also be interpreted literally, although many Bible students have interpreted it figuratively because they thought the serpent would never eat mud. Yet as a matter of fact, almost all the farmers in China know that during the winter season serpents always hold mud in their mouths through the whole period of their dormancy. The judgment upon the serpent also dealt with Satan who had taken advantage of the serpent. In the Old Testament there are four passages adopting much the same expression concerning dust to illustrate four different ideas that may help us understand God’s judgment upon Satan. The first passage is Psalm 44:25 that refers to the custom of a mourner sitting down in dust and ashes. By analogy it may signify Satan’s being sentenced to lead a mournful life all his days. The second passage is Psalm 72:9 that is an expression of the humiliation before God’s king of those who dwelt in the wilderness, perhaps signifying Satan’s fate of leading a disgraceful life. The third passage is Isaiah 49:23 which refers to the future subjection of foreign kings and princes to Israel and may signify Satan’s life of subjection. Notwithstanding how evil he is, he can do nothing without God’s permission. The last passage (Mic. 7:17) illustrates the shameful and trembling life of the nations before the Lord and may well signify also Satan’s trembling life. For as James says, “the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Because of his part in man’s fall, Satan was sentenced to lead a mournful, humiliated, subjected, and trembling life.

2. A Promise for Man. The promise “He shall bruise your head” was a statement of the ultimate victory of the promised seed, Christ, over the universal adversary, Satan, rather than of a perpetual conflict between man and Satan. The mortal part of any living thing is the head. When the head is crushed, the conflict is over and the opponent succumbs. Therefore, to crush the head of any enemy can only mean the ultimate victory over him. Driver’s remark, “No victory of the woman’s seed is promised, but only a perpetual antagonism”⁶⁴ surely overlooked the significance of the “head.” To change the root of the verb *shuph* in “you shall bruise his heel” and interpret it as “lie in wait for” to fit the situation of a serpent is unnecessary, since zeugma, an incongruous sentence construction, is common in any literature, although it is usually rejected by modern writers. “You shall bruise his heel” indicates that the suffering which Satan inflicted upon Christ when He was on the cross was not fatal as Satan’s wound on the head will be. Adam certainly did not understand this promise as clearly as we do today. Nevertheless, he realized that sometime, in some way unknown to him, the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, and the victory would belong to man. The faith of Adam toward this promise was expressed in the name Eve (*chawwah* “life”) which designated his wife as “the mother of all living.” In brief, in this promise God revealed the seed form of His redemption for man, even Christ’s virgin birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. He would be the woman’s seed, not man’s seed, that is, virgin born.

⁶⁴S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen and Company, 1904), p. 48.

His heel would be struck, meaning crucified. He would crush the enemy's head, signifying His triumphant resurrection.

3. An Action by God. When God killed an animal to provide clothing for Adam and Eve, this was the first revelation in seed form of Calvary, that is, the first manifestation of the cross in action. After their fall, our first parents' realization of their nakedness and need for a covering shows that they understood that their fall had brought a curse upon themselves. As sinners separated from God and having guilty consciences, the first pair could not partake of the tree of life until they had done away with their separation from God and the guilt within. In other words, before they could accept the eternal life, they must first have remission of their sin and reconciliation with God. Otherwise, it would be like sewing a piece of new cloth onto an old garment, making the rent even worse. Their curse needed to be done away in order for them to stand before God, but it could be removed only through a vicarious atonement. Accordingly, a victim's blood was shed, and its skin was made into two coats to clothe them. "Skins" should be "a skin" since it is a singular number in Hebrew. Only one skin from one victim was used to cover two naked bodies. This was the seed form of the later revelations, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Adam was not aware that one day Jesus Christ would hang upon a Roman cross on Calvary for the sins of the world. Nevertheless, he sensed that the reason for God's slaying an animal and taking its life was the result of his own sin. At first they attempted to cover themselves; later they accepted a covering from another. Accepting in faith what God had revealed to them was enough for our first parents to receive salvation.

God took two additional actions in regard to Eden. First, He sent man forth from the garden of Eden, showing that sin separates man from intimacy with God, whose presence had been symbolized by the tree of life. Man had been given the capacity to make his own moral choices. But those choices must be made in conformity to God's Word and will and not according to the interests of self. Self-will rather than the will of God pervades the entire story of Adam and Eve's sin. "Self" became so perverted that even God did not try to reform it, but put it to death with Christ on the cross (See Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). But the provision of mankind's clothing and salvation preceded their expulsion, denoting that God's grace always goes before His judgment. Second, "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword . . . to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). This protection of the Garden of Eden was surely not because of physical man. Although Adam was much stronger than any other human being, he could not have been so strong that God had to set both angelic beings and the flaming, self-revolving sword to keep him away from the garden. Adam's care for the garden had been inadequate in that the intruder had been allowed to invade it. Since eternal life was not for Adam only, but for all people throughout all generations, God had to do something so that the old intruder might not be able to block the way leading to life for all the coming generations. Thus the action taken was for protection of the way of life from spiritual beings, namely, Satan and his demons, whose power could be overcome only by the cherubim.

Throughout all history Satan has been strenuously trying to block the way of life: by

murdering Abel, by corrupting all the people in Noah's time, by trying to take Sarah away from Abraham, by killing all the Israelite baby boys in Egypt, by eliminating David's royal family, by trying to kill the infant Jesus, by attempting to prevent Christ's crucifixion, and so forth. Church history, in fact, is a history of Satan's struggle to destroy the way of life. He has been using kings, princes, societies, mobs, and even professing Christians to block the way leading to life, but God keeps it open all the time. In many cases it looked as if Satan was gaining the victory. Yet at the end of each battle the final victory was, and still is, the Lord's. As a result the flow of eternal life has never been cut off. Thus God in mercy (an aspect of His love) revealed His heart towards sinners, disclosed His plan for saving the world, demonstrated the conditions for reconciliation with Himself, and preserved the messianic line leading to eternal life.

Although most of God's disclosures in this first period of self-revelation were in seed form, He did reveal His nature as the Eternal Creator and the Revealer, His attribute as the Omnipotent and the Holy One, and His characteristics of goodness, mercy, and justice.

THE REVELATION OF MAN

Revelation contains both a subjective and an objective aspect. Each is essential for the manifestation of revelation, and the absence of either one causes revelation to be incomplete. Subjectively, there must be a revealer who is able to reveal himself. He must be a person, since revelation is from a person to a person, and he must be willing to reveal. Objectively, there must be a receiver who is also a person able and willing to receive revelation. In the previous discussion, we saw the subjective aspect of God's revelation of Himself as the Eternal, the Creator, and the Omnipotent, who had all the power and sovereignty necessary to do what He pleased. He also disclosed that He was a personal God and demonstrated all kinds of personal activities. He was not only one person but three persons united to carry out the divine design. God's combined characteristics of love and justice could be satisfied only by the unfolding of His plan of redemption. However, no matter how complete the subjective aspect, without an objective receiver who can and will receive His disclosure, His revelation can never be complete. Hence the creation of man to receive God's revelation was imperative. In this Adamic Period, God progressively revealed man's creation, probation, propagation, and temptation.

A. Man's Creation (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7).

What is man? This is a universal question. On the hills of Judea about three thousand years ago a shepherd boy watched over his flock with tender care. Night after night, in quietness and solitude, he lifted his eyes heavenward and gazed upon the moon and stars in a seemingly endless sky. Time and time again, when overwhelmed with the vastness and splendor of the heavens contrasted with his insignificance, he would break forth with this exclamatory question, "What is man?" (Ps. 8:4).

What is man? If we were to ask David, he would answer, "men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie" (Ps. 62:9). Ask Isaiah: "All flesh is grass" (Is. 40:6,7). Ask James: man is "a vapor, that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Indeed, man is frail, insignificant and even wicked, yet he is the one whom God created for His glory. He is not just five dollars worth of chemical ingredients. Nor is he merely a mass of protoplasm on his way to becoming fertilizer for the soil. He is a creature into whom God has breathed His breath of life. Certainly he is not a god. Nor can he develop himself into a god. Yet he was created in God's image and after God's likeness. Man is a paradox. In one respect he is only a piece of clay, sinful and unclean. In another he is like unto God and has the capacity to become God's son. He is surely "fearfully and wonderfully made." Let us consider just how wonderfully he was made.

1. The Plan for Man's Creation. God, having revealed His creation of the earth and all things upon it, next revealed His creation of man. For this unique act He called a council in order to make a determinative resolution, saying, "Let us make man." The first person, plural number, "us" may be interpreted several ways. The most unintelligent one is to explain it as evidence of Hebraic polytheism, thus disregarding the pervading monotheistic concept in the context. Church fathers and earlier theologians interpreted it as an indication of the Trinity. The concept of the Trinity was surely included here, but

one cannot say this was the full revelation of God's Trinity. Because of the nature of progressive revelation which develops gradually from a seed form and to avoid polytheistic implications, it was too early for God to give a full-formed revelation of the Trinity to the Hebrews. Besides these two extremes, some have interpreted it as a *pluralis majestatis*, (plural of majesty), which means the "we" or "us" commonly used by monarchs in their decrees. Others took it as communicative, meaning that God was addressing the attendant angels around His throne. Neither of these views, however, is supported by the Bible. The former was not adopted by the Hebrews, although it was used frequently by Mohammedans in the Koran, by Persians (Ezra 4:18), and by Greek monarchs. The latter is rejected by Isaiah 40:13-14 and 44:24. The most likely interpretation is that it is a plural of self-deliberation, which is not unusual in Scripture. Isaiah 6:8 is a good example: "us" in the clause "who will go for us" is the reflection or self-deliberation of "I" in the first clause "whom shall I send." Another good example is in Genesis 11:5,7-8. The statement "Let us go down" in verse 7 can only be the reflection or self-deliberation of "the Lord came down" in verse 5, and of "the Lord scattered them abroad" in verse 8. What then is man that he requires so much of the triune God's attention?

Three verbs are used in Scripture to illustrate man's beginning (See Is. 43:7). Man was "created" (Gen. 1:27), which means man was a brand-new creation in this world. The verb "created," according to its etymology, does not mean something out of nothing but the creation of something that did not previously exist. Big monkeys and huge apes could have existed in the pre-Adamic world, but not man. (Parts of various fossil apes have been discovered time and again. But zoologists and anthropologists have had to admit the Java man was half ape and half manlike; Zinjanthropus was different from man or developed away from man; and *homo habilis* denotes only "the ability to use tools and to stand and walk upright." In other words they admit these fossils were not real men but manlike. Since they were only different kinds of apes that could have existed in the pre-Adamic world, there is little wonder why zoologists and anthropologists cannot find any substantial data to fill the gaps among the different stages of fossils.) Man did not evolve but was definitely God's new creation on the renovated earth. In order to stress this, the word created was used three times to emphasize the truth that man was newly created on this earth and was neither pre-existent nor a product of evolution. It seems the Holy Spirit knew from the very beginning the trouble that evolution would cause, so He sealed man's creation with a triple *bara*: "God **created** man . . . in the image of God **created** He him; male and female **created** He them." Man was also "formed" (2:7), which means he was not produced immediately after God's command as animals were. Nor was it the idea of kneading plastic clay and molding it into a human body, but he was created through a detailed procedure. Man was also "made" (1:26), for man's body was not something out of nothing, but was made out of the dust of the ground.

2. The Pattern for Man's Creation. The difference between man and animal was not only in the plan and the manner of man's creation but also in the pattern for his creation. Other creatures were made "after their kind" by God's commands, but man was created "in God's image" and "after God's likeness" by God's decree. The interpretations of "image" and "likeness" have varied greatly. Augustine interpreted image as intellectuality or personality and likeness as moral virtue. The Greek Fathers emphasized the former, and the Latin Fathers emphasized the latter. Luther, however, took these two

words as synonyms used for emphasis. Calvin took likeness to be an explanation of image. Charles Hodge said, “Image and likeness means an image which is like.”⁶⁵ These interpretations may have their value, but none are faithful enough to the very language of Scripture.

The argument that these two words are used as an emphatic repetition when supported by the usage of image (used alone) in Genesis 1:27 and likeness (used alone) in Genesis 5:1 is prejudicial rather than grammatical. The use of synecdoche⁶⁶ was the general practice of the writers of Scripture. Both the Old and the New Testament writers frequently used a part to express the whole or the whole for a part. The omission of one from the two words cannot be evidence of “two in one” at all. On the contrary, it might be evidence of “one for two.” The comparison of Genesis 5:1, where likeness alone is used with Genesis 5:3 where likeness and image are both used, is good support for the evidence of “one for two.” Besides, the creative act in Genesis 2:7 is also a good description for this interpretation. The phrase “formed man of the dust of the ground,” describes the creation of man’s external image, and the phrase, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” sets forth the creation of man’s internal likeness, even after God’s likeness. Another argument, based on the lack of a *waw-copulativum* (and) between these two words, is also unwarranted. No serious Bible student would interpret the Hebrew formula “yesterday, the day before yesterday” (Ex. 5:14; 1 Sam. 20:27) as synonyms for emphasis; yet this phrase always occurs without a conjunction. The statement in Genesis 1:26 is emphatic. Thus the conjunction “and” is unnecessary.

The word “image” is used 34 times in the Old Testament: 17 times in Hebrew and 17 times in Aramaic. All of them are translated as image except one in Hebrew in Psalm 39:6 and one in Aramaic in Daniel 3:19, where they are translated “vain show” and “form” respectively. The Septuagint translators translated image in the Genesis passage as *eikon* that means “a figure, likeness.” *Eikon* is used 3 out of 23 times in the New Testament as referring to an abstract or internal likeness. Image in the Old Testament, however, refers only to a concrete or external image. Hence, image in Genesis 1:26 can only be God’s self-revealing image to man, such as the form He took when He appeared to Adam, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The question “How can God have an external image since He is Spirit?” is answered by the operation of the Trinity. God can be God without an image, but He cannot be the Trinity without an image. God’s Trinity can be viewed as a burning candle. The invisible center of the light represents the Father; the visible part, the Son; the heat or invisible but sensible part, the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary for light as light to have an image, but light as candlelight must have an image—the visible part. God cannot approach man as spirit only. Since man is material, God adopted a certain image to approach him. God the Son is that revelation of God, the image He chose before the foundation of the world through which to reveal Himself. It was in this image that He revealed Himself to Adam in the garden of Eden, to the patriarchs, to Moses (Num. 12:8), to Joshua (Josh. 5:13), to Gideon (Judg. 6:12ff), and to Manoah and his wife (Judg.

⁶⁵Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 96.

⁶⁶Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part may be taken for the whole or vice versa, or a singular for the plural or vice versa.

13:3,8-14). He was also seen in this image by Isaiah (Is. 6:1), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:25), and Daniel (Dan. 7:13). When Christ was in this world, He appeared with Moses and Elijah in this same image, with the highest degree of glory, in the presence of Peter, James, and John. According to the Gospel of Luke, both Moses and Elijah also appeared in their glorious images (Luke 9:31). Moreover, God created Adam according to this very image, even the revealing image of God the Son. What then is man? God reveals to us that man is a creature, not only wonderfully made, but made in the revealing image of God.

Not only was man created in the external image of God the Son, but he was also created after God's likeness. The word, "likeness" in Genesis 1:26, is used 25 times in the Old Testament. It is from a root meaning "to be like" and is rendered "likeness" 19 times out of the 25. Likeness can refer to either internal or external similarities. Its Greek equivalent (*eikon*) also refers to both likenesses: external being the emperor's head on a coin (Matt. 22:19-21) and internal being the divine moral and spiritual understanding according to which God refashions the believer's new nature (Col. 3:10). So from the etymological viewpoint, "image" and "likeness" both refer to the concrete or external image, without excluding, however, the meaning of internal likeness. Thus we conclude that God created man physically according to the external revealing image of God the Son and inwardly according to the internal likeness of God.

Quite a few interpretations of the phrase, "the likeness of God," have arisen in the history of the church. Reformed theologians took it to be man's moral virtues. To Luther it was "a thing unknown." Socinians, Remonstrants, and Rationalists insisted that it referred to dominion over God's creation. Most theologians feel that it refers to Adam's original righteousness, which he lost in the fall. Superficially, the last interpretation is very biblical, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." In reality, however, this interpretation by analogy is faulty because these theologians ignore or neglect the differences between the old creation and the new one (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The knowledge, righteousness, and holiness mentioned in Ephesians and Colossians are the factors of God's likeness in the new creation. This nature of a new man created in Christ Jesus was never present in Adam. The gospel of salvation in Christ is not a reconstruction of that which was lost in Adam. It is an entirely new work. Otherwise, the same righteousness that Adam lost could also be lost by those in Christ. Where then is eternal security? Furthermore, the theory that God's likeness was lost by Adam is not found in the Bible, but to the contrary, Scripture teaches that it is still present with man "who has been made in God's likeness" (James 3:9; see 1 Cor. 11:7). Beyond doubt God's likeness in man was changed after the fall, but it was never lost. The passage in Genesis 5:3 cannot be cited as proof of such a loss. The emphatic adjective "own" in the statement of "Adam . . . begat [a son] in his own likeness" is not in the original. We admit that God's image and likeness in man has been terribly damaged by sin, but not totally lost. Calvin said, "Wherefore, although we allow that the Divine image was not utterly annihilated and effaced in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is but horrible deformity."⁶⁷ Precisely what is God's likeness after all?

⁶⁷ John Allen (trans.), *Calvin's Institutes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), Vol. I, p. 208.

Having formed man out of the dust of the ground, God breathed into man's nostrils something out of Himself that is translated into English as "breath" (2:7). As the result of this impartation, the lifeless body became a living soul. **This breath is the only thing that God and man have in common.** It enables man to have God's likeness on the one hand and to be distinguished from animals on the other. Since it is such an important word, and its meaning is much more than breath, I will use the original word *neshamah* instead of the translation "breath."

Ancient Jewish scholars considered *neshamah* to be the highest perception within man. Occurring 24 times in the Old Testament (23 times in Hebrew and once in Aramaic), it is sometimes used to illustrate God's power in nature (Job 37:10; Ps. 18:15, Is. 30:33) and once to signify man's distinguishing trait (Is. 2:22). Twice it is used as a synonym for spirit and is translated as such in the Authorized Version (Job 26:4; Prov. 20:27). According to Scripture, *neshamah* has three functions within man, which are also expressions of the likeness of God after which man was created. One of them is the intellectual function, and the other two are spiritual functions.

The intellectual function of the *neshamah* is man's Godlike personality. When God breathed His *neshamah* into man, it immediately gave man life and made him a living soul. The life-giving function is seen not only in the statement but in the grammar as well. The grammatical construction of the phrase, "breath of life," clearly indicates that "breath" here is in the construct state and is in apposition to the genitive "life." The correct translation of this expression should be "the breath, that is to say, life," just as in John 2:21 "the temple of His body" means "the temple, that is to say, His body." So the *neshamah* was the very life of man that God gave to Adam. It was not God's own life. Man cannot have God's life by birth. He can have it only by believing in God's Word and accepting His life personally. This life (*neshamah*) is simply man's spirit. As Job says, "All the while my breath (*neshamah*) is in me, and the spirit (*ruach*) of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3). The genitive relation of spirit in the phrase "the spirit of God" is a subjective genitive meaning that God is the possessor or source of the spirit. From the parallels of *neshamah* to *ruach* and "in me" to "in my nostrils," one can easily realize that *neshamah* refers to man's spirit which has its source in God. Jesus says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth [that is, gives life]; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). This very spirit gave Adam life and made his body of dust a living soul. With this spirit man has a Godlike personality, and one day he may have dominion over the works of God's hand. Without it man is only a standing animal or a clothed gorilla.

The word "soul" (2:7) has been translated in more than 30 ways in the Old Testament. But when used for man it sometimes refers to his very self. The soul has the functions of intellect to think, of sensibility to feel, and of the will to make decisions as God does. Thus man was made of the dust of the ground, created by God's inbreathed *neshamah*, and as a result he had a Godlike personality. By personality we mean the three mental functions within our soul: self-consciousness, self-sensitiveness, and self-determination. Strictly speaking though, these three cannot be counted as man's real distinctiveness since they are also found in an inferior way in the brutes. The uniqueness of man is the work of the *neshamah* itself. It does not matter whether a person holds the dichotomous theory or the trichotomous theory, he has to admit there is a distinction between intellectual functions and spiritual functions. It is the former that makes man look

manward; while the latter looks Godward. It takes both functions to qualify man to take the test of obedience.

Man's *neshamah* possesses both an intellectual and a spiritual function but its first duty is spiritual activity. According to Scripture it performs two spiritual operations: spiritual perception and moral judgment. Man needs both operations working together to understand God, to think God's way, and to judge things according to God's judgment. Man's spiritual perception and moral judgment are created in the spiritual likeness of God (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Although these spiritual functions of the *neshamah* were seen in actions throughout this period, they were not revealed by statement at this time. A look at a few later revelations will help us to understand these two operations and their relations to man's probation.

Job 32:8 is the earliest revelation concerning **spiritual perception** as the first spiritual function of the *neshamah*. It says, "There is a spirit in man, even the *neshamah* of the Almighty that gives them understanding." Again, "the *neshamah* of the Almighty" is identical with "a spirit in man." Its job is to give man understanding. The verb "giveth understanding" is in the causative form, meaning "to cause to understand." The same form is used several times in Psalms 119 (See verses 27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169) to refer to the understanding of spiritual things, such as God's precepts, God's law, God's commandment, and God's testimonies. The inbreathed *neshamah* gives man the understanding of God and of the things pertaining to God, that is, man has Godlike spiritual perception. This perception is immortal, being named "eternity" in Ecclesiastes 3:11, which reads, "He has made everything beautiful in its time: also He has set eternity [Authorized Version, "the world"] in their heart, without which [Authorized Version, "so that"] no man can find out the work that God does from the beginning to the end" (retranslated). (To translate *olam* as "world" here as the Authorized Version does, theologically speaking, is inexcusably misleading, since "world" in this passage, according to the context, refers to worldly thoughts or cares, which would make God the author of sin. This would also make man's loving the world and the things pertaining to the world, instead of loving the Father, to be God's fault.) At the time of creation, God placed "eternity" in man so that he might perceive God's wisdom and power through the things that He made. "Eternity" is from the Hebrew verb meaning "to wrap up" or "to hide"; hence "a wrapping up" or "hiding" is used to express "long past" or "distant future" time, "life long" or "duration" of a person or the earth, and "eternity of God." In this passage, the last expression is preferred. The suggestion that eternity is akin to the Arabic *ilam* (understanding) is not necessarily implied here, since the context indicates clearly that eternity refers to the spiritual perception by which man is able to find God and the things pertaining to Him. In addition, "so that" is also an inaccurate translation. In the original, it is a negative particle *beli* prefixed with a preposition *min* and a common relative pronoun *asher*. Together they simply mean "without which" indicating the necessity of having eternity in order to know God.

In summary, man is not only as he is because he has a Godlike personality but also because he has a Godlike understanding. He was endowed with spiritual perception and discernment so that he might be able to perceive spiritual things, discern divine truth, and know God's power and divinity (Rom. 1:19-20).

Neshamah's second spiritual function is in man's **conscience**. The passage

concerning moral judgment as another function of the *neshamah* is in Proverbs 20:27, “The *neshamah* [Authorized Version, “spirit”] of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.” The word translated “candle” occurs 43 times in the Old Testament. It refers to lamps in general but also specifically refers to the candelabrum in the temple, which burned continually (Ex. 25:37; 35:14). Conscience, then, is like the temple’s branched candlestick. It casts its rays of light into the darkened soul of man and brings to light the hidden things. The word translated “searches” is from a verb meaning “to dig up.” It is a participle in Hebrew signifying a continual digging. Thus conscience, Godlike judgment, searches and digs into the depths of man’s soul unceasingly.

The origin of conscience has been a constant riddle to most philosophers and psychologists. Nowadays, conscience is considered to be the result of maturity, and its judgment is thought to be formed by parental discipline and environmental inhibitions. To many people conscience is strictly an environmental product and has nothing to do with God. Of course, conscience can be sharpened or dulled by the influence of society and family, but to state that conscience is the product of discipline and inhibition is to put the cart before the horse. **Conscience comes with birth.** Thus this wonderful verse, Proverbs 20:27, has answered all the fundamental questions concerning conscience: its name, its origin, and its function. Its name is man’s *neshamah* or God’s candle, its origin is from God, and its function is to search the innermost chambers of the heart, to tell God’s truth, and to witness for God’s justice.

The operations of conscience may be distinguished as antecedent (a guide before events happen) and sequent (a judge afterwards). Before a person’s will has made any decision to act, and while his mind is still deliberating, conscience either encourages him to go ahead or warns him of the danger in doing so. After the decision has been made and while all the mental faculties are occupied by action, conscience usually keeps quiet, waiting for her sequent action. When the act is completed and all the mental faculties are relaxed, she either crowns the person with satisfaction and gives him a good conscience, or she renders judgment and gives him a bad or guilty conscience. She may retreat under pressure but will never surrender. Whenever the pressure is gone or she is strengthened, she will renew her judgment immediately. If there is no chance for her to carry out her verdict in this life, she will do it in the life beyond: “Their conscience also bearing witness . . . In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:15-16). Listen further to what the Lord said, “And I say to you, that every idle or unprofitable word that men speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36 retranslated).

Bible students often prefer to believe that conscience came into existence after the fall. Some even think that the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil actually produced conscience. Driver said:

The command is broken; and man falls thereby from his state of innocence, and forfeits the blessing of the Divine favor and the Divine presence, which he had before enjoyed It is the awakening conscience of the human race, the

awakening of the right and wrong.⁶⁸

God did not reveal in words whether or not man had a conscience before the fall. Nevertheless, the narrative as a whole indicates that he did. First, conscience was one of the functions of the *neshamah* that he received from the very beginning. Second, without conscience God's command concerning "good and evil" would be meaningless to man, and thus His judgment upon an ignorant one would be unjust. Some may argue here that Adam did have a standard to follow, namely, the commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is certainly true. Yet without conscience, the objective standard would never have been subjectively effective in Adam. J. J. Van Oosterzee mentioned that once a child gave a striking definition for conscience, saying, "It is that with which we cannot do what we like."⁶⁹ Without a conscience in man the objective precept would have been totally ineffective.

A proof of the existence of conscience before the fall is the immediate operation of the moral judgment after the fall. As soon as the sinful act was over, the first pair knew they were naked and felt ashamed. Where did that conscience which felt guilty come from? It seems unlikely it was created by their disobedience. A judge may have the principles of law, but he has no way to apply them until a concrete case is laid before him. Likewise, conscience was there before the fall but did not act until the concrete case of the fall arose.

A few words concerning the relationship between man's spiritual understanding and conscience will conclude our discussion of the two spiritual functions of the *neshamah*. Although these two are brought up together and stay in the same family, their undertakings are different. The assignment for spiritual perception is to know God and the things pertaining to Him, and for conscience it is to bear testimony to God and to execute the moral judgment of God according to the judicial knowledge obtained from the spiritual perception. In the realm of spiritual knowledge, conscience tells us nothing because that lies in the sphere of spiritual perception, but in judicial affairs, conscience holds sway. When our *neshamah* receives illumination or enlightenment from God, spiritual perception analyzes it, interprets it, and makes its judicial rendering known to conscience. Accepting it as the moral standard, conscience encourages, rewards, warns, or condemns man accordingly. In salvation conscience takes its stand on law; spiritual perception stands on grace. Conscience tells sinners to do right; spiritual perception suggests what is the right thing to do. While conscience condemns sinners according to their sinful state, spiritual perception presents to sinners the way of salvation accomplished by Christ on Calvary, even the cleansing power of Christ's blood that cleanses the conscience from dead works. They are two in one. While one is healthy, the other is strong; but when one is defiled, the other is also polluted (Titus 1:15). They resemble the eyes and ears mentioned in Acts 28:26-27: "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." While the ears are dull, the eyes are closed. However, when the eyes see, the ears hear. In other words, the right moral judgment from conscience is dependent on the right understanding of spiritual

⁶⁸Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

⁶⁹J.J. Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. John W. Watson and Maurice J. Evans (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, n.d.), p. 25.

perception, and the development of the conscience is according to the renewing of the spiritual perception (See Rom. 12:2).

B. Man's Probation (Gen. 2:7-17).

In considering man's probation, especially its purpose, or why God required Adam to go through the test of obedience, we must start with some fuller revelation from the New Testament, since the meager revelation in this period is not adequate for a complete study.

1. The Purpose of the Probation. Having been formed, made, and created, man was immediately placed in a state of training so that he might become qualified for his future royal authority. Unfortunately, he failed to graduate from his training program. This failure was the pivotal point of this period, indeed, one of the great pivotal points of all the ages. All the revelations of the past were paving the way for this climax, and man's future destiny depended on this single act. When he was first created, man occupied a position between the creator and His creatures. He possessed God's likeness and had the freedom to reject or to choose God's love and life. The twofold probation of man was to show God's love and to provide man with eternal life.

a. For God's Love. In his gospel and epistle, John, the beloved disciple of Christ, made three great statements concerning God's nature: "God is Spirit," "God is Light," and "God is Love" (John 4:24; 1 John 1:5; 4:8, 16). The first refers to God's being; the second to His attribute; the third to the manifestation of His nature, indeed His whole nature as revealed in Christ. Van Oosterzee said, "In a word . . . love is, properly speaking, the nature of Him who unites all these attributes in Himself; He is love Himself. All His properties must be regarded as the attributes of love" Then he quoted Luther's statement: "God is Himself love, and His nature is nothing but pure love."⁷⁰ Love is indeed the center of God's nature from which all things were called into existence and from which all God's blessings flow. Love never fails!

God is eternal; so is His love. Since genuine love is communion and self-surrender, God needed an eternal object so He could give Himself to it. In eternity there were no eternal beings except those in the Trinity (angels are immortal but had a beginning). Hence the Son, His very other self, was the beloved One. Before the foundation of the world, God the Father loved the Son, as Christ testified on earth (John 17:24), and through this love the Father and the Son both enjoyed supreme delight in each other (Prov. 8:30; Matt. 3:17). The mutual love between the Father and the Son also had perfect self-communication, which is the third self in the Trinity, namely, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, yet is the very Spirit of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11). This mutual love united in a third may also be seen by the necessity for the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit between the Father and the Son. As the Father "giveth not the Spirit by measure unto" the Son (John 3:34), the Son "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). The Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit for His doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38). The Son rejoiced and praised the Father in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21). This

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 270.

explains how Christ is God and why He yet needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Since love seeks the true good of the person loved, the perfection of love requires three things: exclusion, expansion, and expectation.

Exclusion means love is monopolistic. No genuine love can be divided. Nor can a sincere lover have two beloved ones at the same time. This is why Christ is God's **only begotten Son**. And because of that no person can have God's love unless he believes in and loves Christ (John 14:21, 23; 16:27). Nor can one separate those who believe in Christ "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). God indeed so loved the world (John 3:16), yet Jesus said, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father" (John 14:21). Intention and realization are two different things. God has the intention to love the world that was created for His Son, but only those who believe in and are for Christ can receive His love. The phrase "in Christ" and its synonymous terms in the New Testament prove the exclusiveness of God's love in Christ (See Eph. 1:3-14).

Expansion means love must grow and increase. No genuine love is stagnant. "Love never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:8) but "increaseth" (2 Thess. 1:3, "aboundeth" is rather "increaseth" as translated in 1 Thess. 3:12). God expanded His love to His Son by appointing Him to be the "heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2) and by creating the universe for Him. Colossians 1:16 says, "All things were created by Him and **for Him** [emphasis added]." Hebrews 2:10 states, "**for whom** [Christ] are all things, and by whom are all things [emphasis added]." Let it be noticed here that although by the act of creation the entire universe and all its inhabitants were brought into being, neither the essence nor the power of God was diminished by that act. One day all things will gather together in Christ, both those in heaven and those on earth (Eph. 1:10); because God "hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35) "that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

Creation in general and the creation of man in particular were God's acts of love. God created man for Christ's sake that man may believe in God's Word and exercise his faith so that the love wherewith God loves Christ may enter into man (John 17:26). David Brown said, "This eternal love of the Father, resting first on Christ, is by His Spirit imparted to and takes up its permanent abode in all that believe in Him."⁷¹

Expectation means love desires a response. Love should be freely given and willingly responded to. Perfect love requires that each person delight in the other. Christ (Wisdom) was God's daily delight in eternity, and in turn He always had happiness in God (Prov. 8:30). God fixed His good pleasure upon the Son (In Matthew 3:17, "I am well pleased," is a timeless aorist which carries the sense of custom)⁷², and the Son seeks not his own will but the will of the Father who sent him (John 5:30). No wonder Jesus says, "I and the Father are one." Such an experience, or rather blessing, requires two conditions: willingness and obedience.

(1) Willingness. Love cannot be mechanical. It has to come from the willingness of a

⁷¹David Brown, *Critical and Explanatory Commentary* (New York: S.S. Scranton and Company, 1875), Vol. II, p. 160.

⁷²The Greek aorist tense merely states that an event has occurred. In this context the use of the aorist simply notes that God's being well pleased with the Son is His usual and customary feeling about the Son's duties.

person, even from a person's freedom of choice. As it is written, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem . . . that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please [or feels inclined]" (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). The cause of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the unwillingness of the Jews to repent and embrace God's love (Matt. 23:37). The only condition required of those who desire to drink "the water of life freely" is "whosoever will" (Rev. 22:17). In a word, man's willingness to accept is God's fundamental requirement for receiving His love.

(2) Obedience. The confirmation of one's willingness, or the proof of one's love, is to keep His word, which is obedience. When a person really loves the Lord, he will delight in keeping His commandments. He will not perceive His commands to be a burden but a privilege, an honor, or his necessary sustenance. As Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me" (John 4:34). Again Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father" (John 14:21). Yet again Jesus said, "If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him" (John 14:23). This is God's imperative, and it is inviolable. Even though Christ Himself "were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Anyone who desires to be loved by God needs to proceed from a willingness to love God to the actual obedience to God's commands. This was the purpose of the probation in the Garden of Eden: to test the obedience of Adam. His willingness and obedience would lead to eternal life and qualify him to be in God's love, which would be manifested by having dominion over God's creation.

b. For Man's Eternal Life. Although Adam had been created externally according to God's "revealing image" and possessed internally the intellectual and spiritual likeness of God, he was not yet qualified to have dominion over God's creation. He had not yet partaken of the tree of life, which sacramentally symbolized God's very life. Man's having dominion over God's creation was declared in God's decree, yet the actual reign was not to be inaugurated until he had passed his probation. Throughout all the ages the prerequisite for being in the kingdom of God is to have eternal life.

