COMMENTARIES ON THE PENTATEUCH

EXODUS

ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY

VALLECITO, CALIFORNIA

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by Mark R. Rushdoony

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Introduction

Our Lord's Exodus at Jerusalem, Part I

(*Luke 9:28-31*)

> 28. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.
> 29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.
> 30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:
> 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31)

In any exegesis of the Christian faith and life, and of the death and resurrection of Christ, this is a key text. It is also essentially related to the Book of Exodus, because *decease* translates a word which also means *exodus*. The word *decease* is the Greek *exodos*; it is to be Christ's accomplishment, His perfection of His calling, in Jerusalem.

The historical Exodus of Israel was from slavery to freedom, from Egypt towards the Promised Land. The historical exodus of Jesus Christ for His new humanity, the new human race He remakes or regenerates, is from sin and death into justice, dominion, and everlasting life.

There is a remarkable fact, an irony, in this incident. There is a *transfiguration*, a brief one limited to this mountain experience but fading thereafter. Christ radiated with a light and a glory which were not of this world.

The Transfiguration brought together three key persons, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus Christ. As Schilder noted, "Moses gave the law, Elias enforced it, He will fulfill it."[1] By creating a new humanity through His atonement, Jesus Christ created a people who could obey God's law and bring about the rule of justice. Moses and Elijah *talked* with Jesus; the Greek word is *sunelaloun* (*sun*, with, *sullaleo*, talk) and refers to simple talk or conversation. The three disciples were

witnesses to the remarkable conversation, and the meaning of Christ's exodus was obviously clearly stated; their failure to comprehend it until much later was a moral failure, not a lack of clarity in what they saw and heard.

Schilder called attention to the remarkable fact that in this meeting Jesus, while God the Son, was in His incarnation of a lesser glory than Moses and Elijah. They "appeared in glory" (v. 31), in a permanent state, whereas He, the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), was able to manifest that glory only in a brief transfiguration.[2]

Ryle commented thus on the subject of the conversation among Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem:"

> This expression is remarkable. It means literally, his "Exodus" or departure. It is used for "death" by St. Peter, speaking of his own death (2 Peter 1:15). It is also remarkable that in Acts xiii we have a Greek word used for our Lord's "coming" to take his office of a Saviour, which might be translated literally His "entrance." Both expressions are singularly applicable to Him who came into the world and was made flesh, and after doing the work He came to do, left the world and went to the Father. The beginning of His ministry was an "Eisodous," or entrance; His death, an "Exodus," or departure.[3]

Our Lord had already spoken of His coming death and resurrection to His stunned and non-comprehending disciples (Matt. 16:13-28). Because their minds were concentrated on *their* expectations of Jesus, they could not accept or understand His plain statements of the meaning of His coming and His atoning death.

This revelation and transfiguration was a witness to the unity of God's revelation, of what we call the Old and the New Testaments. It was a witness to the three selected disciples, as it is to us, to the church over the centuries. Moses and Elijah did not come to console nor to strengthen Jesus, nor was it their sole purpose to witness to Peter, John, and James. All that Moses and Elijah had done was *essentially and totally* tied to the work of Jesus Christ, and the work of our

Lord is *essentially and totally* tied to the work of Moses and Elijah. Christ did not come in fulfillment of Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, or any other religion, but in terms of *the law and the prophets*, in terms of *God's covenant*.

The law and the prophets are meaningless without the atonement, and the atonement is stripped of its meaning when separated from the law and the prophets. God's covenant with man is a covenant of grace and law. For the sovereign Creator of all things to enter into a covenant with man is an act of grace, pure and total grace. At the same time, a covenant is a treaty of law whereby God declares that the way of peace with Him is to walk in terms of His law word, the way of righteousness or justice.

We come now to another very, very important fact: in John 14:6, Jesus declares that He is the way, the truth, and the life. The word *way* is *hodos* in Greek. It is very closely related to the word *exodus*, which is literally *ex-hodos*, and entrance or entering is *eishodos*. In Jeremiah 5:4 (and elsewhere) we have a reference to the law as "the way of the LORD;" in the Septuagint, it reads *hodon kyrion*. To walk in the way of the Lord means, in the Old Testament, "to act according to the will of God revealed in commandments, statutes, and ordinances (1 Kings 2:3; 8:58). God's law is called 'the way of the LORD' (Jer. 5:4) for which the prophets have to struggle to see that it is observed."[4] In Psalm 119, in the Septuagint, *the way* and *the law* are equated.

The curious fact is that we are asked to believe that, after most of the Bible tells us that *the way of the Lord* is the way of *the covenant of grace and law*, suddenly, with the New Testament, this meaning is dropped! This is an interpretation which is contrary to all common sense as well as intelligent interpretation.

We must thus conclude that Jesus, in declaring Himself to be *the way*, means plainly that He is the incarnation of God's grace and justice: *He is the way*. The law is the expression of His being as God the Son, and His obedience as very man of very man. He is the covenant law incarnate as well as the incarnation of covenant grace: He is God in the flesh.

The presence of Moses and Elijah makes it clear that God's covenant is brought to its perfection in Jesus Christ, and both the law and the prophets are validated. At the same time, the covenant grace and mercy are realized in Him and His atoning death. By His resurrection, He overthrows the power of sin and death.

His *exhodos* in Jerusalem thus means that God's justice as judgment against sin is executed. His resurrection, as part of His *exhodos*, means that the powers of sin and death are broken and a new creation begun of which He is the first-fruit (1 Cor. 15:20), and man is freed to walk in the way of the Lord. This way of the Lord means the freedom to exercise godly dominion, and, by means of God's law, to bring about the rule of God's justice.

This was the *exhodos*, the way, which our Lord opened up for us at Jerusalem.

Chapter One

Exodus: From Slavery to Freedom

(*Exodus 1:1-7*)

The name of the Book of Exodus comes from the Latin, *Liber Exodi*, and it dates back to the Septuagint. It is a Greek word meaning *departure, exit*, or *death*. The word *exodus* appears in the New Testament as *decease*:

> 30. And behold, there talked with him [Jesus] two men, which were Moses and Elias:
> 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:30-31)

> 14. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.
> 15. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. (2 Peter 1:14-15)

In both these instances, there is more implied by the word than death. Our Lord's "decease" is seen in Luke 9:31 as an accomplishment; the verb, "accomplish," is *pleroun*, which means to complete or perfect. The atonement accomplished is Christ's accomplishment for us, for our redemption. Peter's reference also implies a victory. Because the original exodus from Egypt to Canaan, from slavery to freedom, was so great a deliverance, the word in the New Testament implies the same thing, a victory.

Exodus 1:1-7 is written to tie this book to Genesis:

> 1. Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.
> 2. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

3. Isaachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,

4. Dan, and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

5. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

6. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

7. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. (Exodus 1:1-7)

Only the physical sons of Jacob are listed. The sons by Leah are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (v. 2). The sons by Bilhah, Rachel's maid, are Dan and Naphtali; and by Zilpah, Leah's maid, are Gad and Asher. Leah also bore Isaachar and Zebulun, and Rachel bore Joseph and Benjamin. We are plainly told that these alone are the blood family of Jacob.

In Genesis 14:14, we read that Abraham took 318 men of his household into battle. With perhaps another 300 older men remaining to care for Abraham's people and livestock, and another 300 to 400 young boys, Abraham had a household of about 1,000 males. This household increased substantially in the many years between Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the journey into Egypt. Only one daughter is *named* in the history of Jacob (Gen. 30:21), but we are told that there were others (Gen. 46:7). The "seventy souls" (v. 5) are thus the male heads of households, and Leah and Rachel, although dead, are also counted; in v. 1, we read, "every man *and his household*," a term inclusive of all young males, females, servants, followers, and so on. We see also that those who came to Egypt were very numerous, and hence a separate area of Egypt was assigned to them, Goshen (Gen. 47:1-6). Thus, a very telling point is made: from its beginning, the chosen people, while initially descending from Abraham, was inclusive of far more than those of Abrahamic blood. Moreover, they are referred to by Moses as "the children of Israel," by the *covenant* name, not as the children of Jacob. Israel is thus a *religious*, not a racial, designation.

Exodus is not only given as a continuation of Genesis, but it is tied closely to it by v. 7:

> 21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
> 22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas; and let fowl multiply in the earth. (Gen. 1:21-22)
>
> And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. (Ex. 1:7)

As before The Fall, covenant Israel is blessed with the same fertility that marked creation at the beginning, when all the earth was a part of the covenant. The first word in v. 1 is translated as "now" but is literally "and" to express continuity with Genesis, and especially Genesis 1, which, as we have seen, is echoed in v. 7. God's *creation* of all things continues in Exodus with the creation of a chosen people, their deliverance, and the giving of the law. All this is both a new creation and a regeneration. In v. 7, "increased abundantly" is, literally, "swarmed." This was not a supernatural increase but a blessed one.

In Acts 7:14, Stephen refers to the sons of Israel as seventy-five, whereas Moses gives seventy (v. 5); this is because Joseph's children are counted, *i.e.*, Jacob's three grandsons and two great-grandsons. This variation makes clear that the count is of males, heads of households; all other males are subsumed under the heads, as are the women. The number seventy includes Leah and Rachel, together with Jacob, as the source of the seventy; no other women are included in the number.

As we have seen, Israel had a blessed fertility, as that "the land was filled with them" (v. 7). It was precisely this blessing that led to the persecution: Egypt resented the increase and the prosperity of Israel. We are prepared by this statement for what is to follow. Because this is a fallen world, men resent and envy the success and prosperity of others. God's blessings create hostility in men. It is assumed that God's people have no right to anything but a subordinate and silent place. The revival of Christianity since the mid-seventies of the twentieth century has led to hostility, the persecution in courts of Christian schools, home schools, churches, parents, and

various Christian agencies. It would be absurd to hold that more than a limited number of Israelites were faithful, or that more than a limited number of Christians in the eras after c. 1975 have been faithful. Only persecution drove some Israelites to cry out to God (Ex. 3:7). Even then, when God sent Moses to deliver Israel, the leaders turned against Moses when the first step of resistance to Pharaoh led to reprisals against Israel (Ex. 5:19-23).

This is a fact of no small importance. Israel was not delivered because of its merits or virtues, and, in fact, Moses repeatedly makes clear how very difficult it was to help them. It was only God's sovereign and merciful covenant grace which redeemed them. This fact is stressed throughout Exodus; Israel comes through poorly, and this is intentionally shown. Moses wants no glory to accrue to man, himself included.

It must be added that this story is a familiar one. In Elijah's day, his supporters were few. In the early church, as witness Athanasius, the church was as much his enemy as was the state. Matters are no different now. In history, the initiative and merit are all God's, and His works of redemption are acts of grace.

We have echoes of Exodus in Matthew's Gospel. We have a genealogy at the beginning, in chapter 1:1-17; we have an exodus into Egypt by Joseph and Mary and the Christ-child, and then later an exodus out of Egypt (Matt. 2:12-23). The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29) parallels the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and Christ's death and resurrection give us God's new temple or tabernacle for His chosen people. Matthew also sets forth the same exodus from slavery into freedom.

Exodus sets forth the sovereignty of God in history *over the nations*. Pharaoh, in spite of his hatred and hostility, becomes God's instrument for the destruction of Egypt and the deliverance of Israel. We have a superb irony in this fact: in the name of preserving Egypt, Pharaoh destroys it. God's ironies are still with us.

Chapter Two

The Oppression Begins

(*Exodus 1:8-14*)

> 8. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph.
> 9. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:
> 10. Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.
> 11. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.
> 12. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.
> 13. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour.
> 14. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. (Exodus 1:8-14)

We are told that "a new king," a new ruler, possibly of a new dynasty, arose, who "knew not Joseph." There are two possibilities with respect to knowing not Joseph, and the Hebrew word *yada* allows for both meanings. *First*, it could refer to a refusal to recognize the importance of Joseph. The Egyptian kings, as gods, did not normally acknowledge any indebtedness to men, least of all foreigners. The ruler chose to ignore Joseph. *Second*, there could have been an ignorance of Joseph's part in history. Records were kept by most rulers, but many chose not to read them or have them read to them. In Esther 6:1-3, we see that Ahasuerus was ignorant of a recent attempt on his life until, on a sleepless night, he ordered the book of records or chronicles of Persia read to him. In any case, whether with or without knowledge, it was not common for a pharaoh to acknowledge a past or present debt to a commoner, especially a foreigner.

The word *pharaoh* meant *great house*; it referred to the palace area and came in time to apply to the ruler in the palace.

Pharaoh declared that Egypt had a problem, over-population. This is a recurring myth in history, and a political myth. For man, the world is always over-populated when there are people in it who are disliked. Perhaps at times, when Adam and Eve disagreed, each felt that an over-population problem existed. Pharaoh's problem was this: there were too many Hebrews and too few Egyptians. The myth usually requires exaggerations: Pharaoh said, "the children of Israel are more and mightier than we."

He feared thus two things: *first*, that Egyptians would in time be outnumbered by the Hebrews, with serious social consequences. *Second*, he feared that, in the event of war, the Hebrews would unite with Egypt's enemies.

The first fear rested on an exaggeration. The second fear rested on a denial of the historical record. The Hebrews had been in Egypt for *many* generations. During the course of that time, many wars had been fought by Egypt, with no disloyalty on the part of the Hebrews. The problem existed only in Pharaoh's mind, not in the facts of history.

There is more, however. In speaking of Pharaoh, we are speaking of a ruling religious hierarchy around him. Since Pharaoh was a god to the Egyptians, he was surrounded by priests who governed his daily life. According to Frazer, every detail of the ruler's life was governed by precise and unwavering rules. His time, both day and night, was prescribed for him. There was a settled rule for every act. While these rules may not have been maintained in all their severity throughout Egypt's history, these requirements indicate the subservience of the ruler to a religious regime.[5] Because the fertility of the land depended on him, the ruler could be blamed for the failure of the rains and the Nile, and crop failures.[6] Egypt's religion was a fertility cult; the high priest of On was an embodiment of men, and in certain rituals he would masturbate the young pharaoh and at the same time sodomize him to imbue the young god-king with hyper-potency and to ensure the land's welfare.[7]

Joseph had preserved Egypt through a major drought and famine. He had used Pharaoh's power to store up a huge surplus during the productive years in order to care for the people during the drought years. Joseph also reformed the tax structure, reducing the levy to a fifth of the increase of grain crops only (Gen. 47:22-26). In ancient Egypt, the fields were sown one year with wheat, the next year with other crops such as barley, spelt, rye, onions, or something else. The third year was for fallowing the land. This meant that orchards and vineyards were not taxed, and only wheat harvests were. The priests depended on Pharaoh's receipts for their support.[8]

Thus, those who speak of Joseph as a socialist are very wrong. The people of Egypt said to Joseph, "Thou hast saved our lives" (Gen. 47:25). The land had previously belonged to brutal landlords, so that the people were doubly taxed. Because of Joseph's reforms, the land was transferred to the crown, and the people were obligated to pay only a nominal tax. It was a realistic move on Joseph's part: it pleased both the king and the people. Joseph did not tamper with the priestly land holdings (Gen. 47:26), but he did strengthen the royal power against the priests and the landlords. There was no doubt continuing hostility against the Hebrews because of Joseph's reforms.

There was another tax in antiquity, one Joseph could not touch, a tax enacted in the form of labor. As a result, when the usual annual labor levy took place, the Hebrews assumed it to be the routine work required. We are told that taskmasters were set over the Israelites to afflict them. The work pace was thus stepped up, and perhaps the number of days of service steadily increased year by year.

By such forced labor Egypt hoped to weaken Israel, i.e., to reduce their strength and freedom, and also to lower their birthrate. By making a difference in the work-levy of Hebrews and Egyptians, the Egyptians made Israel more conscious of their alien origin. We are also told that the birthrate increased, instead of dropping. Pharaoh had said, "Let us deal wisely (or, shrewdly) with them"; his wisdom was creating troubles for him.

The work assigned to the Hebrews was the construction of two cities, made of brick. It included "all manner of service in the field" (v. 14), which usually meant digging or clearing canals and

like tasks. Pharaoh's unjust levies made Israel aware of its past and its heritage. Both Joshua 24:14 and Ezekiel 20:8 tell us that Israel had become Egyptian in its faith and outlook to a fearful degree. Pharaoh was now reminding them that they were not Egyptians. According to Jewish records, which may be true, the Hebrews, "filled the theatres and all the places of amusement."[9] They had become Egyptians; oppression would in time make them Israelites again. In the ancient world, no other people was more self-consciously separate from others than the Egyptians. This limited their influence and created problems, as racism does in any people. Egypt was also an area of amazing fertility but has often been one of the poorest areas of the world because of misrule.

The forced labor or *corvee* has a long history, much of it ugly. However, in France, at the time of the French Revolution, many rural areas resisted the revolutionary regime because it had become a custom to meet from time to time in church to decide on needed road or bridge work, and to allocate the labor. The designation of tasks had become a form of self-government. In Egypt, however, forced labor could be murderous. Herodotus tells us that Neco began the construction of a canal which cost the lives of 120,000 Egyptians.[10] Modern scholars tend to question this number, but they under-rate the horrors of tyrannies past and present.

In "Under the Willows," James Russell Lowell spoke of us all as "We, who by shipwreck only find the shores of divine wisdom," an insight true of us today, and of Israel of old. It must be added that those who will not be awakened by shipwreck will only perish. God led Israel out of Egypt and sentenced them to death in the wilderness. It was the next generation that gained the Promised Land.

Chapter Three

The War Against Children

(*Exodus 1:15-22*)

> 15. And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other was Puah.
> 16. And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.
> 17. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.
> 18. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?
> 19. And the midwives said unto Pharoah, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.
> 20. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.
> 21. And it came to pass because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.
> 22. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast unto the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. (Exodus 1:15-22)

There are two points of controversy or evasion in this text. *First*, how could Israel be as numerous as we are told it was and yet have only two midwives? In Exodus 12:37f we are told that 600,000 men of Israel, with their women and children, *plus* "a mixed multitude" of Egyptians and other foreigners, left Egypt during the Exodus. Thus, the Hebrew population was perhaps 2,000,000. How could two midwives care for perhaps 600,000 women? Granted that only a limited percentage of these were at the point of childbirth at any moment, how was this possible?

Second, in spite of some evasive comments by some scholars, the two midwives lied to Pharaoh, and God blessed them. Why did God bless them, and how shall this fact be interpreted? More than a few commentators find this text embarrassing to expound.

Turning *first* to the midwives and the many births, the usual explanation of their number is to say that either the two women headed guilds of midwives, or that the population data concerning Israel was wrong. Neither alternative is necessary. When Israel entered Egypt, it had seventy persons of Abrahamic blood, and some thousands who, while not of Abraham, were probably related racial stock. Moreover, in the generations that followed, all these people intermarried. In my years among American Indians, I learned that, in the time prior to the coming of Europeans, Indian women gave birth easily and readily. A child would be delivered under a tree, and the woman was at once able to resume her work, because the head and shoulders of the Indian child were proportional to the mother's pelvic structure. However, when the first babies of mixed blood were born, the birth ripped the woman badly and caused her great pain, and the birth required help from others. At first, such mixed blood babies were killed at once because it was believed they were demonic, since they hurt their mothers so badly. Later, it was noted that the few mixed blood babies kept alive had a greater resistance to disease (many of the diseases having been brought by Europeans), and they were then routinely kept alive.

With regard to the Hebrew women, we can assume a like ease in delivery. It is a modern assumption that every delivery requires a doctor or a midwife. Such an assumption is a valid one perhaps for our time, but we cannot read it back into a distant past. For any difficult deliveries, two midwives could have sufficed.

The midwives told Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were more "lively." Gispen notes that the term can possibly mean that the Hebrew women, like sheep and goats, gave birth rapidly and easily; the term they used could express contempt, which may have enabled them to escape Pharaoh's suspicion and wrath.[11] The midwives said, "The Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women." This was probably very true. The Egyptian empire used many slaves, from

Asia, Africa, and even Europe, so that a mixed genetic stock existed. This would create problems in childbirth.

Second, it is possible that the midwives were not Hebrews but Egyptian, and the term "Hebrew midwives" might refer to the fact that they worked for Hebrew women, as Josephus wrote. The point is not important. Pharaoh gave them an order, and he expected it to be obeyed. Disobedience to the will of a living god was not common. Pharaoh had no knowledge of the facts of Hebrew women and their ease of childbirth. Perhaps he questioned advisors after the midwives gave their explanation and was told that the Hebrew women indeed gave birth easily and without help. He clearly accepted the story of the midwives.

At the same time, we are plainly told that the midwives were not abortionists; wherever they were called, they "saved the men children alive" (v. 17). In the process, they probably alerted the Hebrews to Pharaoh's plans.

The male children were to be killed and the females kept alive. These girls would be added to Egyptian harems and their progeny absorbed into Egypt, a routine process in Egypt's history.

The Bible is clear that the midwives "did not as the king of Egypt commanded them" (v. 17). They violated Pharaoh's commandment and gave him an answer which was both evasive and false. Therefore God blessed them and made them heads of notable houses, or families, dynasties (vv. 20-21). Had they done otherwise, they would have been accessories to murder.

The law reads, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Ex. 20:16), and the purpose of the law is justice. If we assist evil, we are in violation of God's law, and we are accessories to the crime. We do not owe the truth to a man who plans to use it to do evil. The abuse of this text by some is a sorry commentary on the "morality" of those who prefer to see evil done than to tell a lie. Such people are *immoral*. The text is very clear that the women disobeyed Pharaoh, that they then lied about it, and that God blessed them greatly. Of course, some people feel quite free to correct God on His moral behavior. On this text, Calvin erred badly.

Parker's comment was very good:

> So the king could not carry out his own command. A king can give an order, but he requires the help of other people to carry it into effect. Think of the proud Pharaoh having to take two humble midwives into his confidence! The plan of murder is not so easy a plan after all. There are persons to be consulted who may turn round upon us, and on some ground deny our authority. From the king we had a right to expect protection, security, and encouragement; yet the water of the fountain was poisoned, and the worm of destruction was gnawing the very roots of power. What if the midwives set themselves against Pharaoh? Two humble women may be more than a match for the great king of Egypt. No influence, how obscure soever, is to be treated with contempt. A child may baffle a king. A kitten has been known to alarm a bear. A fly once choked a pope. What if a midwife should turn to confusion the sanguinary counsels of a cowardly king?[12]

The midwives thwarted Pharaoh; they apparently alerted the Hebrews so that male babies were hidden to prevent their execution by drowning in the Nile (v. 22).