The Scriptures do not teach that Adam was created with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, nor did he then have actual dominion over nature. He was only on the pathway of his training. His actual ruling would be the result of his passing the test of obedience. Such a statement as "Adam's creation consisted in the perfect conformity of all the moral disposition and affection of his will . . . to the law of God"⁷³ is unconsciously exalting man beyond his true status. Adam was indeed made perfect as a man and was included in God's announcement, "very good" (Gen 1:31). However, he had only man's goodness and perfection. He had tendencies **toward** God's holiness but **was not in** God's holiness. Nor was he in perfect conformity to the law of God, otherwise, his probation would have been unnecessary. God made Adam upright but not "in righteousness and true holiness" as is the new man created in Christ Jesus (Eph 4:24). A.H. Strong's statement, "Since Christ is the image of God primarily in His Holiness,

⁷³Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 301.

man's creation in the image of God must have involved a holiness like Christ's . . . ”⁷⁴ is surely mixing the old creation with the new. If his statement were true, then salvation would be nothing but the restoration of the old Adam, and Christ would be only another Adam. However, the *neshamah* that God bestowed upon Adam was not God's Spirit or Life, but man's own spirit and life. It is the essence of man given by God, but not God's own essence. When after His resurrection Christ breathed on His disciples that they might receive the Holy Spirit, His breath was entirely different from the *neshamah* (John 20:22). His action was the same as God's initial creative work but the nature of the act was entirely different. God performed an act of creation on Adam, whereas Christ imparted the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Consider further, the moving of the Holy Spirit upon the face of the waters was a creative act readying the world for further divine work; but the Spirit who came as a mighty rushing wind on the day of Pentecost to fill the disciples was an impartation. To be a living soul one must be created; but in order to know God one must have eternal life imparted unto him. Moreover, creation is not conditional. Impartation, however, comes through faith and obedience. The eternity (spiritual nature) within Adam was created, but his eternal life, which Adam did not then have, had to be imparted by his eating of the tree of life and rejecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2. The Meaning of the Probation. The purpose of the probation was not revealed clearly during this period, but its meaning was precisely disclosed. Having made every tree grow from the ground for man's physical need, God then designated two special trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden for the purpose of testing man's obedience. One was the tree of life. The other was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man was encouraged to eat of the former, along with all the other trees in the garden, **but was forbidden to eat of the latter so that he might be trained to be obedient so eternal life might be imparted.**

The mythological stories of Gilgamesh, who secured an immortal plant from the bottom of the sea which was eaten by the snake while he stopped at a pool to refresh himself on the way back to Erech, or of Adopa, who refused to take the water of life and the food of life because he was misinformed by Ea that they were the water of death and the food of death, have an entirely different motif than the biblical record. Although the meaning of the tree of knowing good and evil is very simple to sincere students, it has been misinterpreted by many. The olive tree of Athena, the bay tree of Apollo, the forbidden trees mentioned in Homer, and many other so-called sacred trees in different quarters of the ancient world are not replicas of the biblical story. Instead they are corrupted revisions about the first forbidden tree. Men had the traditional impression of such a tree in their minds from the very beginning, but as time went on the true version became corrupted until its meaning was entirely perverted. Myths insinuate that man was mortal because a god withheld eternal life from him. The biblical record indicates man was encouraged to eat the fruit of eternal life along with other fruits in the garden. This encouragement is seen in God's use of the emphatic permissive clause, "thou mayest freely eat" (2:16). This phrase consists of two verbs in Hebrew: the first is an infinitive absolute and the second is the finite verb. Such a construction, an infinitive absolute before a finite verb, gives emphasis to both the finite verb and its antithesis (2:17), "but

⁷⁴Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat” (retranslated).

The exact translation of “knowledge of good and evil” is “the knowing good and evil,” since “knowledge” in Hebrew is an infinitive prefixed with a definite article making the infinitive an accusative instead of a construct state. “Good and evil” are a pair of antonyms indicating the totality of “ethical knowing” rather than knowing in general. Such ethical antonyms are not unusual in Scripture. For instance, Moses’ statement in Deuteronomy 1:39, “And your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil,” cannot be interpreted as knowing nothing at all but rather as knowing nothing ethically.⁷⁵ However, no matter how “good and evil” is interpreted, the ethical implication is obviously present. Geerhardus Vos suggested that the word “knowing” in Genesis 2:17 could be more accurately translated as “choosing,” making it “the tree of the choice of good and evil.”⁷⁶ This would indicate that before Adam ate the fruit he knew what good and evil were because of the function of the *neshamah* that God placed in him (See Gen. 2:7; Prov. 20:27). We must not determine our moral duties and obligations from a source of which God disapproves. We must get them from Him by His Word that enlightens our spiritual perceptions and gives guidance to our conscience. We must take our instruction from God.

The real meaning of this tree was simply to signify God’s sovereignty and to be a means for man to practice obedience. How the tree was named is not the chief point, but what God said about the tree is very important. God said, “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” and it was so. No matter how the tree received its name, the result from eating would be just what God had said. The seriousness lay not in the eating of the fruit but in disobeying the strong prohibition. The clause, “thou shalt not eat of it,” is a very forceful negative. In Hebrew it consists of an imperfect finite verb with the negative particle *lo* and expresses a “definite expectation that something should not happen” (for examples, God’s numerous statements in the Ten Commandments). The consequence of transgressing this prohibition was that “thou shalt surely die.” What could be more serious than death? The prohibition, from beginning to end, was serious enough for Adam and Eve to understand what God meant, especially since their spiritual understanding was still fresh from the Creator’s hand. They should have had the insight to see the whole reality.

It was not only that Adam ate what he ought not to have eaten, but that he **deliberately rebelled against God’s sovereignty. He exalted his own authority above God’s.** He made himself a god in place of the God who created, provided for, and loved him. Olin Alfred Curtes summarized this very well:

The first sin was a personal act of disobedience. It was a taking of self in place of God. In the startling words of Philippi, ‘Man’s self-assertion to Godhead was his fall.’ Personal sin is the supreme egotism of a moral person. It is getting one’s own way over against duty. It is selfishness. One of the characters in Tennyson’s *Becket* is made to say, ‘If I had been Eve i’ the garden, I shouldn’t ha’ minded the

⁷⁵See 2 Samuel 14:17; 19:35; Isaiah 7:15; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 24:15.

⁷⁶Vos, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

apple, for what's an apple, you know, save to a child?'⁷⁷

C. Man's Propagation (Gen. 2:18-25).

After meeting man's personal need and preparing for his mental and spiritual training, God turned His concern to man's propagation, since the first command following His blessings upon man was "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Marriage, the foundation of human propagation, is one of the most dignified and serious events in life. Even at the beginning of man's history, God's revelation regarding marriage was full of detail. First, He spoke about the ethical necessity of marriage by saying, "It is not good that man should be alone." Man cannot be perfect physically with only one hand or one eye. Likewise, man cannot be "good" ethically without a wife, nor a woman without a husband (except those who are gifted to be alone). Marriage is necessary for governing the family, for the comfort of each life, and for the continuance of the race. Second, He disclosed the need for marriage in order to live a successful life. He said, "I will make him a help meet for him." "Meet for him" means "according to his front"; hence "corresponding to him." The characteristics of a good helpmeet were not fully revealed until much later in Proverbs 31:10-31; a passage from which modern wives will derive both instruction and great blessing by frequent reading. A good wife has always been one reason for the husband's success and the children's good virtue. Anyone who desires a happy marriage should first seek the Lord's will for a spouse. An ideal marriage is one in which he and she correspond in many ways, especially in religion since different religions will hardly ever produce a happy family life. Only the couple matched by God, who ordained marriage before the foundation of the world, will find lasting happiness.

Having revealed the necessity of married life in words, God then revealed by action the necessity of equality between a husband and a wife. First, he placed Adam in a deep sleep as a symbol of making him commit the whole matter unto Him. Having put Adam to sleep, "He took one of his ribs . . . and made he a woman." "Rib" may mean "side," and "woman" in Hebrew is simply "man" plus the feminine suffix. Both emphasize the equality of a married couple. Woman, except for her feminine distinctive, is just as dignified and as complete as a man is. She should never feel inferior, although in some ways she is weaker. Both husband and wife should cooperate equally with each other in every way. As an example, many modern marriages suffer from a lack of responsibility in the matter of finances. The husband and wife need to design a sound financial philosophy (such as living within their means and establishing mutually agreeable priorities for spending) and each should bear equal responsibility for proper conduct of their financial affairs.

After God had created the woman, He later revealed in Scripture the necessity for love, unity, simplicity and purity between husband and wife. The idiomatic phrase "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" refers to **one's very self**. The husband should "love his wife even as himself" (Eph. 5:33). Since no one would hate himself, they should not only avoid provoking each other but **be courteous** to each other in words as well as in

⁷⁷Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1918), p. 198.

attitude. For they are both guests in this world and do not know whether or not they will see each other again after the morning good-bye kiss.

The declaration of “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother . . . and they shall be one flesh” indicates the necessity for unity between the husband and his wife. No one should interrupt the love and unity between a married couple. Should a conflict between parents and the marriage partners arise, the love and unity of the married children should be honored. Neither should children disrupt the love and unity of their parents. Husband and wife should **always be one**. They should eat together, go to church together, serve the Lord together, and so on. Even in disciplining their children, they should always stand together in principle. In general, the mother typically exhibits the sympathetic attitude while the father stands for justice.

The statement that “they were both naked . . . and were not ashamed” refers to the necessity for simplicity in life and purity in conscience. Husbands and wives should not keep secrets from each other, except for some professional ones. A clean conscience is essential. Confession and restitution are the only effective ways of doing away with guilt, even between a husband and his wife. The absence of any guilt feeling is the main secret of having a happy life and good children.

God’s joining of the husband and wife together is not only for their happiness but also for “godly offspring,” or rather as in Hebrew “an offspring from God” (Mal. 2:15), that men may be able to subdue the earth “and have dominion over” God’s creation.

D. Man’s Temptation (Gen. 3:1-24).

God planned man’s probation in order that man might pass the test of obedience and enter into God’s love in His Son. Man’s temptation was invented by the tempter, who “sinneth from the beginning” and has “pleasure in them that do” the same. Probation has a Latin origin and means “to see whether anything be good or proper,” “to find by experience,” or “to prove.” It is a term used to describe a period of qualifying and testing which concludes when the probationer has either proved his fitness or demonstrated that he is not fit. God’s testing always comes from good intentions. Temptation, however, means a state of being incited by the internal impulse or by external solicitation to satisfy a legitimate end by an illegitimate means. **Means and end are equally essential and important before God. Truth is not only the correspondence of an idea with a fact but also the integrity of the means and the end.** Means and end should both be justified individually, and neither should be justified simply by the other. That man should be like God was God’s plan before the foundation of the world. How man may achieve godlikeness was also part of His design. Everything “in God” has God’s time, God’s order, and God’s way of doing. No one can accomplish God’s will without taking God’s means, steps, or methods. One day many who say to Him, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?” will be denied by the Lord as He says, “Ye that worketh iniquity” (Matt. 7:22-23). Were they not successful? Did they not reach their goal? They did. Yet they will be counted as having committed iniquity. “Iniquity” is *anomia* in the original. *A* is a negative particle prefix; *nomia* signifies “law”; and both together mean lawlessness. They do their work, but they accomplish it by some lawless means or methods. God may save lost souls and perform

miracles through preachers for His own name's sake, but not necessarily because of their integrity. Be assured that God never approves of workers who accomplish spiritual things by worldly means. Those who hasten after another god shall surely have their sorrows multiplied (See Ps. 16:4). How Adam and Eve increased their sorrows, as God revealed in this period, may be considered as follows: the tempter, the temptation, and the tempted.

1. The Tempter. When considering man's temptation, the first problem confronting us is the role played by the tempter. Who was he? Genesis 3:1 says he was "the serpent," one of the animals. Yet he appeared to be much more than an animal. He possessed manlike mental power and knew how to exercise his intelligence with deception and skill. He was a serpent in appearance, but he had a non-serpentine personality. Who was that personality? In order to answer this question, consider the following two questions.

First, was he the Devil? "Devil" is from the Greek *diabolos* that means "a slanderer, false accuser." It is used 38 times in the New Testament, twice translated as "false accuser" (2 Tim. 3:3, Titus 2:3), once "slanderer" (1 Tim. 3:11), and 35 times "devil." During the temptation in the Garden of Eden, the tempter slandered God continuously. He hinted that God was a tyrant who would not let man partake of His royal fruit. He accused God of being a liar who forbade man to eat the forbidden fruit in order to keep him ignorant forever. At the conclusion he dishonored God's distinctiveness and sovereignty, saying that God was not too far from man and that man could be developed to be just as good and capable as God was. The whole attitude of the tempter indicates he was that slanderer and false accuser called the Devil.

Second, was he Satan? "Satan" is derived from a verb that signifies "to oppose, resist." This verb is translated twice "are . . . adversaries" from an imperfect, once "to resist" from an infinitive, and three times "adversaries" from a participle.⁷⁸ In a word, Satan's nature is adverse to God's and he is always doing things against God. From beginning to end, the narrative of man's fall illustrates the tempter's opposition to God. God said that Adam and Eve might freely eat of every tree of the garden, but the tempter made Eve think otherwise by asking her whether or not God had really said so. "Yea" at the beginning of his question consists of two particles: one is *aph*, an intensive particle, and the other is *ki*, a conjunction. Both together, according to Eve's answer, form an emphatic question meaning "Indeed [is it a fact] that . . . ?" Naturally considered, such a question undermined Eve's certainty in her faith. Thus the tempter gave Eve the first injection of rebellion—doubting the truth of God's Word.

The second injection was denying God's authority. After he caused Eve to doubt God, he led her to deny God. God had said, "for in the day that thou eat thereof, thou shalt surely die"; but the tempter said, "Ye shall not surely die," which is a very emphatic clause. The negative *lo* (not) in this clause has an unusual position. In Hebrew "the regular place of the negative is between the intensifying infinitive absolute and the finite verb,"⁷⁹ but *lo* here stands before the infinitive absolute instead of after it. This is an unusual construction, very rare in the Old Testament, and expresses an unusual emphasis.

⁷⁸Imperfects, Psalm 38:20; 109:4; Infinitive, Zechariah 3:1; Participles, Psalm 71:13; 109:20, 29.

⁷⁹Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

Keil and Delitzsch's translation "Ye will positively not die,"⁸⁰ and Spurrell's "Ye shall by no means die"⁸¹ expressed the emphasis very well. God said "Yes," but the tempter made Eve believe "No!" That was the denial!

The third injection served to separate Eve from God's love. The tempter, having led Eve to deny the authority of God, further led her to have enmity against Him by saying, "Then, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God." This sentence begins with a perfect with *waw* consecutive and stands after the time determination of "in the day ye eat thereof." Such a grammatical construction "assumes a stronger demonstrative force . . . when used to introduce the predicate or the apodosis."⁸² The purpose for using such a strong demonstrative force was to make the tempted one believe God was selfish and the tempter was thoughtful and nice. It suggested that God envied their felicity so much that He forbade them to eat of the tree. All God's love to them was immediately misunderstood, and for the first time the seed of enmity against God was sown in man's nature.

Thus Satan drew Eve's attention to becoming godlike by intellectual means rather than by the spiritual means God had prepared for her and her husband, and by means of disobedience instead of the obedience that God had expected of them. He made her believe that "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" was the true philosophy of human life, and "there is no fear of God before their eyes" was up-to-date psychology. Taken all together, the words and attitude of the tempter identify him as none other than the adversary, Satan himself.

Now, a further question, what was Satan's origin? Because God's revelation in this period did not address this matter, we will look at His later revelation for the answer. In this period, aside from Adam and Eve, there were no other beings except the angels. Naturally, then, the one who became the Devil or Satan had to be one of them. At the time of God's creation of the heavens, two groups of angels were created. Among them one group was named the Morning Stars; the other, the Sons of God. When God created the earth, the Morning Stars sang in gladness and the Sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7). Both enjoyed their heavenly bliss exceedingly. Yet when reading the Old Testament, we find that later one of these two groups was missing. The Sons of God were still standing before God, but the Morning Stars were no longer present. Instead, there was another angelic being named Satan who occasionally joined the Sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1).

Among the Morning Stars, a leading Morning Star is mentioned in Isaiah 14:12 as *heylel ben-shachar*, translated as "O Lucifer, son of the morning." *Heylel* means "brightness," then "bright star" which was translated as *ho heosphoros* (the morn-bearing) in the Septuagint, and "Lucifer" (bearing light) in the Vulgate. *Ben-shachar* means "Son of the Morning." Changing the Hebrew poetic parallelism into prose style, it

⁸⁰C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), Vol. I, p. 95.

⁸¹G.J. Spurrell, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1887), p. 36.

⁸²Spurrell, *loc. cit.*

becomes the “Morning Star” who was cut down to the ground because of his self-exalting desire to be godlike. This fallen Morning Star must be the one who possessed the serpent and tempted Eve, since his nature and character as described in Isaiah 14:13-14 exactly match that of the tempter.

Thus at the very beginning of human history, God not only revealed Himself and His created first pair to us but the evil doings of Satan as well. Through God’s revelation of this period and the references in His revelations in later periods, we are sure that the tempter could be no one other than that “old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

2. The Temptation. From our observation and experience, temptations, though varied and mystical, come from three distinct sources: the world, the flesh, and the devil. In most cases Satan employs the first two as his agents and instruments. The temptation of Adam and Eve has both objective and subjective elements that we will examine separately.

Objectively, in order that Eve might be caught off guard, Satan possessed a serpent to approach Eve with equivocations and double talk. First, he questioned God’s integrity. By the use of the intensive particle *aph ki*, “indeed that,” in his sentence, Eve’s faith was shaken, her intellect was split, and her confidence in God’s integrity was questioned. However, at the beginning of the temptation, good was still within her. In an attempt to strengthen her self-restraint, she added “Neither shalt ye touch it” to God’s commandment. She did not realize that adding something to God’s Word is equally as wicked as taking away from it. As a result, her defensive mechanism went on the offense that weakened her confidence in God’s Word rather than strengthened it.

With her intellect split and her self-defense severely weakened, Satan immediately added weight to her doubting mind by shooting more suspicions into her intellect and sensibility concerning God’s sovereignty and love. Concerning the former, he gave her the idea that God’s Word was not inerrant as she thought. In the latter he gave her the hint that God’s probation was a means of suppression rather than promotion. In addition to this, her sensibility was stimulated by Satan’s accusation against God, and her emotion, from loving God, was now turned instead into doubting and almost even hating the Creator. As a result Satan captured her intellect, and her sensibility was slipping toward captivity.

With the intellect of her soul captured, Satan would have little trouble taking her will captive, if only her sensibility could be made to give in. At this point Satan further developed his strategy by adopting the physical approach to lure her sensibility into his trap. He directed Eve’s eyes to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and let her sense “that the tree was good for food . . . pleasant to the eyes, and . . . to be desired to make one wise.” Eve looked and her whole realm of sensibility was captured.

Now, with two of her three faculties under Satan’s control, it took Eve only a few seconds of deliberation to surrender her will to the temptation and to commit the act of transgression. “She took of the fruit thereof and did eat.” Sin always has a social characteristic. As it is written, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). Having eaten the fruit, “she gave also unto her husband with

her, and he did eat.” Satan knew that she would be his most effective tool to persuade Adam to disobey God.

Contentment with whatever God gives is a great virtue of God’s child, and he who is not content is counted as rebellious. It was nothing but discontent with what God had given him that caused the Morning Star to become Satan. He was not satisfied to be on the earth, for he wanted to ascend into heaven; nor to sit on his throne under the stars of God, for he wanted to be above the stars; nor with standing before God on the mount of the congregation, for he wanted to sit there; nor with being subject to the Most High, for he wanted to be like Him. As a result, he was “brought down” from his original position (Is. 14:13-15).

Subjectively, too, Satan attacked man. Man was created between God and the animals. His position was under God as His agent and above animals as their ruler. Satan knew God’s purpose for man’s creation very well. Satan also knew that man would not be qualified to be God’s agent if he could make man fall from his original state to the level of an animal. Thereby Satan could prolong his position as the prince of this world. Accordingly, he approached Eve with the animal’s philosophy of life, since eating is a chief characteristic of animals. Satan initiated her temptation with the question of not eating and succeeded when our first parents ate. Man had been degraded to a brutish level in God’s sight, as Daniel saw in his vision (Dan. 7:1-7), as the Psalmist declared (Ps. 94:8), and as Peter stated (2 Pet. 2:12). As a brute, man was dead to God, and many times he is even worse than the brute (See Is. 1:3; Jer. 8:7).

Thus Satan blinded our first parents’ spiritual understanding, defiled their conscience, corrupted their intellect, sensualized their sensibility, held their will in bondage, and degraded them. He essentially murdered our first parents. Henceforth, sin and death would bind not only the first pair with chains and fetters but their posterity as well.

3. The Tempted. After God revealed the tempter and his ways of tempting, He disclosed the actual condition of the tempted. When Eve lost her mental balance, which overworked her soul and suppressed her spirit, she fell into sin. The tempter and his ways of tempting were the main causes of man’s fall; however, the real and final decision was up to man himself, rather than anything or anyone else. Self, even more than Satan, is the root of all evil. Satan’s formula was Lucifer plus five times “I”. The sins of the Israelites in the Old Testament consisted of only two evils: they had forsaken “the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13). Those two evils were two sides of one sin: negatively, they forsook the living God; positively, they led their lives according to their own desires and interests. Even the sins of the whole world, God has summed up in Isaiah 53:6 as only one evil, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to **his own way** [emphasis added].” **Sin consists of seeking anything for its own sake.** The old man, **self**, was the cause and result of our first parents’ fall.

Man’s fall was inaugurated by **self-interpretation**, that is, adding some words that God had never spoken, which has been the foundation of all the cults throughout the ages. Humanly speaking, to emphasize God’s commandment, “eat not” by adding “touch not,” was an intelligent addition, yet in God’s sight it did not serve His perfection. He needs no addition. Having been incited by Satan with **self-assumption** (“Ye shall not

surely die”) and **self-exaltation** (“Ye shall be as God”), Eve chose **self-observation** instead of trusting what God had said. When a person walks by sight and not by faith, the desire of his flesh, the desire of his eyes, and the pride of his life encourage his **self-determination** instead of leading him to trust what God has said in His commandments. Thus after Eve had eaten the fruit, for her **self-encouragement**, she gave also to Adam. Adam listened to her, ate the fruit, and transgressed against God.

Having their eyes opened and their conscience made guilty, our first parents became **self-conscious**. In order to cover their embarrassed, frustrated, and upset minds, they sewed fig leaves together to cover their naked bodies. Fig leaves symbolized **self-righteousness** which quickly withered, and before the day was over, they began to seek for **self-isolation** to cover their **self-reproach**. Therefore, they avoided being with God, refused to participate in spiritual activities, and sought to be alone. Such isolation was accompanied with **self-blame** and **fear**. “I was afraid” was the cause of “I hid myself.” Instead of facing the facts, confessing their iniquities, and asking for forgiveness, Adam chose to apply projection by putting the blame on Eve; and Eve, on the serpent. In such actions self can be seen as a red thread running throughout the whole temptation.

Since self is the essence of sin, God’s judgment was also focused on self. In His judgment upon Eve and Adam, the second person pronoun occurs 21 times. The first time was “greatly multiply **thy** sorrow [emphasis added]” and the last was “unto dust shalt **thou** return [emphasis added].” Both portray the whole judgment of God upon man’s sinful self.

Where there is sin, there is the curse; so it was in the case of the first pair’s sin. The curse to woman was twofold. Her manner of having children would no longer be an enjoyment and would cause her to become unnaturally subject to the rule of her husband. The curse to man was also twofold. First, he would have a real struggle to maintain his very existence. Labor itself was not a curse since it existed before the fall, but the painful labor that came as a result of the earth being cursed was. Second, man’s possibility of being immortal was now gone, and mortality became man’s inheritance forever. Sin brings not only a curse but physical death as well.

Besides physical death, man was also cursed with spiritual death, which separated him from God and made him powerless to do God’s will. Man had walked and worked with God in the Garden of Eden. Now, he and his wife were both expelled from the presence of God and became subject to God’s wrath and to all the miseries of this life. So paradise was lost forever. Adam, having been expelled from the garden, had to cultivate the ground from which his body was taken and to meet his physical need from its products until he returned there. His cultivation of the substance from which he was made in order to prolong his existence was pitiful enough, but one day he would also have to return to the very substance from which he was taken and nourished. What a mournful cycle!

Notwithstanding man’s failure, Yahweh still showed mercy to him and his wife. Bread would still be bread to man, and the ground would still continue to give its strength, although in painful toil he had to cultivate it and in the sweat of his face he had to farm it in order to bring forth a harvest. To the woman her life would be in sorrow, particularly in childbirth. Nevertheless, she would still be able to continue the

propagation of the human race. And above all, to both of them, the promise of the final victory over the tempter was granted so that the otherwise hopeless race could still be a race of great hope.

In conclusion, the objective of the revelation of man in the Adamic Period was preparatory in nature. Without it the realization of God's complete revelation could never be reached. Although the revelation of God's redemption in this period was primarily in an embryonic form, the revelation of man was quite detailed. Man's origin, his coming into being, his mental and spiritual formation and function, his married life, the steps of his falling into temptation, the beginning of his inferiority complex, the change of his status, and the cause of his present tragic life were all precisely revealed. The purpose of such a precise revelation is that throughout all the ages man may know himself and by knowing the reality of himself, he might turn from his wicked way and return to God, who will abundantly pardon (See Is. 55:7).

Chapter Two—THE TIMES OF NOAH

In the Adamic Period, the initial revelations concerning God and man were considered. God revealed His nature, attributes, and character through His words and work and also disclosed man's coming into being, going through probation, obtaining a wife, and falling into temptation. He did this to display His greatness and man's importance, His power and man's impotence, His consideration of mankind's value, and His disclosure of redemption for the fallen race. He wanted men through all the ages to realize both their importance and impotence and to trust and obey Him, that His love in Christ might be fulfilled.

Genesis 4:1-11:9 tells of the second period of God's special revelation, the tremendous Noachian Period. It began with a man murdering his brother and concluded with a union of religion and politics in rebellion against God. "Wicked," "evil," "violent," and "corrupt" are descriptive words for this age. Spiritually, the power of sin spread like a prairie fire all over the inhabited world. Man's spiritual perception was thoroughly corrupted, demonism invaded human nature, and man became totally depraved. As a result, a complete divine judgment was executed upon them, and the entire sinful race, except Noah and his family, was destroyed. Revelation disclosed that socially the human race was sharply divided into two classes, that family problems (especially marriage problems) became the foundation of social problems, that self-extravagancy became the subject of popular folk songs, that cult prostitutes were regarded as the noblewomen of the society, that no human empire could ever rule the entire world, and that the union of religion and politics would be the final force opposing God. Yet the revelation from this period concerned not only the facts of that particular generation but is a mirror of the world today. As Jesus said, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

Nevertheless, the corruption of the world did not keep the merciful and sovereign God away from it. His self-revelations in this period were centered on one word, **GRACE**. His thoughtfulness and sympathetic regard for sinners, His long-suffering to a spiritual generation, His justice to a wicked world, His tender love to the righteous, His hope given to a new race, and His effort to prevent evil doings were all manifestations of His grace. He also entered into a more formal *berith*, or covenant, with man. Indeed, in this age "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20b). In this period once again we will first consider the revelation of God and then the revelation of man.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

At the conclusion of the Adamic Period, God revealed Himself to be a personal God full of both justice and mercy. He provided opportunities for our first parents to repent, and He passed judgment on Satan and man respectively. Finally, He disclosed redemption which, although embryonic in form, was sufficient for the people of that day to believe and which served as the foundation of salvation for their descendants throughout all generations. These manifestations of His grace and justice continued throughout the Noachian Era. He repeatedly provided opportunities for man to repent before the coming of the flood. Finally He executed judgment on those who steadfastly hardened their hearts, but granted salvation to those willing to accept His deliverance. In this period the revelation of His omnipotence was demonstrated by means of the flood, but it was exercised only after the manifestation of His grace had failed to convince mankind to board the ark. In this period God manifested His omnipotence controlling rather than creating nature. His translation of Enoch to heaven, His destruction of all living creatures on earth by the flood, His setting the rainbow in the cloud as a sign of His covenant to the world, and His confounding the people's language that they might scatter over all the earth instead of sinning further were all revelations of God's providence rather than of His omnipotence. The climactic revelation concerning God in this period, however, was His advanced covenantal nature. In fact, His love in long-suffering and His omnipotence in controlling nature had all along been paving the way for the full revelation of His covenantal relationship with man. In the Noachian Period the revelation of God consisted of the progressive unfolding in more detail of His nature as the compassionate Father of the family (Yahweh), the gracious LORD of mankind (Yahweh, then Elohim), the righteous Judge of the earth (Elohim), and the sovereign Ruler of the universe (Elohim).

A. Yahweh, the Compassionate Father of the Family (Gen. 4:1-15).

Following the birth of Abel, both Eve and Adam immediately drop out of the biblical account. Without the record of their life in Genesis chapter five, we might think that both Adam and Eve had died early and left Cain and Abel as orphans alone in the world, for Adam did not live up to his full parental responsibility in loving and disciplining his children. However, Yahweh came onto the scene and took over these duties and responsibilities as the compassionate father who exerted discipline in the home. For this reason God is named Yahweh alone instead of Yahweh Elohim throughout the entire passage.

Although the statement of this relationship between God and man, as father and son, came rather late (See Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6), the revelation of the relationship was manifested in action from the very beginning of the human race. Comparatively speaking, the disclosure of God's fatherhood in this passage is even more dramatic than in many of the later revelations. Here, while He was like a father pleased with the gift offered by His filial son Abel; He refused the gift Cain offered as bribery. He rebuked Cain in an effort to save him from being taken captive by sin. After Cain committed murder, God accepted the just accusation of the murdered brother's blood. Prior to

bringing the murderer to justice and passing judgment, however, He manifested His fatherly compassion by granting His sinful child an opportunity to repent. After all hope for repentance was gone, He disciplined Cain with the punishment he deserved. Yet even in the midst of His discipline, He considered the murderer's future safety by granting him a sign as a protection from being murdered by someone else. God's self-revelation as the compassionate Father is threefold.

1. Pleased with the Obedient (Gen. 4:4). The institution of sacrifice had certainly been initiated and exemplified in the Adamic Period, by God's slaying an animal to make coats out of its skin to cover our first parents' nakedness. It is necessary to cover oneself before approaching God, as later revelation tells us "covered thy nakedness" is the prerequisite for "thou becamest mine" (Ezek. 16:8). Both Adam and Eve were never to forget the importance of that vicarious covering. Such significant truth would have been taught again each time a new coat was made, just as the orthodox Jews during the Passover season have been teaching their children the narrative of the Exodus year after year. Both Cain and Abel, and as a matter of fact all the people of Adam's family, should have been familiar with the significance of this vicarious performance since their spiritual perceptions were much more sensitive and responsive than were those of people born later. Thus, their family should have thoroughly understood the spiritual significance of God's sacrifice on their behalf.

Cain was a tiller of the ground. He followed his father's occupation, cultivating the cursed ground and wiping his sweating brow. Although his mother was very excited at his birth, his weak moral and spiritual life in adulthood may indicate that he sensed his mother's disappointment in him. Resentment and frustration were harbored within him and developed until he hated both God and his family. Abel on the other hand was a keeper of sheep. Although the record does not indicate that at his birth his mother expected very much of him, Abel's mature spirituality later suggests that he had been greatly loved and sheltered. He did not have to sweat in the field but tended the sheep instead. His heart toward both God and family was one of love and obedience. Then in the "process of time . . . Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. 4:3-4).

"In the process of time" is "at the end of days" in Hebrew. "Days" in the original can refer to a lifetime, a long time or a shorter period. The exact meaning in this passage is not certain. Some hold that it referred to "after a considerable lapse of time," others to "the fall of the year." In my opinion the "days" mentioned here was not a generalization. Rather it referred to a particular cycle of days, and at the end of each cycle both brothers would offer their sacrifices to Yahweh as their response to the abundant mercy and grace He had bestowed upon them. This cycle might have been once a month or every full moon, but most likely it would have been every seven days, since this was the only cycle that God had so far established. Such a cycle was also observed later among the ancient Babylonians and ancient Chinese. The following is a record of the Babylonian sabbath found by Rawlinson:

The seventh day is the feast of Marduk and Zarpaint. It is an evil day. The shepherd of the great people shall not eat flesh cooked on the coals which is smoked In the secret place a seer shall not give an oracle. The physician

shall not lay his hand on the sick. It is not fitting to utter a malediction. At night before Marduk and Ishtar the king shall bring his offering; a libation he shall pour out. The lifting up of his hands shall then be pleasing to the gods.⁸³

Since God used a seven-day cycle in creation and since ancient people commonly followed a seven-day cycle in their worship, it seems entirely possible that “the end of days” in Genesis 4:3 could be an embryonic form of the Sabbath in the Old Testament and the Lord’s Day in the New.

The reason Yahweh was pleased with Abel’s sacrifice and rejected Cain’s was not simply because one sacrifice was bloody while the other was bloodless, but because the substances used and the methods of preparation expressed each brother’s attitude and motive. The lack of a proper motive causes the Lord to say, “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me” (Is. 1:13). According to later revelation in Hebrews 11:4, we learn that the real reason God accepted Abel’s sacrifice was that he offered it by faith, while Cain did not. Since “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6), it did not matter whether Cain’s sacrifice was bloody or not. God would have been displeased anyway. In other words, **if the offerer is unacceptable, the offering will not be accepted.** Irenaeus said:

For at the beginning God had respect to the gifts of Abel, because he offered with single-mindedness and righteousness; but He had no respect unto the offering of Cain, because his heart was divided with envy and malice, which he cherished against his brother. For if any one shall endeavor to offer a sacrifice merely to outward appearance, unexceptionably, in due order, and according to appointment, while in his soul he does not assign to his neighbor that fellowship with him which is right and proper, nor is under the fear of God;—he who thus cherishes secret sin does not deceive God by that sacrifice which is offered correctly as to outward appearance; nor will such an oblation profit him anything.⁸⁴

Whether the sacrifice was bloody or bloodless was not important from the standpoint of the sacrifice itself, but it was important in determining the condition of the offerer’s heart. It seems, according to the passage, Cain was willing to acknowledge God only as Creator and brought an offering to Him according to his own rational thinking. Abel brought a sacrifice identified with the covering God made for Adam’s nakedness in the garden, when God shed the blood of an animal. So by shedding an animal’s blood, Abel truly identified himself as a sinner after the image of his father and admitted his dependence upon God for mercy and grace. Practicing what God had instituted was Abel’s demonstration of faith.

The very nature of progressive revelation was overlooked by Keil and Delitzsch when they commented on this point saying, “Not, indeed, in the fact that Abel brought a bleeding sacrifice and Cain a bloodless one; for this difference arose from the difference in their callings, and each necessarily took his gift from the produce of his own

⁸³George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1933), p. 281.

⁸⁴Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (ed.), *Anti-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), Vol. I, p. 485.

occupation.”⁸⁵ God’s revelation is organic, therefore, from the earliest times of man there had to be a germinal disclosure of the sacrifice that God explicitly required in later days.

2. Reasoning with the Obstinate (Gen. 4:6-7). Cain was wicked and his offering was an “abomination to Yahweh” (See Prov. 15:8). When Cain discovered that only Abel’s offering was accepted, instead of seeking the cause for his own rejection and correcting it, he became angry with God and Abel. Resentment, anger, and hatred welled up within him and were expressed on his face. God did not immediately judge him for his rebellious attitude, but appeared to him in preventive grace. First, He promised to give him “lifting” if he would have faith in Him and would desire to do right in His sight. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” has been counted by some as the most difficult verse in the chapter. In fact, the problem is not as complicated as it appears. The verb “doest well,” or “doest not well,” in the following sentence is from the verb *yatabh* which means “to be good.” It is in the causative form, and hence it means “to cause to be good.” Its literal translation here would be “Behold, if you would make yourself to be good, there will be a lifting.” “Accepted” in the original is the infinitive construct of the verb *nasa* meaning “to lift up,” hence “lifting up of [one’s countenance].” The idea of such a “lifting up of” face is very close to the idiomatic expression “giving face”; thus “accepted” would be a correct translation in English. The Peshito and Vulgate both have a similar translation, although the Septuagint has a different interpretation. Thus, etymologically, doing good as a personal responsibility is clearly indicated here. It is true, spiritually speaking, no one can be good in God’s sight by his own efforts; nevertheless, a sense of personal responsibility for one’s own actions is necessary for God’s working in one “that which is well-pleasing in His sight” (Heb. 13:21).

God’s second reasoning with Cain was really a warning: “And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door.” Sin had gained entrance into the world by action in the last period but was given no name until this period when, for the first time in Scripture, sin was called *chattath*. The Lord named it and described it in detail so that the reality of sin as the antithesis to God’s love might be known by Cain and all mankind. Both the form of *chattath* and its nature are very peculiar here. In order to understand its peculiarities, further study is necessary.

There are two ways to define things: nominally and essentially. “Nominally” means to derive a definition out of the word itself, while “essentially” refers to a definition from the very nature of the thing. For instance, the nominal definition of Adam is “man made of dust,” while the essential definition is “a sinner, dead to God and condemned” (See Rom. 5:16-19). The nominal definition of Messiah is “the anointed one,” since this passive noun is derived from the verb that signifies “to anoint,” while its essential definition is “a priest, a prophet and a king,” the three offices of our Lord. Sin can be defined in these two ways.