The reference to "stools" in v. 16 is to the two stones on which the women of Egypt sat or knelt during delivery. This was still done in Egypt at least into the nineteenth century.[13]

What Pharaoh attempted to do was nothing unusual in antiquity, and many states, including Rome, Sparta, Athens, and even modern China, thought nothing of executing unwanted babies. Modern abortion is in line with ancient paganism. Then as now, the matter is treated by non-Christians casually, and as a necessary and even wise policy of state: Pharaoh was at least honest in openly designating a particular "national" or racial group for destruction. Today it is done less directly and with ostensible nobility. Certain racial groups are commonly urged to obtain abortions by "advisors" who believe that a problem of over-population exists, especially among peoples they dislike. The result is a war against children, especially unborn babies. When a nation and a worldwide order routinely makes war on unborn babies and murders them by the

millions, it passes a death sentence against itself. We find a statement by our Lord cited by three of the Gospels, Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, and Luke 17:2:

> But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt. 18:6)

Certainly the murder of the unborn little ones is an even greater offense.

Chapter Four

God's Man, Moses

(*Exodus 2:1-10*)

1. And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.
2. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.
3. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.
4. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.
5. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.
6. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children.
7. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?
8. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.
9. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.
10. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. (Exodus 2:1-10)

The birth of Moses came after the onset of persecution, and after the decision to kill all male Hebrew babies. Prior to that time, Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed (Ex. 6:20), had become the parents of Miriam (Ex. 2:4) and Aaron (Ex. 7:7).

Moses was given his name by Pharaoh's daughter, "Because I drew him out of the water" (v. 7). The name *Mosheh* has an important meaning. *Mu* means seed, a male child, a son. *Sheh* in Egyptian means pond, lake, or the Nile. The name thus means "child of the Nile," and the name thus tells us plainly that he was found in the Nile.[14] Since Hebrew children were to be thrown into the Nile and drowned, Pharaoh's daughter openly identified that Moses was a Hebrew child saved from the Nile. Moreover, given the plain speaking of antiquity, there is a further connotation. Before childbirth, the fluid in the womb breaks, and thus the child comes forth. Pharaoh's daughter said that her son came out of the waters of Egypt's life-giving stream.

There is a grim note in vv. 2-3, which Robert Young's *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* makes clearer for us:

> (2) And the woman conceiveth, and beareth a son, and she seeth him that he is fair, and she hideth him three months. (3) And she hath not been able any more to hide him, and she taketh for him an ark of rushes...

Every male child born required a decision, to surrender the child to death, or to attempt to save it. Both Jewish and Christian commentators routinely overlook the fact that infanticide had been a routine option for Hebrew mothers. To surrender the child was infanticide, and probably many Hebrew women practiced it. The more conspicuous their position, the more difficult would concealment be. Moses' mother apparently decided to save Moses on seeing how fine, robust, or fair he was, but she could not conceal him too long, because she and her husband were somewhat conspicuous. After three months, some solution had to be sought.

We have an incident of evil here, the murder of babes, common in antiquity and even more common now. Out of this evil comes forth God's covenant witness and power, the giving of His law, and His cleansing of Canaan. At the time when Egypt's tyranny comes sharply into focus, God prepares His future by means of a baby born with a very poor life expectancy. This amazing story begins with a simple statement: "And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi" (v. 1). As Parker said,

> There is nothing extraordinary in this statement. From the beginning men and women have married and have been given in marriage. It is therefore but an ordinary event which is described in this verse. Yet we know that the man of Levi and the daughter of Levi were the father and mother of one whose name was to become associated with that *of the Lamb*! May not Renown have Obscurity for a pedestal?[15]

Biblical history emphatically stresses the total providence of God in all events. God's purposes transcend our understanding because they are inclusive of and govern every strand in creation. Oehler observed:

> God, by reason of His *power* over the world, can never be unjust. For the world is not a thing alien to Him, a thing intrusted to Him by another, but His own possession, and all life therein is derived from His breath. God cannot be unjust to that which He Himself called into existence, and maintains therein. It is also the only source of right therein.[16]

Moses' mother was aware of the fact that Pharaoh's daughter bathed in the Nile. Josephus tells us that Pharaoh's daughter was named Thermuthis, meaning "the Great Mother." She held a high and religious position in Egypt and had her own household. The Nile was worshipped as an emanation of Osiris, and as life-giving. [17] The daughter of Pharaoh thus bathed ritually in the Nile, a fact known to Moses' mother.

Accordingly, she had an ark constructed out of "bulrushes" or papyrus. Because we associate papyrus with our word *paper*, we fail to realize that sea vessels were built out of papyrus (Isa. 18:2). The *ark* was a miniature Nile boat in its construction. It was placed in the reeds close to shore, where Pharaoh's daughter would find it; also, it would not drift downstream when surrounded by reeds.

The word *ark* is used only here and in the Genesis account of Noah's *ark*. In both instances it refers to a dramatic step in God's plan of judgment and salvation.

We are specifically told that Pharaoh's daughter recognized that this abandoned baby was a Hebrew child and "had compassion on him" (v. 6). This is a notable fact. However, there is another aspect which may be inferred. This was a unique incident: no other Hebrew woman had tried it. Their sons had been drowned in the Nile. Jochebed had prepared her son for discovery during a religious ritual. Because most actions in our time are secular and profane, we fail to recognize that at one time *all* actions were religiously governed, for good or ill. As a result, for the life-giving Nile to manifest a male child during a religious bathing ceremony was a happy omen.

Perhaps, subsequently, Pharaoh's men prevented a like incident from recurring. In this episode, however, the Hebrew origin of the child is acknowledged, and he is still made a member of the royal household with a religious name, *Mosheh*, or *Musheh*. Courville believes that it is possible that Moses was groomed to be a coregent, and he sees a hint of this in Paul's words:

> 24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
> 25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
> 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26)[18]

Miriam was close by when Pharaoh's daughter found the ark and baby, and she volunteered to find a nurse for the baby. Pharaoh's daughter was under no illusion as to who the nurse was, i.e., the baby's mother. She told her, "I will give you your wages" (v. 8), or, I will give you your *reward,* the life of your child.[19] A child then was commonly nursed until three or four years of age. No doubt Pharaoh's daughter maintained contact with Jochebed to that point at least. Then the child "became her son" (v. 9) and was educated accordingly. This would mean instruction in

astronomy, theology, medicine, mathematics, and more, "virtually everything that was part of the intellectual domain of the civilized world at that time."[20]

Moses thus was born of his people in a time of deadly persecution. In his rearing, he was a prince of Egypt. He was in a very real sense, however, *alien* to both Israel and Egypt, and was treated later with suspicion by both. In this way God prepared Moses to be God's man, not Israel's nor Egypt's.

Chapter Five

Moses as the Man of Justice

(*Exodus 2:11-22)*)

11. And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

12. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

13. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

14. And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

15. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

16. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

17. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day?

19. And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.

20. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

21. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

> 22. And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land. (Exodus 2:11-22)

We are now told that Moses, when he was grown, or, literally, when he became great, "went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens" (v. 11). The meaning is that he separated himself from the palace to identify himself with the Hebrews. This is stressed by Hebrews 11:24-26:

> 24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
> 25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
> 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

We must not sentimentalize this text: Moses did not choose his natural mother over his adopting mother. He may well have retained to his death a strong regard for both. The choice was rather religious; he identified himself with the covenant people of God. "The pleasures of sin" is thus a phrase which does not refer to a variety of actions but rather contrasts a covenant life in God against a covenant-breaking life lived in terms of man's own law as an ostensibly autonomous individual. Because he was in a real sense outside the life of both Israel and Egypt, Moses apparently had given himself to the study of both faiths. He thus saw his roots in the covenant God and His people. He also understood the messianic goal and kingdom is the process, as well as the atonement, perhaps, i.e., "the reproach of Christ."

Moses, by his birth and upbringing, was both of Israel and of Egypt, and yet aliens to both. By leaving the palace to live apart from Pharaoh's men, Moses isolated himself from the Egyptians, without, however, breaking with them in any dramatic fashion. But an incident occurred to more fully separate him from both Israel and Egypt.

He saw an Egyptian, probably an overseer, beating a Hebrew. In anger, Moses intervened, and, in the struggle, killed the Egyptian. The body was then hidden in the sand. Apparently the only eyewitness was the Hebrew.

The next day, however, Moses saw one Hebrew assaulting or beating another. The man may have been a Hebrew used as a taskmaster by the Egyptians, not an uncommon practice. On the previous day, Moses had "looked this way and that way" before he had killed the Egyptian and had seen no man. He had realized, apparently, as he began to fight the overseer, that, if the man lived, he would have Moses killed. Pharaohs tolerated no interference with their orders. The guilty Hebrew, when Moses intervened to ask, "Why do you smite your fellow Hebrew?," turned insolently to Moses to ask two questions which were actually accusations: *First*, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?," and *second*, "Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

Two things were at once apparent. *First,* by virtue of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was in fact a prince-judge. The Hebrew man, in effect, denies that Moses is acceptable to Hebrews as a prince-judge. He is to them a foreigner. *Second*, Moses' killing of the Egyptian is known, and the Hebrews were not viewing it favorably. Had the popular reaction been strongly favorable to Moses, the man would not so readily have shown contempt for Moses. He knew, however, that Moses was now rejected by both Egypt and Israel.

In Stephen's words in Acts, we have another account of this episode:

> 22. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.
> 23. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.
> 24. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
> 25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

> 26. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?
> 28. Wilt thou kill me, as thou didest the Egyptian yesterday?
> 29. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. (Acts 7:22-29)

We are told three things about Moses, namely, that he was learned, that he was "mighty in words," and that he was also "mighty in deeds." He was thus a man of power.

We are told that Moses "feared, and said, Surely this thing is known" (v. 14). The root of Moses' fear was *religious*: he was trying to restore Israel into covenant faithfulness and to deliver them, but he found himself *rejected* when he staked his life and future on saving a Hebrew. He thus had no place in either Egypt or Israel, and hence he fled. He knew himself to be a *stranger* to both Israel and Egypt, and, later, as a stranger in Midian, he named his first son Gershom, meaning a stranger there (*Ger*, a stranger; *sham*, there).

Moses fled to Midian, where he rested by a well. The seven daughters of a man of Midian were there to water the sheep, but male shepherds drove them away. These were the daughters of Jethro, which means "his excellence," and was probably a title as a nomadic chief. He is also called Reuel in v. 18, and Hobab in Numbers 10:29. Reuel may mean a friend or a shepherd of God. He is called, in v. 16, "the priest of Midian," the word translated as priest being the Hebrew *kohen*. Kohen can mean priest *or* chief. Jethro was thus leader of a small nomadic band. Perhaps because of his true faith, he was isolated and limited in power. The fact that other Midianite shepherds treated his daughters badly indicates a disrespect. However, the fact that the girls were able to work with their small bands of sheep without being raped by these men indicates that Jethro still commanded a little power.

In Egypt, Moses faced death for his action, which was based on his sense of justice in seeing a man unjustly beaten. Such beatings of work levies were in those days often murderous. His sense

of justice had not abandoned him: he now intervened to protect the girls *and* to draw water for them.

The father, being otherwise busy at the time, was surprised when they returned early. When he learned that "an Egyptian" had helped the girls, he insisted that someone go to that nearby well and bring the man to dinner. As "an Egyptian" who was well dressed and with some indications of his palace heritage, Moses probably intimidated the shepherds whom he drove back from the well. To oppose a man of rank could be dangerous. Jethro could have been motivated by both natural gratitude *and* a desire to befriend a prominent Egyptian.

Moses' history soon became known to Jethro, and Moses was content to live with him and herd sheep. He was given Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, as a wife. Zipporah means *bird*, or *little bird*, although Youngblood translates it as "Lady Bird."[21]

The child, Gershom, also sometimes Gershon, is of interest in a double sense. *First*, Moses uses that name to set forth the fact that he is a stranger to Israel, Egypt, and Midian. The name indicates his isolation and loneliness. *Second*, the name can also be seen as an affirmation of faith. In Genesis 46:11, we are told that Levi's firstborn son was named *Gershon*. Moses thus recalls his roots. Like Levi, he is the head of a great beginning, and, against all hope, he uses a name to invite a comparison of himself with Levi.

Midian was an area outside the main lines of trade and communication. It was thus a safe hiding place, especially with an obscure leader of a small band of nomadic herders.

Moses was now a sheepherder; he had once been a prince and a judge, as well, because a prince had legal powers. His intervention in both cases, between the Egyptian and the Hebrew, and between the two Hebrews, had an element of legality because of his status. The problem, however, was that the overseers of labor levies had great powers and were doing Pharaoh's bidding. Whatsoever the cause of justice Moses might have pled, the fact remained that he had intervened in Pharaoh's key area, the royal construction projects and his labor levies. This was

an offense against Pharaoh. Moses had no assigned jurisdiction over Hebrews, and his action was seen as lawless. The Hebrew reads that Moses *struck* the Egyptian, and the man died.

God called Moses to be His lawgiver. The training of Moses as a prince of Egypt was a schooling in "political justice," i.e., in statist power, in the use of forced labor levies, racism in laws, and a disregard for the common peasant. In his flight for life, Moses again encounters injustice at the well. He was thus given a radical schooling by God in humanistic law. His allegiance to both Egypt and Israel, to the palace and to the slave worker, and to all man-centered visions of righting injustice, was thoroughly shattered. If we cannot be separated from man's ideas of justice, we cannot be used by God. Moreover, men are not ready to receive justice unless they see its source as the covenant God.

An important aspect of this story is *the rejection of Moses by Israel*. Both now and later, Israel was an unhappy nation with respect to Moses: treating him with disrespect, blaming him for their failures in courage, and rebelling against him. Moses came to see the sins of Israel clearly. This was a necessary part of his schooling. A persistent aspect, especially of modern man, is his belief that the underdog, the minority group, the oppressed, the down-trodden, the persecuted race or nationality, is the virtuous one, and its superiors and/or oppressors are the evil ones. They are unwilling to see evil on both sides and to seek the good in one only, God (Matt. 19:17). This proneness of men to identify the good with one side or another leads to the perversion of justice. Justice can only be identified with God; then all men and all groups of men must be summoned to follow justice and serve it.

It was an essential part of Moses' schooling that he see Israel as well as Egypt as a sinning people. To have served Israel rather than God would have been evil.

Chapter Six

The Source of Law and Justice

(*Exodus 2:22-25*)

> 22. And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.
> 23. And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.
> 24. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
> 25. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them. (Exodus 2:22-25)

We are told in v. 23 that "the king of Egypt died," i.e., that the Pharaoh who sought Moses' life was now dead. The Egyptian Pharaoh was a god in the faith of the land. Frankfort stated that the word in Egyptian was *netjer*; it is not to be translated as "a god" or "the god" but as "the god with whom you have to reckon in the circumstances."[22] According to Ezekiel 29:3, Pharaoh says of the Nile, "My river is mine own, and I have made it myself." According to Yahuda, the Hebrew is literally, "I made myself."[23] According to Eisemann, Pharaoh says, "Mine is the river," i.e., the Nile; thus I need no divine help, because my river provides for all my needs. "And I have made myself " means that Pharaoh acknowledges no debt to anyone, or any need or dependence.[24] Since Pharaoh was the god men had to reckon with in given circumstances, there was no code of laws, as far as we know, valid for all times and governing all Pharaohs. What we have, according to Pritchard, are "royal decrees, framed to meet particular situations."[25]

We could call this an ancient form of situation ethics. Instead of an eternal unchanging God, there was a situational god, one who was the power confronting us in a situation. Instead of a code governing the ruler and the ruled, there was only the will of the ruler. This was legal positivism, not too different from our own legal theories today.

In the course of history, the oppressed do not always cry out against injustice. Very often, they do not believe in justice or injustice, and they strive to live with the existing conditions. An existentialist or positivist view of law and justice on the part of the ruler is likely to be shared by the ruled. Men have over and over again lived under brutally oppressive conditions while accepting them as normal and routine.

The Israelites had become Egyptianized. For them, god meant Pharaoh, the power they had to reckon with in a situation. Given such a belief, morality meant some kind of conformity to the ruling power. The Hebrews had by subterfuges kept as many male babies alive as possible, but this was a personal, not a religious, fact. Then and long afterwards, the evil of Egyptian faith was intensely a part of Israel, a fact cited with biting power by Ezekiel 20:5-11.

The faith of Egypt was a pragmatic and statist faith. The basic concern was a stable, prosperous state. Men certainly died in great numbers during the forced labor levies, but, if you survived, you might do well. During the wilderness journey, Israel repeatedly contrasted freedom with problems, against slavery with plenty, and the preference for the "fleshpots" of Egypt was very plain (e.g., Ex. 16:3, etc.). They had left Egypt physically, but Egypt was still basic to their life and thought.

After the Pharaoh who sought to kill Moses had died, then Israel "sighed by reason of their bondage." They "cried" out, and God was mindful of their cry because of *His* covenant's sake; God heard them and "knew them," i.e., recognized their place in His covenant plan. We are not to assume any merit or *religious* growth on their part at this time. God simply manifested prevenient grace. Although the term is now much neglected, prevenient grace is basic to Scripture and to life. Prevenient means "that which goes before;" it means that, before we are redeemed, a long chain of providence has guided and prepared us for the present time, for the future, and for all eternity. Prevenient grace means that there is more to our lives than our own will and act, and that there is more to history than man. When Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose,

it refers to all our yesterdays as well as our todays. Whatever sin and error we contributed to our yesterdays God uses to develop His purpose and plan.

God, we are told, "knew them," (v. 25) or looked with respect unto them in terms of His covenant of grace. The Septuagint gives us another possible reading, "and God was known to them," or, "revealed Himself to them."[26] This is a likely reading, because we have a progression here:

1. And God heard their groaning (v. 24)
2. And God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob (v. 24)
3. And God looked upon the children of Israel (v. 25)
4. And God knew them, or was known to them, or revealed Himself to them (v. 25)

We go from an immersion in history to power from beyond and over history. This is essential and most germane to the text. If history is the only reality man has, then there is no appeal against evil or tyranny, because there is no law whereby men and nations are judged. Then man's law is the only law, and right is what the state says it is. In such a context there can be violent upheavals and revolutions, but no essential change, because one evil power is traded for another. We can reasonably say that the modern age of revolutions has only intensified many problems while altering a few. Men who are at war with God will always be at war against men, because striking man, as God's image-bearer, is a way of striking against God. The Marquis de Sade took delight in showing his violent contempt for God by sexual abuse of mankind.

Pharaoh claimed a religious right to rule, although the religious premise was in part existentialist. In Greece, as in Rome, tyranny came to be associated with rule and not with worship. When authority was not derived from the culture's worship, according to Coulanges, it exercised "a power that religion had not established." It was "the obedience of man to man."[27] The tyrant could not appeal to a religious doctrine of *right* or *good*. His justification thus became, not an

appeal upward (to God), but an appeal downward (to the people). As a result, the tyrant appeals to the people against an aristocracy, against the rich, and against all who are successful.[28]

Egyptian religion, because of its existentialist element, could not escape tyranny although it evaded the appeal downward by making the ruler a god. In Greece, Rome, and other countries, despite efforts, as in Rome, to turn rulers into gods, the downward appeal prevailed. Wherever this happens, envy begins to govern, and, certainly, in modern humanistic states, envy is a powerful governing force.

The covenant of God with man precludes the rule of envy and requires God's justice to prevail. God separated Moses from looking downward to an oppressed minority, Israel, for law and justice, or from looking to a pseudo-upper realm, Pharaoh's court, for law and justice. On no level can fallen man provide justice and law.

Moses began by seeking *freedom* for Israel, but he failed to realize that freedom is not in essence political or economic but theological. Our Lord is very clear that only through Him and His atonement can we be free men, for "whoever committeth sin is the servant (or slave) of sin" (John 8:34). Freedom which forsakes Christ is not freedom but license. Men then interpret freedom as the right to copulate at will, approve abortions, homosexuality, pornography, euthanasia, and more, and to be irresponsible. But irresponsibility is not freedom but its negation. The twentieth century has seen much talk of freedom even as freedom perishes and is replaced by license. Freedom is a moral fact: it begins with man's self-government, and his ability to exercise moral responsibility in every area of life. The reduction of freedom to a political matter can only lead to the destruction of freedom. Freedom cannot be defined in terms of rule by church or state, but only by the government of the Holy Spirit in man.

Chapter Seven

The Burning Bush

(*Exodus 3:1-10*)

1. Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.
2. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.
3. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.
4. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.
5. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.
6. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.
7. And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;
8. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
9. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.
10. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Exodus 3:1-10)

Moses in Midian found life much simpler and easier than in Egypt. Whatever hopes he may have harbored for a time soon gave way to an acceptance of his life as a sheepherder. Having once been the companion of royalty, he was now the companion of sheep and the husband of a woman with a modest heritage.

As a sheepherder, he took the flock "to the backside of the desert," to a remote wilderness area, in the area of "the mountain of God," where later the law was given. It is called both Sinai and Horeb in the Bible; *Horeb* probably means "desolate place." Here at Horeb, God reveals Himself.

We are told that "the angel of the LORD appeared unto him" (v. 2). In some way, "the angel of the LORD" must be identified with God. This is clear from Genesis 16:9-13; Judges 6:11-14; and Judges 13:3-22. The angel of the Lord is clearly said to be God appearing in human form. At the same time that "the angel of the LORD" is identified with God, we have God speak of the angel (Ex. 23:23, 32:34). We have evidence of communication between God and the angel of His presence (2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron. 21:27). In Zechariah 1:12, "the angel of the LORD" speaks to God. From antiquity, it has been recognized that "the angel of the LORD" is a member of the triune Godhead, and Christians have seen Him as God the Son in His pre-incarnation appearances.

It is an interesting fact that, although two great events occurred at Sinai, *first*, God's revelation of Himself to Moses, and *second*, the giving of the Law, Israel never made Sinai a holy place, a shrine, or attached any special importance to it. This was a radical break with all antiquity, and a recognition of the transcendence of God. Even today, historic sites are turned into national "shrines" (a religious term), because we associate great events more with a time and place than an ongoing faith. One of the reasons why we are not at all sure or even reasonably aware of the location of Mt. Sinai is that Israel never attached any value to the site; it was the law itself which was important. Where sites were marked on Israel's entrance into Canaan, it was for educational reasons.

One of the things we are told about God is that He is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). In this instance, the fire did not consume the bush. Moses turned aside to see this strange sight.

At this point, many scholars indulge in naturalistic and evolutionary nonsense. The burning bush has been explained as the subject of spontaneous combustion because of the sun's intense heat; or, we are told, the original faith of Israel had been a worship of storms and lightning, and this was a vision of a storm god. Every kind of nonsense is invented to evade the fact of supernatural revelation.