From its nominal definition, sin is not simply moral or ethical defects. Many things may be adequate morally or ethically and yet be sin in God’s sight. Moses’ smiting the rock twice to produce abundant water (Num. 20:8,11), Uzzah’s taking hold of the ark instead of letting God take care of it (2 Sam. 6:6), and Peter’s sympathy to Jesus’

⁸⁵Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 110.

suffering (Matt. 16:21-23) were all good deeds. Morally or ethically speaking those incidents were not blameworthy, yet they were all counted as sin in God's sight. The word *chattath* (sin) is derived from the verb *chata*, signifying "to miss the mark," and is used in Judges 20:16 to describe those slingers who did not "miss their mark." Thus the nominal definition of sin is missing the mark set by God, which is lack of conformity to God's will. God has ordained definite means and end for every action and has set the right time and way of doing everything. If anything or any action is not carried out according to God's means, end, time, and method, no matter how moral and ethical it may be, it is sin.

For its essential definition, the nature of sin can be seen from its morphology and syntax. First, sin is attractive. The form of the word itself is in the feminine gender, denoting the attractiveness of sin in its seductive appeal, while its actual gender is masculine as indicated by the following modifying masculine participle *robhets*, crouching, denoting the destructive power and tyrannous nature of sin. Thus sin is double gendered. It would never approach a person with its ugly face but always with sweet appearance, sympathetic talking, and affectionate touching. When sin has caught the victim, however, it binds him with its cords (See Prov. 5:22) and slays him (See Rom. 7:11). Second, sin is intensive and forcible. Besides its actual masculine gender, the extreme strength of sin is also shown by the intensive form of the noun *chattath*, indicated by the doubling of its second radical, *tt*. It can even rob some people of sleep until they do wrong (See Prov. 4:16), or cause others to be like the troubled sea without ever having rest (See Is. 57:20). Third, sin is aggressive. The ever militant activity of sin is expressed by the nature of the Hebrew active participle which expresses active and continuous action in the past, present, and future to describe its ceaseless crouching or lying in wait, as a lion being ever ready to spring upon anyone going out the door. Keil and Delitzsch described it well. "The feminine *chattath* is construed as a masculine . . . sin is personified as a wild beast, lurking at the door of the human heart, and eagerly desiring to devour his soul."⁸⁶ This personification of sin as an unrestrained animal might have laid the foundation for the revelation much later of Satan as a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he might devour (See 1 Pet. 5:8).

God made it plain to Cain that he had no reason to be angry with Him and Abel, and that he had to realize the power of sin and its consequence upon himself. In later revelation, *chattath* would come to mean both sin and sin-offering. In the Authorized Version it is translated as sin 169 times, sin-offering 116 times, punishment and purification for sin twice each, and punishment of sin and purifying once each. It is a remarkable message that where there is sin, there is the punishment of sin and yet there is also a sin-offering. Surely this is the embryonic form of the distant revelation "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). Thus God brought to Cain's attention that although sin and punishment were crouching at the entrance, the sin-offering and purification for sin were also there. However, Cain himself had to make the final decision between life and death, blessing and curse, since he alone was responsible for mastering the ever present sin (4:7). Unfortunately, Cain chose the latter, rejecting God's reasoning, and as a result committed the first murder on the earth.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 112.

3. Disciplining the Disobedient (Gen. 4:9-15). From the very beginning and throughout all the ages, God has been revealing Himself as a gracious and holy God. He is love, yet He cannot tolerate sin. When Satan rebelled, God sentenced him and all those who were with him. When Adam and Eve were disobedient, He judged them accordingly. In this period the record of His judgments became even more detailed, whether in His outstanding judgment by the flood upon the whole world or in individual cases such as Cain.

When Cain appeared with a long face, an indication of his evil heart, God disclosed His preventive grace by telling him that He was not a partial God. He told him that if he would listen to Him and do his best, he would receive the same respect that Abel did. Initially God's preventive grace seemed to have a positive effect on Cain because the Scriptures say that Cain spoke to Abel, which might mean he gave an account to Abel of God's reasoning with him. Before long, however, Cain rejected God's grace and committed fratricide. God came to him again asking two questions similar to those He had asked Adam, "Where is Abel thy brother?" and "What have you done?" God certainly knew both answers. He did not ask Cain in order to secure information but to alert him concerning his spiritual condition, hoping that his conscience might be awakened and lead him to repent of what he had done. Again Cain hardened his heart and denied his sins. As a result, God disciplined him by causing the ground to withhold its yield and by banishing him from His presence, making him a displaced person who became a restless wanderer upon the earth.

God's discipline comes without fail, but only after He has offered us all the mercy at His disposal. Before sending the flood, God gave the people 120 years to repent. Before exiling the children of Israel, God was patient with them until they refused to listen to Him any longer (See Neh. 9:30). Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord tried again and again to gather the Jews under His protection, but when they would not submit; the Lord said, "Behold, your house [temple] is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Even now "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). When His children are in misery, He is grieved (Judg. 10:16); in their affliction, He is afflicted (Is. 63:9). In other words, each time His own suffer, the Lord suffers also, and His suffering exceeds theirs. When He heard the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war approaching Judah, His heart was broken, and He said, "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart" (Jer. 4:19). Thus even as He punished Cain, He responded to Cain's appeal, "that every one that findeth me shall slay me," and set a mark upon him for his protection.

In summary, Cain disobeyed God by bringing an improper sacrifice to Him; he envied and resented his brother; he rejected God's offer of reconciliation; he committed premeditated murder; he lied to God; and he affronted God's justice. As a result, he was both banished from the presence of Yahweh and rejected by the earth. Even so God granted him a mark to protect him. No wonder one of the later revelations says, "But Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsook them not" (Neh. 9:17).

B. Yahweh, then Elohim, the Merciful Lord of Mankind (Gen. 6:1-22).

God's name (Yahweh, "LORD") and title (Elohim, "God") were used interchangeably before and after the flood according to changing circumstances. Before the flood, God was still Yahweh to the world. He granted sinners a grace period and continued the operation of the Holy Spirit for 120 years. When He saw the increasing wickedness of men, His heart ached for them. After the whole world became corrupt, He used his sovereign title Elohim rather than His redemptive name Yahweh to command Noah to build an ark as He prepared to purge the wicked world. Noah did everything according to Elohim's commands (Gen. 6:22), and as a result he was counted righteous before the LORD (7:1). His faithfulness and obedience really pleased God who became Yahweh to him again. When Elohim commanded Noah to enter the ark with those who were to accompany him, he obeyed (7:5,9) and as a consequence he was shut in the ark by Yahweh Himself (7:16). After the people of the earth were all swept away by the flood, Noah and his family were the only human beings left. Since God would not be Yahweh to the world as a whole, but only to His elect people, God led him out of the ark and made the universal covenant with him as Elohim—the sovereign Ruler—instead of as Yahweh, the merciful LORD (9:1-17). Similarly, God was Elohim, and not Yahweh, to the race of Shem as a whole (9:26).

God's mercy is the manifestation of His love toward sinners. It was revealed both before and after the sinful act of our first parents. In the Adamic Period, even in the midst of His judgment, He showed His mercy. That same mercy was repeatedly and progressively revealed in this period. His long-suffering toward the wicked and His compassion toward the righteous are too obvious to go unnoticed by any observer. However, the judgment on man in this age was more severe than earlier, because, as it is written in later revelation, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). In this period God's mercy was precisely revealed before the flood, during the flood, and after the flood. Before the flood He provided time for people to repent, prepared a person to entrust with His grace, and proclaimed dramatically the way of salvation using the ark as an object lesson.

1. Providing Time for Repentance (Gen. 6:3-7). From the beginning of the creation of the universe, the operation of the Holy Spirit was very evident. After Adam's fall man, because of his sinful nature and darkening spiritual perception, was incapable of being or doing right in God's sight without the help of the Holy Spirit. This was why David later pleaded with God earnestly in prayer that He might not take away the Holy Spirit from him but renew him with a steadfast spirit (Ps. 51:11-12). Man is a free agent, and the Holy Spirit's ability to operate within him depends on his personal attitude. He is at liberty to set his mind on either the flesh or the Spirit. If a person chooses the flesh, the Spirit will cease His operation within him, which results in death; whereas otherwise, there will be life and peace (See Rom. 8:6). The Spirit nevertheless does not cease his operation abruptly without giving warning but He strives repeatedly, until all possibility for repentance has been exhausted. This was exactly the situation before the flood.

The world of Noah's day was unbelievably wicked. During this period rationalism prevailed over revealed religion, parental duties were neglected, fratricide was practiced, personal responsibility was ignored, amusement and luxury were the main attractions of

society, marriage was abused, man's fist took the place of God's justice, idolatry was initiated, spiritual messages were rejected, and religion and adultery joined hands together. Man was not merely demoralized but became degenerated to the point of opposing God Himself. No wonder "it repented Yahweh" (6:6).

"Repented" as used here is in niph'al, which in Hebrew is the reflexive, passive, and reciprocal form. Its fundamental meaning is "to breathe pantingly." Although the word used here is in an anthropomorphic expression, it is a clear indication of the merciful kindness of Yahweh. This verb, used in Scripture to express emotion of one kind or another, carries here a reflexive force to express emotion reacting upon the mind, that is, "to trouble oneself," or "to move with pity." Hence it may mean "to be sorry" (Judg. 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11), "to be comforted" (Gen. 24:67), or "to comfort oneself" (Is. 1:24 "ease"). Similarly today, we may convey either disgust or comfort by sighing. Contextually, "repented" is just an abbreviated way of saying, "It grieved Him at His heart" or "it pained His heart." In no way does the repentance of God presuppose that He was concerned for any personal wrong doing, or wished to do better next time, nor does it show any variability in His nature or His purpose. It is an anthropomorphic expression for the pain in God's heart when He observed man's degradation, for man had become nothing but flesh (6:3). Man's nature was incurable, and God decided to destroy all of mankind on the earth. Nevertheless, He still sought some person to whom He could entrust His grace, so that through him God's redemptive love might be shown and the world might be blessed. At this critical time Noah was born to Lamech and his wife.

2. Preparing a Person to Entrust with His Grace (Gen. 6:8-13). After the birth of Noah, Lamech made an important announcement concerning his hope for his son. He said, "This son is to comfort us from the work and toil of our hands resulting from the ground which Yahweh has cursed" (5:29, retranslated). Therefore, he named him Noah which in Hebrew means "Comforter." Lamech was not looking simply for release from work and toil by means of better tools. Continually man had been looking for the promised seed. Eve had thought Cain might be the promised one, and now Lamech hoped this son might be the one. The messianic hope did not spring from the Jewish people. It is universal and prehistoric. When I was young, traveling in the interior of China and talking to people who complained about the toil and tumult of the age, the people often concluded their complaint with the wish that the real "Son of Heaven" might come soon and solve all the problems of this world.

The meaning of the Hebrew *chen* (grace) in the Old Testament is not as rich as the Greek *charis* (grace) in the New Testament; the latter has far more meanings than any one English term can represent.⁸⁷ The reason for its simplicity in the Old Testament is certainly due to its early stage in progressive revelation. All seed forms are simpler than later revelation. *Chen* was used 69 times in the Old Testament, and the passage under discussion (6:8) is the first occurrence. The last six occurrences, according to the original order of the books in the Old Testament, are in Esther that was indeed the last grace the Lord bestowed upon the Jews during the Old Testament time. It was translated as "grace, favor, and gracious" when referring to either God or man; "pleasant" when used to

⁸⁷ *Charis* means (1) charm, loveliness, Luke 4:22; Ephesians 4:29; (2) good will, favor, Acts 4:33; 18:27; (3) the state or benefits of grace, Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 1:15; (4) thanks, 1 Corinthians 10:30; 15:57.

describe an animal (Prov. 5:19); and “precious” to modify a stone (Prov. 17:8). Nominally, it denotes an external pleasant appearance or manner as well as internal favor; biblically, it refers to God’s favor proceeding from His love.

Grace enabled Noah to find favor in God’s sight, to be counted as a just man, and to be kept blameless in the midst of universal contamination. Grace prompted God to give Noah warning of the impending destruction, to instruct him in full detail concerning how to build the ark, and to provide for the needs of both Noah and those who were to enter the ark with him. The extent of grace was also shown by the personal attention Yahweh gave in shutting the door of the ark, in remembering Noah by bringing him and those with him safely through the raging flood, in preparing the new earth in which he and his descendants could dwell after the deluge, and finally, in sealing His promise with a solemn covenant.

Since God is omnipotent it would have been easy for Him to have destroyed all mankind and start over with a new creation, but this would have wasted the revelation of His grace and defeated His redemptive purpose. He chose to extend grace to the wretched by carrying out the redemption promised through the seed of woman. It was to advance the manifestation of His redemptive grace that God selected Noah and his family. God’s redeeming grace was first revealed in Eden and progressed throughout the ages until it culminated in Jesus Christ. As it is written, “And the Word was made flesh . . . full of grace” (John 1:14). Thankfully, grace was extended not only to Noah and the people in his age but through him to all people throughout the ages.

Scripture tells us all divine/human relationships are monergistic in character, setting forth God’s sovereignty and man’s subordination. While grace discloses that salvation is all of God, the Bible also discloses the requirement for man to receive God’s grace, which is by faith (Heb. 11:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). By faith Noah obeyed God and through grace became the heir of righteousness. Because the Bible first lays down a seed form of its doctrine, faith here is an anticipation of the fuller revelation of Abraham’s faith in the coming period.

Not only can the meaning of grace be seen in Noah’s life and work but the results of grace are also revealed, both internally and externally (6:9). Internally, the grace of God caused Noah to be “a just man.” “Just,” according to Koehler, is a thing examined and found in good condition.⁸⁸ Juridically, it means a man whose behavior is examined and found immaculate, hence guiltless, correct, or just. It indicates Noah’s spiritual relation to God as a justified sinner who was counted as a person having never sinned. Such a status is achieved only by the application of the vicarious blood, that is, the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and with this blood Noah and all other believers in the Old Testament were justified. The external result of grace is seen in the term “perfect” or “blameless,” which Keil and Delitzsch suggested refers to Noah’s life and conduct.⁸⁹ Thus blameless refers more or less to the external result of grace. His blamelessness was expressed in his obedience to God’s commands. The repeated statement that Noah did everything as God commanded him (6:22; 7:5, 9, 16) indicates his absolute obedience to God, which is the secret of reaching perfection as Christ later

⁸⁸Ludwig Koeller (ed.), *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), p. 793.

⁸⁹Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

experienced when He became **fully qualified** through suffering to be the High Priest and Savior of His people (Heb. 5:8-9).

The grace of God justifies a sinner instantaneously and sanctifies a justified person progressively. Thus, in order to walk with God, grace is necessary. “To walk with God” may be understood as having fellowship with and confidence in God. Noah maintained fellowship with God by constant attention to His word. Noah experienced spiritual growth because he listened when God spoke, did what God said, and maintained unbroken communion with God. Noah’s confidence in God was built up by submitting his will wholly to the will of God. He never worried about either present or future problems. He never considered whether or not he could gather together all the living things, or whether there would be any problems inside the ark during the flood. He did only what God said and committed the rest to the Lord. He had complete confidence in God in all things, just as later revelation says “Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Ps. 37:5).

God made a fragmental covenant with Noah to reiterate the promise of His grace. God had been demonstrating personal interest in man ever since He created him. This gracious interest came to a pinnacle in this period with the disclosure of the word *berith* (covenant) (6:18). Although God made a covenant with Adam in the Adamic Period, the actual word was not revealed at that time. Etymologically, *berith* is derived from the verb *barah* that has the meaning “**to cut**” and refers to cutting the animal asunder in the covenantal ceremony. This cutting asunder conveys two ideas: one concerns the sincerity of the parties in establishing the covenant, as it signifies cutting from the center of their hearts; the other refers to the oath that if either party breaks the covenant, that one will be cut asunder, just as was done to the sacrificial victim. Further, it may include a second meaning of the verb which is “to share the meal,” or “**to eat together**,” as it is translated “eat” in 2 Samuel 12:17. Among Orientals, to eat together is an indication of mutual concern and is the conclusion of making any sort of covenant (See Ex. 24:8-11). The verb may also have a third meaning, namely, “**to separate**” or “to choose,” as it was employed in the challenge: “Choose you a man for you” (1 Sam. 17:8).⁹⁰ Any covenant, naturally, has some sort of binding force to **separate** the participating parties from others; otherwise, there would be no reason to have a covenant.

All three meanings of *barah* serve to illustrate the nature of any *berith* in Scripture. It is a solemn agreement **made from the center of God’s will**, and man is obliged to keep it. It is a sign of mutual concern and **exclusive fellowship**. It also serves as a bond to **separate man from other relationships foreign to God**. In the same manner, God made the covenant with Noah and all those who were going to be with him, so that they might have confidence to fulfill their obligation to enter the ark and keep themselves alive (6:18). In any biblical *berith*, the mutual relationship between God and the participants was particular and exclusive. They were different from the rest of the

⁹⁰Benjamin Davies, *A Compendious and Complete Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament: Chiefly Founded on the Work of Gesenius and Furst, with Improvements from Didtrich and Other Sources* (London: Asher and Co., 1872), p. 103. “To cut,” “to eat,” and “to separate” were included under the meaning of *barah*, and he also indicated that *barah* (to eat) was the root of *bereith* (covenant). The last point is also held by Meyer as quoted in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (Leiden, NY: E. J. Brill, 1994), Vol. 1, p. 157.

people; they were God's. Thus Noah was qualified by God's grace and confirmed by God's covenant to be the trustee of God's grace.

3. Proclaiming the Way of Salvation (Gen. 6:14-16). After man's fall God revealed His way of salvation that would make it possible for man to carry out His original plan to rule over His creation. The forms and procedures of redemption were revealed in different ways and at different times, simply because the redemptive action was always connected with historical circumstances; but the purpose of redemption was always the same. The purpose of salvation was not to restore man to his original position but to lead man to accept God's life, to be trained to be like Him, and later to exercise dominion over His creation. The beginning of the external manifestation of redemptive grace was disclosed when God slew an animal to make coats for Adam and Eve. In this period the external manifestation of the way of salvation was expanded further by the design and building of the ark.

God's instructions to Noah were not only to guide his work and training but also to benefit the people watching him by inspiring them to ask questions that would give Noah an opportunity to explain the way of salvation to them. The manner of Noah's preaching was very graphic, since he had this huge boat to illustrate his message.

In Hebrew the ark is called *tabhth* which is used only here in Genesis chapters six through eight and twice in Exodus 2:3, 5. In shape it was more like a floating house than a ship to be navigated. The ark was built of gopher wood, although today no one knows exactly what gopher wood is. Some have thought it could be cypress since the Phoenicians frequently used it in shipbuilding. The Targums chose cedar and Spurrell preferred juniper. No matter what kind of wood it was, it is certain to have been a wood durable enough to stem the waves and to stand firm against the winds since, by their faith, Noah and his family had abandoned themselves to the vessel of God's own design, which was to provide them salvation from otherwise certain destruction. He certainly would have provided a boat fully capable of carrying them completely through the fierce gale to eventual safety (See John 10:28-29).

The ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. These measurements are based on an 18-inch cubit, which is corroborated by the measurement taken from the Hezekiah tunnel in Jerusalem. An inscription written in old Hebrew letters was found in 1880 on the rock wall at the entrance of the tunnel and tells us that the length of the tunnel was 1,200 cubits. The measurement of the tunnel today is approximately 1,800 feet (1,708 according to Warren and 49 feet longer according to Conder). Thus one cubit should be about one and one-half feet long. Certainly, there could be more than one kind of cubit, and this calculation is only according to our present knowledge. The measurement of the ark should have some redemptive significance, although presently we do not know what it is.

The ark was coated inside and outside with pitch. The noun, "pitch," is derived from the verb that means "to cover," which in the intensive form means "to make atonement" (See Ex. 30:10 where it occurs twice). Atonement is not a covering of sin (the old idea), but a living at-one-ment of man with God. It surely seems that this "pitching" inside and outside of the ark might be the seed of later revelation referring to the subjective (salvation) and objective (sanctification) aspects of redemption. Other features of the ark

could also have been roots for significant later revelation regarding the Church; such as the three decks within the ark, the opening near the top for light and ventilation, and the placement of the door on one side for the convenience of the passengers as they entered the ark.

As the ark began to take shape the people undoubtedly asked, “What is it?” “It is a rescue boat for the perishing,” could have been the answer. The follow-up question, “What do you mean?” would have given Noah an opportunity to tell them what God had told him was going to happen. To conclude his preaching he would say, “You are all invited to come. There is no admission fee.” The result, however, was always the same. The people pointed their fingers at him in derision and went about their business.

Throughout this period of grace during which he constructed the ark, the people of Noah’s day continued in their disobedience. Later revelation speaks of Christ’s “being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit; by whom also He went and preached unto the spirits [now] in prison who long ago were disobedient when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (1 Pet. 3:18-20). How could Christ by the Spirit preach the gospel to disobedient people alive in Noah’s time yet who were definitely dead when Peter wrote in his epistle: “the gospel was preached to those who are now dead” (1 Pet. 4:6)? Peter also tells us that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). Now no one can be a preacher in truth and power unless he has been sent and anointed by the Spirit. As the Scriptures say, “How shall they preach unless they are sent” (Rom. 10:15) and “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

The passage in First Peter 3:18-19 clearly explains that Christ Himself did not preach to spirits alive in Noah’s day, but by the Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Noah in his proclamations to the people as he was building the ark. Furthermore, in the Orient when one mentions a deceased person, he does not refer to him according to his former living status, but according to his current situation as “the dead” or the like. For example, when Naomi was persuading her daughters-in-law to return to their mothers’ houses, she wished that the Lord might deal kindly with them as they had dealt with “the dead” (that is, their husbands) and with her (Ruth 1:8; 2:20). So it is that “the spirits in prison” in 1 Peter 3:19 definitely refers to the disobedient people living in Noah’s time but who were dead when Peter was writing his epistle (1 Pet. 4:6). Any other explanation of 1 Peter 3:18-20 would seem to make our Lord either unfair (He descended into Hell and preached His triumph over death and men’s evil deeds only to the spirits from Noah’s time, but not to the “spirits in prison” as a whole) or, as some hold, He gave the dead a second chance to repent. The Holy Spirit challenges this last view by His unqualified statement: “It is appointed unto men once to die and after this [death] comes the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). In His teaching concerning the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus strongly implies that following death one’s destiny is irreversibly final: “A great chasm has been fixed [*esteriktai*, perfect passive of the verb *sterizo*, meaning ‘has been firmly fixed and remains perpetually so’] so that . . . none may cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:26, retranslated). Thus, to put it all together, Christ Himself did not preach to spirits in Hell. He anointed Noah through the Holy Spirit who resurrected Him, and it was Noah who proclaimed God’s way of righteousness to a disobedient people—people who in Peter’s day, more than 2,000 years later, were “spirits in prison.”

Through the years, Noah built the ark and preached righteousness as the long-suffering God waited until the exact moment the grace period expired and then Yahweh closed the door of the ark behind Noah and his family. This confirms what God Himself later proclaimed, “Yahweh, Yahweh, God of the compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy and truth, preserving mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; He, however, will never leave **the guilty unpunished**” (Ex. 34:6-7, retranslated, emphasis added).

C. Elohim, the Righteous Judge of the Earth (Gen. 7:1-8:19).

God’s justice and grace have walked hand in hand throughout the ages. On one hand, God’s justice calls for the punishment of wickedness; on the other, His grace cries out to the wicked to turn them from their sinful ways and to the righteous to deliver them from perilous situations. God’s judgment on Satan and Adam revealed His justice in punishing sin. Now God’s judgment was revealed in Cain’s banishment and the destruction of all civilization by the flood. In each of these cases, God clearly revealed that He would not permit sin to go unpunished.

1. Removing the Wicked (Gen. 7:1-24). In the Noachian Period mankind totally opposed God and paid no attention to the grace God offered them through Noah. Perhaps their willful disobedience reflected their disbelief in what Noah said. Later revelation tells us the people of that time deliberately ignored the sovereignty of God as the Creator (2 Pet. 3:5-6). God resolved to remove the wicked from His sight and to sweep them off the earth. Since man is above all other creatures, the creatures below him were included in his fate; just as when the head of the body dies, all other members of the body die as well. Accordingly, God said, “I will destroy . . . both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air” (Gen. 6:7).

Ever since the fall of Adam, all creation has felt the corruption brought about by man’s sin. In the previous period, God disclosed that the earth would be cursed for man’s sake and that thorns and thistles would be signs of the curse (3:17-18). At the beginning of this period, the earth, having been forced to drink innocent Abel’s blood, rebelled against murderous Cain by withholding its produce when tilled, as in much the same manner that the land of Canaan later rebelled by spewing out its inhabitants because of their abominations (4:11; Lev. 18:24-28, “If you defile the land it will vomit you out”). Undeterred by God’s dealing with Cain, the violence of the Nephilim (giants) and the exceeding wickedness of man, whose every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time, continued to weigh down the earth until the flood of rain came, “the same day were all the fountains of the deep broken up” (7:11).

Having declared twice that the earth was filled with violence (6:11, 13) and having given instructions to Noah on how to build the ark, God announced the coming destruction by His own authority, and solemnized it by the repetition “I, behold I” (6:17). This emphatic formula, used for the first time here, was used again when God made the covenant with Noah (9:9). It is equal to “God, behold, God himself,” which indicates that God brought destruction upon the earth because His very nature required that it be done. Therefore, the flood came. All the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven opened together to release sudden destruction upon a depraved multitude that had

no place to flee for their lives. They might have climbed to the roofs of houses or to the tops of mountains, but the rising torrents and raging waves soon swept them away from their refuge. Some of them might have come knocking at the door of the ark begging Noah to open the door for them; but Noah could not open it, for it had been shut by Yahweh. Perhaps Noah's heart ached for them, and he felt frustrated because he could not give a helping hand to the perishing, especially some who might have been his old workmen or close relatives. Now he could do nothing except shut his ears and let them drown. **When the grace period is over, there will be no more grace, only judgment.**

God's judgment has a definite measure and degree. It will be neither more nor less than required. Its time and location are accurate. The time will never be longer or shorter than what He has appointed. One of the reasons the Holy Spirit keeps so many numbers in Scripture is to assure us of this fact. The flood was 15 feet higher than the highest mountain, and the earth was inundated for 150 days. Consequently all living things outside the ark died. This judgment became an illustration of the judgment that will come in the last days (Matt. 24: 37-39).

2. Remembering His Promise (Gen. 8:1-19). As justice is the manifestation of God's holiness, so is mercy of God's love. God's love, as we learned earlier, was manifested by His mercy and goodness; His holiness is revealed in His justice and righteousness. Etymologically, justice and righteousness are almost the same. Theologically, they may be distinguished as follows: the former concerns the execution of judgment and the infliction of punishment for any sin committed by man; the latter concerns the distribution of grace and blessings to redeemed ones. Both justice and righteousness manifest the principle of equity in God's nature. He, as the supreme Judge of the world, dispenses His blessings and judgment without prejudice or favoritism. His justice and righteousness are similar to Aristotle's corrective and distributive justice. On one hand, God will never leave the guilty unpunished; on the other He keeps His promise faithfully and will never let the righteous down. No wonder the Psalmist later said, "Thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment [or justice] and righteousness in Jacob" (Ps. 99:4).

The promise of God, theologically, is God's declaration in word, which is supported by God's power for fulfillment and God's truth for assurance. What God has said He is able to perform (Rom. 4:21), and His Word stands forever (Is. 40:8). God's promises may be divided into unconditional and conditional ones. Unconditional refers to the promise that requires no work and is fulfilled by the faith of the recipient alone. The conditional promise always demands some sort of work and can be fulfilled only after the deed has been performed. For instance, His promise of protecting Cain from being murdered, His promise of Isaac's birth, and His promise to Hagar concerning the future of Ishmael were unconditional. But God's promise to keep Cain from being overpowered by sin was conditioned by "If thou doest well"; Noah's deliverance from universal destruction by obedience; and Abram's becoming a great nation by obeying the command, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." The condition necessary to receive a promise from God, in general, varies according to the nature of the promise. One promise may have several conditions that must be met to receive the fulfillment, or one condition may cover many promises.

Due to the progressive nature of God's revelation, His promises always became more detailed as time went on. The best example of the progressive nature of a promise of God is the Messiah's birth that is beautifully and progressively exhibited in the Old Testament. The promise of deliverance from the destruction of the flood is another good example. About 120 years before the flood, God told Noah to bring the animals into the ark by "two from each," that is, by pairs (6:19). Seven days before the flood, He said that of clean animals there should be seven pairs, and of the unclean, one pair (7:2). At first, He said He would bring a flood (6:17). Later, He said He would bring a flood by causing it to rain 40 days and 40 nights and by opening the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven to add to the deluge (7:4, 11-12). Initially, the object of destruction was "all flesh" (6:17); later, "every living substance that I have made" (7:4). Furthermore, the last objects were described by three verses (7:21-23). Surely this was progressive revelation rather than data drawn from many documents by an unknown editor.

God's condition for delivering Noah from the universal destruction, besides His own grace, was simply Noah's obedience that sprang from his faith. It is true that Noah had an obligation to obey God since he had been granted enlightenment to see the reality of the wickedness of his age, had found grace before Yahweh, had been appointed to build the ark, and had other encouragement from time to time from God. Genuine obedience, however, is the product of a willing heart and not solely the performance of duty. As God later revealed, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Is. 1:19). Actually, it is only from genuine willingness that obedience can be active, fervent, constant, and unselfish. Noah manifested all these good virtues in his obedience. He was active not for just one or two years but for more than 120 years. He was fervent in work and earned a name as a preacher of righteousness. When progressive revelation came he obeyed whatever God said. He obeyed solely to carry out God's will and not for his own benefit or pleasure. Thus he fulfilled the conditions necessary to obtain God's promise and thereby enjoyed God's blessings.

Sometimes, from man's standpoint, God's promise may be delayed, but it is never denied. It may be like a flower seed buried under the snow throughout the whole winter, that when spring comes sprouts, buds, and blossoms. The promise of destruction for the corrupted world and of deliverance for the just was not realized until six score years had passed. Later, Abraham's hope was almost gone before the promised birth of Isaac occurred. Almost 2,000 years ago the disciples received the promise that Christ "shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go," yet faith in prayer among believers will have almost passed from existence before this word will be realized (Acts 1:11; Luke. 18:8). Man may forget or neglect what God has promised, but God remembers. When His time comes everything will work on schedule.

The flood had covered the earth for five months and every living creature outside the ark had been destroyed. One may wonder what was going on in the ark. Others, if not Noah, might have thought God had forgotten them since they had not heard from Him for five long months. Some of Noah's daughters-in-law might have groaned about how insipid their life had become, and perhaps the sons complained about their monotonous daily routine of feeding and cleaning up after the animals. But God had not forgotten! There is no past, present, or future in Him, nor is there any difference between here and there. To God every minute is now, everywhere is here, and no thought can be hidden

from Him. He remembers everything because He cannot contradict His faithfulness. God never forgets the affliction of the righteous. As later revelation says, “God is not unfaithful to forget your work and labor of love” (Heb. 6:10). At the critical moment “God remembered Noah and every living thing” (8:1). “Remember” does not mean God had at any time during the flood forgotten Noah, but that He first had to deal with the wicked before Noah’s turn came. Divine remembrance at that moment was good news to those who were in the ark. They would soon be on dry ground again. Before long their freedom of movement would be restored, and they would breathe fresh air in a quiet cleansed earth. It is a mystery that the omnipotent God would be mindful of a few people and animals in a crude boat. Yet He did remember them. He dried the ground and brought them out of the ark to live in the new world. Yahweh’s revelation of Himself as the personal God was greatly expanded through His dealings with Noah. This serves to raise anticipation of even more personal revelation of God in time to come.

D. Elohim, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe (Gen. 8:20-9:17, 26-27; 11:5-9).

The omnipotence of God was disclosed in the Noachian Period not only through the meaning of the name Elohim but also through His sovereign actions over nature. This sovereignty was vividly revealed in the translation of Enoch, which testified to God’s absolute control over human life and death. In the story of the flood, both the destructive and the protective power of the just God of the universe is described. To gather beasts and fowls for the ark, to bring the flood upon the earth, to control the length and size of the deluge, and to dry the land afterward for man’s habitation, all demonstrated that He is the absolute Ruler of the universe. After the judgment of the flood came a new beginning, and God reemphasized that He was still the personal Ruler of the universe by His continued use of the title Elohim. He had previously revealed Himself as the Ruler of the universe by providing Seth to replace Abel (Gen. 4:25), so that this world might have a better race of men than just the descendants of Cain. He enabled Enoch and Noah to walk with Him (5:22; 6:9) as good examples to all the world, and then before the coming of the flood He took Enoch to Himself as a warning to that age and as a type of the rapture (5:24). He made the Noachian Covenant with “every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth” (9:16) and foretold the future of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (9:26-27). The use of Elohim in all these passages indicates that God is the Ruler of the universe, that His sovereignty and controlling power is to be recognized, and that man should fear Him and refrain from sinning against Him.

1. Making the Covenant with Noah (Gen. 8:20-9:17). Immediately upon coming out of the ark, Noah built an altar on which he sacrificed to Yahweh a clean animal and a fowl. This indicates that both Adam and his descendants knew the right way to approach God. It confirms that Cain and Abel were familiar with this proper approach to God and that Cain had been deliberately disobedient to the divine revelation. God accepted Noah’s sacrifices and responded with the promise that He would curse the ground no more, nor would He again destroy every living thing with a flood. He also pledged the continuance of the seasons and day and night “as long as the earth remaineth.” (Here was another of God’s fragmental covenants of day and night [Jer. 33:20-21], although the revelation in this period did not specifically indicate that.) The general meaning of

covenant was discussed earlier. Now the cause and contents of the Noachian Covenant will be examined.

The reason for the Noachian Covenant is found in the statement, “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” (8:21). In Hebrew “imagination” means “frame, form, or purpose” referring to the whole system of man’s thinking. When a person’s entire thought process is evil, that which comes out of his mind cannot avoid being wrong. A sinful heart was not the result of bad environment or poor parental training but was a trait inherited from Adam. Before the flood, man’s wicked nature was cause for God’s judgment; after the flood, it became the reason for God’s covenant. Man’s nature was utterly depraved. Since no judgment could cure man, other means had to be employed to help him. This is what God meant when, after the flood, He said that He would not use the same way again to deal with the earth while it remained, but would instead make a covenant with man.

The contents of the covenant with Noah were more detailed than the one with Adam. The **preamble** started with God’s blessing and declared that the sovereign God of the universe is the maker of the covenant. The monergistic emphasis (God’s sovereignty and man’s subordination) in this covenant is tremendous: “I, behold I,” “I establish my covenant,” “I make,” “I do set my bow in the cloud,” “I bring,” “I will remember,” and “I will look upon it.” Mankind’s **obligations** were to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, not to eat blood, nor to take the life of man. Such protection of human life emphasizes its sacredness. Man was created in the image of God; therefore, to assault man is equal to attacking divine majesty and the assailant should not go free. Capital punishment is a heavenly regulation. The **purpose** of the covenant was to reassign man’s authority and to preserve a people and a land for the future kingdom. The **blessings** of the covenant were that no more curse would be put upon the earth such as that which had just taken place, the regularity of the seasons would be assured, and man would be allowed to eat meat. Its **ceremony** was the sacrifice Noah offered by which he pleased God (8:20). By means of the very clouds that brought destruction to the earth, a rainbow was appointed to be a **witness** and **token** of the covenant, symbolizing the divine grace that God extends to man. The differences between the covenant of the Noachian Period and the Adamic Covenant are obvious. The covenant commenced with God’s blessing, which was not included in the previous covenant. The increase in man’s diet, the value of the blood, the relationship between blood and life, capital punishment, and the name of the promise and charge associated with the term *berith* (covenant) were all new. In addition a promise of no more worldwide flood, the rainbow-witness to the covenant, and the eternal nature of God’s covenant were all emphatically revealed at this time. Although it is evident that the purpose of the Adamic Covenant concerned man’s reigning with God; since then, however, man’s authority had been greatly reduced. Originally, man was given dominion over the animals by their voluntary submission; now, animals still would be in subjection but through fear rather than through volition. The reason for man’s reduced authority could be God’s postponement of the establishment of the kingdom. Although it is not emphasized at this point, a kingdom consists of three elements: land, people, and authority. God had preserved the land. Now He was going to select a people for His own so that He might develop them to be authoritative in His coming kingdom.

2. Choosing the Messianic Line (Gen. 9:25-27). Prophecy during this period was very rare. Without information from later revelation, Bible students might assume that Noah was the only one who prophesied during this time. However, in Jude, Scripture relates that Enoch also prophesied against the ungodly in those days. Although he mentioned the coming of the Lord with 10,000 of His redeemed ones, Enoch's prophecy had very little to do with progressive revelation. Noah's prophecy was the only one in this era which carried forward the progressive revelation concerning redemption.

In Noah's prophecy concerning Shem, he said, "Blessed be Yahweh, the Elohim of Shem" (9:26). This was not Noah's benediction on Shem but rather his praise to Yahweh. In his praise, moreover, he asserted that Yahweh was the God of Shem, which was the greatest of all blessings. It was not God's grace or goodness that blessed Shem, but God Himself who was the blessing. When one has God, one has everything! Spurrell made a similar observation:

Shem is not blessed directly, but the God of Shem (Deut. 33:20), *i.e.*, Shem is blessed through his God, the highest possible form of blessing. If God is to be blessed for His goodness, which is implied in blessing Him, how great must be the happiness of those who are under His protection and enjoy His favour.⁹¹

The election of Shem was intimated even before the flood in that his name was usually given first in the list of Noah's sons (5:32; 6:10). In Noah's praise to Yahweh, Shem was identified as the possessor of God's redeeming name. He was the divinely chosen recipient through whom the sovereign God of the universe would bestow the blessings of salvation upon mankind. Henceforth, the full revelation of redemption and the bringing forth of the Redeemer would not be assigned to Ham or Japheth but to Shem and his descendants. Before the flood the whole human race was God's selected people; after the flood He narrowed it down to Shem's descendants alone. He selected Abram out of Shem's line, Jacob out of Isaac's family, Judah out of Israel's 12 tribes, and David's family out of Judah. It was as a son of David that the Redeemer was born who was to be the King of God's coming Kingdom and the One in whom the people of the Kingdom would be chosen and trained.

God was Yahweh to Shem in assigning him to carry forward the plan of redemption. However, He was Elohim, the Creator and Ruler of the world, when He gave Japheth the earthly blessing and when He chose to abide with Shem. The phrase, "shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (9:27), has long been a problem among Old Testament students. Syntactically, Elohim should be the subject of both clauses, and the sentence should be translated as "May Elohim enlarge Japheth and dwell in the tents of Shem." Contextually, however, many Hebrew students suggest and many versions mistranslate, that Japheth should be the subject here to avoid making God the unlikely antecedent for "his" in the clause, "and Canaan shall be his servant." Yet poetically speaking, "his" is not necessarily referring to the immediate precedent (God in the Hebrew text), since this clause is as a refrain in a poem. Further, "his" is *lamo* in Hebrew, a poetic form of "to

⁹¹G.J. Spurrell, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

them,” and should be translated as “their” instead of “his.” In other words, *lamo* refers to “his brothers” in 9:25 rather than to the immediate singular precedent (God) in 9:26 and 9:27. Accordingly, the following translation may be the original meaning:

Cursed be Canaan;
A slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.
Blessed be Yahweh, [who is] the God of Shem;
But let Canaan be a slave to them.
May God enlarge Japheth and dwell in the tents of Shem;
But let Canaan be a slave to them (9:25-27).

The emphasis in this prophetic poem is surely on the fact that Shem was in God’s favor: he was chosen by God to be in the Messianic line destined to carry out His redemptive grace, and God Himself would abide with him.

3. Checking the Apostate Race (Gen. 11:5-9). After previously using the title Elohim rather than God’s name Yahweh in His encounters with the world, Scripture suddenly employs Yahweh again as God interrupted mankind’s rebellious plans. It was like the sun’s eyelashes before the sunset—a striking and beautiful scene before darkness takes over everything. After this encounter there would be a long silence until God called Abraham.

God desires to be Yahweh to all the world, as later revelation says, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Yet in actuality, only those who “shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13). Before He designated the Yahweh relationship as being only for His selected people, however, God revealed it once more to mankind as a whole when He examined the city and tower on the plain of Shinar and prevented the execution of their sinful plan. This approach of Yahweh to man was not new. In the past whenever man was in trouble, the redemptive name Yahweh was always present. When Adam fell into temptation, Yahweh Elohim rescued him. Before and after Cain murdered Abel, Yahweh was the one who gave him parental advice and disciplined him. Prior to the flood when men were uniformly opposed to Elohim, Yahweh intervened to stop their evil doings. Yahweh is assuredly the compassionate and merciful God.

On the plain of Shinar, using brick for stone and slime for mortar, the people began to build a city and a tower in order to exalt themselves and to oppose the sovereignty of God. As a result “Yahweh came down to see” them. This is certainly an anthropomorphic illustration (which gives God human form, attributes and emotions) since “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him,” and He knows “the hearts of all the children of men.” The Ruler of the universe is not merely a first cause or sustaining force, but a real person after whose likeness man’s personality was created. This use of an anthropomorphic expression was not a new thing. After Adam’s fall Yahweh Elohim walked in the garden, but here He came down to the plain. In other words, the first indicates that God and man were on the same level; whereas, the second denotes that man was far below God. God had to lower Himself to reach man since man had become ever more degraded, just as in the later days Christ came down to earth to reach sinners. In the statement “Yahweh came down to see,” “to see” simply indicates God’s reluctance to judge man. He wanted to examine the whole matter to determine

whether there could be any way in which reconciliation between rebellious man and His holiness and justice could be achieved.

The meaning of Babel (11:9) has long been debated among Old Testament students. Some see a Babylonian origin and translate it as derived from *Bab* (gate) and *Bel* (their god's name—"Bel bows down" Is. 46:1), hence "Gate of Bel." Others take it as a contraction of *Beth* and *Bel* and translate it as "House of Bel." Still others use an Assyrian origin and translate it as *Bab* (gate) *Il* (god), hence "Gate of God." According to the context, however, it is from the Hebrew verb *balal* rather than of any foreign origin, and *Babel* is only a contraction of the emphatic form *balbel*, which means "confusion." God used confusion here to prevent mankind from completing their evil design.

Superficially, the statement in Genesis 11:6 seems to contradict another teaching of Scripture. God wishes mankind to be united, as Christ expressed later in His High Priestly prayer (John 17:11, 21-23). Why then, instead of approving the efforts of those people, did Yahweh thwart their plans and scatter them over the face of the earth? The answer may be found in the fact that God's truth never subscribes to worldly casuistry which maintains that the end justifies the means. Casuists advocate that, as long as the end can be reached, the means they are applying, wrong or right, make no difference. But this is not God's way. In God both the end result and the means used to achieve it must be justified. When only the end justifies the means, or vice versa, it is only an attempt to justify that which does not merit justification. Therefore, no matter how excellent the work, if either motive or means are wrong, it is sin before God. For this reason, the dispersion of the people from Shinar cannot be counted as God's judgment. It was rather Yahweh's preventive grace to keep the people from further sin. God's grace, or providence, in reference to man's sin may be divided into four categories: preventive, permissive, directive, and determinate. This is the first revelation of preventive providence that means that God, according to His foreknowledge, may hedge up a person's way with thornbushes or build a wall against him to keep him from sinning. As Hosea 2:6 says, "Therefore I will block her way with thornbushes, and I will build a wall around her so that she cannot find her path." Further examples of preventive grace are seen in God's obstructions to Pharaoh (mediate providence in 12:17, "The Lord plagued Pharaoh and his household with serious diseases because of Abraham's wife Sarai") and to the people of Sodom (immediate providence in 19:11, "And they [the angels] 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"). Without God's grace the world would have become far more hellish.

To summarize the revelation of God in the Noachian Period, God revealed Himself as Yahweh and Elohim separately, whereas earlier He was either Elohim or Yahweh Elohim. In this way He showed Himself to be the personal God who exercises both unbending justice and compassionate grace in dealing with man. God revealed Himself to Cain and Abel as the Father of the family, then as the Judge to all mankind and as the Ruler of the universe by the destroying flood, and finally as the One who acted to restrain the sins of disobedient people at the tower of Babel. Surely, He deserves all the praise!

THE REVELATION OF MAN

The story of man's fall and the resulting corruption of the physical world as told in Genesis chapter three is really pitiful. The curse placed upon nature subsequently served as a solemn reminder of man's sin. Unpleasant climate, thorny vegetation, brutal animals, and stony ground are all scars from the bite of sin. The scars in man himself are even more dreadful. The **image** of God in man, denoting his bodily likeness to the revealing image of the Second Person of the Trinity, was marred by the fall. Weakness, fatigue, pain, sickness, and finally physical death became the lot of the physical body. Also, the **likeness** of God in man (man's spiritual perception, conscience, and personality) was damaged by spiritual death that blighted every faculty of man's soul and spirit. Spiritual perception was perverted. Even after God told Cain about the cruelty of sin, he refused to accept the truth and without cause murdered his younger brother. The conscience, which heretofore had directed man to perform rightful actions, became flawed. When God asked, "Where is Abel thy brother?" Cain seared his conscience when he said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The will of man lost its perfect freedom in making decisions and was subjected to an inward compulsion toward sin. Intellect often became subservient to imagination. Sensibility became the avenue of temptation and often tried to gain control of the other faculties. The future of man was dark, with weakness and sickness his lot.

Obviously the story in the fourth chapter of Genesis is a continuation of the preceding narrative. This is corroborated by wording, style, and presentation. True to the nature of God's revelation, the Holy Spirit omitted further references to the lives of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the garden, except for brief statements regarding the birth of their sons, Cain, Abel, and Seth. The reason for such brevity was not due to a lack of material, nor because a so-called editor extracted only what best fit his purpose. Rather it was an intentional omission by the Holy Spirit who chose to reveal only the part of Adam's life that showed the old man's origin, status, and nature as the antithesis of the new man's origin, status, and nature as exhibited in Christ (See Rom. 5:12-21). Having fulfilled this particular purpose, to record the rest of Adam's life in the sacred record was unnecessary.

The same principle also applies to the lives of Cain and Abel. The Holy Spirit recorded nothing in Genesis about why Cain tilled the ground while Abel kept sheep, nor how God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's, nor what Cain said to Abel. He used them to demonstrate by their religious lives the two classes of human beings (believers and unbelievers), representing two kinds of religion (natural and supernatural). As soon as that purpose was fulfilled, the details concerning the rest of their lives were superfluous.

Initially, God dealt with the human race as a whole; but by the end of the Adamic Period, the stream of humanity was divided into a rivulet and a vast stream, or a chosen line of people and a rebellious line. This division actually started at the very moment God said "your offspring and her offspring" to Satan (Gen. 3:15). From that time God gradually drew the chosen line away from the mass of humanity and narrowed it during the Noachian Period to prepare the way for the development of Israel in the Patriarchal Period, the establishment of the Davidic kingdom in the Monarchical Period, and the

coming of the Messiah in the New Testament Period.

Therefore, after this God's revelation dealt mainly with chosen people through whom He would fulfill His redemptive purpose. Other nations would be mentioned only as they were involved with this chosen line. The selection of the chosen people during the Noachian Period centered mainly around four individuals: Abel, Seth, Noah, and Shem. The revelation of man in this period concerns division: in the family, in society, in Noah's generation, among the races and according to language.

A. Division in the Family (Gen. 4:1-15).

Chapter four of Genesis opens with Eve's exultation that later was to quickly melt away. Upon bringing forth her first-born son, Cain, Eve quickly assumed this could be the seed of woman whom God had promised. The phrase *eth Yahweh*, in Eve's joyful announcement, "I have gotten a man **from the LORD**," is hard to translate. The Targum of Onqelos renders it "from before Yahweh," the Syriac "for the Lord," the Septuagint "through (*dia*) the God," while most Vulgate manuscripts and modern Jewish translations have "with the Lord." Syntactically, the construction here is just like that in Genesis 6:10, where *eth* before "Shem, Ham, and Japheth" is in apposition to "three sons." Likewise *eth* with Yahweh here could be in apposition to "a man," as Luther translated, "a man, the LORD." Nevertheless, as Keil and Delitzsch said "The sense would not allow it."⁹² Probably "with the LORD," in the sense of "with the help of Yahweh," is closer to the original, since *eth* is translated "with" in many other passages in the Old Testament (See Gen. 26:24; 39:2; three times in Judg. 1:3).

Although the exact translation may not be certain, it is clear that Eve was extremely excited, even as many a new mother is today, and believed her child was definitely a gift from God. She might also have expected that this child would overcome the enemy and fulfill the earnest hope which she had been carrying in her heart since the expulsion from Eden. Unfortunately, her exultation over the birth of her firstborn soon vanished in the vanity of her earthly life. Then she had a second son whom she named Abel.

The names of Cain and Abel indicate two traits of man. Cain, according to the context, was derived from the clause "I have gotten a man," as Moses was derived from the clause "I drew him out of the water" (Ex. 2:10) and as Samuel came from "I have asked him from the LORD" (1 Sam. 1:20 retranslated). Thus Cain was euphonized from the verb *qanah*, meaning "to get" or "to gain," rather than from the noun *qavin* (worker in metal). So Cain represents that division of mankind whose philosophy of life is to gain continuously. As long as they live they will gain purposelessly, just as later revelation says, "He piles up [riches], but does not know who will gather them" (Ps. 39:6, retranslated). Abel, *hebhel* in Hebrew meaning "breath" or "vanity," represents the opposite division, that is, those who realize the vanity of this life and do things which will last for eternity. The real division of mankind before God, however, is religion. since worship is the first spiritual trait which differentiates men—a man is known by the god he worships.

1. Natural Religion—Cain. The actual word for religion does not occur in Scripture.

⁹²Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

Its Latin derivation is from either *religare* or *relegere*. The former means “to bind back,” as Augustine advocated; the latter means “to go over again,” as suggested by Cicero and others. The word translated as “religion” or “religious” in the New Testament is primarily derived from the Greek verb *treo*, which means “to tremble,” hence “fear of God”; or *sebo*, “to revere,” hence “devout.” Comparatively, Augustine’s suggestion fits the real concept of religion and is closer to the biblical idea, since all normal religions are trying to rebind man to God, and normal religious life is nothing more than keeping the binding between man and God from becoming unraveled. The approach taken in binding differentiates between natural religion which derives its binding from man’s perverted nature and supernatural religion which is based on divine revelation.

Cain’s religion was a natural one derived from his depraved heart, and, according to later revelation, was influenced by Satan (1 John 3:12). Cain’s depravity is seen in the motive which prompted him to bring his sacrifice. He admitted the existence of God and would even worship Him as the One who provided for him, but he did not place dependence on Him for his redemption or worship Him as Yahweh the redeemer. His main desire was to secure favor from the Creator while avoiding His displeasure. Cain trusted Cain. This was the beginning of the pagan concept of worship that is often accompanied by costly sacrifice, even the sacrifice of life itself. Pagans fail to see that the true value of worship lies in the motive of the worshipper and not in the value of the offering. Cain’s religion was a mockery of God rather than an honor to Him. He represented the beginning of natural religion that counterfeits supernatural religion.

Natural religion found expression in a bloodless sacrifice offered without selection from the fruit of the ground. While the basis of God’s acceptance of the sacrifice lies in the motive of the offerer and not in the substance of the sacrifice, the substance of the sacrifice in this case reflected the offerer’s motive toward God. A vegetable offering given to the LORD from a sincere heart would be acceptable, provided it is in the LORD’s institution; but a vegetable offering or an animal sacrifice not in the LORD’s institution would be an abomination to Him. Moreover, even the divinely approved offerings and sacrifices would be unacceptable to God if the offerer, because of his life or motive, is unacceptable (See Is. 1:12-17, “. . . stop bringing to Me your worthless offerings. . .”). Cain’s vegetable offering proved he neither believed nor obeyed God, for he did not observe what God had instituted, and he did not bring his best for the LORD. He reluctantly offered some of the fruit of the ground merely to fulfill his obligation and to soothe his conscience. “Of the fruit” (Gen. 4:3) should be “some of the fruit,” since in the original *min* (of) before fruit is a partitive preposition. In a word, Cain’s sacrifice was an expression of his disobedience to God rather than obedience, with his fault being mainly an internal one—a defiant attitude known only to God.

Cain’s disobedience prompted his wrath against Yahweh. Wrath is often derived from either justice or jealousy. The first source belongs to God, and in most cases, the second belongs to man. Whether or not wrath is legitimate can be determined only by its source. Cain’s wrath no doubt originated from his jealousy of Abel that grew until he committed murder.

God evaluated and then disapproved of Cain’s worship. A system of religion which is devoid of faith and obedience toward God or which is based on meritorious work can neither please Him nor be spiritually effective. Cain, disregarding God’s warning and the

disastrous consequences of such disregard, persisted in his own way and reaped the harvest of his actions. He defiantly rejected the grace that God so mercifully offered him. Then, as every sinner who has persistently rejected God's grace experiences, Cain could no longer overcome his sin but instead he was ruled by it. He was bound by envy and hatred which led him to commit murder. His parents probably expected him to be the killer of the real serpent—Satan; instead he became the murderer of his own brother. It is obvious that theology and ethics are inseparably linked. A false theology will inevitably lead to a wicked life.

Having rejected God's grace, Cain became subject to fear that is a characteristic of every false religion. Fear in general is an uneasy feeling originating from a sense or imagination of insecurity, accompanied with a desire to shun the difficulty. The anxiety Cain experienced was different from the respectful dread that Abel had for God. The name of Cain's country, Nod which means "wandering" or "flight," clearly describes the lives of the followers of false religions who constantly seek peace and hope through the teaching of cults but instead find only insecurity. After a person has been banished from God—the source of peace, love, and truth—what can be his portion be but insecurity, hatred, and falsehood?

2. Supernatural Religion—Abel. According to later revelation, Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent than Cain's," because it originated from his faith (Heb. 11:4). Abel worshipped God as redeemer as well as creator. He trusted and obeyed what Yahweh had instituted instead of listening to his own reasoning. He brought a sacrifice not merely to gain divine favor but also to confess his faith in what God had established. His religion was a religion of faith. The fear of the LORD was in him, which is a spiritual disposition generated by the Holy Spirit within man, giving him the inclination to obey Yahweh and the desire to avoid His displeasure. His belief and duties toward God were not derived from his dead spiritual perception but were taught by his parents who had obtained them directly from God.

His faith was fully expressed in his sacrifice. By selecting the choicest and fattest firstborn of his flock as a sacrifice for the Lord, Abel testified that Yahweh deserved the best from him. While Cain sacrificed to God only in form, Abel worshipped Yahweh in truth. As the offering was burning on the altar and the fragrant aroma was ascending skyward, the flame of genuine faith and love for God was burning in Abel's heart. Together with thanksgiving and prayer from his obedient heart, all these ascended heavenward to the gracious heart of the Father above.

The result of Abel's godly worship was a sacrifice accepted by Yahweh and was also the witness "that he was righteous" (Heb. 11:4). According to the record in Genesis, Abraham seems to be the first one specifically reckoned as righteous, yet according to later revelation in the book of Hebrews, Abel was the first one. He became one of the very first believers to be justified by faith. Who can say that salvation in the Old Testament is different from that in the New?

Although Abel's simplicity made him prey to the hypocrisy of his wicked brother, he did not lose anything. All the while he was on the earth he had close fellowship with Yahweh. Even after his death he is still living and has been witnessing for his faith through all the ages. He deserved to head up the train of those who were and are saved

by grace through faith.

Thus salvation was clearly revealed in the sacrifices of Adam's sons as being by grace through faith. God's acceptance of any sacrifice from man is an indication of His grace. Without grace, worship has no value to Him. The only means to approach God was revealed in the acceptance of Abel and rejection of Cain. Abel offered his sacrifice in faith, and Cain did not. The difference between their motives and attitudes became the Great Divide, separating man into two types—those in Christ and those in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22).

B. Division in Society (Gen. 4:16-5:32).

Civilization developed rapidly after Abel's death. Man's occupations and inventions often develop along the lines of their needs in life. Agriculture and raising of domestic animals were naturally the first occupations to be practiced to provide man with food, clothing, and tent materials. It was natural that Cain, as the firstborn of the family, assumed the agricultural vocation to which his father had been appointed, and Abel, as the second son, followed his father's secondary occupational interest—a keeper of flocks. This description of their occupations reveals a high state of civilization at the very beginning of human life. Man did not wander in an apelike state of existence through mazes of development until finally, by trial and error, he learned agriculture. Indeed, God revealed that man's highly civilized state came with his creation.

1. A Rebellious Society—The Cainites (Gen. 4:16-24). The fact that Cain founded a city shows that civilization began very early in the history of mankind. This first town was evidence of the beginning of an organized society. In contrast to nomadic people living in their isolated tents in the wilderness, an ancient city was a small walled enclosure with a few families staying together for mutual concern, help and protection.

Cain's motive for building a city might have been a desire to compensate for his insecurity. He longed for protection against the fears incited both by the restless conscience within him and his banishment from God. Uniting his clan together in one place surely gave him some feeling of safety. The etymology of the word "city" which is derived from a verb meaning "to go around," hence, "to encircle or enclose" as in a walled town,⁹³ also indicates the idea of protection. Despite his efforts, Cain never finished his building program; for the verbal forms in the clause, "he builded a city," are an imperfect with *waw* consecutive together with an active participle. The correct translation should be "and he was building a city," which indicates that his action of erecting a city was a project he never completed. In other words, Cain failed in his effort to defy God's curse that had forbidden him to settle permanently anywhere. Cain did not win his battle with the Almighty.

Civilization in this period seems to have arisen hand in hand with the growth of sin. Whenever the people were taken up with the things of the world, they allowed God neither time nor place in their lives. In the fifth generation from Cain, Jabal, the first son of Lamech's wife Adah, invented the tent and was the originator of nomadic life. Jubal, the second son of Adah, invented the lyre and the reed-pipe, or flute, and became the

⁹³Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

“father of music.” His two musical instruments laid the foundation for the development of all stringed and wind instruments in use today. Tubal-cain was the son of Zillah, Lamech’s second wife. Working with metal he invented all kinds of edge-tools and made possible the manufacture of swords for warfare. All of these inventions could have been used to glorify God if the people had been motivated by the fear of God. Instead, they used them to develop a wicked society that glorified humanity and left God out of the picture.

Lamech celebrated the invention of the sword by repeating the sin of his murderous ancestor Cain that he defiantly commemorated in his “Sword Song.” He did become the father of poetry, but he was also the father of adultery. Besides his sin of murder, Lamech started polygamy in defiance of divinely established monogamy, turning the institution of marriage into the lust of the eye and flesh. Cain had retained a sense of his need for God, but Lamech depended upon his fist and his sword alone. Is it any wonder that God would forsake such a society as this?

2. A Redeemed Society—the Sethites (Gen. 4:25-5:32). The account of Seth’s birth clearly revealed that he was appointed by God to replace the murdered Abel. According to Eve’s announcement and references from later revelation, Scripture indicates that Satan certainly had no desire for the promised seed of woman to be born. Somehow the enemy took Cain captive and incited him to murder Abel. Consequently, Adam was left with only one son, yet one whom God had cursed. In order to maintain the course of His redemption, God again adopted a vicarious approach to preserve the messianic line by appointing Seth to take Abel’s place.

As civilization progressed, the depravity of the human heart became more manifest. This ever increasing depravity harmed man both mentally and physically, as indicated by Seth’s naming his son Enosh, meaning “man.” The Old Testament has several root words for the English translation “man.” This one, *enosh*, is derived from the verb *anash* meaning “to be weak, sick.” Its participial form was translated “incurable” (Jer. 15:18), “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), and “woeful” (Jer. 17:16). In the same way that oriental parents often named a child according to what was happening around the time of his birth, the name Enosh undoubtedly reflected at least man’s physical situation at that time. Relatively soon after the time God had created him, man was already sick and weak. This could have been the factor which drove people to the public worship of Yahweh, the God of redemption; as men then “began to call upon the name of the Lord [in worship and adoration]” (Gen. 4:26).

Seth’s genealogical record in Genesis, in contrast to Cain’s, is a proof of his election. The Cainite genealogy goes through only seven generations from Adam; which is briefly summarized in eight verses and is never mentioned in God’s revelation again. However, the genealogy of Seth occupies thirty-four verses, recording in minute detail the ten generations from Adam to Noah, who was the next chief figure in the progression of God’s revelation.

One can sense that the Cainite genealogy was tumultuous. The improvement of their civilization only helped deepen the depravity of their hearts. The more they invented, the further they departed from their Creator. To them God was unnecessary. Two names in the genealogy were combined with *El* (Mehujael and Methusael), yet the first (who

probably died from the plague) means “smitten by God,” and the second (who wanted to deify himself) means “man who is God.” How could God be gracious to such as these? The Holy Spirit recorded their births along with their inventions, but not their lives or deaths. Could that mean they were already dead even while they were living? Indeed, they had the name of being alive, yet they were dead. Scripture tells us that those who give themselves to impure and lewd pleasure are dead even while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

By comparison, the record of Seth’s genealogy is very orderly. Each person mentioned has his birth, life, propagation, and death recorded. Although no one knows whether or not all of them were godly people, seemingly most of them were God-minded. Enoch was the outstanding one among them. While others recorded in the Sethite genealogy only lived and died, Enoch’s life stood out as a witness of the nature and final stage of divine redemption. The description of Enoch as “walking with God” certainly does not refer to any physical meeting with God’s manifestation, but rather to a life lived constantly conscious of the presence of Elohim, while trusting and obeying Him. As a revelation to all the ages, as well as to Enoch’s contemporaries, and as the final stage of His redemption, God took him away without his dying. The New Testament concludes, “It was by faith that Enoch was taken up so that he did not experience death” (Heb. 11:5). This demonstration of eternal redemption in the midst of a steady stream of death testifies to all men that whoever will trust and obey Him will likewise receive bodily redemption, either by the resurrection from the dead or by the glorious transformation at Christ’s second coming. It is interesting that the same word that described Enoch’s translation was used to tell of the taking of Elijah (2 Kin. 2:3, 5). The person who lives for God on earth will live with God in eternity.

The Holy Spirit always has a definite purpose in Scripture with every word and every story directly or indirectly making reference to God’s redemptive purpose. The genealogy in 5:1-32 is an excellent illustration of this. In ancient times, especially before the invention of writing, people condensed their genealogies into poems and songs and committed them to memory so that their family tree might be passed on orally, generation after generation. This passage could be the written record of such an oral tradition. A careful study of the names in this passage uncovers an exciting record of God’s redemptive story. Adam is derived from *adamah* meaning “ground,” for man was created of dust from the ground. Seth is from *siyth* meaning “to appoint”; Enosh from *anash* meaning “to be weak, sick”; Cainan from *qul* meaning “to lament”; Mahalaleel from *mahalal* meaning “praise,” and *El* “God.” Jared is from *yaradh* meaning “to come down”; Enoch from *chanakh* meaning “to teach, dedicate”; Methuselah from *math* meaning “man;” (*u* is a connecting vowel) and *shalach* meaning “to send”; Lamech from *lamach* meaning “to overthrow” enemies; and Noah from *nuach* meaning “to rest.” Accordingly, the message would go as follows: “The Man (Adam) who was made of dust from the ground was appointed (Seth) to be sick and mortal (Enosh) which results in lamentation (Cainan).” This presents the situation of man and is followed by the way of God’s redemption: “Praise be to God (Mahalaleel) who comes down (Jared) to teach (Enoch) man, sends man forth (Methuselah) to overthrow the enemy (Lamech), and gives man rest (Noah).” Although to the Western mind this may seem to stretch the revelation, we must always keep in mind that the Old Testament was written in a Middle Eastern setting.

C. Division in Noah's Generation (Gen. 6:1-12).

God gave His revelation progressively because sin was advancing unremittingly, the spiritual perception of man was becoming increasingly darkened, and also because Satan was continually making incursions into the affairs of man. Initially, Satan adopted eating as a means to trap our first parents in order to degrade them to the level of an animal. About the only work an animal does is to eat and to copulate. Becoming more open in his interference in the affairs of man, Satan added the appeal of sexual lust to further corrupt man whom he had perverted earlier. The intermarriage in this period not only corrupted the holy institution of marriage into a means of gratifying selfish and lustful desires but did something much more serious than commonly thought. It brought about the cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of man, in order that the human race might be degraded to a subhuman level. Had it been successful, man might no longer have been the seed of man but the seed of Satan, thereby denying the promised redeemer a way to become a man.

1. A Degenerated Generation (Gen. 6:1-7, 11-12). Satan's scheme corrupted the overall population of the earth. The people concentrated on "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark" (Matt. 24:38). "The earth was filled with violence," (Gen. 6:11, 13). Justice, truth, and honor were never seriously considered. Everybody violated the rights of others with fists and swords reigning everywhere. Without God's gracious intervention (seen in His protection of Noah and his family from the contamination of the world, thus preserving the Messianic line) the earth was in danger of becoming *thohu* and *bhohu* (without form and void) again. Satan's main instrument to cause the wickedness, evil, corruption, and violence in this period was the invasion and disturbance by "the sons of God," who not only corrupted the people at that time but "also after that" (6:4).

There are four suggestions for the interpretation of the "sons of God." Unfortunately, none is totally satisfactory. Some think they were from a pre-Adamic race that worshipped false gods. Some following the analogy in Psalm 82:6 interpret them to be nobles. Others insist they were Sethites. Still others suggest they were angels. The first suggestion is disproved by a correct interpretation of the verb *bara* (created) used three times in Genesis 1:27 to describe the first man's origin. This verb proves that man's creation was neither an addition, nor a restoration, but a brand new event which had never occurred previously. Thus there could not have been a pre-Adamic race.

The second and the third suggestions could be accepted if it were not for the following biblical problems. (1) "Men," which often signifies the human race as a whole, is used here in contrast to the "sons of God" (6:1-2). Obviously, then, the latter could not be descendants of Adam. (2) The expression "sons of God" occurs six times in other passages of the Old Testament, and all of them indisputably refer to spiritual beings.⁹⁴ (3) If at that time marriage with a nobleman could produce giants, the same result should be seen today when a nobleman and a commoner or a believer and an unbeliever marry. (4) The explanation of *nephilim* (giants) as only morally fallen ones cannot be supported by other passages, which clearly refer to the as men of enormous physical size. "And there we saw the giants [*nephilim*] (the sons of Anak who come from the giants) and we

⁹⁴ Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:6; Daniel 3:25.

ourselves felt like grasshoppers, and to them we looked like grasshoppers” (Num. 13:33). After the flood there were also tribes of giants in Canaan.⁹⁵ In order to exterminate them, God commanded the Israelites to destroy all the Canaanites without exception.

The fourth interpretation presents a problem, and that is, how could angelic beings carnally cohabit with women and actually take them to be their wives? This problem, however, could be solved by combining the second and the fourth suggestion. Without doubt angelic beings are unable to cohabit with females; yet they could employ agents, especially those in the ancient priesthood. By possessing the priests, who would have had the privilege of marrying the choicest women in the land, these wicked angels could thereby have produced demon-influenced children. They could have been enormous in size and terribly corrupt in morals.

Geerhardus Vos designates this period as an era of “minimum grace,” which is to say that although a minimum of grace could not be avoided in nature or redemption, God did not actively intervene to offset mankind’s downward spiral into sin.⁹⁶ This view is not altogether biblical. Objectively, any grace that God bestows is always in abundance. Subjectively, whether or not it will be abundant depends on the capacity and desire of the person who accepts it. Adam proved that even under perfect conditions of grace man could still depart from God. The downward course of this period leading to complete destruction was not due to God’s grace being minimal. Instead the world was destroyed because of the power and intensity of sin.

God revealed the depth of man’s depravity by saying that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil; and this was not occasionally, but continually, even from childhood. Imagination is derived from a verb meaning “to form, fashion” which is translated as “formed” in Genesis 2:7; hence it means a shaping in the mind or a pattern of thought. Human thought patterns were so depraved that their thoughts were exclusively evil. The extensiveness of depravity included the totality of mankind, Sethites as well as Cainites, for “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Even after the flood, the tragedy of human depravity continued to show itself. Noah drank, became drunk, and lay naked inside his tent. Ham gazed with satisfaction upon the shame of his drunken father and told his brothers about it with delight. Nimrod enslaved men under his rule and became the first despot to build an empire. By the end of this period, the entire race would attempt to construct a world capital to concentrate human power in one location in defiance of God’s decree to spread out over the earth. Indeed, this was the most degenerate generation in history. Our Lord used it as a striking example of perilous times in the last days. No wonder God wiped it off the face of the earth. Surely this was in anticipation of “the heavens and the earth, which are now . . . reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7).

2. A Delivered Generation (Gen. 6:8-10). “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14) is not only the reality of God’s heavenly selective service but a basic truth. The selected ones are always in the minority. In the Sethite genealogy, God selected only a few people, two of whom were Enoch and Noah. Although their assignments were different, each of them fulfilled his commitment. Having discussed God’s revelation

⁹⁵Compare Deuteronomy 2:10-11,20-21; 3:11; 9:2.

⁹⁶Vos, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

about Enoch earlier, we will now consider God's revelation concerning Noah.

Lamech suggested at his son's birth that Noah had been divinely chosen. Man had been longing for deliverance ever since the catastrophe in Eden. Eve hoped Cain would give her rest. Instead he offered her heartaches. Now it was Lamech's turn. To express his confidence in God's grace, Lamech named his son Noah. Noah was the first person in Scripture who was explicitly said to have found grace before God; and by this very grace, he became "a just man, perfect in his generation, and . . . walked with God" (6:9).

Grace reveals the nature of God's love. It was seen in every period in the Old Testament but was never so fully demonstrated as it was in this age. On God's side grace prompted Him to warn Noah of the impending judgment, to provide a way of escape for him and all those with him, and to shelter them through the raging flood. On Noah's side it was by grace that he had faith; and through this faith he led a godly life and practiced God's will with constant obedience. While grace reveals that salvation is all of God, it also discloses the necessity for man to fulfill one condition for the reception of even more grace: he must have faith in God's Word. This explains why Noah and his family were the only ones out of the whole antediluvian population who received God's grace.

The result of grace in a man's life is both internal and external. Internally, it creates righteousness within man's soul. The description of Noah as just indicates his spiritual relation to God as a justified sinner standing before the LORD and being declared righteous through the application of the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Besides creating instantaneous justification within his soul, grace also promoted progressive sanctification as Noah "walked with God." "Walk," aside from its ordinary usage in Scripture, often refers figuratively to spiritual conduct and life. According to later revelation, agreement between the two and humility before God are essential conditions for walking with Him (Amos 3:3; Mic. 6:8). Noah fully met these conditions. He never disagreed with God. Whatever God said and did, he took for granted that it was right. His will was to do God's will, and he had a quiet and calm assurance in God that all would be well with his soul. Whether he was building the ark or enduring the test of the deluge, he depended completely upon the grace of God. No wonder he was kept morally and spiritually above the corrupt generation of his time and became the trustee of God's grace.

Externally, grace did not keep Noah in a greenhouse and shelter him from all the storms of human depravity. He grew to maturity in the midst of all the evils of a corrupt generation. He held the position as "preacher of righteousness" for 120 years. He presented himself to his apostate age as a single example of sincere devotion to God and preached a prophetic warning to that generation, even though the people paid no attention to his message.

Noah was described as "perfect" (6:9) that in the original language technically refers to physical rather than moral perfection. It occurs 91 times in the Old Testament and in the Authorized Version was translated as "without blemish" 44 times, "without spot" 6 times, "undefiled" once, "perfect" 14 times, and "upright" 8 times. This certainly implies that Noah was kept perfect morally as well as mentally and physically. While others were being contaminated by demonic influence, he was kept in good health and sound mind and with an enlightened spirit. After all, perfect before God should not be just

spiritual, but mental and physical as well.

Thus, through the life of Noah and his family, God revealed that His grace is sufficient to deliver all those who will have faith in Him. The reason God bestows His grace is not only to justify a believing soul but also to sanctify the believer in order to produce an uncompromising unselfish character and to keep his body, mind, and spirit whole. As a result God will be glorified and the world will be blessed through him.