When Moses turned aside to look more closely at the burning bush, God called out to him, "Moses, Moses," and Moses answered, "Here am I" (v. 4). Moses is then told three things: *First*, he is to come no closer; *second*, he is to take off his shoes, because; *third*, the place is holy since God is present.

To Westerners, this requirement of taking off one's shoes seems quaint and oriental. The fact is that our own custom is most common to barbarians, and it has a poor history. The two key areas where a man was to go unshod were, and in some places still are, in a home, and in a place of worship. It is a mark of respect. It indicates that the place is set apart, is a safe place, and is also a clean area which must not be polluted by the world's dust and dirt. In the West, the removal of one's hat by men is required in churches; and, in homes, both men and women remove their hats. The removal of one's shoes also signifies *rest*, and the idea of rest was once basic, and in some countries still is, to worship, eating, and being at home, and so shoes at such times were, and are, discarded.

We thus have a series of remarkable images. The burning bush represents Israel. As Keil and Delitzsch noted, Israel was "burning in the fire of affliction, the iron furnace of Egypt (Deut. 18:20)," but they were not consumed.[29] At the same time that the fire represents Egypt, it also represents God, by whose ordination the persecution has taken place in order to prepare Israel for freedom. Then we have a desolate place in the wilderness become suddenly a sanctuary where Moses meets God.

First, it must be noted that Moses does not find God; God finds Moses. God initiates this event: it is revelation, not discovery. *Second*, it is a specific and particular revelation: it is to Moses, and he answers, "Here am I." *Third*, Moses is warned against coming closer. Modern religiosity is often presumptuous and assumes an easy familiarity with God. The unshod feet speak of peace and rest, but not a casualness in God's presence. Some prominent pulpiteers who have been "stars" on the American church scene have also been notable moral shipwrecks. I believe part of the problem has been their cheap and easy familiarity with God. We are less ready to violate the moral laws of a God whom we hold in awe. Otto Scott has described his reaction to a violent storm in the north Atlantic in World War II; he said he realized that "God is no buttercup." This is a lesson which our generation will soon learn.

Fourth, God identifies Himself not only as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but as "the God of thy father" (v. 6). We are told little about Moses' father, Amram, other than that he was a Levite (Ex. 6:18, 20). God knew Amram, and He identified Himself as the God of Amram. This brought God close to home; the patriarchs represented a remote past, but a man's father places God very close to one.

Fifth, the reaction of Moses was one of fear and awe: he covered his face (v. 6).[30]

God declares that He has seen the affliction of Israel, and He has heard their cry. He is now going to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and give them Canaan, a land oozing or flowing with milk and honey. The six peoples living in the land are cited, an interesting list of ancient peoples.

The abundance of milk and honey means an area of rich pastures and many wildflowers, shrubs, and trees for bees to collect nectar from to make into honey. It is an image of prosperity and wealth. It is necessary to realize that Palestine today has little resemblance to Palestine then. Even apart from all other oppressors, the Turks turned many areas, including Palestine, into a desert. Their taxes on trees led to the destruction of trees.

God now speaks directly to Moses concerning his calling: Moses will be sent to Pharaoh, and it will be Moses' duty to bring Israel out of Egypt (v. 10). It is worthy of note that nothing has been said thus far about Moses' personal faith; all we know of that matter is by inference. God in His word is unconcerned about the religious experiences of the men He calls; His concern is to call them, and to send them forth. There is an analogy to a military commander; such a man does not ask the men whom he sends out on a dangerous mission anything about their love of their country: he simply sends them out. God commissions us and sends us out, not with guarantees of security, but with an order to obey.

It is noteworthy in this connection that many Calvinists over the generations have looked to the Burning Bush as the Biblical type of their faith, as a sign of great affliction but never of destruction. Their choice of the burning bush has meant a rejection of the idea of an easy faith.

Chapter Eight

What is His Name?

(*Exodus 3:11-18*)

11. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?
12. And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.
13. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?
14. 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.
15. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.
16. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:
17. And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.
18. And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. (Exodus 3:11-18)

This is a key passage in Scripture because it is basic to any understanding of God. Let us remember Otto Scott's reaction during a great storm at sea during World War II: "God is no buttercup." Men, however, want to define God in terms of their understanding, and they regularly pervert Scripture to do it. Thus, in 1 John 4:8, we read, "God is love." The word translated as *love* is *agape*, which indeed is *love*, but love in the sense of *grace*. John is writing about the need for grace, forgiveness, and love in the Christian community, and he reminds believers that God's being towards them is one of *agape*, love, mercy, and grace, and they must manifest this one to another. We cannot generalize this into a *definition* of God.

In Exodus 34:14, we read the commandment, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." The Hebrew word *ganna* means jealous or angry; we can no more use this statement, that God's name is Jealous, then that He is love, to *define* God. The same is true of statements that tell us that God is judgment, mercy, or anything else. These are all attributes of God, not definitions. Definitions are limitations; they give us the boundaries or fences around a concept or thing to help us understand it. But God is infinite and beyond all definition: He is *the source of all definition*. We define all things in terms of His law, His standard. Definitions are possible because there is a standard, a point of reference, God, who is the Creator and the definer of all things. When we deny the ultimacy of God and His infallible word, we then substitute ourselves and our word, and thus reduce meaning to anarchy. Every man becomes his own god and definer (Gen. 3:5).

This was Moses' problem. God confronts Moses and commissions him: *first*, he is to go to Pharaoh (v. 10) and to order Pharaoh to set Israel free. *Second*, God declares that He will be with Moses in all of this (v. 12). *Third*, the token or proof that God is the source of Moses' commission is this: "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (v. 12). This is clearly a strange *proof*; God promises to be with Moses, and the proof will appear when Moses returns to Horeb or Sinai with all the Hebrew peoples. Moses must move ahead by faith.

Before this revelation, God, the God of Moses' father Amram, was a strange God to Moses. Moses had left Pharaoh's palace by faith, and God had not appeared to support him. Now, many

years later, when Moses has no advantage, God appears to say, "Certainly I will be with thee" (v. 12). All this Moses could not understand. He answers by saying that "the children of Israel" will not understand either. When he tells them, "the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

Names in antiquity and well into the modern era have, in many cultures, been *definitions*. Thus, a man's name could change as he changed. We do not know Abraham's original name. When we meet him, he has been called, along with Terah his father, to leave Ur (Gen. 10:27-11:4), and he had been named *Abram*; it is hardly likely that his father would have named him "the father of many." Later, God changes Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5). It took faith for Abraham to carry such a name, for the extent of his fatherhood was very limited.

Thus, in asking for God's *Name,* Moses asks God to define Himself. He does not understand God: His ways are strange and bewildering to Moses, and therefore certainly to the leaders of Israel. He asks God to explain and define Himself.

This God *refuses* to do. He declares Himself simply to be I AM THAT I AM; I am He who Is, the self-existent One, the eternal Being. Since God is the source of all definition, He cannot be defined: it is He alone who can truly define, because "All things were made by Him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). God says to Moses, simply tell the people, "I AM hath sent me unto you" (v. 14).

Then God adds, carry this message to the elders of Israel:

> The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; and this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. (v. 15)

Here God says, *first*, that, while He cannot be *defined*, He can be known in His self-revelation. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who reveals Himself *and* who enters into a covenant with His people. For us, this means that we have the whole of Scripture as God's self-

revelation, and we can know Him truly, though never exhaustively, in His word. God is the LORD, or Jehovah, or Yahweh, the self-existent one.

Second, God declares, this is My Name, my definition, to all generations: I can never be reduced to any attribute; I am God, the self-existent Being. I am the Definer. To know God as the I AM THAT I AM means to know Him as the Creator, the Definer, and the absolute Determiner and Lord of all history. After the Red Sea crossing, Israel joyfully sang the Song of Moses, which began:

> 1. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
> 2. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.
> 3. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. (Ex. 15:1-3)

The statement, "The LORD (or, Jehovah) is a man of war," is again no more a definition than is the statement "God is love," or, that His name "is Jealous:" it cites an attribute, i.e., that God wages war against covenant-breaking man. "The LORD (or, Jehovah) is his name," i.e., He is the self-existent Creator who is the Determiner of all history.

Then, *third*, "this is my memorial (or, remembrance) to all generations." In Hosea 12:5 we read, "even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial," or remembrance, or name.[31] "'Memorial' is a synonym of 'Name.'" God says that His self-revelation will suffice: He is He Who Is, or, "I will be what I will be."[32] Thus, God, in using a Name which states His being as beyond definition, at the same time makes clear that He is a *person*, the Person in terms of whom we are all persons.

Moses was a rejected man. Now he is told that the elders of Israel "shall hearken to thy voice" (v. 18). This hearkening would be a faulty and sinning one, but, all the same, despite rebellions, Moses would be their leader under God.

To reconstitute Israel as a covenanted community, it was necessary for Israel to separate itself from Egypt and, by means of long-neglected sacrifices, renew the covenant with God. C.D. Ginsburg made clear the reason why a three-day journey was necessary:

> The necessity for withdrawing to so great a distance arose from that remarkable peculiarity in the Egyptian religion, the worship of animals. Cows, or at any rate, white cows, were sacred throughout the whole of Egypt, and to kill them was regarded as a crime of the deepest dye. Sheep were sacred to the inhabitants of one nome or canton, goats to those of another (Herod. ii. 42). Unless the Hebrews retired to a place where there were no Egyptians, they would be unable to perform their sacred rites without danger of disturbance, and even bloodshed.[33]

Turning again to the "Name" of God, J. C. Connell called attention to the fact that "I AM THAT I AM" has an indefinite text and can mean equally, "I was," "I am being," and "I will be." (This is echoed in Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and which is to come, the Almighty.") Connell said further:

> "I AM THAT I AM" signifies that He is self-existent, the only real being and the source of all reality; that He is self-sufficient; that He is eternal and unchangeable in His promises; that He is what He will be, all choice being according to His own will and pleasure. In addition, the name preserves much of His nature hidden from curious and presumptuous enquiry. We cannot by searching find Him out. See Proverbs 30:4. Compare His announcement of Himself in Rev. 1:4, 8 etc.[34]

Some years ago, a prominent film actress declared, after her acclaimed "conversion," "God is a living doll." Such a statement Moses could never have made: he was known of God, and thus knew God.

Chapter Nine

Indemnification Promised

(*Exodus 3:19-22*)

> 19. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.
> 20. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.
> 21. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:
> 22. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians. (Exodus 3:19-22)

This is a favored passage with people eager to "prove" that God has a bad character and gave immoral orders to Israel, namely, to "borrow" from the Egyptians and then leave the country. The problem with this view is that it is not true. Our word *borrow* comes from the Middle English *borwen*, which in turn is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *borgian*, a pledge or guarantee. Borrow translates the Hebrew word *shaw-ale*, which can mean request, demand, require, and more, including borrow. Ellison has called the translation borrow as "indefensible." It was a demand for compensation for their labors.[35] Clements pointed out, "the Egyptians will be glad to pay the Hebrews for the work they have compelled them to do...as an encouragement to go."[36] This demand would come after the plagues on Egypt, and the payments would be received as a pledge not to return to Egypt.