D. Division Among the Races (Gen. 9:20-27).

As the Jordan River begins with many small streams combining into four main streams that join together as a river to flow through Lake Hula and the Sea of Galilee to end up in the Dead Sea, so is human depravity. It started with Adam's eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then spread through the Cainites, then contaminated the Sethites, and ended up causing the deluge. Only Noah, his wife, and his three sons with their wives were delivered. Yet even this select group was infected with the virus of human depravity. Sometime after the flood, farmer Noah began to plant a vineyard (Gen. 9:20). According to Hebrew syntax, he was not necessarily beginning to be a farmer, but rather he began the cultivation of the grapevine. Whether or not others had previously practiced cultivation of the grapevine can be neither proved nor disproved. However, one thing is sure. Wine was not a familiar item to Noah because when he drank, he became drunk. In spite of this, God in His merciful kindness overlooked Noah's weakness and ignorance and allowed him to predict the divisions of the human race.

The fact that such a revelation could come in spite of Noah's drunkenness points out the difference between spiritual life and spiritual office. Although Noah failed God, yet he was still the head, the priest, and the prophet of the family. God still honored His spiritual calling (See Rom. 11:29) and allowed him to practice his office. However, it is true that, shortly afterwards, the record of Noah's life came to an end. **When a person abuses God's gift, God's gift ends.** The prophecy of Noah concerns both the revelation of God and the revelation of man. Since the former has already been discussed, the latter will be considered as Canaan's execration, Shem's exaltation, and Japheth's extension.

1. Canaan's Execration. Having awakened from his wine, Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (9:25). The fact that Canaan was cursed instead of Ham proves Noah's prediction was not parental discipline, nor out of a revengeful heart, but by the inspiration of God. He predicted two things for the future Canaanites, which he might or might not have seen through his prophetic eyes: one was a curse and the other was servitude.

As some commentators suggest, the curse which was shifted from Ham to Canaan could be due to the principle of generic solidarity, since the judgment of the one who hated God could go on for three or four generations. Nevertheless, denial of the proverbial saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2) was also true in the Scriptures. At any rate the prediction here would be judgment for the later sensual animalism of the Canaanites, rather than because of the sin of Ham's carnal gratification at that moment. Sexual excess incorporated with polytheistic worship practices later caused the Canaanites to practice the abominations of animal appetite to the full. Consequently, some of them were exterminated by the

Israelites, while others remained in servitude until their eventual extinction.

Meanwhile, civilization among the Hamites was developing rapidly, as seen in the building of the first imperial kingdom by Nimrod, Ham's grandson. Nimrod the mighty hunter was a conqueror. By sheer force he transformed his clan into a united monarchy. Since Scripture does not give any chronological hints, no one can be sure exactly when his kingdom started. Whether he started before, during, or after the building of the tower at Babel is an open question. Nimrod might have been the rebel leader at Babel, since his initial kingdom was in Shinar (10:10). If that was the case, it existed only until divine interference stopped the work and scattered his people. Then he went on to build a second empire in Assyria. This order seems to satisfy the presentation in verses ten and eleven and to give a fair picture of events. Nimrod, derived from a verb meaning "to rebel," is an imperfect, first person, plural number and common gender of *qal* (general form), which means "we rebel," or, if in the jussive mood, "let us rebel." He was a representative of depraved human nature—a rebel against all established order and even against the all-seeing God. He well deserved to be called "the mighty hunter before Yahweh" (10:9), denoting his defiance to God.

2. Shem's Exaltation. Having cursed Canaan, Noah blessed Yahweh saying, "Blessed be Yahweh, Elohim of Shem" (9:26). As mentioned earlier, before the Mosaic Period Yahweh was God's redemptive name. Here, Yahweh the Redeemer was for the first time singled out as God to a single race, which He selected to dispense His grace. Consequently, according to history, the Shemites were a people who were gifted with religious sensitiveness. All monotheistic religions of the world came from Shem's descendants, especially the Hebrews through whom divine revelation was offered to all the world.

According to the genealogy in chapter ten, Japheth is listed as the first son of Noah (See 10:2, 6, 21). Yet whenever the names of the three brothers are mentioned together in Scripture, Shem is always listed first (5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1). Can we determine who was the firstborn in Noah's family? Most commentators would take their first impression, gained from the order of those three names when mentioned together, and try to explain away the difficulties presented by chapter ten. Before the reader comes to chapter ten, he has had at least five direct impressions that Shem was Noah's firstborn son. Naturally it will be hard for him to change the concept he formed about Shem's birth order. The convenient way to reconcile the so-called discrepancy is to make the following passage conform to the preceding ones. However, having read chapter ten carefully and with an open mind, it seems obvious that Japheth was the oldest son and Shem the youngest. Besides the order in the genealogy, the statement in Genesis 10:21 also stresses the natural order of the brothers. The translation in the Authorized Version, "unto Shem . . . the brother of Japheth the elder," is accurate.⁹⁷ The Revised Standard Version translated it "To Shem the elder brother of Japheth," which is clearly not accurate. The reason for such a misleading translation is not grammatical but rather psychological. Many Bible students do not realize historical events in Scripture can have two orders: one spiritual and the other historical. For example, in ancient Israel there

⁹⁷ Both the Amplified Bible and the New International Version agree that Japheth is the older brother of Shem.

were two different shekels, one was the shekel of the sanctuary, and the other was a common shekel. If an interpreter or translator does not differentiate between them, his rendering certainly cannot be accurate. In the same way the Bible student must consider the reason for the different order of events to understand this situation.

Chronologically, Japheth was the oldest one, and naturally he would be first in Noah's genealogy. But when it came to spiritual matters, Shem took first place. Thus when any passage in Scripture refers to some spiritual aspect or anything connected with God's redemption, the one in the line of redemption is mentioned first. About 1,000 years later a revelation testified nicely to this fact, "'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' saith the Lord, 'Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau?'" (Mal. 1:2-3). This same passage was quoted about 480 years after that: "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13). Why was Esau not put first since he was the older brother, instead of Jacob who was second born? The only answer is that Jacob was in the Messianic line and Esau was not. Spiritually, or in God's sight, Jacob was the firstborn and Esau was not. Likewise here, Shem was indeed the firstborn in God's sight, although not physically, and thus he should be mentioned first. Since the genealogy in chapter ten is a historical record rather than a spiritual one, the physical order is restored. Consider Abraham's case; he was born when Terah was 130 years old and his nephew Lot was perhaps not much younger than he was. Yet Abraham's name was always listed as the firstborn of Terah, because he was in God's redemptive line and his older brothers Nahor and Haran were not (11:26-27). Ishmael was the physical firstborn of Abraham, yet Isaac was called the firstborn and not Ishmael (22:2). Moreover, when they were mentioned together, Isaac was before Ishmael (25:9).

Scripture is the record of God's revelation in which He unveils His plan of redemption. He adopted only the material that would accomplish His purpose and omitted the rest, which explains why some passages in the Bible stop their narratives abruptly. The Holy Spirit had no obligation to retain all historical sequences. As does any author, He had the right to condense a story, simplify an event, or shift an emphasis in order to drive home His truth. Likewise, in order to emphasize Shem spiritually, God counted him as the firstborn in the family, in order to qualify him to inherit the spiritual rights of the firstborn.

3. Japheth's Extension. In reference to Japheth, Noah simply said that God would enlarge him (9:27). "Enlarge" is the causative form of a verb signifying "to be wide," hence "to make wide." It may be taken either locally as in the extension of territory or metaphorically as in the increase of prosperity or prestige. Actually, both of these, politically and materially, have been fulfilled.

The following statement "and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," is the natural rendering and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, cannot refer to Japheth. Even if it did refer to Japheth, interpreting it as Japheth's conquest is still unscriptural. For *shakham* "to dwell" never has the meaning "to conquer" or "to disturb"; but to the contrary has the idea of settling down or resting at ease. Since the *shekinah*, God's glory which dwelt on the mercy seat, was later derived from the same verb, "dwell" refers then to God's presence among the Shemites rather than Japheth's territorial conquests. "Tents" is plural, so it does not refer to the temple in Jerusalem. It could, however, be an anticipation of Ezekiel 11:16 which says that some day the Lord God would be to Israel

as a little sanctuary in the countries where they would go. Or even further as the Lord said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). Thus the Noachian Period to this point reveals a seed form and fundamental pattern of the New Testament Church in which each individual should do his part in witnessing to God’s plan of redemption and also work together with the body of believers to proclaim this truth to the entire world.

E. Division According to Languages (Gen. 10:1-11:9).

Shortly after the flood, man’s sinfulness again became universal. When God made the covenant with Noah and his descendants, He stipulated that they were to replenish the earth (Gen. 9:1). The people, however, wanted to remain in one place (11:4b). On the west bank of the river Euphrates in the plain of Shinar (probably the site where Nimrod’s kingdom was established) mankind began to build a city and a tower in an ungodly assertion of their unified attempt to achieve their own purpose. This was the first time man attempted to unite forces against God. It was no longer only man’s thinking that was evil but also his actions. Rebelling against God was not just individual disobedience to God, but the whole human race was acting in opposition to their Creator.

Before the foundation of the world God planned for the oneness and unity of man. Some day, it will be fulfilled but not by either mankind’s intellectual devices or united forces but in God’s own location, initiation, and realization. The location is “in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28); the initiation is baptism “by one Spirit . . . into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13); and the realization is not now but at the fullness of time (Eph. 1:10). No matter how successful a unified organization man might establish, sooner or later God will surely scatter it.

God used diverse methods to deal with man’s wickedness, in keeping with the different historical circumstances but in the end the result was always the same; the wicked were routinely overthrown. Instead of destroying the people as He did with the flood, this time God took away the blessing of everyone being able to speak a common language. Since the people could no longer communicate with one another, the cooperation necessary for planning and working together was naturally impeded. Subsequently, misunderstanding and misinterpretation took the place of mutual trust. As a result, those who spoke the same dialect gathered together and formed a new community among themselves. Thus, with their unity broken, the city was probably taken over by Nimrod’s group. The time of their dispersion probably was around the time of the birth of Peleg (division), since his name in all likelihood was given in memory of that event (10:25).

A foretaste of the restoration to unity was seen on the Day of Pentecost. The actual restoration, however, will be realized only at the coming of the Son of Man. When He comes, all the people will use a pure language to call upon His name and will serve Him with one mind (Zeph. 3:9). This golden age will come one day, but it will not be brought in by building a city (politics) and a tower (religion).

The site of the tower of Babel, according to archaeology, can be either the ruins of *Birs Nimrud* at Borsappa, located southwest of Babylon on the west bank of the Euphrates, or the temple of Murduk in Babylon. Herodotus describes the former as seven

square boxes, each of a different color and each standing upon a larger box beneath, with an exterior stairway leading from the ground to the top. Originally, it may have had a shrine on top for the chief god, with the seven stages beneath it representing the seven planets, or the gods of the week, with a god in charge of each weekday. The top stage was dedicated to the moon-god and was painted with a silver color, the second to Mercury with dark blue, the third to Venus with light yellow, the fourth to the sun with a golden color, the fifth to Mars with rose red, the sixth to Jupiter with brownish red, and the seventh to Saturn with black. Thus, their sins of building the city and the tower included not only making themselves a name and preventing God's mandated dispersion but also promoting idolatrous worship. No wonder that later in Ur, Terah, the father of Abraham, was also an idolater (Josh. 24:2). Extensive excavations at Ur, a site 125 miles southeast of Babylon, show that the city was the chief center of worship of the moon-god, Nannar, and his spouse Nin-Gal. Thus archaeological discoveries as well as Scriptural statements show one sure thing: the religion of man at the close of the Noachian period had degenerated into an advanced state of idolatry.

In conclusion, since the beginning of this period, a division had developed between those who were unwilling to follow God's instruction for their lives and those who were willing to do so. Although, through the development of human ingenuity, a high degree of civilization had been cultivated, the depravity of the majority was seen in fratricide, bigamy, cultic prostitution, violation of the rights of others, sensual gratification, self-exaltation, and tyrannical despotism. Civilization could not restrain degeneration but, instead, advanced it. But through it all there was the minority who received God's grace, exhibited faith in God, and with a willing heart walked with God. They demonstrated that God's salvation could deliver one not only from future doom as Enoch experienced but also from present distress such as Noah lived through. Men may try to fill the gap between these two divisions—the natural man and the spiritual man—but what God has put asunder, no one can put together. Among the minority, centered around Seth, Noah, and Shem, God prepared a godly remnant in the midst of corruption to preserve the messianic line and to set the stage for the coming of the Patriarchal Period.

Chapter Three—THE TIMES OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, AND JOSEPH

In the Adamic Period God revealed Himself progressively as Elohim and Yahweh Elohim to denote that He is the Creator who created things out of non-existent materials; the Omnipotent who did all things according to His pleasure; the Holy One who would not tolerate sin; and the Revealer who revealed Himself in the Spirit and in the Word by His goodness toward His own, by His mercy toward wayward ones, and by His justice toward the stubbornly disobedient. Then in the Noachian Period God showed Himself as the Father of a family, the Lord of mankind, the Judge of the earth, and the sovereign Ruler of the universe. Now in the glorious Patriarchal Period, the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, God set His revelation forth more clearly as He progressively pursued the covenantal redemption toward its consummation in Christ.

God's revelation in this period is much more spiritually illuminating because it became more particular than universal. He narrowed His worldwide scope to a certain group of people as He prepared a man (Abraham) and his descendants (the Jews) to be the recipients of His revelation (the written Word, the Bible, and the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ), that through His chosen people the promised redemption might reach all the world and that in due time the pledged kingdom might be realized. Accordingly, He found the man Abram, called him out of the land of his birth, and brought him to a strange country where God culminated His self-revelation for this period by making a covenant with him in the name of *El Shaddai*. Great and marvelous was this covenant of God with men of obedience, and precious was the revelation of El Shaddai to all those who had faith in Him. As in the previous chapters, this period in Scripture will be treated by considering first the revelation of God and then the revelation of man.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

God revealed Himself as Elohim in the creation narrative, as Yahweh Elohim in His initial relationship with man, and as Yahweh and Elohim separately in His dealings in subsequent events. Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image,” but Yahweh Elohim acted when man first came on the scene. When man became totally corrupt, Elohim commanded Noah to build the ark; but it was Yahweh who instructed him to bring his family and the creatures with him into the ark; and Yahweh was the one who shut the door behind them. Yahweh was distinctly the redemptive name in Genesis but not the covenantal name. In the Adamic Period, the covenantal name was Yahweh Elohim. Yahweh Elohim made the Adamic Covenant with the first pair, sought them after their fall, and clothed them with garments made from a skin. Elohim made the universal covenant with Noah, but it was El Shaddai who established the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:1-2). Elohim commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering (22:2), and the Angel of Yahweh provided the ram in Isaac’s stead (22:13); but El Shaddai ratified the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob (35:9-12). In other words, during this period the premier covenantal name of God was El Shaddai, not Yahweh. Yahweh was God’s redemptive name in Genesis, and after Genesis it was both His redemptive and covenantal name. The revelation of El Shaddai was the main disclosure during the Patriarchal Period so that all generations may know who He is. In our study of the Abrahamic Covenant we will be considering Yahweh’s faithfulness in promising the covenant, El Shaddai’s faithfulness in preserving the covenant, and El Shaddai’s presence in sustaining the covenant.

A. Yahweh’s Faithfulness in Promising the Covenant (Gen. 11:27-17:27).

Faithfulness and conformity to facts are two aspects of God’s truth, and truth is the conformity of God’s being with God’s knowing. Faithfulness, therefore, is the perfection of God’s nature whereby He fulfills whatever He promises and accomplishes whatever He starts. Although the word “faithfulness” does not occur in Genesis, and passages referring to this attribute of God are initially scarce, the reality was vividly revealed through Abram’s life in Canaan.

Actually, God’s faithfulness has been continually seen even from the first page of history when He said, “Let there be,” and “it was so.” He warned Adam that he should not eat the forbidden fruit, or he would surely die. Tragically, Eve and Adam did eat, and He pronounced death upon them and sent them away from Eden. When the world became corrupt, He predicted through Noah that after 120 years a flood would come, and it came. He promised to save the lives of Noah and all those in the ark with him, and He fulfilled His promise. Other than through His work and word, His faithfulness was especially revealed when He made covenants with man. No wonder that later the weeping prophet, even in the midst of misery and suffering, could still say, “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:23). God’s faithfulness, however, had not been strongly emphasized until this period where His faithfulness may be seen both in His promises and in His covenant.

1. His Faithfulness to His Promises (Gen. 11:27-13:18). During all the years following the flood, God did not find a single person who was qualified to be called as the father of His chosen people until around 2000 B.C. He saw a boy who was born in Ur of the Chaldees, located in southern Mesopotamia. The boy grew up in a city devoted to the cult of Nanna (moon-god) and paganism, so He called him to leave his native country and go to a land that He would show him. Abram departed from Ur with his father, his wife, and his nephew, Lot, and moved to Haran, a city in northwestern Mesopotamia, preparing to enter Canaan. But somehow he settled down in Haran, and God made no contact with him during the years he stayed there. He might have thought that God had forgotten him. But God never did. After the death of his father, Terah, Yahweh called Abram a second time and promised to make him a great nation, a blessing, and a great name that he might be a blessing to others. Truly, God is faithful to fulfill His calling.

The clause “and thou shalt be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2), literally means “Be thou a blessing.” It is emphatic in the Hebrew text since the *athnah*, the chief divider of the verse, is placed before this clause. In other words, “a great nation,” “I will bless thee,” and “thy name great” represent the means for making Abram “a blessing.” God’s blessings bestowed upon us are to be used as a means of blessing others. Otherwise, we abuse His blessings.

The question of whether God called Abram once or twice has long puzzled Old Testament students. Even Keil and Delitzsch said, “It was in Haran that Abram first received the divine call to go to Canaan.”⁹⁸ Leupold, however, makes the correct comment, when he stated, “Gen. 15:7 and Neh. 9:7 might perhaps be so construed as to mean that Abram’s leaving of Ur stood under God’s special providence; but Acts 7:2 definitely asserts that God’s first call to Abram came in Ur, ‘before he came to Haran.’”⁹⁹

Having promised to make Abraham a blessing, God also granted him protection in order that his being a blessing might be effective, and that in the end all the families of the earth might be blessed in him. Doubtless, the phrase (“in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,” 12:3) was the seed form of the promise given some 15 or 20 years later (“I will bless her [Sarai] and give thee a son also of her,” 17:16). The fruit of the promise is recorded in Matthew 1:1, which is, “Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham.” Indeed, we see illustrated here the truth that “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

Abram left Haran when he was 75 years old. After he had reached the beautiful valley in Canaan named Sichern, Yahweh appeared and promised him the land where he stood (12:7). Land, one of the three factors that constitutes a nation, was the first thing promised to Abram. True to His promise, God finally restored the land to the Israelites in 1948 after 1,900 years of exile.

Because of a terrible famine, Abram left the land where God had sent him and went to Egypt. There, had not the LORD intervened, he might have lost his wife Sarai forever. But faithful Yahweh protected him as He had promised, “I will bless them that bless thee,

⁹⁸Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 180.

⁹⁹H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956) Vol. I, p. 404.

and curse him that curseth thee” (12:3). After returning from Egypt and separating from Lot, Abram’s faith in God continued to develop. The LORD amplified His promises to him; “this land” was enlarged to “all the land which thou seest,” with the addition of “forever” as the length of occupation (13:15), and the promise of people, the second component of a nation (13:16).

Thus from the beginning of this period, Yahweh progressively revealed two seed forms: first, He promised to establish a kingdom and, second, He laid the foundation for the kingdom, a clear demonstration of His faithfulness. No wonder Psalm 89, a prayer for the fulfillment of Yahweh’s covenantal promise to David, used faithfulness 7 times out of its 49 occurrences in the Old Testament.

2. His Faithfulness to His Covenant (Gen. 14:1-17:27). Where there is a covenant, there is a binding. The separate parties to a covenant cannot do just anything they desire, especially if their actions break the stipulations of the contract. Otherwise, as covenant breakers, they would reap the judgment of the law. God applied this same principle to His covenant with man. For the sake of man’s unbelief and cowardice, God was willing to give up His prerogative of absolute sovereignty and put Himself under the restriction of a covenant, to give man confidence in Him. In other words, since man’s recognition of God’s goodness is so feeble, God brought Himself down to man’s level, limiting Himself by a covenant so that His faithfulness might be substantiated, and man might have confidence in what He promised. A covenant is an expanded promise, more substantial and glorious than a simple promise, because it is very detailed in its expression of what God binds Himself to do regarding His word, purpose, and people.

As an expression of His justice during Noah’s time, God destroyed that wicked generation; yet because of His grace He manifested His love to the obedient ones through a partial covenant with Noah. Although God promised He would never destroy the earth again as He had done in the past (8:21), yet neither Noah nor his descendants had perfect confidence in what God had promised. Because of their evil hearts of unbelief they feared that the same destruction might be wrought upon them again. To further strengthen their faith in His promise God made the Noachian Covenant with them, repeating three times that He would not destroy the earth with a flood (9:11, 15). In addition He set a rainbow in the clouds as a witness to His faithfulness. When man did not understand or have faith in God’s promise, God made a covenant to reveal Himself in black and white so that man could have access to God’s heart. Thus a covenant substantiates and magnifies God’s faithfulness.

a. His faithfulness in preparing Abram for the covenant (Gen. 14:1-24). After four kings from the east defeated five local kings, A fugitive from the battle informed Abraham that his nephew Lot had been taken captive. Abram, with 318 trained men of his own, immediately summoned his allies (Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner), gathered a combined force numbering around 1,000 men, chased and defeated the four kings. This was the first time Abram experienced the privilege and security of participating in a covenant. “Confederate with Abram” in Hebrew is “possessors of the covenant of Abram” (14:13). Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner were heads of their respective families or tribes who had made a covenant with Abram. When their covenantal partner Abraham needed help, they were obliged to fight for him. This covenantal bond would certainly impress on Abram the seriousness of his later covenantal relationship with God.

Following the slaughter of the four kings, Melchizedek, priest of *El Elyon* (God Most High) in Jerusalem, came out to greet Abram. He blessed him and said that El Elyon, the Possessor of heaven and earth, was really the one who had given Abram the victory. Abram recognized the genuineness of Melchizedek's priesthood and gave him a tithe of the recovered goods. The king of Sodom proposed that he take only the recovered people and that Abram should take all the recovered goods. Abram refused because, recognizing the truth of Melchizedek's inspiration that God was the Possessor of heaven and earth, he had already made an oath before Yahweh El Elyon that he would not take anything lest he bring dishonor upon Yahweh.

This incident was the first time in Scripture that God revealed Himself as El Elyon. The combination of El and Elyon occurs five times in the Old Testament, four times in this chapter and once in Psalm 78:35. When used separately, *el* means "mighty" and *elyon*, "highest," which is translated as "uppermost" in Genesis 40:17 and "high" in Deuteronomy 26:19. But used as a pair without an article, they should be interpreted together as a proper name. The meaning of this title is explained in the following phrase, "the possessor of heaven and earth" (14:19). "Possessor" is from a verb meaning "to make, to possess." Delitzsch and Leupold both preferred the first meaning and translate it as "the founder" and "the Creator" respectively. According to the context, however, it should mean more than just the Creator, since the use of the name here indicated the protection, deliverance, and providence of El Elyon. Spurrell said, "*Qoneh* (possessor) combines the double idea of creating and possessing."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Yahweh was not only Creator of the universe, transcendent above all, but also Possessor of all, the ever-present God. From this experience Abram had learned Yahweh was not only a personal God but also God of the universe, both the creator and possessor of everything. He had the power to make and keep a covenant just as He had the right to give one victory and the other defeat.

b. His faithfulness in the purposes of the covenant (Gen. 15:1-21). Conquering four kings from the east gave Abram honor from his contemporaries and blessings from El Elyon. He enjoyed the privilege of being a party to a covenant and learned that Yahweh is the God of the entire universe. These, however, did not ease Abram's anxiety about his future security and posterity. He did not know if those four kings might come back some day to take revenge. Neither was he sure that he would have a son in the future. In brief, Abram worried about two things: the presence of evil and the absence of good. The Lord knew his heart and thoughtfully sent "a word" to Abram in a vision promising that He would be his protector and provider (15:1). Yahweh promised He would stand between him and his enemies in order that the thrust of evil could never approach him without first approaching Yahweh. Further, Yahweh Himself would be his exceedingly great reward. What reward could be better than God Himself? Abram, however, was neither greatly encouraged nor comforted. Rather, he complained about his childless situation and suggested that Eliezer might be his heir. After the Lord rejected his suggestion and promised him descendants like the stars in the sky, Abraham finally believed the Lord's promise, and by that belief he was reckoned to be righteous and became the father of faith (Rom. 4:3, 11).

¹⁰⁰Spurrell, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

In the original language “the word of Yahweh came unto Abram” is literally “there was a word of Yahweh to Abram.” This was the first instance in which *dabar* (word) was applied to God’s revelation which in the preceding periods had come only in an active form, as “God said” and “God called.” During this period before the making of the covenant, “word” was formulated into a set form that in later revelation came progressively upon the prophets and in the end became flesh to dwell among men. Such a set form was necessary to produce justifying faith. Faith cannot be developed in a vacuum; it must grow from seed. We cannot have human faith without human words or evidence, nor can we produce historical faith without reliable historical records. Likewise, saving or justifying faith can be produced only when one accepts the Word of God. Although Abram did not fully accept God’s Word this time, he did later when “the word of Yahweh” came to him more emphatically (15:4).

When Abram was talking to God, Abram addressed Him as *Adonai Yahweh* which expressed Abram’s recognition of Yahweh’s lordship. According to the Hebrew, the expression “Lord G” in the Authorized Version should be translated as “Lord Yahweh.” This was the first time in the Old Testament that Yahweh was named “Lord,” which Abraham may have derived from the revelation that Yahweh was the possessor of the heaven and earth. This new combination of God’s names advanced the understanding of God’s nature.

Adonai (Lord) appears in the Scripture both as a common noun and as a title for God. *Adonai* always represents authority and requires allegiance. In this period it was used eight times as a title of Yahweh. The first time Abram used “Lord” to address God was when he asked for a son to be his heir (15:2); the second time was for the promised land (15:8). Abimelech used *Adonai* once in Genesis 20:4 when addressing God. Abraham used it the remaining five times in Genesis 18 when he pleaded before Yahweh for the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah to be spared if only a few righteous people dwelled there. *Adonai* was later used by the Hebrews as a substitute for the pronunciation of Yahweh, which they considered too sacred to pronounce. This was why the Authorized Version translators rendered Yahweh as the LORD throughout the Old Testament, distinguishing between Yahweh and *Adonai* by the way in which each is printed. The former is printed with all capitals (LORD) and the latter with a capital and lower case letters (Lord).

When Abram believed in Yahweh, even in the authority of Yahweh’s lordship and supremacy, Yahweh in turn reckoned it to him for righteousness. This was the first time the verb, “to believe,” was ever used in Scripture. It is a causative form of *aman* from which our Amen was derived. *Aman* means “to be steady,” “to make firm”; hence its causative form means “to remain steady,” “to hold firmly.” “To believe,” more accurately, is not only a persuasion or an assent of the mind to the truth but perseverance in the same.

Another first in the Patriarchal Period was the revelation of justification through faith as compared to the revelation of justification by grace in the Noachian Period. The progressive order of these two revelations in the Old Testament is logical rather than chronological. Theologically and thus logically, faith cannot come before grace. Chronologically, it is impossible to make any distinction between them; whenever a person has one, he has the other as well. Later revelation says it well: “For by grace are

ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

After Abram had accepted God’s promise that he would become a multitude of people (count the stars . . . so shall your descendants be. And he believed in the Lord,” 15:5-6), the Lord promised him the land, too (“I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land,” 15:7). Although Abram had faith in the first promise, he did not have the same degree of faith in the second one. So, he asked the Lord for evidence of His promise. Sympathizing with him, the Lord made a covenant that Abram accepted. A covenant is the title deed of God’s faithfulness given in order to strengthen the believer’s faith, which may be considered as the immediate purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Here near the beginning of His revelation, God’s distant purpose was not very clear. The seed form of the kingdom revelation, which would be the climax of God’s redemption, was given here in Genesis, yet it did not sprout until David’s time. Prior to man’s creation, it was God’s intention for him to “have dominion” over His earth. Since man was subordinate to his Creator, his dominion was to be conditioned by obedience to the Word of God. When Adam tragically failed the test and disrupted the intended theocratic program, the continuation of Satan’s kingdom was temporarily assured. The first glimmer of the gospel in Genesis 3:15 (“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your descendants and her descendants; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise he heel”) sometimes called the protevangelium actually was a declaration of war upon the kingdom of evil, and its defeat must precede the establishment of God’s coming kingdom. Although the kingdom plan was temporarily thwarted by Adam’s fall, God continued to faithfully and unhurriedly prepare His people, land, and king by means of the agreements called covenants.

c. His faithfulness during the postponement of the covenant (Gen. 16:1-16). The contents of the Abrahamic Covenant were not condensed into one single passage of Scripture as the previous covenants were. Due to Abram’s slow growth in faith, the Lord could give him only a portion of the covenant at a time. When God made the covenant with him in Genesis 15, Abram had enough faith to accept it, yet not enough faith to carry it out. Thus ratification or publication of the covenant came 13 years later in chapter 17. His marriage to Hagar was undoubtedly the reason for the delay.

God decreed that Abram would have a son and that the son would be born to Sarai. However, Abram went ahead of the Lord and obtained a child through Hagar. Abram believed Yahweh’s promise but he used the wrong means to accomplish God’s purpose, which to God was disobedience. As a result of his insubordination, Hagar ran away from him, his fellowship with God was broken for 13 years, and, in addition, the publication of the covenant was postponed.

God never restricted Himself to a single means of revealing Himself to man, but progressively changed His method from direct internal address to personal appearance to vision and now, for the first time, to the manifestation of the Angel of Yahweh. “Angel” simply means a messenger who speaks or brings a message for someone. Essentially, “angel” denotes office and not nature. Among the Trinity the Second Person is the Word (the Spokesman) of God. Whenever God’s Word is in action, the Second Person of the Godhead is there. Since the angel said, “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly,” and since

Hagar recognized Him as Yahweh and named Him El (God) (16:10-13), He cannot be anyone else but Yahweh, the possessor of heaven and earth. The reason the Second Person revealed Himself as the messenger of Yahweh, instead of as Yahweh Himself, might have been to avoid polytheistic implications and misunderstanding.

While Hagar was running away, thinking that she was alone in the world, suddenly she saw the glorious appearance of the Angel of Yahweh and heard His wonderful promise that her son would be multiplied and would occupy the territory east of all his brethren. She immediately realized that although she might be deserted by man, Yahweh saw her and cared for her. No matter where she was, she would never be out of Yahweh's omniscient protection. In her excitement she declared that Yahweh was *El Roi*, which means "God of seeing" or "the all-seeing God." *Roi* is a masculine noun which means seeing, or vision, and in First Samuel 16:12 is translated as "to look to" in the Authorized Version and as "appearance" in the Jewish translation. In Nahum it is translated as "a gazingstock" rather than just "gazing" (Nah. 3:6). Here in Genesis 16, a slightly different form of the word is used both at the end of verse 13 and as the last part of the well's name in verse 14. It is an active participle with the suffix of the first person singular, meaning "my seeing" or "my Seer." An accurate translation of this verse might then be, "Thou art a God of seeing . . . Have I also here looked after my Seer?" (16:13). And the meaning of *Beer-lahai-roi*, the well's name, is simply "Well of living [referring to herself] after my seeing"(16:14).

The attributes of God related to time, space, and action were revealed progressively in the Old Testament. In Genesis omnipotence came first, then omniscience, and then omnipresence. We saw God's omnipotence in the creation, the flood, and the confounding of language. A sense of God's omniscience was detected in His knowing everything about Adam's fall and Cain's murder of Abel, but the full demonstration of this attribute was not seen until this occasion. Here, He revealed Himself to a slave girl as the All-Seeing God, *Roi*, in order that she might teach the backsliding Abram a lesson concerning His faithfulness and omniscience.

All her fear, depression and discouragement subsided and Hagar went back to Abram's home. After Hagar had returned and he heard her story about Yahweh's care for her, Abram's faith was definitely strengthened. He might have said to himself, "If God would take care of my slave girl, certainly He has not forgotten me!" The probability that this happened is seen in the naming of Hagar's son, Ishmael (God hears). Indeed, Yahweh does see us in, and hears our cries of, affliction. He never forgets us and will come to our aid in time of need.

d. His faithfulness in the publication of the covenant (Gen. 17:1-27). We have studied God's direct and indirect self-revelation as El Elyon in the preparation of the covenant, as Adonai in the purpose of the covenant, and as El Roi in the postponement of the covenant. All these confirm Yahweh's faithfulness. At the same time they are anticipatory revelations looking forward to the climactic revelation of El Shaddai in the Abrahamic Covenant. Because Abram's faith matured very slowly, God gradually developed his knowledge of Himself and gave the covenant to him portion by portion, lest the full immediate revelation of the covenant overwhelm Abram's ability to believe it. Throughout this period Abram had been learning the faithfulness of Yahweh, who was the owner of the universe, the Lord of everything, and the God who saw everyone. All

these revelations were preparing Abram to understand and accept El Shaddai's reality and nature when they were disclosed to him. Although the beginning of the covenantal promise was given while Abram was still in Haran, it was not completed until Abram was 99 years old. Before Abram's departure from Haran, Yahweh placed His promises on him alone (12:2-3); after his arrival at Sichem, Yahweh extended the promise to his descendants. After the separation from Lot, Yahweh enlarged His promise from "this land" to "all the land which thou seest," and from "thy seed" to "thy seed as the dust of the earth," while the duration of their occupation would be "forever" (13:15-16).

Rereading Genesis 15 carefully, one can sense that the covenant there was partial rather than complete. It was a covenant for the land rather than the Abrahamic Covenant as a whole, for it started from Abram's question, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it [this land]?" and it concluded with the accurate date of the occupation of the land for his descendants: "Your descendants shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years . . . and afterwards shall they come out with great substance," (15:13-14). It seems that all of chapter 15 was a vision rather than a physical reality. A vision is a state of spiritual insight brought about by the operation of the Holy Spirit within a person's spiritual perception. It is supernatural in origin, vision in sight, but without physical presence, as Keil and Delitzsch stated, ". . . but a spiritual fact, which was not only in all respects as real as things discernible by the senses, but which surpassed in its lasting significance the acts and events that strike the eye."¹⁰¹

Since the contents of chapter 15 were a vision, they had no external reality. This was a private revelation that was not yet ready for publication. Had Abram not gone ahead of Yahweh in the matter of Hagar, the official publication of the covenant might have been earlier. Nonetheless, the official publication of the Abrahamic Covenant was in Genesis 17 and was the crown of Yahweh's revelation in this period. **All the preceding revelations were preparatory for it, and all the future ones were used to magnify it.**

After the birth of Ishmael, 13 years elapsed (16:16-17:1) before Yahweh appeared to Abram as El Shaddai to ratify and to publish the covenant. For the preservation of the covenant God stipulated that Abram must walk before Him and be perfect, that is, he must be devoted to obedience and practice what is right. When God appeared to him, Abram was speechless with shame but expressed his gratitude by prostrating himself before El Shaddai, who seeing the obedience in Abram's heart conferred on him the three factors that constitute a kingdom: people—"I . . . will multiply thee exceedingly," authority—"kings shall come out of thee," and land—"all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." Above all, El Shaddai Himself would be God to him and to his descendants (17:7-8). To emphasize the preservation of the covenant, two tokens were adopted: the change of Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah, and the circumcision of all the males in the family.

The Abrahamic Covenant may be summarized in the following outline in which its elements are correlated to the essential factors that constitute a covenant.

1. Preamble—El Shaddai (17:1, 7-8).

¹⁰¹Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

2. Historical Introduction—"I . . . brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees" (15:7).
3. Stipulations:
 - a. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (17:1).
 - b. "Keep my covenant . . . thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations" (17:9).
4. Witnesses:
 - a. "I" (God Himself) (17:2, 6-7, and so on).
 - b. Stars (15:5).
5. Recipient's Pledge:
 - a. Faith (15:6).
 - b. Obedience (17:23).
6. Purpose:
 - a. Provision for a people (15:5).
 - b. Provision for a land (15:7-8).
 - c. Provision for kings (17:6).
7. Blessings and a curse:
 - a. All families on the earth shall be blessed in him (a Messianic prophecy) (17:4-8, See Rom. 4:16-17).
 - b. His descendants shall be as numerous as the dust of the earth and the stars of the sky (13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 6).
 - c. The land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates shall be theirs for an everlasting possession (15:18; 17:8).
 - d. Kings shall come out of them (17:6, 16).
 - e. El Shaddai shall be their God (17:1, 7-8).
 - f. The breaker of the covenant "shall be cut off from the people" (17:14).
8. Ceremony—the slain animal, the smoking furnace and the burning lamp (15:9-10, 17).
9. Token:
 - a. Names changed—Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah (17:5, 15).
 - b. Circumcision (17:9-14).
10. Time—"everlasting" (17:7-9, 13, 19).¹⁰²

Thus the Abrahamic Covenant was fully ratified and made public, confirming God's faithfulness to Abraham. Later revelation witnesses, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

B. El Shaddai's Faithfulness in Preserving the Covenant (Gen. 18:1-25:18).

1. He Is the Almighty, the All-Sufficient. *Shaddai* occurs altogether 48 times in Scripture. It appears 17 times by itself (once in Genesis), parallel 16 times to El (five in Genesis), seven times to Eloah (all in Job), once to Elyon (Ps. 91:1), once to El and Elyon

¹⁰²Compare George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955), p. 31ff.

(Num. 24:16), and seven times together with El.¹⁰³ Its meaning has often been debated; however, no completely satisfactory answer has yet been found. I prefer the rabbinic explanation which takes it as a combination of *Sha* and *ddai*, meaning “He who is sufficient,” that is “the All-Sufficient.” However, the acceptance of this meaning is not dependent on rabbinical etymology but comes rather from its biblical implication. To interpret a word by knowing its etymology and grammatical structure is important, but before one comes to a conclusion, its context must be checked, too. If the context is not sufficiently clear, other passages that use the same word may give light. Since the etymology and morphology of Shaddai are so ambiguous, it should be examined in the context of other passages where it occurs.

The combination of El and Shaddai is used six times in Genesis, and, except in 43:14, is followed by one of the descriptions mentioned below: “and will multiply thee” (Gen. 28:3), “be fruitful and multiply” (35:11), “I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee” (48:3-4), and “who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings . . . blessings . . . The blessings . . . the blessings . . .” (49:25-26). Hence the context of these passages implies that Shaddai means “all sufficient” rather than “almighty.” “El,” which means “power” or “might,” taken together with “Shaddai” should mean “the Almighty and All-Sufficient One.” Thus the name El Shaddai was a pledge to the patriarchs that God had power enough to fulfill the promises of His covenant and riches enough to meet any conceivable human need, even those completely beyond natural possibilities enabling an aged childless couple to produce a son from whom kings and nations would come.

Due to the sacred nature of the name El Shaddai, the patriarchs dared not use it freely, but reserved it for special occasions. This explains its infrequent use in Genesis. Abraham did not use this name at all. Isaac used it once when he blessed Jacob with the Abrahamic or covenantal blessings, that is, when he bestowed both people—“that thou mayest be a multitude of people” and land—“that thou mayest inherit the land,” upon him (28:3,4).

When Jacob returned to Bethel and in real dedication to God built an altar, God appeared to him, reminded him that He was El Shaddai and confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant with him. People—“be fruitful and multiply,” authority—“and kings shall come out of your loins,” and land—“and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it,” were promised to Jacob and his name was officially changed to the covenantal name Israel (35:9-12). It had been privately changed earlier at Peniel (32:28).

On three occasions Jacob himself addressed God by this sacred name. Once was when he was in great distress: the famine was very severe in Canaan, his second son Simeon was imprisoned as a pledge that Benjamin, whom Jacob loved as his very own life, would be sent down to Egypt. In such desperate straits he could only encourage and comfort himself by giving benediction in the name of the One, who being El Shaddai, could help him (43:14). The second time he mentioned El Shaddai was when Joseph visited him with his two sons when Jacob was ill (48:3-20). Jacob recounted how El Shaddai had appeared to him and blessed him; but Jacob only mentioned people and land not kings. It seems that from the beginning to the very end, man never had enough faith in God. No matter how much emphasis God has placed or how many details He has

¹⁰³Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:3; Ezekiel 10:5.

worked out, man still has come short of fully accepting His promise. Once more, shortly before his death, Jacob used the name El Shaddai as he blessed Joseph. This time, because of the poetic structure, El Shaddai was separated into two parallel lines, “By the God (El) of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty (Shaddai), who shall bless thee” (49:25). El is for help, and Shaddai is for blessing. What a wonderful combination! “By” (49:25) means “by the nature of.” Thus in the Patriarchal Period, Yahweh dealt with the people by the nature of the name El Shaddai; whereas in the later Mosaic Period He will deal with them by the nature manifested in His name Yahweh. The patriarchs knew the name Yahweh but did not understand its nature, since God did not use it when dealing with them.

Although the name El Shaddai does not appear frequently in Genesis, its substitutes are seen quite often. Among them, without doubt, Elohim is used most frequently, because El Shaddai said twice that He would be Elohim to Abraham and his descendants (17:7-8). This is confirmed by Isaac’s blessings to Jacob, in which the use of El Shaddai paralleled with the use of Elohim (28:3-4). In short, in anything dealing with the Abrahamic Covenant, Elohim may serve as a substitute for El Shaddai. This explains why Elohim appears more often in this period than in the preceding ones. From chapters 5 through 16, Elohim appears only 25 times, but from chapters 17 through 50, it appears 133 times. Second in use to Elohim alone may be the longer forms “Elohim of Abraham thy father” (26:24), or “Elohim of Isaac” (28:13), or the like (See 46:3; 48:15). In addition, sometimes El (God) by itself is used as a substitute for El Shaddai, especially in Jacob’s farewell speech where El is used in parallel with Shaddai (49:25). Earlier, at the time of Jacob’s journey down to Egypt, God named Himself El, parallel with “Elohim of thy father” (46:3). In this manner El Shaddai revealed Himself progressively as the Almighty, the All-Sufficient One in the Patriarchal Period.

Once He had made the covenant with Abraham, El Shaddai preserved it as well. “Preserving” means God’s continuous operation in maintaining a created substance. Negatively, He prevents the destruction or nullification of persons or things. Had God not preserved the Church, she might have disappeared even before she was well established. Adam’s expulsion from Eden that he might not live forever in sin, Cain’s being marked that no one might murder him, the confusion of language at Babel to stop the people from sinning further, the deliverance of Lot from the fire of Sodom, and the protection of Sarah to keep her from being taken from Abraham were examples of God’s preservation. Positively, God maintains the continuance and effectiveness of things that are in existence. Ever since creation God has been upholding the existence and operation of the universe. He would never build a house only to lock Himself out. Had the theory of Deism—that God withdrew from the universe immediately after He made it—been true, the earth might have been burned up or become ice-bound long ago. His planting fruit trees in Eden for Adam’s nourishment, His giving Seth to take the place of Abel, His saving of Noah and his family from the flood, and His establishing the Noachian Covenant may all be classified as positive preservations.

El Shaddai maintained the integrity and effectiveness of the covenant for Abraham, because He is the keeper, as well as the maker. Such covenantal preservation is not unique only in this period but is found throughout the entire Old Testament. The preservation of the covenant is progressive, as can be seen in El Shaddai’s dealings with

Abraham. He is not only the Almighty, the All-Sufficient, who knows all (“God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him . . . she [Sarah] is a man’s wife,” 20:3-6), hears all (“and God heard the voice of the lad [Ishmael]” 21:17), and sees all (“God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz,” 48:3), but also the just Judge, the everlasting God and the thoughtful Provider.

2. He Is the Just Judge (Gen. 18:1-20:18). “Just” refers to a standard in dealing with the rights of others impartially, equally, and honestly. “Justice” may be classified as reciprocal or retributive. “Reciprocally just” refers to the equal exchange of things. It is conducted on a cash-and-carry basis. Many of the conditional promises of God in Scripture belong to this category. “Retributively just” refers to the distribution of rewards and punishments as the circumstances demand. In chapters 18 through 20 of Genesis, El Shaddai was revealed as a judge granting a reward to Abraham, inflicting a punishment on the two wicked cities, and placing a restriction on a righteous nation. He is truly the Judge of all the earth, doing things according to His own judgment.

a. A reward to Abraham (Gen. 18:1-19). The three great virtues in the ancient East were courtesy, hospitality, and patience. Abraham exhibited all of them. After the covenant had been made public, one day Yahweh revealed Himself to Abraham as the Angel of Yahweh. This was the second time that Yahweh had revealed Himself in this manner. The first time He appeared to the fugitive slave-girl Hagar (16:7-8); this time to a relaxing chief (18:1). At Mamre Abraham was sitting at the tent door at noon when he saw three strangers in front of his dwelling. Running to welcome them, he “bowed down himself toward the ground, and said, ‘My Lord’” (courtesy); then he entertained them with “Butter, milk, and the calf which he had dressed . . . and he stood by them under the tree” (hospitality). His serving those three strangers, his standing before Yahweh after the other two angels had left, and his unceasing intercession for the two wicked cities were all examples of his patience. Although those virtues could not merit God’s reward, they did please Yahweh. Yahweh reaffirmed the promised birth of a son to him and even told Abraham exactly when he would be born.

After entertaining the three strangers, Abraham realized that they were unusual guests. While he walked with them as they started on their way again, Yahweh revealed two promises to him: first, “a great and mighty nation” (18:18a), which expanded “a nation” or “nations” as revealed to him earlier; and second, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (18:18b), which was more detailed than “thou shalt be a blessing,” demonstrating that His grace is always progressive.

b. A punishment on the two wicked cities (Gen. 18:20-19:29). In addition to the two promises, Yahweh also disclosed to Abraham the coming judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. While God’s grace was still working on the problem (18:21), Abraham was inspired by divine grace to seek mercy from Yahweh’s justice by reminding Him that He was “the Judge of all the earth” (18:25). In the latter part of his prayer, Abraham replaced His title, Judge, with Yahweh (LORD) (18:27,30-32).

The duty of a judge, according to Abraham, was “to do right” (18:25). “Right” is *mishpat* in Hebrew. It is used 422 times in the Old Testament with some of the translations in the Authorized Version being “judgment” (294 times), “right” (18 times), “justice”, “justly,” and “just” (once each). Its primary meaning is “to settle a case”;

hence “decision,” and “judgment.” But when referring to the character of a judge, it means “justice” and “right.” Since here it refers to the Judge, either “do right” or “do justice” would be a good translation.

God is merciful and just. He prefers to lavish mercy upon sinners, yet He will not let sin go unpunished. He is the judge of all the earth; He demands justice. Whenever His justice and mercy come into conflict, grace will come to the rescue. After grace has done its best, and if the situation remains unchanged, judgment will be executed. Although God’s grace moved Abraham to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah, yet their situation was continually growing worse and worse. As a result, except for Lot and his two daughters, all the people in those cities were consumed with their belongings by the fire of God’s justice. El Shaddai’s justice was revealed here in full to Abraham to inspire him to be cautious to follow El Shaddai’s admonition to walk before Him and be perfect, in order that the integrity of the covenant might be maintained.

c. A restriction on a righteous nation (Gen. 20:1-18). By His actions, God twice answered Abraham’s question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The first answer was the destruction of the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the deliverance of just Lot who, as later revelation says, “was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Pet. 2:7). The second answer was given in innocent Abimelech’s case. After Abimelech, the king of Gerar, had taken Sarah to make her his wife, Elohim kept the king from sinning against Him when for the first recorded time God used a dream to reveal Himself.

Abimelech said, “Lord [Adonai], wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?” The answer was that God never committed injustice; hence it was better for him to repent that he might deliver himself from death. Abimelech proved his repentance by his action. In the early morning, not only did he return Sarah but also paid Abraham a substantial compensation. Elohim accepted his sincere repentance and restored Abimelech and his household. Abimelech’s spiritual understanding was much more enlightened than that of many modern Christians who do not know either the importance of repentance or the necessity of making restitution. Abimelech, however, knew both very well.

This episode brings to light evidence that God’s revelation did come to the Gentiles in ancient times. It was manifested both to Melchizedek, who knew the only true El Elyon, and to Abimelech who feared Adonai and was willing to please Him. This revelation agrees with that which the Lord later revealed to Ezekiel, “when the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby” (Ezek. 33:18-19).

3. He Is the Everlasting God (Gen. 20:1-21:34). “Everlasting” or “eternal” is the description of a long duration that has neither beginning nor end. It is so immense that all the days, months, years, centuries, and even millenniums in it are like a few drops of water in the vast ocean. It is something beyond our imagination, and no language in this world can describe it. With respect to God, it is the existence of His being. He is the beginning and the ending, yet He is without beginning and without end. In Him there is no succession, that is, no distinction between past, present, or future. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever; He never gets older. He needs no recollection of the past,

nor foreseeing of the future. To Him all times are now, and all places are here. He knows the past, present, and future; He is here, there, and everywhere. He is not only the Owner of the universe, the supreme Lord, the All-Seeing God, but also the immutable, omniscient, and omnipresent God. For the first time, we clearly see the attributes of God's eternity, immensity, unchangeableness, omniscience, and omnipresence through Abraham's experience of God's faithfulness in protecting Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, and himself.

a. His faithfulness in protecting Sarah (Gen. 20:1-18). Ever since God had promised Adam that one day the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan had been diligently striving to thwart God's plan of salvation by cutting off the line from which the promised deliverer might come. He used Cain to murder Abel, the sons of God to hybridize the human race, and now he tried to ruin Sarah. Satan certainly knew God's progressive revelation of His promise to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed and doubtless he was attempting to cut off the messianic line by attacking Sarah. First, he tried to use the king of Egypt, and now he was using the king of Gerar. Had God not intervened in both cases, Sarah might have been corrupted by one king or the other. Faithful God, for the maintenance of the covenant, kept Sarah from being ruined.

So far in our study, Scripture has always used Elohim with a singular verb to denote that its plural form is not a numerical plural, but the plural of abstraction (denoting that God is spirit and not flesh) and amplification (showing the completeness and perfection of God's entire being). However, when Abraham made his third excuse before Abimelech, he did use a plural verb with Elohim. He said, "When Elohim caused me to wander from my father's house," the verb "caused to wander" is a plural, which by itself can be translated, "They caused [me] to wander." Some Old Testament students believe that this construction indicates that Abraham was accommodating the polytheistic view of Abimelech. According to the context, however, it seems very unlikely that Abimelech would be a polytheist, because the pronouns employed in the conversation between Elohim and him were all singular and not plural. In truth this incidental use of the plural verb could be an indication of plurality in the Godhead, which is also implied in the name Elohim. This represents the second scriptural use of Elohim implying that the Godhead is at least a plurality. The same construction of a plural verb with Elohim also appears in Genesis 31:53 and 35:7, demonstrating the progressive nature of God's revelation.

b. His faithfulness in protecting Isaac and Ishmael (Gen. 21:1-21). Finally the date that El Shaddai had promised Abraham for the birth of his son had arrived. Sarah gave birth to a boy whom Abraham named Isaac. "Isaac" is an imperfect form, third person, masculine gender, and singular number from the verb "to laugh," hence literally, "he laughs," denoting Abraham's great joy at the birth of his promised son and sole heir. When his son was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him to fulfill the stipulation of the covenant. Before long the day arrived that Isaac was weaned. According to the Oriental custom, this was one of the happiest days in a family's life. Unfortunately, on this occasion Ishmael was jealous and mocked Isaac. This mocking was revealed later in the New Testament to be "persecution" (Gal. 4:29), which both the All-Seeing God and Sarah observed. For Isaac's protection Elohim gave a special dispensation against prevailing custom and ordered Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham, in

spite of the parental love between him and Ishmael and the marital bond between him and Hagar, obeyed Elohim and sent them away. This separation indicated that God's protection was over Isaac, who would be the new party of the Abrahamic Covenant. At the same time God anticipated and made preparation for the coming event when Abraham would be called upon to present his only son Isaac as a sacrifice.

Homeless once again, Hagar was wandering around in the desert. She had no shelter, no food, and now the water in "the skin of water" was finished. She considered her future: Ishmael was still too young to take care of even himself let alone provide for her, and she was too weak to take up the responsibility. Despondency and fear filled her heart. All she could do was to lift up her voice and weep. While they both were crying, Elohim heard Ishmael's voice and spoke to Hagar as the Angel of Elohim. He told her that Elohim had heard the boy's voice and would make him into a great nation (21:17-18).

This was the second time God revealed Himself to Hagar as the Angel of God. The first time He disclosed Himself as the All-Seeing God (16:13); this time as the All-Hearing God. The first time Yahweh asked her to name her son Ishmael as a memorial to God's hearing of her affliction; this time the Angel of Elohim told her that Elohim's answer came because He had heard Ishmael's voice. Thus the name Ishmael was a memorial to God's hearing. Our faithful God is both omniscient and omnipotent. He hears our prayer, sees our need, and cares for us; He is El Shaddai.

The reason that Yahweh presented Himself as the Angel of Elohim on the second occasion (21:17), instead of as the Angel of Yahweh as before (16:7), was due to the change in Ishmael's status. Formerly, Ishmael was counted as one of Abraham's family, but now he was no longer in the redemptive line but had become an alien to the blessed family and a stranger to the covenant of promise. God was no longer Yahweh to him, but Elohim. This time God promised that he would become a great nation, whereas the first time He promised that he would simply be multiplied and have a place to live

c. His faithfulness in protecting Abraham (Gen. 21:22-34). After Ishmael left, the Philistine king Abimelech, having observed the life of Abraham, concluded that Abraham was a man blessed by God and wanted to make a covenant with him. He came with his captain Phicol which may be, if it is a Hebrew name, either from a combination of *Phi* meaning "mouth" and *col* meaning "all," or a derivation from the verb *Pacal* meaning "to be attentive." Anyway, this captain must have been a man of ability and his presence necessary in dealing with any intertribal affairs. Abraham was glad to have another alliance for his own safety and that of his tribe.

They met together to establish a peace treaty, but there was an obstacle in the way: the problem of the ownership of a well, which had been dug by Abraham's men and subsequently taken by force by Abimelech's men. In order to settle the ownership of the well, Abraham gave seven ewe lambs to Abimelech, which he accepted. As a memorial for the event Abraham named the place Beersheba, which signifies "well of Seven." Since seven ewe lambs were used as the means of removing the barrier to making a covenant, which was made by an oath, this well's name may be paraphrased as "Well of Oath."

This experience of making a covenant with Abimelech would certainly cause

Abraham to recall his covenant with God, especially the covenantal promise in which El Shaddai had said that He would establish His covenant as an everlasting agreement with him and his descendants (17:7-8, 19). As a continuous witness and reminder of Yahweh's faithfulness in the covenant, Abraham planted an evergreen tamarisk tree in Beersheba and addressed Him as *El Olam*, the Everlasting God, who would always be there to maintain His covenant.

Thus El Shaddai revealed to Abraham that He is the just Judge who distributes reward and punishment as needed, Elohim who has more than one person in His Godhead, the All-Hearing who is faithful to His promises, and the everlasting God who is not only omnipotent, but omniscient, and omnipresent as well.

4. He Is the Thoughtful Provider (Gen. 22:1-19). The previous discussions have shown that it is much easier to establish a covenant than to maintain it. Although the preparation for and the making of a covenant were necessary steps, the progressive maintenance of it was more important than its inception. After the publication of the Abrahamic Covenant, God's word to Abraham and to those after him became more complex; yet in principle there were only two revelations: God's faithfulness and God's presence. God's faithfulness is the foundation for maintaining God's covenant; man's responses are to trust and to obey Him. The safeguard for the maintenance of God's covenant is His presence, which will be considered later. After the revelations of His faithfulness, El Shaddai prepared to give Abraham His final trust-and-obey test.

After years of anxiety, Abraham's hope for an heir was finally realized in the boy Isaac. After Ishmael had left, Isaac was the crowning pleasure of his old age. One night, in either a vision or a dream, El Shaddai told Abraham to offer Isaac to Him as a burnt offering. This was certainly a formidable test for Abraham and also a puzzling one. The requirement that Abraham give up his beloved "only" son and offer him as a burnt offering appeared to nullify God's promise, to tear God's faithfulness to pieces, and to thwart His eternal plan. It was hard enough for Abraham to cast Ishmael out, even though he was born according to the flesh; but Isaac was born according to the Spirit (Gal. 4:29). How could he be given up to die? Who was going to carry on God's messianic line? It was also puzzling because from the very beginning Abraham had been satisfied to have Ishmael as his heir. It was God who said, "No, Sarah your wife is going to bear a son for you" (17:19, retranslated). No doubt Abraham tried to reason out a solution to the apparent conflicts. If he did not deserve to have a son, why had Isaac been given to him in the first place? Since Isaac had been born, should he not be kept for him? How could the faithful God give Isaac to Abraham on the one hand and on the other demand that he offer Isaac as a burnt offering? How could faithful El Shaddai do such a contradictory thing?

However, while he was pondering these things, all of God's past revelations were working within him: the riches of the Possessor of the heavens and earth, the promise of the supreme Lord, the care of the All-Seeing, the covenant made with the Almighty and All-Sufficient, the justice of the Judge of all the earth, the understanding of the All-Hearing, and the faithfulness of the Everlasting. All these led him to see that what El Shaddai had said would be carried out in due time. No human being could change it; no creature could prevent it. And even though Isaac might be burned to ashes, El Shaddai would have His own way to fulfill His promises, even though it meant raising Isaac from

the dead (Heb. 11:19). Therefore, he took Isaac to the region of Moriah.

After they had reached “the place which God had told him of,” Abraham built an altar and laid Isaac on it. As he stretched forth his hand over Isaac to slay him, Abraham was stopped by the Angel of Yahweh who led him to sacrifice as Isaac’s substitute the ram provided by the faithful El Shaddai. Overcome with gratitude and joy, he named the mount *Yahweh Yireh*, which etymologically means “Yahweh sees,” but biblically “Yahweh provides.” According to later revelation, he was counted as righteous before God for the second time (James 2:21, 23).

The clause, “In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen,” is better translated, “In the mount the LORD will be seen.” It is a prediction that was later revealed in more detail by the prophet Malachi, saying, “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant” (Mal. 3:1). Mount Moriah was the site of the temple in Jerusalem upon which Yahweh was later seen in the person of Jesus Christ.

The promise in Genesis 22:17-18 was the final one for Abraham. Blessing, multiplying, victory, and especially that particular seed which would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, were promised anew. “In blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed” is better rendered, “I will surely bless thee, and I will surely multiply thy seed,” because blessing and multiplying in Hebrew are two infinitive absolutes used to emphasize the two main verbs. Since in ancient times the gate was the governmental center, the promise that Abraham’s seed would “possess the gate” means that he would overcome his enemies. “Thy seed” can be singular or plural, since this word can be used as a collective noun. Its plural form is used only once (1 Sam. 8:15). Since the Holy Spirit later revealed that in this promise it is singular, referring to Christ (Gal. 3:16), this phrase undoubtedly refers to the coming Messiah, who was prophesied as coming from the seed of woman in the Adamic Period (3:15), the descendants of Shem in the Noachian Period (9:9, 25-27), and the seed of Abraham in the Patriarchal Period.

El Shaddai not only provided a ram as Isaac’s substitute at Moriah, but He thoughtfully arranged for Abraham’s servant to meet Rebekah, and He inspired Rebekah to agree to become Isaac’s wife. Had Isaac not married, El Shaddai’s covenantal promises to Abraham would never have become a reality. So Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah was an important step in maintaining and fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant, which could be the reason the Holy Spirit spent 67 verses to record the circumstances surrounding his wedding.

C. El Shaddai’s Presence in Sustaining the Covenant (Gen. 26:1-50:26).

A careful reading of the passages in Genesis regarding the Patriarchal Period reveals two of God’s attributes, first His faithfulness and then His omnipresence. Ever since sin came into the world, death had been penetrating man spiritually, mentally, and physically. As a result, man was separated from God and inherited an inability to know and to trust God. No matter how often God revealed His faithfulness to him, man was simply unable to comprehend its reality and put his trust in Him. From creation He used His own visible presence, man’s spiritual perception to hear His voice, visions, and dreams to reveal Himself and to affirm His faithfulness to the people; however, they either ignored Him

entirely or worshipped Him only with lip-service. He made covenants with them, putting His faithfulness down in black and white. Still, as a whole, mankind turned a deaf ear to God. Isaiah's lamentation, "Who has believed our report" (Is. 53:1), later quoted by both John and Paul, repeated the old story of man's relationship with God from the beginning. Man on his own simply does not have faith in God.

The fundamental reason for man's lack of faith in God is that man has no faith in himself. Ever since the fall, man's thinking has often been negative and subjective. Negatively, man intuitively senses that he is not good, although he may never admit it publicly or even to himself. Since he has no confidence in himself, how can he have confidence in God? Subjectively, an individual always begins his thinking from himself and judges things according to his own judgment. If he is a European, he thinks the European is superior; if he is an Oriental, he thinks the Oriental character is nobler. This explains why no race admits that it is inferior to others. Because man starts his thinking from himself, and because there is no sure knowledge of God within him, man cannot know God without outside help. This explains why revelation from God is needed, particularly concerning God's faithfulness in making His covenant with man. There is a Chinese saying, "Upper class people settle matters by talking things over, middle class people settle things by writing, but the lower class never settle anything, even by digging a hole through the cowhide!" The gracious Lord, since man did not believe what God had said, lovingly lowered Himself to the middle class level and wrote down His promises for us. Even so some men still say, "God is dead." Who is really dead, God or man?

God's attribute of omnipresence, like His faithfulness, has often been either neglected or completely ignored. Since man himself is material and touchable, he subjectively thinks that all beings should be touchable. Because God is invisible, to an unbeliever He does not seem to exist; even to the believer He often seems far, far away. No matter how much in Scripture God has emphasized His presence or proved His faithfulness in believers' lives, man just cannot grasp the reality. This explains why God assured Isaac and Jacob again and again that He would be with them. Historically, the tabernacle in the midst of the Israelites, the temple in Jerusalem, and especially the incarnation of Emmanuel (God with us), all were progressive demonstrations of His presence with man. Yet throughout history only a minority has sensed God's presence and enjoyed it. But one day the new heaven and the new earth will appear, and "God Himself shall be with them [mankind] . . . and they shall see His face" forever (Rev. 21:3, 22:4). Then all God's people will know His presence as an objective reality.

1. El Shaddai's Presence with Isaac (Gen. 26:1-28:4). Before the death of Abraham, God had never said to any one, "I will be with you." The closest promise to this was the one that Abraham gave to his servant as he sent him to find a bride for his son Isaac, "He [Yahweh Elohim] shall send His Angel before thee" (Gen. 24:7) or "with thee" (24:40). After Abraham's death, during a famine in Canaan similar to that which his father had experienced, Isaac, following in the footsteps of his father, went to Gerar with the intention of going down to Egypt. Yahweh appeared to him, advised him not to go, and transferred to him the covenantal promises that He had previously given to Abraham. He affirmed that the countries of Canaan would be given to him (land), his descendants would be multiplied as the stars of the heaven (people), and all the nations would be

blessed through his offspring (authority) (26:3-4). The crown of this affirmation, however, was “I will be with thee” (26:3), which was the first full revelation of God’s omnipresence. In the past God had been mainly recognized as omniscient rather than omnipresent. Hereafter, God’s omnipresence would gradually receive greater emphasis. As time went on, revelation regarding God’s omnipresence not only increased progressively in quantity but was also amplified in quality.

When Isaac went back to Beersheba, El Shaddai confirmed His presence with him (26:24). This time, besides being the source of his blessings, God’s presence was the origin of his freedom from fear. Truly, wherever God is present, there is the reality of His blessings and the absence of fear. The more God’s presence is sensed, the greater the faith of God’s child. And conversely, the growth of faith increases the believer’s realization of God’s presence. The reality of God’s presence is sensed not only by the favored person himself but also by those who contact him. As a result, even Abimelech sensed that Yahweh was with Isaac and that Isaac had received the blessings of Yahweh (26:28-29).

2. El Shaddai’s Presence with Jacob (Gen. 28:5-36:43). As he was running away from home on account of Esau’s vengeful threat, about evening on the third day Jacob came to Bethel and spent the night there. The LORD appeared to him in a dream and transferred to him the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, which had previously been transferred to Isaac after the death of Abraham. First, He mentioned that He was El Shaddai, the God of his fathers; second, the land; third, the descendants; fourth, the messianic prophecy; then last, His presence. This time, however, God’s presence was more vividly described than it had been before: He promised to keep him in all places wherever he traveled, to bring him back to Canaan, and to fulfill what He had promised (28:11-15).

During the 20 years that he toiled faithfully for his maternal uncle Laban, Jacob experienced God’s presence. Although Laban changed Jacob’s wages ten times, no harm came to him, nor were his hands empty (31:5, 7). In fact, he was now the father of eleven sons and one daughter and possessed large herds of livestock. The LORD spoke to Jacob again telling him to return home and promising for the second time that He would be with him. Where God’s presence is, there will be guidance, protection, and success. How precious His presence is!

On the way home, since he neglected to inform his father-in-law of his departure, Jacob was pursued by Laban and his men. After seven days they overtook him at Mount Gilead. Had God not intervened in a dream to him, Laban might have taken Jacob and his family captive. After Laban searched in vain for teraphim (idols) which Rachel had stolen (probably to insure that she retained legal title to her share of Laban’s estate, and is paralleled in the 15th century BC text from Nuzi), Jacob gave him a good lecture. In his rebuke he complained of the ill treatment which he had received during the past 20 years on the one hand, and on the other he gave all the credit to the presence of El Shaddai, whom he called “the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac” (31:42). Here, for the first time, El Shaddai was named “the Fear.”

The noun *pachadh* (fear) actually means “dread,” and the verbal form signifies “to fear, to be in awe, to tremble.” Etymologically, it has no implication of “reverence.”

Modern Christians think that since God is love then He should not be feared but revered. This is man's so-called logical interpretation. The Scriptures simply teach that every one should fear God and tremble before Him. As the Bible says, "Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11). Some Bible students claim that although this was true in the Old Testament, it has been done away with in the New. If this be true, then how are we to explain the reaction of Christ's beloved disciple on Patmos Island? The Scripture says, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, 'Fear not,'" demonstrating that John's falling down as though dead was purely from fear (Rev. 1:17). Moreover, the fear of God is spiritually beneficial and not harmful. The early Church was strengthened internally and multiplied externally only as it was living in the fear of God and in the comfort that comes from the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). Here "living in the fear of God" is clearly as needful for building up the Church spiritually and for multiplying it physically as was "living in the comfort that comes from the Holy Spirit." In fact, they are inseparable twins necessary for any healthy church. Clearly all these events occurred in New Testament times. Let us not deceive ourselves. Heavenly truth is a two-way street, while man's so-called logical mind goes one way. This may be one of the fundamental problems in most theological debates, that is, man's attempt by his limited logical thinking to rationalize God's infinite mind. No wonder the truth can never be reached by reasoning. All heavenly people should be heavenly minded: loving God to enjoy His presence and fearing God to keep oneself from sinning against Him.

After making a covenant with his father-in-law, Jacob continued his journey southward. Before long he reached the ford of the Jabbok where Jacob had his climactic experience of God's presence. Every event that came after was either a recollection of this experience or of less importance with regard to God's presence in his life. God was not only with Jacob but revealed Himself face to face. God also disciplined Jacob with a physical disability, teaching him a lesson about pride and self-dependence, and changed his name to Israel (32:28). This was certainly the turning point in Jacob's life and was similar to God's revelation to Abraham recorded in Genesis 17. No wonder he built an altar at Shechem and named it *El Elohe Israel*, that is, "God, God of Israel [the personal God of Jacob]" (33:20).

The last promise concerning God's presence in Genesis was given as Jacob went down to Egypt. When he had arrived at Beersheba, God in a vision told him that He was El, the Elohim of his father, which is El Shaddai, and promised to make him a great nation in Egypt. He further promised to go down to Egypt with him and to bring him back to Canaan after Joseph had closed his eyes for him, that is, at death (46:4). From that time on God's presence was very real to Jacob.

One day after residing in Egypt for 17 years, Jacob became very sick. Joseph came to visit him with his two sons. While blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob described God's presence as the nearness of a shepherd to his sheep, and as a redeemer to his redeemed. This was the first time that God was described as the Shepherd and the Redeemer (48:15-16). In the original language, the phrases "fed me" and "redeemed me" of the Authorized Version are both participles with definite articles. The literal translation would be "the one shepherding" and "the one redeeming." Since both are participles, they denote continual action and indicate Jacob's faith at the time of his making this statement, that

is, El Shaddai was still shepherding and redeeming him. “The one shepherding” was certainly in anticipation of “the Shepherd . . . of Israel” (49:24), of “Yahweh is my Shepherd” (Ps. 23:1), of “He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd” (Is. 40:11), and of “I am the good Shepherd” (John 10:11). And “the one redeeming” may have been contemporary to, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25) and was the seed form of “I will redeem you with a stretched out arm” (Ex. 6:6); of “O LORD . . . my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14) and of “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse” (Gal. 3:13). He was the Shepherd and Redeemer not only of Job and Jacob but is also the Shepherd and Redeemer to all believers throughout all the ages. Even in eternity His redemption will be praised (Rev. 5:9), and He “shall shepherd them” (Rev. 7:17).

As Jacob came to the end of his life, he gathered his sons around him and predicted what would happen to each of them. In his prediction he mentioned that one day Shiloh would come to Judah. The exact meaning of Shiloh has been debated for years. Usually it is taken as either a personal name or the name of a place. If the former is right, the Authorized Version’s translation is accurate. Otherwise, this clause should be translated as “until he comes to Shiloh.” Whether or not one can derive the messianic idea from the word Shiloh is an open question. However, that the overall prophecy in Genesis 49:10 speaks of Messiah’s coming is beyond question. Indeed, the whole context of the verse (49:10-12) tells the messianic story. Who is this person that when he comes, or comes to a place of rest, the obedience of the people will be given to him? It will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

After his prophecy concerning Dan and still under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jacob unexpectedly concluded it with the prayer, “For Thy *Yeshuah*, I do wait, O Yahweh” (49:18 retranslated). *Yeshuah* is usually translated as salvation, and it does mean this. Yet, at the same time, since its pronunciation in Hebrew is just like the New Testament word “Jesus,” how do we know that Jacob was not pronouncing our Lord’s name? Inspiration was not limited by a prophet’s intellectual capacity. Whether or not Jacob could comprehend what he was predicting makes no difference to inspiration. Later revelation tells us that in ancient times the prophets who prophesied of salvation made careful inquiry and search in order that they might have full knowledge of the salvation predicted (1 Pet. 1:10). This could also be the case here. History tells us that Jacob’s prayer was not answered until a long time later when Simeon saw Jesus in the temple and said, “For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation [*sotêrion* in Greek and *Yeshuah* in Hebrew]” (Luke. 2:30). Thus Jacob, having experienced God’s presence, proclaimed the coming of the messianic kingdom with the name and work of the Messiah as the conclusion of God’s covenantal redemption in Genesis.

3. El Shaddai's Presence with Joseph (Gen. 37:1-50:26). Although Joseph was not in the messianic line, he also experienced God’s presence with him. The condition for having God’s presence is simply “to fear Him.” A careful study of the life of Joseph makes it impossible to deny that Joseph was a person who feared the Lord from the beginning to the very end of his life, as he said to his brothers, “This do and live; for I fear God” (42:18). When he was 17 years old, he shepherded his father’s flock with his brothers. Because he feared God, he not only restrained himself from committing the evil things that his brothers were doing but he also brought “a bad report about them” to his father (37:2). For this reason, in addition to the two dreams about being exalted above

them, which he told to his brothers, he was hated by them and finally was sold into Egypt.

While he was a slave in the house of the Egyptian captain Potiphar, “Yahweh was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man” (39:2). Whatever he turned his hand to not only prospered, but he himself became a means of prosperity to his associates (39:2). God’s blessing upon Joseph, which was sensed by his master who handed over whatever he had into his hand, also affected his form and appearance that was exceedingly handsome (39:6). Unfortunately, Potiphar’s wife constantly looked at him sensually, desiring to lie with him. Joseph refused her for two reasons: first, his faithfulness to his master, and second, his fear of God. He said, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Although Joseph, falsely accused by his master’s wife, was put in jail by his master, the jail could not exclude Yahweh’s presence. The Scriptures emphasize that Yahweh was with him even in jail, and therefore he found grace before the prison warden who made Joseph his assistant. “Fear of God” is not only a condition for having God’s presence, it is also the Christian’s most effective weapon in dealing with all forms of temptation. In addition, it can affect a man’s appearance and cause him to find favor with men.