The disastrous plagues which struck Egypt prior to Israel's departure were particularly painful to Egyptians. They shattered the economy of Egypt and brought grief to every family. Even more, they were a religious catastrophe. Egypt's religion was naturalistic in the ancient sense of harmony with nature and its gods. Frankfort pointed out that the Egyptian way of life was not

struggle but harmony, harmony with nature and society, with rulers and superiors.[37] God's impact on Egyptian life and thought through Moses was thus particularly devastating. God struck, *first*, against the natural world Egypt trusted and depended on for its life; the plagues were all outwardly naturalistic. *Second*, God made a mockery of Pharaoh's divinity and wisdom; with each passing day, Pharaoh's "wisdom" became more and more obviously folly and evil. As a result of Pharaoh's "wisdom," the wealth of Egypt passes into the hands of Israel. To survive, Egypt sends out the Hebrews with its wealth as a bribe to stay away. In this we see an instance of God's purpose in history. In the telling words of F. W. Grant,

> As the result of all this, moreover, the wealth of the world passes into the hands of the people of God. "All things are yours," says the apostle; "whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, ... are yours," (1 Cor. 3:22). Men out of Christ, as they have right to nothing, so indeed they possess nothing. In the end, it will be found so. "Godliness" it is that "hath promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). They who go as pilgrims out of the world yet carry with them all the goods of the world, and the world that would enjoy it must yield it up to them. To him who belongs to the world the world cannot belong.[38]

The use of the word *borrow* seems to have been popularized by Martin Luther. It does not appear in the Catholic Douay version, nor in the Geneva Bible.

Cassuto saw clearly the meaning of this request by Israel at God's command. It was not an isolated instance but an application of God's law which somewhat later was set down by Moses in Deuteronomy 15:12-15:

> 12. And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.
> 13. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

> 14. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor,
> and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.
> 15. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

This is God's law and His requirement of all men in history. As a result, Cassuto said:

> This was required by law … that is, absolute justice demanded it … and although no earthly court could compel the king of Egypt and his servants to fulfill their obligation, the Heavenly Court saw to it that the requirements of law and justice were carried out, and directed the course of events to this end.[39]

Deuteronomy 15:12-15 refers specifically to bond-servants, in service for debt or to make restitution for crime. A bond-servant's labor could be sold to another man. In any case, at the end of six years, at the time of his release, he was to be compensated liberally for the loss of his freedom. This was *not* equivalent to payment for services but a way of enabling the person to resume a normal life with some capital in hand.

All this was to *spoil* the Egyptians. The Hebrew word is *natsal*, which can mean either *spoil* or *save*, and it is usually *save* in the Bible. This would render the phrase, "and ye shall save the Egyptians." The word *natsal* occurs 212 times in the Old Testament, and in 210 instances its meaning is to snatch or save, to rescue, or to recover.[40] We should remember that the Hebrews had been in Egypt for some generations; they had accumulated properties which could not be taken with them. In asking for compensation and getting it, no injustice was done.

In what way, then, did they *save* the Egyptians? The implication is that God's greater judgment would have fallen on Egypt had they not given to the Hebrews. Moreover, God did not want a continuing hatred of Egypt and Egyptians to remain in Israel. In fact, the law of Deuteronomy 23:7-8 declares:

> 7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.
> 8. The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

Foreigners were eligible for citizenship in Israel's covenant; some, because of their low moral statutes, were eligible only after three generations, others after ten. Israel was to remember the handicaps of being an alien in Egypt and be godly in its dealings with aliens in its midst.

An interesting aspect of this episode is that God declares, "the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand," or, as Gispen renders it, "unless a mighty hand compels him" (v. 19). That mighty hand was the hand of the Lord God. In Genesis 15:14, God promised Abraham that Israel would come out of Egypt "with great substance." Now, Pharaoh's power having been broken by God through the plagues, God enriches Israel by requesting indemnification by Egypt. But the request, at God's orders, was not to be made by either Moses, nor by the men of Israel, but by the women (v. 29). The weakest of Israel would ask for and by God's grace receive the gifts.[41]

There was another reason for this request being made by women to women. In our day, we forget that in more than one culture of antiquity, and in some to this century, women had a protected role. A man converted his monetary wealth into gems, gold, and silver, and these were in the form of ornaments to be worn by his wife. Thus, even the wives of tradesmen and peasants would often be richly ornamented. We have some evidence of this protected status of women, a curious bit, in Genesis 12:10-20; Abraham, in going to Egypt to escape a famine, asked Sarah to pass herself off as his sister. As his wife, while no man would touch her as long as she was a wife, they might readily kill Abraham to make Sarah a widow and thus eligible for marriage. Murder in their eyes was a lesser offense than in any way laying hands on a married woman. Thus, when the Hebrew women asked the Egyptian women for an indemnity, they were going to the actual possessors of Egyptian wealth. This gives us an indication of the security and status of women in peaceful times which feminists are unwilling to note.

Finally, we are told that God says, “And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty” (v. 21). It will be obvious to Egypt that God is working to deliver the Hebrews, and, in religious fear, the Egyptians will be more ready to favor Israel than Pharaoh.

In Isaiah 61:6, we are told:

> But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

Israel’s experience is a type of that which we are experiencing, a captivity to the enemies of God, God’s delivering judgments, and our inheritance of the wealth of the centuries.

Chapter Ten

The Day of God's Vengeance (*Exodus 4:1-9*)

1. And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.
2. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.
3. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.
4. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:
5. That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.
6. And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.
7. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.
8. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.
9. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land. (Exodus 4:1-9)

The pyramids of Egypt are in a number of ways a witness to the beliefs of ancient Egyptians. By their solidity and permanence, and also their triangular form, they witness to the Egyptian belief that their culture represented the true state of being and was aligned with the essential structure of being. The Egyptian believed the universe to be static, a realm without change.[42]

Thus, in challenging Egypt's faith, God struck at the world of nature. Suddenly nature became, to the Egyptian mind, perverse and undependable. This fact struck at the foundations of Egyptian life and religion: Egypt's certainties became uncertainties, and turned into a series of judgments.

The first question in Moses' mind at this point was with respect to Israel: "they will not believe me" (v. 1). He does *not* say, "The Egyptians will not believe me." His concern is the cynicism of his own people. Repeatedly in history, those who are in name God's people are most resistant to His word and His messengers.

This was Moses' third objection. His *first* (3:11) was, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Moses now saw himself, not as a prince, but as an insignificant man. *Second*, Moses asked, whom shall I say has sent me to them (3:13)? He asks for God's Name. Now, *third*, Moses says, "they will not believe me" (4:1). God's answer to the *first* objection is, "Certainly I will be with thee, and ...shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee"(3:12). The word translated as *token* is in the Hebrew '*oth*, flag, token, beacon, omen, prodigy, or evidence. It will be obvious that God is with Moses. The *second* answer is God's declaration that He is He who Is, God the Creator-Sovereign (3:14-15). The *third* answer is that God will give Moses three supernatural signs to confirm his calling. As against the powers of history, Moses will have power from the Lord of history.

The *first* sign will be to turn his shepherd's staff into a snake and then back again into a staff. The *second* sign is to turn his hand leprous and then reverse the process. The *third* sign is to turn into blood a dipping of Nile water, a sign also of a coming plague.[43]

Two of these three signs Moses saw with his own eyes. There was no question in his mind as to what God could do. Intellectually and empirically, Moses had no way of questioning God's word and power. All the same, he made excuses. He knew, but he lacked faith to act on what he knew. The evidence was clear, but Moses showed no faith. Evidentialism is, as it always has been, a failure. Paul in Romans 1:17-21 makes clear that *all men* have in all their being total evidence of God's truth, but they "hold" or suppress it in unrighteousness, because of their injustice. What

Moses had been ready to do in his own power he now feared to do in God's power. Later on, Israel would repeatedly show the same lack of faith as Moses sought to lead them. Like Pharaoh, Israel said in effect, even after the Red Sea deliverance in their wilderness years, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (5:2).

The signs given by God are very telling ones. F. W. Grant wrote powerfully of the *first sign*:

> The sign of the rod comes first. The rod is a sign of power - "the rod of Thy power" (Ps. cx. 2) — here, as we know, in the shepherd's hands, who, as we have seen, is the very type of royalty according to God. Even the iron rod with which Christ will smite His enemies is still represented as in a shepherd's hands. In all passages, it read really, "He shall shepherd them with an iron rod." (Rev. ii. 27). Severely as it may smite, love guides it. Woe indeed to those whom everlasting love has thus to smite!
>
> The rod in Moses' hand is, then, the type of power — divine, and characterized by tenderness and care, as a shepherd's rod. But Moses is told to cast it on the ground; and out of his hand the rod changes its character - it becomes a serpent. Plainly enough the type can be read here. Who that looks round upon the earth with the thought in his mind of power being in the hands of eternal love but must own to strange bewilderment at finding everywhere what seems completely to negate the supposition? Scripture itself puts the question in its full strength: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (Ps. xciv. 20)…
>
> There is no doubt that there is a special reference to Egypt here, which Moses and the Israelites would readily understand. "The asp played a conspicuous part in Egyptian mythology. It was the emblem of the goddess Ranno, the snake of Neph, the hieroglyphic of 'goddess,' and the sign of royalty…[44]

The *second sign* deals with leprosy and its cleansing. Leprosy is a Biblical type of sin. Both the defilement and the cleansing are shown to be from the heart. God by His grace can make us a new creation. Hard-hearted Israel can be made to hear by God's grace.

The *third sign* is a prediction of judgment and therefore of Israel's deliverance from Egypt.[45]

Each of these signs had a clear meaning to Moses and to Israel. *First*, the serpent was a prominent part of the Egyptian crown, and it set forth Pharaoh's power to kill. As George Bush noted:

> Thus, Eliezer, a Jewish commentator: "As the serpent biteth and killeth the sons of Adam, so Pharaoh and his people did bite and kill the Israelites; but he was turned and made like a dry stick."[46]

God was placing in Moses' hands the power to strip Pharaoh of all power.

The *second sign*, leprosy, had a like meaning. Leprosy separated men from society and made them pariahs. When Moses was through with Pharaoh, he had made him as appealing as a leper to his people.

The *third sign* refers to the Hebrew male infants who were cast into the Nile (Ex. 1:22). God through Moses would render the sacred Nile loathsome by turning the water into blood (Ex. 7:15-18).[47] Years had passed, but God had not forgotten the infanticide ordered by Pharaoh, nor has He forgotten the abortions of the twentieth century. His judgments never fail.

Moreover, the plagues on Egypt began at this point, turning the waters of the Nile into blood (Ex. 7:17-25). The death of the infants was not forgotten by God. How long it had continued, when it was discontinued, and how many babies died, we do not know. What we do know is that this judgment had priority with God.

Failure to recognize this strict justice by God is a sin which now plagues the church. God is seen as inoperative in history, but this is a blindness on the part of the church. Whatever men may or may not believe makes no difference to God. The day of the vengeance of our God never fails.

Chapter Eleven

"I Will Be With Thy Mouth"

(*Exodus 4:10-17*)

> 10. And Moses said unto the LORD, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.
> 11. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?
> 12. Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.
> 13. And he said, O my LORD, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.
> 14. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.
> 15. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.
> 16. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.
> 17. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. (Exodus 4:10-17)

The unwillingness of Moses to respond to God's call is sharply different from his early zeal and impetuosity in breaking with the court and in defending his people. The difference is the fact that Moses is now a broken man. The years have taken an ugly toll on his self-confidence. It is for this reason that God now uses him. In the course of time, men and nations are routinely broken, and the consequences are devastating to them. One consequence is that they become past-bound: they live in the past; their minds are wrapped up in past battles and defeats, and they cannot face the present with unfettered strength. Only a religious change can turn a defeated person or people

into a present power. For God's purposes, such broken men and nations are His chosen instruments for victory. Our salvation begins with an accepted judgment; only then are we freed from the past. Men who seek to excuse or to explain their past can never escape it.