God’s presence continued to be manifested in Joseph’s life. After Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh’s two dreams, Pharaoh appointed him as his second-in-command over his kingdom because he sensed that the Spirit of God was in Joseph (41:38-40). This is the first revelation that the Spirit of God is able to abide within man. In Genesis the revelation of the Holy Spirit was rare but nonetheless progressive. He was seen for the first time in God’s creation (1:2), for the second time in struggling with man (6:3), and this time in abiding within man. First, He disclosed God’s omnipotence; then, God’s holiness; and now, God’s omniscience and omnipresence. Where God’s presence is, there is the Spirit of God. Moreover, God’s presence cannot be recognized without the illumination of the Holy Spirit from within.

Many times Bible readers cannot understand Joseph’s purpose in dealing with his brothers as he did. Actually, whatever he did to his brothers when they came to Egypt to buy food had only one purpose, and that was to drive them to fear God and sense His presence. He declared to his brothers that he himself was a person who feared God (42:18). Through his efforts his brothers recognized first, their own sin and its retribution (42:21-22); second, the judgment of God (44:16); and third, God’s providence (45:5-8). As a result his brothers realized that they, too, were the servants of God (50:17).

In Jacob’s last speech, he illustrated for Joseph that El Shaddai’s presence is like the hands of a strong man guarding a person, the appearance of a shepherd among the sheep, and a rock in the desert which shelters one from either the storm or the blazing sun (49:24). Joseph feared God at all times; therefore, he experienced God’s presence all his life. Even at the end he said that he dared not take God’s place and assured the children of Israel that God would surely bring them back to the promised land (50:19-24).

To experience God’s presence by the operation of the Holy Spirit within is all that a person needs to have his faith strengthened and to make his spiritual life grow. When a person knows the nearness of God, no fear can threaten him, and no darkness can overshadow him. God’s presence makes every place bright and every work powerful.

Only in God's presence can the believer find the foundation for his faith or experience God's faithfulness. Since God's faithfulness and presence are so important to regeneration and sanctification, God revealed them in this period as a foundation for the New Testament teaching concerning these truths.

THE REVELATION OF MAN

In Scripture God's truths are usually taught first by local illustrations which make His later revelation easier to grasp. Abraham's being justified by faith makes justification in Christ more understandable. The delivery of the Israelites from Egypt is an example that makes it possible for God's salvation of the individual to be more fully comprehended. Likewise, believers who lead a godly life and walk in the light of Christ are necessary for the unbelieving masses to perceive God's light. A great need in these last days is for the Church to develop spiritual patterns that will set good examples for Christians who desire to live unreproachable lives in Christ. Twentieth century believers cannot find such a pattern in any human writings; however, in Scripture God has set forth individuals, especially the patriarchs, whose lives are excellent spiritual patterns to follow. Although most believers are familiar with the patriarchal stories, the majority ignore their essential worth, which is God's revelation of His truths through His working in their lives. In truth, the lives of the main patriarchs represent God's progressive revelation in reference to the believer's spiritual life, all the way from his conversion to his reigning with Christ: with Adam representing the sinner saved by grace, Cain and Abel indicating the distinction between lost and saved, Noah showing the deliverance from great destruction that God's grace brings ("But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Gen. 6:8, NKJV), Abraham demonstrating the trials and triumphs of faith, Isaac suggesting the life and growth of sonship, Jacob evidencing the responsibility of serving God through one's life and work as a servant, and finally Joseph representing the reigning with the powerful king (Gen. 41:38-43) which awaits every good and faithful servant of Christ ("He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds to the end, to HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS," Rev. 2:26). This conclusion agrees broadly with the biblical admonition that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching" (2 Tim 3:16). Furthermore, "These things [in the Old Testament] happened unto them [God's people] as examples, and they were written down for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11). And again, "For whatsoever was written earlier times was written to teach us that through [our] perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Thus we can biblically conclude that all Scripture was written to teach how so to live and to bring us, along with its instructions, sufficient encouragement to endure life's testings with hope. For convenience, the patriarchs will be considered in chronological order as they appear in Scripture.

A. Abraham—the Revelation of Faith (Gen. 11:27-25:10)

Faith may be classified as human or divine. To the former belongs all historical faith, dogmatic faith, and temporary faith; and the latter is faith in God's Word, faith in miracles, and faith in Christ. Divine faith arises from an "operation of God" (Col. 2:12) within man's spiritual perception whereby man may see and have confidence in the reality of God's truth. In other words, faith is "spiritual seeing," which gives assurance to our hope and makes us certain of realities that we cannot physically observe (Heb. 11:1). It is not a dead substance but rather a living seed which grows "from faith to faith," that is, from one degree of faith to another (Rom. 1:17). Normally, faith is at first small and weak like a mustard seed, and it takes time to grow. Only a superficial faith springs up quickly like Jonah's gourd and then withers as rapidly because it has no deep root (See

Matt. 13:5-6). Faith has life that animates the just (Hab. 2:4), invigorates other graces (Gal. 5:6; 1 John. 5:4), and is developed by the Spirit's work in us (Gal. 5:22). While the means by which it increases is entirely up to the operation of the Spirit within man's spiritual perception, one way faith grows is for the believer to pass the divine tests and trials which come his way (James 1:2-12). Abraham's faith grew as he passed tests, and the same should be true for believers today. God is not partial. As He tested Abraham and made his faith grow, so will He do for His twentieth-century believers. In other words, God revealed His means of cultivating the growth of Abraham's faith to the end that we might follow Abraham's good steps and avoid his failures.

The full revelation of redemption through faith commenced with Abraham, culminated in Christ, and will be concluded at the end of the Millennium. Although Seth, Noah, and Shem were in the messianic line, the actual restoration of God's redemptive plan began with Abraham, for it was only in him that all the families of the earth were to be blessed. To be an expert or a specialist in something, an individual needs specific training. Usually such training is a serious matter. How much more important then was God's training for one such as Abraham, the father of all those who would believe in the Lord after him. The training of Abraham's faith will be considered by looking at the various tests he was given.

1. Tested by God's Call—Faith in Repentance (Gen. 12:1-7; Acts 7:2-4). God's business methods are different than man's. In general, man writes out a constitution and bylaws, organizes a committee or board, solicits funds, and then finds someone to run the company. God's method is just the opposite. He starts by training a man to do His work. Until He can find someone to train, He allows His business to be postponed.

After confounding the language of the builders of the tower of Babel, God maintained a long silence until He finally found in Ur of the Chaldees a young man named Abram. In order to transform his mind from paganism to faith in the living God, He ordered him out of his country and away from his kindred (Acts 7:3). Abram left his country, but took his kindred (his father Terah and nephew Lot) along with him. Upon reaching Haran, for some reason Abram decided to stop there instead of entering Canaan.

Haran was located to the northeast of Canaan near the border of northwestern Mesopotamia, about halfway from Abram's starting point toward the goal that Yahweh set for him. Abram dared not disobey God's order by remaining at Ur; yet he did not have courage enough to enter Canaan itself. His obedience was only partial and **to God partial obedience is disobedience**. As a result he did not build an altar to Yahweh, nor did Yahweh appear unto him during the time he remained in Haran. **Fellowship with God depends upon obedience**. When obedience fails, fellowship is automatically canceled.

After Terah died Yahweh spoke to Abram again, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred," and for emphasis added the phrase, "from thy father's house" (Gen. 12:1). Abram did depart from Haran as Yahweh had told him; however, he took Lot with him. Although he did not pass his test with honors, at least he did make it to the place God designated for him.

Repentance is one of a few biblical terms that has been both misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is a concept of New Testament revelation, translated from the

combination of a Greek preposition *meta*, which is equal to the Latin prefix *trans*, meaning “change,” and a Greek noun *noia* meaning “thought” or “mind”; hence *metanoia* means “change of mind.” Although this definition is not found in the Old Testament, the idea is certainly there. The seed form may be seen in Yahweh’s statement to Cain, “If thou doest well” (4:7). Its closest synonym in the Hebrew is the verb *shuv* meaning “to turn” as it is used in Ezekiel’s preaching, “Repent [turn] and turn yourselves [literally ‘cause yourselves to turn’] from your idols; and turn away your faces [literally ‘cause your faces to turn away’] from all your abominations” (Ezek. 14:6). *Shuv* however cannot fully express the concept of a “change of mind.” Any change has to pass from one phase to another or must substitute one thing for another, that is, it has to have a negative and a positive aspect. These two aspects of *metanoia* may be found in Ezekiel’s preaching when he says, “But if the wicked will **turn from all his sins** that he hath committed, **and keep all my statutes**, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live” (Ezek. 18:21, emphasis added). This statement explains the concept of repentance in the Old Testament. Negatively, it is to “turn from all . . . sins”; positively, it is to “do that which is lawful and right.” In other words repentance is not just sorrow for what one has done, or is doing, wrong. It is not just a matter of lamenting one’s sins or of expressing one’s emotional agony for the past but is also the change of one’s whole concept in regards to living his daily life.

While the word for repentance is not formed from the word for confession of sin, but from one denoting a change of mind, yet biblically, it does include the confession of sins. Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness” (Acts 8:22). Or as the writer of Hebrews says, “repentance from dead works” (Heb. 6:1). Both passages stress the importance of confession of sins. Repentance, however, does not stop at the confession of sins; it goes on to reorient a person’s mind until Christ’s mind becomes his. In brief, repentance is turning to God from idols, or sins, to serve the living and true God (See 1 Thess. 1:9). So Abram repented when he turned to God from idols by departing from Ur and served the living and true God by entering Canaan. Although he did not fully repent at the first opportunity, he made the full turn when the test was repeated.

Crossing through the land of Canaan, Abram came to Sichem. Yahweh appeared to him there and promised him the land in which he was sojourning. Then Abram built an altar to worship Yahweh (12:7). Whenever a believer passes a divine test, he is rewarded with more understanding and fellowship.

2. Tested by Hardship—Faith in Sincerity (Gen. 12:8-20; 20:1-18). Having passed the first test, Abram advanced to a hill between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. Bethel means “House of God”; Ai means “pile of ruins.” In the Old Testament east refers to “the front”; west denotes “the back.” This then was the situation in which Abram found himself: before him was a pile of ruins; behind him was God’s house. In other words the world in front of him was nothing but a pile of ruins, but the city behind him had “foundations whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). In all circumstances involving a choice between the world and the kingdom of God, even a believer such as Abram must be careful “lest he fall” into sin (See 1 Cor. 10:12).

God does not promise sunshine every day in our lives on the earth, nor has He promised His children that they will not have any trials or sufferings in this world. In

fact, many times trials and sufferings are necessary for the training and benefit of His children. Therefore, even in the promised land, there would be a famine, and it could be severe. One thing, however, is certain, no matter how severe the famine in the promised land, the troubles in Egypt would surely be greater. God's children, living in God's will may experience hardship; nevertheless, outside God's will there will be even greater hardship. Had Abram realized this, he would never have left Canaan. Unfortunately, he was quite immature then. When he saw a severe famine developing in Canaan, he seemed to doubt that God had really called him to live there. If He had, why was such a severe shortage of food come upon this promised land? He tried to solve the problem by himself, forgetting all that God had promised and done for him. When "if," "maybe," "suppose," or "in case" are prefixed to a person's thinking towards God, his faith will assuredly shrink. As a result, Abram neglected his eternal calling and turned his thoughts to his immediate physical needs. He should never have doubted his calling that was very clear and impressive. He doubted anyway. Having lost sight of God's greatness and faithfulness, he failed to take hold of it and unhesitatingly "**went down** into Egypt."

While in Egypt he built no altar unto Yahweh, nor did Yahweh appear to him even once. Famine did not threaten him there; yet his security in God was gone. Like the grave, sin and disobedience never say, "It is enough!" (See Prov. 30:16). When one sin has been knowingly committed, another will likely follow. Abram's disobedience cost him his sense of security in God and caused his conscience to accuse him, and he lied as a defense mechanism to counter the fear that gripped his heart. When faith goes out, fear comes in and defense mechanisms automatically take the place of trusting in God. Had Yahweh not intervened, Abram might have been slain in Egypt. Nevertheless, Yahweh continued to demonstrate His faithfulness toward him by protecting his wife from being morally and spiritually ruined by Pharaoh. In the end God allowed him to be expelled by the Egyptian king. Although Abram had passed his first test; he failed this one. God repeats spiritual tests over and over again until the believer passes, provided he **never gives up**. Abram failed the test of truthfulness. When his dissembling was discovered, he refused to confess it before God and Pharaoh; therefore, he would have to take the test again. Those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past will be doomed to repeat them. Whenever a person has failed a spiritual test, he may be sure that the same test will sooner or later come to him again. Yet God is faithful and will never let a person be tested beyond what he is able to bear. Have faith in Him!

After more than 20 years had elapsed, for some unknown reason, Abraham again journeyed toward the south and stayed for a while in Gerar. Once more he introduced his wife Sarah to the people as his sister. So the king of Gerar took her. If the faithful God had not intervened once more, King Abimelech might have defiled Sarah. Warned by God in a dream by night, Abimelech called Abraham in the morning and rebuked him (20:1-9). Although Abraham had failed the test of truthfulness again, he nevertheless did confess his insincerity before Abimelech and thus made himself right before God and man. He said, "And it came about, when God made me wander from my father's house, that I said to her 'everywhere we go, say of me, He is my brother'" (20:13). It is evident that the root of Abraham's deceit was not planted in Egypt but in Ur. Any plant that has not been uprooted is bound to grow again. So it grew again in Gerar. This time, however, Abraham did uproot it and God let him pass the test.

Since Abraham had barely passed this second test, God did not give him any new revelation at this time nor did he build any new altar to Yahweh. A test barely passed does not give one a great deal of honor before God. Nevertheless, God still honored the prophetic office that He had given to Abraham and when he prayed for Abimelech's family, God restored the birth privilege to the queen and the ladies in the royal family. A prophet who might have no children himself can still pray for others to have theirs. God is faithful to His appointment.

3. Tested by Gain—Faith in Meekness (Gen. 13:1-18). Later revelation clearly disclosed a principle for all backsliders in all ages, namely, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). In this principle there are three steps that any backslider must take if he wants to restore his fellowship with God: first, recognize his failure—confession; second, turn from his failure—repentance; third, resume the life and work that he had before the failure—restoration. There is no shortcut to restoration. The point at which a person has fallen is the very point from which he must begin again. God requires that all things must be done in order (See 1 Cor. 14:40). This was exactly what Abram did to restore his fellowship with God. First, he went “up out of Egypt,” whereas he previously “went down into” (12:9-13). Second, since he had gone down into Egypt from “the south,” he had to return “into the south” (13:1). Third, since he journeyed to the south from his camp between Bethel and Ai, he had to return to the very spot where he previously had pitched his tent and built his altar (13:3-4). Having completed these steps, he then “called on the name of Yahweh” for the first time since he had gone down into Egypt.

From birth, mankind inherits a desire for possessions and the fruit of that desire is gain. Rightful gain is undoubtedly beneficial to the gainer. Wrongful gain, however, is not a benefit but a judgment upon the gainer and upon the three or four generations following him. Riches often become the source of quarrels, envy, hatred, and even murder. The riches Abram gained from Egypt were no exception; he acquired them by telling a lie and would reap judgment because of it. The herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot had been constantly quarreling from the time they left Egypt. Finally, Abram asked Lot to move away from him. According to the custom, since Abram was senior to Lot he had the right of first choice in selecting his pastures, but he gave the preference to his nephew. This was Abram's victory. Through his past failure, he had learned that God's appointment is always better than his own choosing. By giving no thought to his own loss but by considering instead Lot's benefit, he passed this test of meekness. He unconsciously applied the “seed principle” later revealed by Christ during His earthly ministry, which is “Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33). Accordingly, Yahweh awarded him not only the land in which he was living but also all the land that he had seen, was seeing, and would see (13:15, 17). He also promised him that the number of his descendants would be as the dust of the earth (13:16). Abram then moved onward to Hebron, a name derived from a verb meaning “to be united,” hence “companion, association,” which illustrates the fellowship between God and Abram. There, Abram built an altar to Yahweh once more. Whenever a new test is passed, new blessings and new fellowship are automatically added.

Abram passed his test of meekness; but meekness is an abstract noun and not easy to

define. It is not equivalent to weak compliance, though it may look like it. The best place to find its definition is in Christ since meekness was the essence of His life (See Matt. 11:29). Meekness in Christ's life was manifested toward God and toward His fellowmen. Toward God He submitted Himself without reservation (See Phil. 2:6). Whatever came to Him from God, He would take without any complaint or murmuring, saying "The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it" (See John. 18:11). Toward man He was always peaceable when personally provoked or unjustly wronged: "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). He often forfeited His own rights and privileges for the good of others, and at last He died for the redemption of the world. Meekness, after all, is not an escapist mechanism of a feeble character but is rather the self-restraint inherent in a strong and victorious virtue. Indeed, at times keeping quiet is actually much harder than speaking out. Meekness, however, does not mean an inability to express indignation. Whenever Christ saw the corruption of Judaism's religious leaders and the wickedness of demons, His wrath was kindled and His justice was displayed by severely rebuking the leaders and casting out the demons. Meekness is a lamb; yet at times it should be a lion. When people mistreated Christ Himself, He bore it with patience and compassion. However, when anyone wronged God's kingdom or mistreated God's truth, He indignantly denounced that evil and fought it with His own life. As a result God "hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

This definition of meekness agrees with what Abram experienced in his test. In the personal conflict between him and Lot, he forfeited his right of seniority without any complaint. Yet when he learned that the four kings of the east had wronged the five local kings, he risked his life to defeat the invaders and to restore the five principalities. Having returned from defeating the four kings, Abram, according to custom, could have had all the spoils that he recaptured from the invaders. Yet, when he was offered the booty, he rejected even a thread or the thong of a sandal. He must have realized that his victory was beautified by the Lord (See Ps. 149:4), and that as long as he was meek he would "eat and be satisfied" (Ps. 22:26). Abram passed this great test generated by a conflict with a close family member with a perfect score and obtained an unusual reward from God. His faith was strengthened, personal justification was granted, the promise of the land of Canaan was confirmed, and the coming 400 years in the history of his descendants was revealed. Above all he was appointed to be the father of all who believe in God. What a great reward God has prepared for those who forfeit their legal rights for the sake of His name and for their fellowman.

4. Tested by Waiting—Faith in Patience (Gen. 15:1-17:27). Man likes to do things in a hurry. God prefers to take things in their due time. Waiting patiently before God is certainly not a natural trait of man's old nature, but is an advanced virtue of the mature believer. Yahweh had already tested Abram regarding obedience, sincerity, and meekness, and now was going to see if he could wait patiently before the LORD.

At Sichem, Yahweh had promised Abram that he would have descendants although the emphasis then was on the land rather than on the descendants (12:7). From that time on Yahweh progressively enlarged the promise. Abram was promised that his people would be "as the dust of the earth" (13:16) and, later, as numerous as the stars (15:5). Yet ten years had elapsed since he had entered Canaan (16:3), and the promise was still

unfulfilled because his wife Sarai remained childless. Since both of them were growing older every day, the hope of having a child was becoming dimmer every moment. He began to wonder if God's promise was flexible, since God had only said, "he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be thine heir," and did not verbally assert that his son should necessarily be born to Sarai (15:4). In the meantime Sarai had been suggesting to her husband that he should do as his contemporaries did and take Hagar as a concubine, in order that she might have a child through her maidservant. Abram might have thought that this could be the means to gain the promised heir since it was not wrong according to the standard of social morality in his day. Finally, consenting to Sarai's suggestion he ceased to wait on God and took Hagar in. Before long Hagar became pregnant, and the evil consequences of impatience in waiting before God began to develop in his family. This tragic mistake harmed not only his immediate family but also his descendants for generations to come.

Believers are encouraged in the Scriptures to wait before the Lord. The imperative "wait on the Lord," the indicative "wait for the Lord," and the like often appear in the poetic and prophetic books, especially in Psalms and Isaiah. Because our old nature is impatient we must learn the lesson of patience by waiting before the Lord. Broadly speaking, the difference between Saul and David might be distinguished by this trait: the former was impatient before the Lord, whereas the latter waited patiently. In later revelation being patient in the Lord is disclosed as a qualification for reigning with Christ: "if we endure we shall reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12, retranslated).

Waiting does not mean to sit still in idleness, nor to merit God's favor by procrastination, but to rest securely in God's faithfulness, thoroughly believing that what He has promised He will surely fulfill in due time. It is like those blessed servants waiting for their lord to return from the wedding, with their loins girded about and their lights burning (Luke 12:35-36). In other words, waiting is not being idle or inactive but is rather an attitude of confidence in God, that is, resting in God's faithfulness, looking toward God's fulfillment, and accepting God's time. Accordingly, **waiting before the Lord is never a waste of time** but is the training of faith that works patience. Had Abram realized the importance of this training, he could have avoided the problem in his family and the trouble between the Arabs and the Israeli people that persists even to this day. Abram failed this test. As a result Yahweh did not speak to him for 14 years, nor did Abram build any more altars to Yahweh during that interval. Impatience can truly ruin a Christian's fellowship with God.

After 14 years of silence, Yahweh appeared to Abram as El Shaddai to confirm the covenant with him. He changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah and expanded the revelation concerning Abraham's promised heir, saying that Sarah was to give birth to him. At this time Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 89 and physically there was no possibility for them to produce a child. Humanly speaking this was an impossible situation; spiritually, however, Abraham had been developing confidence in Yahweh as later revelation tells us he was then "fully persuaded that, what he [the Lord] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). He began to realize that whatever the situation might be, God's promise would never fail; and however long Yahweh might delay fulfilling His promise, He would never forget His words. Eventually he made up his mind to wait hopefully and patiently before the Lord.

5. Tested by Other's Needs—Faith in Love (Gen. 18:1-19:28). The three great virtues in the ancient Orient were hospitality, courtesy, and patience; among these three hospitality was counted as the crown. This was why Lot would rather have his own daughters ruined than to see his guests harmed (19:8), and why Job would count it as an abomination if he ate his meat by himself and paid no attention to the needs of others (See Job 31:16-23). Even today among the nomadic Arabs, if a person neglects hospitality or allows a beggar to pass his door with empty hands, he is counted as an accursed one. In the New Testament Jesus said, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed" (Luke 14:13-14). Later, hospitality was also commanded in the New Testament and emphasized by referring to Abraham's service to Yahweh and the two angels in order to prove its importance (Heb. 13:2). Nowadays there is a lot of noisy discussion about love, yet it often fails to produce any concrete results. People would rather discuss love than practice hospitality, which is the fundamental act of Christian love. As a result believers too seldom put biblical love into practice.

The question "What is love?" has long been a puzzle in philosophical circles. To date there has never been a satisfactory definition given from secular sources. In the New Testament there are two definitions: objectively, love desires only the best for the person loved (John 3:16) and subjectively, love is a laying down of one's very self for others (1 John 3:16). Abraham demonstrated both of these aspects when he entertained the three strangers.

Hospitality can be a burdensome and tiresome task, especially during the summer season at the noon hour on a hot day. Abraham, however, did not mind the discomfort, but only considered the needs of his guests. Seeing three strangers in front of his tent, he realized that they needed some water to wash their feet, a shady place to rest, and some refreshment for their stomachs as well as their hearts (18:4-5). He disregarded the hot season, hot day, and hot hour and provided them with all they needed. Then he stood as a servant to serve them. In so doing he passed the test of love. As a reward he was given another confirmation of Isaac's birth, reassurance of being the dispenser of God's blessings, instruction for family education, the revelation of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the answer to his prayer for the two wicked cities, if ten righteous could be found. (Unfortunately, there were not even ten righteous in both cities; otherwise, the sunken sites at the south end of the Dead Sea might be living cities today.)

6. Tested by Separation—Faith in Overcoming the Flesh (Gen. 21:1-34). God's revelation is progressive and so is God's training. Abraham passed the test of faith (11:21-12:8), failed the test of truthfulness (12:10-20), obtained knowledge of God's sovereignty through failure, and passed the test of temperance (13:1-14:24), at first failed the test of patience but passed it later (16:1-16), passed the test of godliness (17:1-27) and brotherly kindness (18:1-19:28), and barely passed the retest of truthfulness (20:1-18). Abraham then came to his two final tests which were designed to lead him to love God without reservation: overcoming his very own flesh by sending Ishmael away (21:1-34) and complete surrender to his Lord by offering up as a sacrifice to God his only son Isaac (22:1-24). As Scripture says, we are to love God supremely with all the ability that we have and our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-33).

God operates on His own schedule. When His time for an event comes, He acts without delay. The time God set for the birth of Abraham's heir finally arrived. Sarah gave birth to a son whom Abraham named Isaac, which means "he laughs," commemorating Abraham's (17:17) and Sarah's (18:12) past laughter and anticipating that those who hear it in the future would also laugh (21:6).

When Isaac reached the age to be weaned, Abraham gave a big banquet for this unusual occasion in his family. Sadly, to Sarah's annoyance, "the son of Hagar the Egyptian" mocked the young heir during the celebration. According to later revelation, such mocking was in reality a persecution of Isaac by Ishmael (Gal. 4:29-30). Sarah demanded that Abraham cast out both Hagar and Ishmael, which was a very grievous act in the sight of Abraham (21:10-11). God, however, encouraged him to do as Sarah had demanded and told him that only through Isaac would his descendants be counted. The following morning he obediently sent Hagar and Ishmael away. It would be very painful for any father to cause such a separation, yet Abraham did so without complaint, accepting that God's way is always the best. Thus Abraham passed the test of separation and was rewarded in that he was assured that Ishmael would be blessed as well as his heir Isaac. Among the nations Abraham gained an ally in Abimelech who recognized God's presence with him. In his spiritual perception, Abraham was shown that Yahweh is not only El Shaddai but also El Olam—the Eternal God (21:33).

The narrative here is simple, but the symbolic significance of it is very complex. According to the progressive revelation given in the New Testament, Isaac and Ishmael symbolize the different natures of man (Gal. 4:29). Isaac represents the nature of the Spirit; Ishmael, the nature of flesh. They had different origins, lives, and destinations. Isaac was born by promise; Ishmael was born out of Abraham's selfish desire. Isaac's life was free; Ishmael's was in bondage. Isaac became the family's sole heir; Ishmael was cast out of the family. Thus we have a picture of both the new and old natures of man. They could not stay together, nor could they take each other's place. The old nature had to be cast out. The revelation in Romans tells us that flesh is at enmity with God and can neither be subject to nor please God (Rom. 8:7-8). God has to do away with it. The way to deal with the flesh is not to attempt to change it for the better but to let it be cast out, that is, allow it to be crucified with Christ and thereby be dead to oneself forever. As Galatians 5:24 says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Flesh, as defined here, does not refer to the atoms of the body, many of which are renewed every year. It is the sinful and perverted nature which man inherits from Adam. It hates what God loves, and loves what God hates. Within it there is nothing good. Some may think that in the flesh there are some good things. That is a mistake. Paul was well-educated, highly cultured, and deeply trained in religion. Morally speaking he was blameless; yet he said that in his flesh there dwelt no good thing (Rom. 7:18). He knew that flesh as a whole is at enmity with God, and no part of it can please Him. Flesh is like the Canaanites who were doomed to be totally destroyed. Whoever saves and exploits his flesh will be in all sorts of trouble.

To be crucified with Christ is a process. No one can agree to his flesh being crucified until he is willing to renounce his flesh, that is, the old sinful nature. No one will renounce his old nature until he detests his sinful self, and no one will detest his sinful

self until he sees the wickedness of it. Unless the Holy Spirit illuminates his inner eyes (his spiritual perception), no one can see the wickedness of his sinful self. In brief, realizing the crucifixion of self with Christ depends entirely upon the operation of the Holy Spirit within that person who would obey Him without reservation. The Holy Spirit will lead him to see the reality of his flesh, and by seeing it, to hate his self-centered old nature. The Spirit will then compel him to the very center of despair (which is the place of death), enable him to plunge himself into the death of Christ, and make him one with Christ. As Lightfoot said, “I have no longer a separate existence, I am merged in Christ.”¹⁰⁴

7. The Final Test—Faith in Perfect Surrender (Gen. 22:1-19). Having passed all preceding tests (as the Scripture says, “after these things”) Abraham was facing his final test. In the Authorized Version, the verb “tempt” in the clause “that God did tempt Abraham” is misleading. It is an intensive form of the verb meaning “to lift”; hence “to test,” “to try,” or “to put someone to test,” but not “to tempt.” Theologically, it is inaccurate to say that God tempts man, since later revelation says, “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man” (James 1:13). The difference between “to tempt” and “to test” is the difference in motive. The former intends to harm others, whereas the latter acts for the benefit of others. God never tempts man, but He does test man for the purpose of developing man’s faith in Him and love for Him. In the past He had tested Abraham in many ways, now He was going to give him the final test, a very severe test indeed.

A preliminary stage of this test was to cast Ishmael out. The removal of Ishmael might be justified, since he was born after the flesh rather than by God’s promise and thus was not ordained by God to be Abraham’s descendant to bring forth redemptive truths. However, since Isaac was the son for God’s redemptive plan, there was no logical human reason to burn him as a sacrifice. Abraham had always been satisfied to have Ishmael in the family. When God gave His promise that Sarah would bring forth a son, Abraham said, “O that Ishmael might live before thee.” It was God who had insisted that only the child to whom Sarah gave birth should be his son (17:18-19). Now Ishmael was gone, and God was demanding that he give up Isaac, also. What was God doing? Abraham, however, did not question God, but demonstrated his faith in an unusual way. He believed that what God had promised, He would surely fulfill one way or another. How and why was not Abraham’s concern. He confirmed his heroic faith by the detailed, orderly steps of his preparation. The six *waw* consecutives (ands) in 22:3 indicate that his mind was not disturbed, nor was he emotionally upset. His heart had perfect confidence in God. He believed that, even if Isaac were burned on the altar, God could raise him up from the ashes (Heb. 11:19). So he said to his servants that he and Isaac would come back to them after they had completed their worship (22:5). Abraham passed the test.

Reaching God’s appointed destination, he built an altar and laid Isaac upon it. As he lifted his knife to sacrifice his only son, he was dramatically interrupted by the Angel of Yahweh. Lifting his eyes Abraham located the ram caught in a thicket behind him, and he took it and offered it in place of his beloved son (22:13). Here the vicarious atonement was revealed clearly for the first time in Scripture. It served as an anticipation

¹⁰⁴J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1902), p. 119.

of the Exodus-Eve when the firstborn, along with the other Israelites, were redeemed by the substitution of lambs (Ex. 12:1-29). Isaac was dead, not personally but substitutionally. Thus Abraham's unreserved love to God was beautifully demonstrated. By following God's directions concerning Ishmael and Isaac, he had indeed overcome his own flesh and blood. By His own name God assured Abraham of the immutability of His faithfulness and He enumerated the blessings that He had stored up for Abraham's descendants. First, He would multiply his descendants like the stars of the heaven, as He had previously shown him following Abraham's defeat of the four kings from the east (15:5), and as the sand upon the seashore, which was similar to "the dust of the earth" that He promised him after the departure of his nephew Lot (13:16). The phrase "as sand upon the seashore" should refer to Abraham's spiritual descendants, whereas "as numerous as the stars in the sky" should refer to his physical descendants since "stars" were not mentioned in Isaac and Jacob's covenantal promises (See 28:14; 32:12).

Second, He desired that Abraham's descendants overcome their enemies (22:17). To "possess the gate of their enemies" means to rule over their enemies, since in ancient times the gate of a city was the governmental center of that city. "Shall possess" is an imperfect with *waw* conjunctive and would be more accurately translated as a jussive, "And may thy seed possess." In other words this was God's desire rather than His promise. Had the Israelites been obedient to God, they would have become rulers over the nations a long time ago. Unfortunately, they rejected this heavenly honor again and again, and now it has passed to the Church. May His redeemed Church never reject either Him or His promise that she will rule over the nations (See Rev. 2:26-27).

Third, it was promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed "in thy [Abraham's] seed" (22:18). Twice before "in thy seed" was phrased as "in thee" (See 12:3; 18:18). So the preceding "in thee" was actually the anticipation of "in thy seed" here. "Seed" can be either a singular or a collective noun and should be interpreted according to its context. The seed mentioned in Genesis 22:17 is doubtless a collective noun referring to Israel. However, the seed in verse 18, according to later revelation given through Paul, is a singular noun referring to Christ, because **only in one of his seed** shall all the people of the world be blessed (Gal. 3:16; See also Acts 3:25-26; 4:12). "Shall be blessed" has a different stem than does the same phrase in the preceding passages (12:3; 18:18). Here it is an intensive reflexive; the preceding ones are passive, including the force of reflexive or reciprocal. When all three passages are taken together, "Shall be blessed" expresses the idea of "shall be blessed," "shall bless themselves," and "shall bless one another," revealing that God's blessing has both objective and subjective aspects. Without the believer's subjective willingness and acceptance, objective blessings can never become a reality. With subjective acceptance through faith, the Christian can be blessed and can also bless others.

After Abraham passed the test of faith in perfect surrender, he was tested no further. Having completed the course God set for him, Abraham was qualified to conduct the few remaining items of business in his life. First, he buried his dead out of his sight, and through the burial he possessed a piece of land in Canaan as a pledge of the future possession of that land by his descendants (23:1-20). Next he sent his servant, Eliezer, to his own native people to find a wife for his son Isaac. God's redemptive plan would have never been fulfilled without her (24:1-67). He then divided some of his property among

the children born to his second wife and sent them away from Isaac (25:1-6). These tasks completed, he went to be with the Lord whom he loved even more than his own life. He was indeed qualified to be the outstanding example of faith for all those who believe in the Lord.

B. Isaac—The Revelation of Sonship (Gen. 25:19-28:5)

New Testament revelation says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). This shows that the purpose of Christ’s redemption is not just to save a sinner but also to qualify him to be God’s son and His heir. This truth is exactly what God revealed through the lives of Abraham and Isaac. God, having revealed His ways in training a believer’s faith, next revealed to all believers the life of a notable son to show them how to lead lives worthy of being God’s ideal sons.

The emphasis set forth by God’s revelation through Isaac’s life is different from that of Abraham’s. In Abraham the believer’s faith is illustrated, but in Isaac the believer’s life is stressed. The former pays attention to the believer’s training, whereas the latter takes note of the believer’s witnessing. One concerns itself with “**just . . . by faith,**” while the other is more concerned with “the just shall **live** by faith.” In Abraham the way to become God’s beloved is indicated, and in Isaac the behavior of God’s beloved is described. In short, Abraham’s life shows the first aspect of redemption—faith, whereas Isaac’s life marks the second aspect—sonship. Let us consider Isaac’s sonship and its implications for the believer’s sonship.

1. The Life of Sonship. The promise of Isaac’s birth was first given when Abram arrived at Sichem in Canaan, although that first promise was not specific. Then one year before Isaac’s birth, God’s promise of a son was given again, together with the son’s name and the time and purpose of his birth (Gen. 17:19-21). Having waited for a quarter of a century for the promised heir of the covenant, the hearts of the 100-year-old father and the 90-year-old mother were understandably gladdened by the fulfillment of the divine promise in the birth of their son. The old age of the couple proved the supernatural origin of Isaac’s birth, for by all known natural laws, the birth of a child unto them was utterly impossible. This unique birth serves as a divine illustration of the new birth which initiates the Christian’s spiritual sonship. The believer, like Isaac, is born into the heavenly family by a miraculous birth that occurs according to the divine promise, even the Word of God. As against all natural circumstances Isaac was born into Abraham’s family, so beyond all natural ability the depraved sinner is born again into the family of God. As the Bible says, “This [is] the Lord’s doing; and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Mark 12:11).