Moses' *first* objection now, as we saw in Exodus 4:1, was, they will not believe or hear me. Without reviewing the other objections raised by Moses, this particular one is important to us now. For a man to believe that he has something to say to a perverse generation takes both courage and faith. Why should people listen to a lone and contrary voice? Isaiah 53:1 gives us the prophet's cry, "Who hath believed our report?" or doctrine. To speak to a people determined to go against God's law is to speak hopelessly. Paul, however, in citing Isaiah 53:1, adds, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:16-17).

God answered this and other objections by Moses, who now makes a *second kind* of objection, a personal one. He no longer questions God's power and ability to destroy Egypt, but he questions his own fitness to be God's instrument. Moses says that he is neither eloquent nor a quick thinker. Words come slowly to him, he declares. A more eloquent spokesman could serve God better.

God's answer is a devastating one: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?" (v. 11). God declares, *first*, that, because He is our Creator, what He commissions us to do He will empower us to fulfill. Moses must not be governed by his inadequacies but by God's command. *Second*, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (v. 12). This is a very important promise, and a repeated one. Our Lord tells us, as He told His disciples when He first sent them out,

> 16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
> 17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
> 18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

> 19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
> 20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (Matt. 10:16-20)

This is an echo of God's words to Moses. Our Lord says, *first*, that our task is a difficult and a dangerous one when we challenge the evil premises of our time. We are, humanly speaking, helpless; we are like sheep surrounded by wolves. *Second*, fool-hardiness in God's name is not permitted. "Beware of men," we are told, because God's enemies can drag us into court on whatever charges they choose. Recently, a woman was convicted of trespassing on air space for leaning over a fence to speak against abortion and to hand a girl a leaflet. *Third*, when we face our enemies, we must do so in God's Holy Spirit, who will empower us to speak what we should speak, for He will be in us to empower us.

God accepts no excuses, from Moses or from us. If Moses does not wish to speak, his brother Aaron, now coming to see him, can do so for him, and very ably. This arrangement would add to Moses' status. As Yahuda wrote:

> Exodus 4:16 reads literally: "he (Aaron) shall be to thee a mouth and thou shalt be to him a god (*Elohim*)." Here "mouth" is used metaphorically for representative, being a literal rendering of the Egyptian *ra* ("mouth"), a very common title of a high office at the court of Pharaoh. The office of a "mouth" was so important indeed that it was held by the highest state dignitaries. Thus especially in the New Kingdom the titles "mouth" (*ra*) and "chief mouth" (*ra-hery*) frequently occur in reference to persons of high rank, who, as chief superintendents and overseers of public works, acted as intermediaries between the king and government officials. In some cases they are called "mouth" or "chief mouth of the king," e.g., Ahmose, the commander-in-chief of Thutmosis III, says of himself: "(I was) the mouth of the king who brought tranquillity to the whole land and who filled the heart of the king with love and satisfaction every day" and "(the king) made me chief mouth of his house."[48]

As Yahuda pointed out, Pharaoh was to the Egyptians *the great god*, and, as such, he spoke to the people through various officials who were his *mouth*. The Lord uses Moses' reluctance to establish an ironic parallel, one which both mocks and challenges Pharaoh. Moses appears before Pharaoh as God's prophet and also "instead of God." Like Pharaoh, he has a mouth, Aaron, to speak for him.[49] This was so bold a challenge, and one accompanied with supernatural judgments, that it restrained Pharaoh's vengeance against Moses and Aaron.

Aaron was Moses' elder brother, and, normally in antiquity, this would have given him a superior status. God reverses this fact, and Aaron accepts it.

Moses had not wanted to go, but God compels him to do so. Moses is also ordered to take his shepherd's staff or rod (v. 17), because royal scepters in antiquity were shepherd's staffs. They set forth the king as shepherd of his people. Moses under God is to be the shepherd of Israel. To carry such a staff into Pharaoh's presence was in itself a challenge to that ruler's authority.

Aaron is identified by God as "the Levite," meaning here the *priest* under Moses' jurisdiction; as priest, Aaron is part of the chain of communication *from* God; in Exodus 7:1, God tells Moses that "Aaron thy brother shall be thy *prophet*." He shall speak for Moses, who speaks for God. One result of this was to isolate Moses during a time of great hostility and pressure: Aaron stood between him and the people.

Moses was out of touch with both Israel and Egypt. His command of both languages, Hebrew and Egyptian, would have been rusty; hence, he was "slow of speech." Aaron, fluent in both tongues, was thus a good spokesman.

At this point it is well to remember that we are "in the know" in a way that Moses was not. We know of the ten plagues on Egypt, and Israel's deliverance. God only revealed to Moses His mission and gave evidence of His power to Moses, but, apart from that, no specific statements were made. All Moses knew was that God purposed to deliver Israel through him. He knew this would be an enormously difficult task. His most *specific* assurance had to do with speech. Moses

knew by this time that God's ways can be very difficult. It is well to remember our Lord's words to His disciples, which both tell us that some would be killed, and yet not a hair should perish:

> 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:
> 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.
> 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.
> 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.
> 18. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.
> 19. In your patience possess ye your souls. (Luke 21:14-19)

These words have reference to the conditions just before the fall of Jerusalem in the war of A.D. 66-70, the most fearful war in all history. All the same, they have relevance to us. Our Lord promises full protection and yet says some of them will be put to death. God's perspective on our lives includes all of eternity, and, in this sense, there is no loss for us. All the same, when in His service, we do have supernatural protection as well as wisdom and power when we speak. We are required to speak for Him faithfully to our generation; He declares then, "I will be with thy mouth" (v. 15).

Chapter Twelve

Calling versus Presumption

(*Exodus 4:18-31*)

18. And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

19. And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

20. And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

21. And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

22. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

23. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

24. And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

25. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

26. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

27. And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

28. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

29. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

> 30. And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.
> 31. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. (Exodus 4:18-31)

These verses trouble many whose theology is faulty, because God declares that He will harden Pharaoh's heart (v. 21). In Exodus 8:15, we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, whereas in Exodus 7:13 the wording is somewhat neutral. The hardening is the response of Pharaoh, but behind it is God's sovereign decree. God as sovereign so ordained it. As we view men and nations, we must recognize three things, or else we warp our thinking. *First*, "all nations are not equally honored," as Parker saw. Nothing can eliminate the fact of differences. If we reject God's predestinating purpose, we fall into a variety of humanistic answers. Some ascribe racial superiority to some peoples and inferiority to others. Still other men insist that conspiracies have held back some peoples, or else geography, weather, resources, and so on. These "answers" do not hold up; some very backward peoples have had rich resources. *Second*, "all individuals are not equally endowed." If we do not receive this fact from God's hands, then pride, elitism, and the abuse of those less endowed, or less successful, follows. If we see our endowments as God's grace and calling, then we are humble and faithful. As Paul says,

> For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (1 Cor. 4:7)

Third, "Divine judgment is regulated by Divine allotment." Thus, we read in Matthew 11:20-24:

> 20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:
> 21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

> 22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.
> 23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
> 24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

God's plan of judgment is moral: "*God must do right*, or He is no longer God."[50]

Another problem for some people is v. 10, Moses' failure to tell his father-in-law Jethro the full purpose of his return to Egypt. God, however, had given His word to Moses, not Jethro, and, at this point, no human counsel was to intrude. To tell Jethro, however fine a servant of God Jethro was, would be to open the door to human advice.

Moses did ask Jethro's permission. He had come a refugee, and Jethro had made him a member of the family. Hence, Moses, to be godly, needed Jethro's consent, which he received.

Still another difficult text for many is vv. 24-26. We must remember that this episode follows the statement that Egypt's firstborn would perish (v. 23). In Genesis 17:14, God declares that all in Israel who are not circumcised will be cut off from God's covenant. Here God threatens to kill Moses, because Moses had begun to follow God's calling without obeying God in so simple a matter as circumcising his son. To again quote Otto Scott, "God is no buttercup." Moses was called to set forth God's judgment, death, on Egypt; unless Moses were himself faithful, that death would also fall on him. His wife Zipporah was resentful of this requirement, and some have suggested that Moses had postponed obedience because of her. If this were true, this incident means that God also served notice that Moses was to obey Him, not his wife. Moses had in his hand his staff, which was to humble and break Pharaoh. How could he command obedience to God from Pharaoh while not yielding it himself?

The circumcision was performed with a flint knife, which could be very sharp. Although metal knives were common, flint knives were used by the poor.

We are told in Exodus 18:2-3 that Moses sent his wife and two sons back to their father. Because of God's assurance of victory, he had taken his family with him when he left Jethro; now, faced with a problem from his wife, he sent her home to her father. Zipporah called Moses a bloody bridegroom, or a husband of blood. The interpretations are many, from favorable to unfavorable. "Cast it at his feet" is literally "made it touch his feet." She recognized that by this act she was regaining life for Moses, freeing him from God's wrath. At the same time, she seemed resentful that this step was required. Circumcision was common in antiquity, but, in many cases, only just prior to marriage.

Moses was to tell Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn," and, if Pharaoh did not set Israel free, "behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (vv. 22-23). This verse, 22, is cited in Matthew 2:15 as fulfilled in Christ's recall as a child from Egypt. The pharaohs were known as the "Sons of God," so that to call Israel God's son was a direct challenge to Pharaoh's claims.

We are told that Aaron and Moses met at Horeb or Sinai. God had brought Aaron there and prepared him to serve his younger brother as his spokesman.

On returning to Egypt, the elders of Israel were called together. As a leading Levite, Aaron was able to summon such a meeting. Despite the generations of oppression, Israel had maintained its forms of tribal or clan government. In antiquity and until recently, most tyrant states used forms of structured rule of subject peoples. In modern tyrannies, these are obliterated because of the tolerant nature of the modern state.

We see in v. 30 that it was Aaron who spoke for Moses to the elders of Israel, and also Aaron who "did the signs in the sight of the people." Moses is thus separated from the people, and his power exercised by Aaron. Familiarity by an enslaved people is barred, because their idea of familiarity is to level everyone downward. In Numbers 16 we are told of the rebellion of Korah

and Dathan, an incident with many ramifications. At its heart was this premise, as stated by Dathan, Korah, and others, together with 250 other "princes of the assembly" (Num. 16:2):

> And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the LORD is among them: Wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Num. 16:3)

The rebels assumed as *fact* what was in reality the religious *goal* for all God's people. According to Exodus 19:5-6,

> 5. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:
> 6. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

This is a *conditional* promise of a *conditional* status. Israel, to gain this status before God, had to *obey* God's voice and *keep* His covenant. To treat such a promise as a description of present status was presumptuous and incurred God's wrath.

A distance is thus placed between Moses and the people, and this distance is God-ordained. Modern democratic thought denies the fact of differences and "unequal" or differing endowments, and the result is presumption, pride, and arrogance. However, when men view their greater endowments as their own rather than a gift from God, the result is even more arrogance, presumption, and pride. Neither is godly.