The life of this promised son not only began with a miraculous birth but continued to be endowed with covenantal blessings. His birth was not only free from slavery, but he was privileged to be the heir of the Abrahamic Covenant and the successor in the messianic line. His life may be summed up by the answer that his father gave to his question on the way to Mount Moriah. After they had left their servant and while they were still walking, he said to his father, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” “My son,” answered Abraham, “God will provide.” God’s

providence was the cause of Isaac's richly endowed life. Whatever Isaac had, God had provided through Abraham. He possessed all his father's riches and blessings as Abraham's old servant testified, when he said, "And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master . . . and unto him hath he given all that he hath" (24:36). It was also confirmed by later revelation that stated that "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac" (25:5). Isaac never labored for the wealth he received. He simply took all the fruit of Abraham's work and enjoyed it. He did not need to travel to Canaan as Abraham did, for he was born there; nor did he personally have to fight with Ishmael, since that problem was taken care of by his parents. He did not even have to find his wife or obtain his own burying place. God provided his wife, by blessing Eliezer's search for her, and Abraham had previously provided for his burial site (49:29-32). Moreover, God's own word to Isaac guaranteed that he would experience this kind of life. When Isaac planned to go down to Egypt, Yahweh appeared to him and promised that He would give his descendants all those lands that He had previously promised in His Abrahamic Covenant, and for Abraham's sake would multiply Isaac's descendants as the stars of the sky (26:2-5). In truth, the promised son's life was the harvest from seed his father had sown.

Believers, likewise, are the heirs of God, who did not fight or struggle for redemption but simply claimed what God the Father has done in Christ. They did not work for their own salvation but simply accepted what God has provided in the Redeemer. Nor do they need to crucify themselves but instead claim Christ's crucifixion with them, as it is written in the revelation according to Paul, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). However, none of these exceedingly great and precious privileges can be realized without obedience that must be expressed in faith and willingness.

Isaac, doubtless, was the most obedient son in the Old Testament, although he was not an ideal father. Scripture nowhere indicates that he was rebellious in any way. His submission to his father and his confidence in what his father did are excellent examples for all the children of God. He, as a young man, might well have been curious at times; nevertheless, never in his life did he question his father's motives and doings. Even at the moment when his father lifted the knife over him, he had confidence in his love. Although it was Abraham who offered Isaac, nevertheless, Isaac had to dedicate himself willingly by submitting to his aged father as he was bound and placed on the altar. Keil and Delitzsch said here, "In permitting himself to be bound and laid upon the altar without resistance, he gave up his natural life to death to rise to a new life through the grace of God."¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, no believer can enjoy the fullest rights of heavenly sonship unless his heart is absolutely obedient and his life is completely dedicated.

2. The Growth of Sonship. Growth is always accompanied by struggle. No success can ever be achieved without striving. Whether the growth of a plant, of an organization, or of sonship, the principle is always the same. Problems, persecutions, and even failures are often necessary for a person's growth. The growth of Isaac's sonship was no exception.

Twenty years after Isaac's marriage, his wife Rebekah was still without child. This drew Isaac to a closer fellowship with the Lord as he earnestly prayed for a son. Prayer

¹⁰⁵Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

may continue for a long time before it is answered, but the Lord has never failed to have heard any prayer. In the fullness of God's own time, Isaac's petition was accepted, and Esau and Jacob were born.

Trouble between the twin brothers started before their birth. When they were still in their mother's womb, they "struggled together within her." The verb "struggled together" is an intensive and reciprocal form of the verb meaning "crush"; hence it signifies "crush each other violently." Although it was hard for them to display such violence within her, nevertheless, their movement must have been somewhat alarming; otherwise, Rebekah would not have been so troubled. After their birth the quiet life of the contemplative thinker Isaac was disturbed. Both domestic problems and tribal persecutions invaded his tranquility. His domestic problems sprang from the fraternal rivalry between the twin brothers, perhaps the result of the parental partiality of Isaac toward Esau and of Rebekah toward Jacob. Most parents unconsciously favor the child who supplies more of their own needs. This was true also with Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac loved the roving hunter Esau because he represented pleasures which his own sedate life could never gratify. "He did eat of his venison" is the translation of the literal "for game was in his mouth." It refers to Esau's ability to cook the game he caught according to his father's taste. Rebekah favored the peaceful and industrious shepherd Jacob, since he could give her more of his company and filial affection. As a result, there was a schism in the family, and the efforts of each brother to outdo his sibling were ongoing. Cheating, lying, bitterness, and hatred took the place of brotherly love and mutual help. This surely pierced Isaac's tender heart.

Esau's disdain for his birthright would have been another sore grief to Isaac. Esau was the firstborn, yet he sold his birthright for a bowl of red-brown lentil stew. He never realized the importance of his right; nor did he consider the far-reaching consequences of his action, but instead forfeited his sacred heritage for a moment of sensual enjoyment. Returning from hunting famished and weary, he saw the fresh pottage that Jacob had just cooked, and gave himself up to the temptation of the "red stuff." His statement, "Please let me swallow some of the red, this red" indicates how thoughtless he was. He did not even know exactly what that red stuff was. Instead of offering him some food as any good brother would do, Jacob demanded Esau's birthright in exchange for bread and lentil stew. Esau, instead of rebuking Jacob for his unreasonable demand, sold his honor and nobility without a second thought. By this act he made light of his sacred birthright, and therefore, the New Testament revelation categorized him as a God-dishonoring person (Heb. 12:16). Such an indifferent attitude toward his birthright proves Esau's unworthiness to be Isaac's firstborn, for the patriarchal birthright was a sign not only of the material blessings of the chieftainship but also of the covenantal blessings of Yahweh.

In addition to the sibling rivalry, the Hittite marriages of Esau were certainly another great sorrow for Isaac (26:34). "A grief of mind" (26:35) is literally "bitterness of spirit" in the original. Every time he and Rebekah glanced at one of Esau's wives, they were inwardly pained because they were reminded that their firstborn had defiled the family's honor. This type of marriage endangered the spiritual heritage of the family and had therefore been forbidden by Abraham. Isaac's disappointment and broken heart can be completely shared only by those who themselves have had unprofitable sons.

From outside the family Isaac was persecuted by the greedy Philistines who noted his

great wealth with envy. Having been in Gerar for some time, the patriarch wanted to cease being a nomad and settle down. When he began to farm, due to Yahweh's blessing upon him, he not only reaped thirty or sixty fold from what he had sown but even one hundred fold, which was the highest productivity in the land. No wonder the Philistines envied him. Prosperity breeds envy, and envy often brings forth injury. This proved true in Isaac's life as the Philistines in their envy moved against Isaac and his servants. First, they stopped up the well that Isaac had inherited from his father Abraham (26:15); second, they expelled Isaac from the city of Gerar (26:16); third, they took over two wells which had been dug by Isaac's servants (26:19-21).

In response to his Philistine persecutors, Isaac not only maintained a good testimony but also overcame their envy and persecutions with persistent meekness. Evidently he had confidence in God and believed that as long as Yahweh was with him and blessed him, no one would be able to hurt or belittle him. Although he lost his fruitful farm and two wells to the Philistines, God made more room for him and let him have better wells and "be fruitful in the land" (26:22). In the end even Abimelech, the king who forced him to leave Gerar, came and made a pact with him for he saw that Yahweh was with Isaac and had blessed him (26:28-29). Thus we see that meekness towards man and persistence in service are the indispensable prerequisites for any measure of success in the growth of sonship.

Jacob's deception in obtaining the paternal blessing intended for Esau was another domestic persecution for Isaac. The dimness of Isaac's eyesight coupled with his partiality for Esau and his appetite for the tasty game of his hunting son presented the opportunity for the deception. The sad result was the fanning of the long-smoldering coals of bitterness between the twin brothers into an open flame of hatred, which caused a 20-year separation between the brothers. The dimness of Isaac's eyes matched the darkness of his spiritual perception. At the same time, he was also troubled with thoughts of death (27:4). His spiritual perception was so dim that he failed to recall the divine prophecy given prior to the birth of his sons that "the elder shall serve the younger" (25:23). He also overlooked Esau's negligence regarding his birthright and his Hittite marriages. The clear evidence of these facts should have enabled him to do the right thing. His insight, however, was clouded by his partiality to Esau and his tasty venison. Thus, ignoring all the facts, he gave his paternal blessings supposedly to Esau, but really to the supplanter Jacob in disguise. Interestingly, he stopped short of bestowing the covenantal promise for the future possession of Canaan (Compare 27:28-29 with 28:3-4). It seems that although Isaac's spiritual insight was dim, he nevertheless dared not give Esau the promise of the land of Canaan, which God intended to give to Jacob. This incident reveals clearly that greed can be a temptation to any aged believer or minister who uses his ears in place of his eyes and listening instead of observation.

Isaac was a backslider but only for a short time. Before long his clear insight was restored. When he learned that Esau was planning to put his brother to death, Isaac agreed with Rebekah to send Jacob to his brother-in-law's home. He called Jacob to him, charged him to marry a wife from his uncle Laban's family, and blessed him with the genuine covenantal blessings, in which God's covenantal name El Shaddai was invoked, and the "blessing of Abraham" was transferred from himself to Jacob (28:3-4). Indeed, great is His faithfulness! In spite of Isaac's grave failure, God's grace was still sufficient

to restore him, renew his spiritual perception, and make his heartstrings vibrate once more in tune with God's heart. Just as Isaac, believers will never be rejected by God in a moment of backsliding but will be restored to fellowship by the power of the eternal Father, provided they are willing to be restored.

C. Jacob—the Revelation of Service (Gen. 25:19-34; 27:1-35:29; 46:1-47:12; 48:1-49:33)

When God first revealed Himself to Moses at Mount Horeb, He called Himself “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6, 15-16). This title became His covenantal title, taking the place of El Shaddai. But it also referred to who God is to His children and what He in turn expects them to be toward Him. To Abraham He was the faithful God who brought him through all his trials of faith and allowed him to experience God's faithfulness, in order that he might realize the necessity of committing himself to God without reservation. To Isaac He was the providing God who supplied him with all his needs as a son in order that he might have a rich life. But to Jacob He was a chastening God so that through His discipline Jacob might mortify his wicked self, be delivered from his egocentric life and casuistic mind, and become a good and faithful servant. Thus, God is the faithful God to those who have faith in Him, who will live up to their sonship, and who will serve Him as good and faithful servants. In other words, to believe in God is not just becoming God's son and enjoying what God has prepared for the believer in Christ, but it is also taking on the responsibility of serving God through one's life and work as a servant. God is the God of Jacob because He is a working God. He has been working throughout all the ages, and He likes to see His children working together with Him. As Jesus told the Jews, “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these things also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19; See 10:37).

Provision had been made for Isaac as a son; but, as a servant, Jacob had to earn everything himself. He had to encounter all kinds of troubles in order to learn to be “good and faithful” (Matt. 25:23). Both of these aspects are necessary in a believer's life. Without provision he cannot stand trial, and without trial his spiritual life can never grow. Service is indeed indispensable for growth. Jacob, through his trials and service, had his selfishness, egotism, and casuistry burned out. In this manner his faith in God was strengthened and his denial of self was reinforced. Great is His lovingkindness! Even Jacob, the supplanter, He molded into a precious vessel. The steps of this molding will be considered as: casuistry abandoned, faithfulness practiced, and self mortified.

1. Casuistry Abandoned (Gen. 25:19-34; 27:1-29:22). Although Jacob's birth was an answer to his father's prayer, and although he was upright in his youth, yet as he grew older he became self-centered and habitually took advantage of others. His self-centered character, in truth, was deeply rooted in his nature. Before his birth he struggled with his brother in his mother's womb (Gen. 25:22), and at his birth he tried to stop his brother from being the firstborn by holding him back by his heel (25:26). Consequently, he was named Jacob.

Jacob, like Isaac and some fifty other Hebrew names in the Old Testament, is a verbal form. Nominally, it means “he who takes hold of by the heel,” essentially, it means

“supplanter” as Esau interpreted it saying, “Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times” (27:36). This was indeed an illustration of Jacob’s character which plagued him most of his life and was the main cause of his future sufferings.

In his adolescence Jacob led a virtuous life as was evidenced by the phrase “a plain man” (25:27). “Plain” is *tam* in Hebrew which means “sincere,” “upright” or “simple.” The same adjective is used to describe Job’s spiritual maturity (Job 1:1) and was also used to portray a virgin’s peerless virtue (Song 5:2). Jacob’s quiet and meditative life as a nomadic tent dweller brought him into constant fellowship with the devout elders of the family who could influence him to be sincere and upright. Unfortunately, he soon developed the philosophy of casuistry, that the end justifies the means. He certainly knew the promise of the Lord, but instead of patiently waiting upon Him he adopted casuistic means to attain both political and spiritual ends. Ever-opportunistic Jacob took advantage of Esau’s need when he came in hungry after hunting. Because he wanted to become the chief of the clan and inherit the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, Jacob did not share his lentil stew with his brother but used it to obtain the birthright. Jacob’s conscience no doubt objected to his own plan, but his will and emotions disregarded its proddings and he seized the opportunity to gain the birthright by his own efforts. Although Jacob did secure the coveted birthright of the firstborn, it was not in God’s time or by His means, and therefore, initially it brought him divine judgment instead of divine blessing.

Even obtaining the birthright did not bring Jacob security, because he was still afraid that his brother might take the promises away from him through their father’s paternal blessing. In an attempt to increase self-confidence and security, he accepted the sly suggestion of his narrow-minded mother, Rebekah, to deceive his aged father in order to gain all the blessings, leaving nothing for his simpleminded brother. It should be noted that Jacob’s conscience did express a deep concern about the possible evil consequences of the scheme (27:11-12); nevertheless, his strong-willed mother’s persuasion and guarantee overpowered his inner warning. Consequently, he carried out his mother’s advice and secured his father’s blessings.

As soon as he had procured the blessing, he began to reap the fruit of his ill-gotten gains. Threatened by Esau’s murderous conspiracy, Jacob obeyed his parents’ suggestion without delay and fled to his maternal uncle’s home in Haran (28:5). Indeed, “haste is waste.” From that point Jacob was separated from the redeemed family for 20 years. His birthright, hastily gained by deceptive means, was of no benefit to him until he had received divine discipline to teach him to understand that God’s end must be attained by God’s means. Thus through Jacob’s casuistic life, God reveals an eternal truth that **spiritual ends must be attained by spiritual means**. The one who attains God’s blessings by ungodly means will feel the chastening rod of God until he forsakes his own ingenuity and deceit to seek only God’s way of doing things. Then, and only then, will he be spiritually prepared to serve the Lord faithfully.

2. Faithfulness Practiced (Gen. 28:10-31:55). The service of a faithful servant must ever find its origin in genuine love. Faithfulness and sacrifice performed without such love may be only the compensations of an inferiority complex and are without any spiritual value. Thus Jacob received divine training to help develop his faithfulness.

At Bethel, Jacob, the heir apparent, became the family's successor to the Abrahamic Covenant. Yahweh appeared to him in a dream and transferred the covenantal blessings to him. Progressive revelation regarding God's omnipresence was made and Jacob was reassured that God would be faithful to His word (28:10-16). Shortsighted Jacob, however, was not at all excited. He asked God only for journeying mercies, food and clothes, and a safe homecoming. This did indicate though that after his three days' lonely journey, he began to realize the vanity of life. After all, without home, love, and security, what good was the birthright? It is true, that at the conclusion of his fellowship with God at Bethel, he was still quite businesslike toward Him, but even though his conduct was immature, there was some indication of his having faith in God.

Jacob began his labor of love by helping his cousin, Rachel, to water her father's flock (29:10). He, who had not long ago refused to give his own brother a bowl of stew, now willingly served a female cousin whom he had never previously seen. The long weary journey most certainly had done Jacob good, demonstrating that suffering matures a person. The supreme demonstration of Jacob's labor of love, however, was his 14 years of hard work to obtain Rachel for his wife. Time in love is always much shorter than in reality, and labor in love is always an enjoyment. This was also true for Jacob. For the sake of Rachel whom he loved, seven years of labor seemed to him but a few days (29:20), and even another seven years were just a short period to him (29:30). Likewise, this shows that no service unto God can be really faithful and enjoyable unless it springs from one's genuine love for the Lord.

Every trial exists for a definite period. When its time is up and its destination is reached, God will not let it linger any longer. When the additional six years of Jacob's labor were over, God on the one hand caused his environment to become unbearable, and on the other He told him in a dream that he should return to his father's land. Having talked it over with his wives, Jacob packed up all that he owned in Haran and, without informing Laban of his departure, fled to Canaan. This was the first time in Jacob's life that he had acted solely upon God's word. After 20 long years of labor, Jacob began to learn the importance of waiting before God and acting according to His word, instead of his own understanding. Whenever Jacob acted upon God's word, God's presence was very real to him.

When Laban pursued Jacob, he received a divine warning in a dream that he should not touch Jacob or anything belonging to him. When Laban overtook him on Mount Gilead, Jacob testified to his own faithfulness in service. After Laban had searched in vain for his pagan idols in Jacob's tents, Jacob rebuked him, and said that during his full 20 years of service, he had never once neglected his duty as a shepherd. He had never lost any animals from Laban's flocks, nor had he ever enjoyed so much as a mutton chop from them. Whenever any of the flock was stolen or torn by the beasts, he himself paid for the loss. He had never taken a day off for vacation but labored in the heat of the day and the cold of the night, when he often had to keep vigil. In spite of all Jacob's hard and faithful work, Laban managed to cut his wages ten times. But Jacob never laid aside his responsibility as a caretaker of the flock. What a faithful servant Jacob was. This is the kind of servant for whom God has looked throughout all the ages and is still seeking today.

Worldly ill-treatment often drives a man closer to his heavenly calling. Having

endured all those afflictions and abuses, Jacob realized that man might ill-use him and take advantage of him, but the God of his father (even the “Fear of Isaac”) had never neglected him (31:42). To the contrary, He paid him abundantly. When Laban told him that his wages would be the speckled cattle, then all the cattle were born speckled. When Laban said that only the striped cattle would be his hire, then all the cattle bore stripes (31:8). God never overlooks the faithfulness of His servants, nor does He let them go away empty-handed. Their sufferings, ill-treatments, and even tears are all recorded (See Ps. 56:8). We can therefore say that this was in anticipation of the later revelation, “Servants . . . whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:22-24). To express his gratitude to God, Jacob offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving as Laban prepared to return home.

The reason God gives work to believers, strictly speaking, is for the good of the worker rather than for the work itself. God is the creator and has great power. All creation, visible and invisible, is under His sovereignty, and all His heavenly servants, who excel in strength, hearken to His voice and perform His commandments. If His purpose in dealing with man was only to get His work done, He could either do it Himself with a word or send angels to accomplish the job. He does not need anyone to initiate His doings, nor does He need for man to add a final touch to His work. After all, He is the beginning and the end of all things. His purpose for letting His feeble and ignorant children carry on His work, instead of doing it Himself, is for the training of His children rather than for the good of His work. If parents do not neglect their children’s training (and many of them make sacrificial efforts for the sake of their children’s education), then how much more will our Father in Heaven do for His children’s training. Often He chooses to allow His work to be defective or even delayed in order that His children might receive adequate training. Likewise, what God did in the remainder of Jacob’s life was for Jacob’s good rather than for the good of His work. First, He used circumstances to train Jacob to be faithful and then further trained him to do away with his egotism and casuistry. Faithfulness is needed in a servant; yet as long as egotism remains, true faithfulness to God will always be in question. Whenever ego is on the throne, a person will always be loyal to ego rather than to God. Therefore, without the mortification of self, a servant’s faithfulness will never be genuine. God, having finished Jacob’s training for faithfulness, now turned circumstances against him in order to purge his egotism that his spiritual life might become as gold and precious stones.

3. Self Mortified (Gen. 32:1-35:29). “Now Jacob went on his way” (32:1) to begin another stage in his training. First, Esau was coming to meet him. “Your sin shall find you out” is ever true. When Jacob had learned that Esau was coming with 400 men, he was “greatly afraid and distressed.” For safety he divided his belongings into two camps (32:7). After he had arranged everything, he called upon the God of his fathers for deliverance instead of relying upon his own cunning (32:9-12). Evidently Jacob’s faith in God had developed considerably, although his egotism was still on the throne. In order to mortify Jacob’s “self,” God came in person to wrestle with him at Peniel, the place where Jacob expressed his egotism the most and thus where God dealt his ego a mortal blow.

“To wrestle” means “to struggle by hand to hand combat with an opponent in order to

subdue him.” So at Peniel God sought to subdue Jacob’s stubborn ego. After the nightlong bout, God used a touch of supernatural power to conclude the contest. Jacob’s hip joint was dislocated and he could fight no longer. His pride and self-dependence surrendered. In commemoration of this occasion, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. However, at that time Israel was just a name. The reality of this name was not substantiated until he returned to Bethel (35:9-10) to pay the vow that he had made many years previously, at the time of his flight from Esau.

In general “Israel” is interpreted as “God’s prince,” or as the Scofield Bible states, “A prince with God.” Nominally, however, this is a faulty meaning. Such a misinterpretation may be due to the incorrect translation of the Authorized Version which says, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and men, and hast prevailed” (32:28). “As a prince” is not in the original. The clause “as a prince hast thou power” is the translation of a Hebrew verb that signifies “to strive”; it has nothing to do with “as a prince.” The same verb is used twice in Hosea 12:3-4, of which the first one is in *qal* (general form) perfect, and the second is an imperfect with *waw* consecutive. Both were translated as “had power” but without “as a prince” added in either verse. Without doubt, “as a prince” in Genesis 32:28 is an interpolation and not a translation. Further, the first part of Israel (*Isra*) is simply a short form of *Yisreh* (*qal* imperfect) meaning “he who strives.” In other words, it is a verbal form just like Isaac, “he who laughs,” or Jacob, “he who holds by the heel” and not a noun form that signifies “a prince.” The meaning of Israel, therefore, can be either “he who strives with God” or “he who strives for God.” It may also have the meaning of “God’s son,” as later revelation defined it (See Hos. 1:10).

The next morning as Jacob passed over the shallow stream, Esau with his 400 men was waiting on the other side. Much to his surprise, instead of attacking him, Esau came forward to embrace him and be reunited. This indicates that his prayer for deliverance had been answered and that his self-defense scheme had been wasted. It surely taught him that to put his trust in the Lord was much better than to have confidence in himself. Consequently, when he arrived at Shechem, he built an altar and named it *El-Elohe-Israel* (God is the God of Israel). Now Jacob realized that God was not just the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac but also the God of Jacob.

After the disgraceful incident involving Dinah and Shechem (34:1-31), God told him to go up to Bethel and build an altar there (35:1). Jacob first charged his household to put away their strange gods and physically cleanse themselves. Then he took them to Bethel. He built an altar there and named it *El Bethel*, which nominally means “God of Bethel.” Essentially, however, it may mean “God, the faithful God,” for he wanted to bear witness that what God had previously promised him at Bethel, He had fulfilled abundantly (28:15; 35:7). In response to his faith, God spoke to Jacob in His covenantal name, El Shaddai, and reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant to him (35:11-12). After this, Jacob went to Hebron and lived there until he went down to Egypt to join Joseph.

Having gone through all these trials and afflictions, Jacob now approached what later revelation called, “the path of the just . . . the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18). The last years of Jacob’s life were really a shining period. His splendor, comparatively, was greater than Abraham’s or Isaac’s, and his fear of God had progressed much more than theirs. When he found that Joseph was still alive

in Egypt and had become the second to Pharaoh, he was naturally overjoyed to be able to visit him there. Nevertheless, he was afraid that his going might not please God. This indicates that Jacob's fear of God was much more than Abraham's and Isaac's, for both of them had taken their leaving Canaan for granted without first seeking God's will. But Jacob first offered a sacrifice and then sought God's will before leaving the promised land. He went down to Egypt only after God appeared to him in a vision and promised to bring him back to Canaan. The formerly egocentric Jacob turned out to be one who dared not move without God's order. Jacob's self was mortified, his ego dethroned, and thus he was free from the dominion of his old nature.

Once settled in Egypt, Jacob testified before Pharaoh that his life was a pilgrimage, short and evil, in comparison to the lives of his forefathers (47:9). He was not giving his own biography to Pharaoh as much as preaching projectively, in order that Pharaoh might have some idea of the vanity of life. Before his death Jacob grew very feeble, yet he was able to reaffirm what El Shaddai had promised (48:3-4) and predict that God would lead his children back to the promised land (48:21). At the end he even predicted the future of his twelve sons and their descendants (49:1-28). The rewards for being a good and faithful servant may come late, but they assuredly are great.

D. Joseph—The Revelation of the Overcoming Life (Gen. 37:1-36; 39:1-45:24; 47:13-31; 49:22-26; 50:1-26)

During the Patriarchal Period God revealed His truth through four main characters. Each of them discloses one part of a believer's spiritual life. In Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob God revealed the importance of faith, sonship, and service. These aspects, however, are not the end of the believer's pursuit but rather the means for reaching the end. The final result of Christ's redemption is the same as God's intent in man's creation. Man was not created by chance; he was specifically created to have dominion over God's creation. This end has not yet been achieved nor will it be achieved until the return of Christ. In Abraham we learn how God makes a believer's faith grow, in Isaac how God provides all the believer's spiritual needs, and in Jacob how God trains a faithful servant. The faith from God revealed in Abraham, the life from Christ in Isaac, and the discipline from the Holy Spirit in Jacob are all means by which a believer is qualified to reign with Christ. It is in Joseph that we find the culmination of God's preceding revelations, in that Joseph's life reveals the preparation the believer needs for future dominion.

Before Joseph became a ruler over Egypt, God took him down a long hard path to prepare him to be an overcomer and a keeper of His word to the very end of life. The great things that Joseph did were not only related to Egypt but also to Israel and to God's Church throughout all the ages. Without his reign, not only might the Egyptians have starved to death, but also the nation of Israel might have been annihilated and the revelation of God's redemption in Genesis would not have been completed.

The steps which God took to build Joseph's spiritual life may be considered in light of the later revelation which says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song 4:16). Studying Joseph's life carefully, one can observe how God let the north wind and the south wind alternately blow upon him until the aromatic spices of his character flowed out. God prepared his

character with sufferings, exercised his body with toil, exposed him to disgrace and humiliation, and frustrated him with injustice and ingratitude, that his mind might be cultivated, his sensibility stabilized, his volition strengthened, his faithful character developed, and his faith in the Lord increased. The operation of the north and south wind in Joseph's life may be clearly seen.

1. South Wind—Enjoying Parental Affection (Gen. 37:1-17). Joseph was the first son of Rachel, whom Jacob loved dearly. He was a handsome lad with his mother's beautiful features. The Bible uses even the same wording (*yephath-toar wiphath-mareh*, "handsome form" and "handsome appearance") to describe her beauty and his handsomeness (See Gen. 29:17; 39:6). Following the death of Rachel, Joseph became even more precious to Jacob. Hence, he was the one who in his boyhood enjoyed more parental love than his siblings. As a result, he was the only one among his brothers who developed outstanding character. Parental love has a lot to do with a child's future disposition and moral characteristics. Unless the parents of the United States go back to taking good care of their children, there is no way to abolish juvenile delinquency.

When Joseph was 17 years old, he began to tend the flocks along with his brothers. Owing to his noble character, he not only refused to go along with their evil doings but often reported their wicked deeds to his father. Joseph knew the difference between love and evil, but today not many Christians do. Love and truth are two interactive concepts, but this is not true of love and evil, which are two entirely different categories. To refrain from exposing evil is not love, but criminal cowardice. On the other hand, to expose and eliminate evil is part of the genuine Christian character. As long as a person's motive is selfless, exposing evil is a noble deed and should be encouraged. Joseph did the noble thing. As a result, he was loved more by his father and was rewarded with "a coat of many colors," or rather "a robe with long sleeves"; but his brothers envied and hated him.

Joseph's two dreams were a primary cause of the envy his brothers felt for him. In telling the dreams Joseph suggested that he would be exalted above his brothers and even above his parents. The details of the two dreams hurt his brothers' pride and excited their envy; yet he still loved his brothers and remained an obedient son to his father. When his father sent him to visit them in Shechem, which was more than fifty miles away from his home valley of Hebron, he answered without hesitation, "Here am I" (37:13). Joseph was not spoiled by the south wind.

2. North Wind—Sold into Slavery (Gen. 37:18-36). It is universally acknowledged that those who are going to do great work need special training. Sincerity, obedience, patience, faithfulness, diligence, thoughtfulness, purity, and wisdom are not to be obtained through an easy life or a convenient environment but by enduring hardship and obstacles. This was demonstrated through Joseph who would never have been completely equipped to become a ruler had he always remained at home. Providentially, God let his father send him to check his brothers' welfare at Shechem. Arriving there, he learned that his brothers had gone on to Dothan (37:17), which is on the slope of Mount Gilboa. When he found them, they first cast him into a dry pit, and then sold him to the Ishmaelite merchants from Media who were passing by Dothan on their way to Egypt. Although Joseph begged pitifully for mercy (42:21), his brothers turned a deaf ear to his plea and sold him for 20 pieces of silver (37:28). Such a crisis would have caused many to be mortally sick; yet there is no indication of any accusation or curse falling from Joseph's

lips, although he might have wondered how God would fulfill his dreams through these particular circumstances.

3. South Wind—Earning Confidence and Esteem (Gen. 39:1-6). Reaching Egypt, the merchants sold Joseph to a captain of Pharaoh's guard named Potiphar. Instead of grudging and complaining, Joseph went about his work and fulfilled the duties set for him. Yahweh's presence with him caused him to become a "prosperous man," a man characterized by success. He quickly won the confidence of his master and was promoted from slave to steward of his master's house. Many things in his life had changed, and Joseph was learning rapidly. Yet what he had learned in Potiphar's home was not enough. He needed further preparation. Accordingly, God permitted him to be unexpectedly humiliated.

4. North Wind—Facing Temptation and Injustice (Gen. 39:7-20). When the north wind blows into their lives, many young people think it is tragic, but to God it is often a manifestation of His grace, as revealed in Jeremiah's lamentation, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:27). A life of ease without struggle can ruin a youngster, but the yoke borne in youth is a stepping stone for the individual to reach a higher station. This was true for Joseph. One day, while in Potiphar's house fulfilling his duties, his master's wife, who had been casting her eyes upon Joseph for some time, suddenly caught him by his garment to compel him to lie with her. Because of his consciousness of God's presence, Joseph rejected her advances, left his garment in her hand, and fled.

This temptation might have been irresistible and inescapable for other young men. Joseph, however, quickly overcame it. The secret of his victory lay in putting distance between the temptation and himself. Although one may overcome some temptations by facing them, yet many of them, especially those temptations connected with sexual lust, can be overcome only by fleeing (See 2 Tim 2:22). Joseph's victory rested on a single foundation—faithfulness. He wanted to be faithful to God who had always been with him, to the master who had so much confidence in him, and to himself that his purity might be kept from defilement. He cared so much for the integrity of his faithfulness that he did not consider the price that he might be required to pay. For God's sake he would rather go to jail than yield himself to the wicked woman's desire. For his master's sake he did not choose to defend himself in order to avoid disgracing his owner's wife. So he kept silent, uttering no word of controversy. What a beautiful character he had! Although evil is usually short-lived, for the time being it prevailed over Joseph. When Potiphar returned home, he accepted his wife's accusation and put Joseph in jail.

5. South Wind—Promotion and Friendship (Gen. 39:21-40:22). Even though Joseph's physical environment changed for the worse, his spiritual conviction did not. His sense of God's presence had been an encouragement and power to Joseph throughout all his past trials, and it continued to be a blessing to him in jail. It helped him to forget the slander of his master's wife, to ignore the injustice of his master, and to concentrate his mind on his immediate responsibilities. His faithfulness in duty and his wisdom in work were recognized by his superior, the keeper of the jail, who soon promoted Joseph to be his assistant.

Talent and friendliness go together, and neither one can be put to good use without

the other. Talent without friendliness makes it hard to reach others' hearts, and friendliness without talent produces only lip service. Joseph had both and was thus able to create a friendly environment in the jail. One day Pharaoh's butler and baker, who were also in jail, were troubled by dreams. Joseph noticed their troubles and asked if he could be of any help. They told him that each of them had dreamed a significant dream, but no one could figure out what they meant. Joseph comforted them by saying, "Does not interpretation belong to God?" This indicates that in Joseph's mind God was surely in everything. Joseph interpreted the butler's and the baker's dreams, and after three days both interpretations were completely fulfilled: the butler was restored to his butlership, and the baker was hanged. Indeed, it was Joseph's south wind blowing, but on a rainy day.

6. North Wind—Enduring Ingratitude and Tardiness (Gen. 40:23). Waiting is wearisome; waiting longer than expected is almost unbearable. Joseph's imprisonment for two more long dreary years was surely a severe north wind for him. Each day of those two years was a very long day. This short verse, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him," clearly expresses the butler's self-interest. It indicates the ungrateful character of the butler in general and denotes the terrible experience endured by Joseph in particular. Such a situation could lead a person to hate the world for its ingratitude, but not Joseph. He possessed the great virtue of keeping silent and the great ability to watch and wait for God's operation. God prolonged his jail life to increase Joseph's patience in waiting for God's time and to deepen his confidence in God's faithfulness. Assuredly God's "tardiness" is evidence of His extra grace to His beloved ones.

7. South Wind—Reigning as a King (Gen. 41:1-45:24; 47:13-31). No chastening is enjoyable at the time it is received; it is always painful and unpleasant. Nevertheless, it brings forth the fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it (See Heb. 12:11). God's timing is incredibly accurate. He is never a minute ahead or a second behind but always exactly on time. At the end of those two long years, God caused Pharaoh to have a strange dream by which He moved the chief butler to remember Joseph's goodness to him and to recommend Joseph to Pharaoh for the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. Although the dream was twofold, the subject matter was one: the seven years of plenty contrasted with the seven years of famine. As soon as Joseph had finished his interpretation and had given his suggestion of how to prevent the coming disaster, Pharaoh appointed him to carry out the plan. Pharaoh had recognized in Joseph something more than natural ability. He saw that Joseph was supernaturally endowed by the Spirit of God. Without hesitation, Pharaoh took off his signet ring and placed it upon Joseph's hand, clothed him with fine linen, put a gold necklace about his neck, had him ride in the second chariot of honor, and ordered the heralds to call out ahead of him "*Abhrek*," that is, "bow the knee" (41:43). Thus Joseph was made a ruler over all the land of Egypt (41:38-43), and his dreams given by God years before were finally fulfilled. He reigned over the Egyptians with wisdom and sympathy and over his own brothers with discipline and love. Fittingly, he was honored above his brothers (49:26).

As God trained Joseph to lead an earthly kingdom so He likewise trains believers daily to have authority in His coming Kingdom. Salvation (a new creation), like the physical creation, is unconditional, in that no works are involved, but reigning with Christ

is conditional. “Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish” (John 3:15) but “if we endure, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). The exact meaning of how the believer is to endure may be explained by the revelation in the last book of the New Testament, “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations” (Rev. 2:26).¹⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

Genesis begins with God’s perfect creation, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (1:31). It ends with the ultimate tragedy, death, “So Joseph died . . . and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt” (50:26). Between those two events lie thousands of years of human history: primarily a history of human failure met by divine grace, which is made plain throughout the pages of Genesis by God’s unfolding progressively the revelation of Himself to man.

The progressive manifestation of God toward a rebellious race brings an ever-clearer picture of salvation manifested in the successive pages of the first book of Scripture. As mankind moved farther from His truth, God progressively unveiled His purpose and plan in ever more explicit terms. In the Adamic Period, He revealed His nature and man’s probation, temptation, and sin. Again in the Noachian Period, He revealed His nature and man’s situation. In the Patriarchal Period, He showed most clearly His faithfulness in testing and bringing the victorious life to those who faithfully follow Him.

Genesis clearly shows us the triumph of grace over sin. That is why Henrietta Mears divided the book into three essential parts, which illustrate the need for God’s progressive revelation of Himself to man:

1. Generation—“In the beginning God . . .” (Genesis 1:1)
2. Degeneration—“Now the serpent . . .” (Genesis 3:1)
3. Regeneration—“Now the Lord . . .” (Genesis 12:1)¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁶For further study on the kingdom of God and what it means to reign with Christ, see *The Kingdom and What It Means to the Life of the Believer*.

¹⁰⁷Henrietta G. Mears, *What the Bible Is All About* (Minneapolis: The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, n.d.), p. 17.