Chapter Thirteen

"Thus Saith the Lord"

(*Exodus 5:1-9*)

1. And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.
2. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.
3. And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.
4. And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.
5. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.
6. And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,
7. Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.
8. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.
9. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words. (Exodus 5:1-9)

These verses are especially relevant to prayer, because they tell us much about the ways of God. People too often pray for escape from confrontations and from moral divisions. Over the years, and now as well, I have regularly encountered people who ask for prayers where prayers are offensive to God. My son or daughter, they will say, is on drugs, or is promiscuous, or is stealing

from us: pray that God save him (or her) and deliver them from this evil. Such prayers invite judgment on all who pray so; God requires us to exercise godly discipline and chastisement, not to abdicate our responsibilities and thus ask Him to bail us out of our troubles.

There is more. When we make a stand in the Lord, we must expect to pay a price: men will resent it; they will oppose us, and they will treat us as enemies.

Israel had prayed to God, had cried out to God, for deliverance. They were now to learn that there were troubles attached to it. Slavery has its problems, but it does diminish the burden of responsibility.

The request of Moses and Aaron was for a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to God in order to reestablish Israel as a covenanted people. Because such sacrifices would be religiously offensive to Egyptians, it was necessary to distance themselves.

Pharaoh's response was, *first*, to treat Moses and Aaron as labor agitators. Egypt in that era had experience with such men. Its method of dealing with labor unrest was to penalize the workers. The conditions of work, and the work quotas, were made more difficult in order to turn the workers against their organizers. We are told, for example, that:

> there is also documentary evidence from an Egyptian papyrus in which a man who had to supervise or to construct a building says: "I am not provided with anything; there are no men for making bricks and there is no straw in the district."[51]

In this instance, the Israelite workers had to provide the straw for the adobe bricks, and also make more bricks than before (v. 9). For Pharaoh to have ordered the arrest or execution of Aaron and Moses would have made them martyrs. By increasing the work of the Israelites and placing the blame for it on Aaron and Moses, Pharaoh counted on a reaction by the workers against the two men. This is exactly what happened.

Second, Pharaoh treated with contempt the purported message from an unknown God: "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice…?" (v. 2). The God of a slave people was *nothing* to him. Even more, the claim of a subject and his God represented a religiously outrageous presumption. As Frankfort pointed out so tellingly,

> The Egyptians judged pride more like the Greeks than the Hebrews. It was not a sin of the creature against his maker but a loss of the sense of proportion, a self-reliance, a self-assertion which passed the bounds of man and hence led to disaster. But while the Greek *hubris* was overtaken by Nemesis, the gods' resentment, the Egyptian's pride dislocated him with his appropriate setting, society.[52]

By analogy, we might compare it to a modern garbage man assuming that he has a right to associate with the wealthy members of "high society." For the God of Israelite slaves to command Pharaoh, the living god and power over all of Egypt's empire, was arrogance and pride. Pharaoh *may* have known something about Israelite religion; when he said, "I know not the LORD," or, Adonai or Jehovah, he perhaps meant, I do not choose to know or recognize so insignificant a thing.

Third, the Egyptians were convinced of "their racial superiority,"[53] and they were concerned with preserving it. Pharaoh observed, "The people of the land are now many" (v. 5). The term "people of the land" could mean, and often did mean, "the common people," but it could also mean aliens, slaves of the state, and non-Egyptians. Egypt was fearful that these outsiders would outnumber Egyptians and in time revolt to gain power and control. This is apparently Pharaoh's meaning. For a slave people to make demands of him was an ominous sign, and steps had to be taken against Israel. The earlier executions of Israelite male infants had served for a time to break the people's will to resist; now new steps would have to be taken.

The word used in v. 1 and translated as *feast* is the Hebrew *hag*, still used to describe pilgrimages to Mecca. Aaron told Pharaoh that, unless Israel were faithful to God, He would "fall upon us with pestilence (or, plague), or with the sword" (v. 3). This refers to an aspect of God's

revelation not mentioned before this, but it was one which was taken very seriously by Moses and Aaron. The facts of judgment and God's wrath are too seldom preached in our time. Men want a kindly, grandfatherly God, or one who only loves. This is clearly anti-Scriptural and blasphemous. We rarely hear mention, for example, of such a verse as Malachi 2:3, wherein God declares that He will spread manure over the faces of the religious leaders of the people for their hypocritical and empty worship. God does not take kindly to misrepresentations of His nature and word.

In v. 6, we have a reference to "the taskmasters of the people," who were Egyptians, and "their officers," who were Hebrews who kept records of the work done and saw to the requirements. Because the work was supervised by Hebrews, the resentment of the workers was thereby deflected in part from the Egyptians to their own people. This was a common aspect of many an imperial policy.

In v. 8, we have a reference to "the tale," the number or tally of the bricks. In Old English, "to tell" meant to count (cf. Gen. 15:5; 2 Chron. 2:2; Ps. 22:17; 48:12; 147:4, etc.). We still speak of a vote counter as a "teller," and the same term is used for certain bank employees. We have the expression, "and thereby hangs a tale," which refers to the recounting of the sequence and meaning of some event. The Gothic form of the word "tale" is "talzjan" and means to instruct, so that to speak of "fairy tales" is to go against the root meaning of the word.

In v. 1, we have the declaration, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel. Let my people go." The prophets of later years all began their proclamations with the same prefix, "Thus saith the LORD." This is the premise of all life and faith, of all moral action, and hence the only true ground for any challenge to the powers that be. All human action must be founded on the assurance of God's infallible word as the authority for man's life and work.

What follows is thus a contest between "Thus saith the LORD" and "Thus saith Pharaoh." In such a struggle, David's words, as he faced Goliath, are still true: "All this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:47). Pharaoh spoke the word of command in contradiction to

God, and it was Pharaoh who was broken. The Pharaohs of all ages will be broken only by those who stand, not on their word and will, but on the word of God.

Chapter Fourteen

Loneliness of Moses

(*Exodus 5:10-23*)

10. And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.
11. Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.
12. So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.
13. And the taskmasters hasted them, saying, Fulfill your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw.
14. And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?
15. Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?
16. There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.
17. But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD.
18. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.
19. And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.
20. And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh:
21. And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.

> 22. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?
> 23. For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. (Exodus 5:10-23)

The initial response of Pharaoh was to increase the work by requiring the Israelite forced labor to collect its own straw to make adobe bricks. Instead of properly collected straw, they had only stubble to harvest, so that their labor was greatly increased.

Pharaoh's attitude was that the Israelites were lazy workers and were led by two labor agitators. He therefore punished the workers directly in order to kill off all protests. The Egyptians were used to labor unrest and were experienced in dealing with it.

Moreover, Egypt regarded idleness as one of the very serious sins. In the judgment of the dead before Osiris, idleness had to be disclaimed. Epitaphs on tombs often absolved the dead of idleness as a way of praising them. To charge Israel with idleness was to declare Israel worthless.[54]

This charge of idleness was made to the Israelite foremen. It was common in antiquity to use a subject people's leaders to control them, a practice common into the twentieth century. The Nazis used Jewish police in their labor and concentration camps.[55] One of the advantages of such a method was that it deflected criticism, because the coerced labor force could never be certain how much of their task came from their overlords, and how much of it from foremen eager to please their superiors. It was for this reason that the foremen went directly to Pharaoh; they had to clear themselves in the eyes of the people. They normally represented Egypt to the people; now they were representing their people to Pharaoh.

We are told in v. 15 that the foremen "*cried* unto Pharaoh." This is the same word as used in Exodus 2:23, when we are told, "the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage, and they *cried*, and their cry came up unto God…." It is a despairing plea in a time of grief and dismay.

Moses and Aaron were outside, waiting to hear of Pharaoh's reaction to the foremen. Pharaoh's strategy of causing division began at once to work. "The real enemy was Pharaoh and Egypt, but the leaders turned on Moses." The foremen said, literally, "you have made us stink" in Pharaoh's eyes.[56]

Pharaoh's strategy was clearly working, and, like all such strategies, it should have continued to work had Pharaoh's basic presupposition been true, namely, that, in any given situation, there were two factors or two sides. Contrary to all such humanistic assumptions, the decisive, over-ruling, and supernatural factor in *every* situation is God. To overlook Him is to invite His judgment.

When the report on the audience was made to Moses, and when the foremen turned against Moses, the reaction of Moses was one of grief. God had warned him that Pharaoh would not agree to let Israel go, but Moses, however prepared for that, was less prepared for his rejection again by his own people.

We are told that "Moses returned to the LORD," i.e., having received his commission from the Lord, he returned now to question its validity. He raises two questions.

First, Adonai, Lord, why hast Thou brought such grief upon this people? (v. 22). Moses, like so many who pray, wanted easy answers. People too often pray expecting special delivery answers from God with no accompanying change in themselves, their loved ones, their church, their country, or whatever else they pray for. This is why the saying, "Prayer changes *things*," can be dangerous: prayer changes us first of all, and its course can be like an earthquake. For Moses to have expected the confrontation with Pharaoh to result in an easy answer was altogether wrong. Thus, to pray for the salvation of the United States means to pray that God judge us, purge and cleanse us, and then reestablish us in His covenant. Cheap praying is blasphemous. The answer to Moses' question, Why this grief upon my people?, was that without that grief and much more there could be no redemption. The humanist in politics expects the passage of a statute to solve a major social problem, when usually the statute compounds the trouble. The humanist in the

church expects cheap prayers to set all problems right and forgets that God works at both ends of every matter.

Moses' *second* question was, "Why is it that Thou hast sent me?" i.e., given the fact that I am now *discredited* in my very first move. This fact is very clear: Moses was now a thoroughly discredited leader. Pharaoh had successfully separated Moses from Israel, and Israel had turned bitterly against Moses.

This left Moses alone with God. This was God's purpose from the beginning. No credit for the deliverance would go to Israel, only shame. No credit would go to Moses, who complained, step by step, about God's ways. All the glory would be God's, and, in the process, Moses would be hardened for leadership. He would also be schooled to look God-ward, so that he would see the hope of the people in God's covenant grace and law.

The people rejected both Moses and the God of Moses. They used the very Name of God (v. 21) to damn Moses and Aaron. They thereby said in effect that our God wants us to reconcile ourselves to defeat and slavery.

The church today is full of many who preach the same bad news of defeat and slavery in the Name of the Lord. The generation then who so believed died in the wilderness. People who are slaves at heart are not given the privileges of freedom.

The present generation is so deeply involved in slavery that it cannot understand its meaning. Slavery is damned even as it is pursued by men, and freedom is called slavery because freedom means problems. Slavery is the risk-free life; it means full employment, total care by someone else, and cradle-to-grave security. Freedom means problems, losses, and constant risks, but it also means the possibility of success and prosperity. The immigrants who came to the United States during the years of slavery lived in conditions far worse than those of slaves, but they had the freedom to advance themselves, and they did. The modern lust for a risk-free life is an invitation to enslavement; as a result, freedom is rapidly waning.

Chapter Fifteen

The "Name" of God

(*Exodus 6:1-8*)

1. Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.
2. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD:
3. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.
4. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.
5. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.
6. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:
7. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
8. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD. (Exodus 6:1-8)

This text is a delight to many scholars because it gives an opportunity for debate and dissension. The point at issue is God's statement in v. 3 that, in His revelations to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He was not *known* by His Name, Jehovah, or Yahweh, but as God Almighty, El Shaddai. Did God mean that prior to the burning bush episode God had never been called Jehovah or

Yahweh? In all of Genesis, the term El Shaddai is only used six times. How common was its usage, and was Yahweh or Jehovah an unknown term at that time?

There is, however, another possible approach. As Youngblood, for example, has pointed out, to know can be, *first*, casual, or knowledge by acquaintance, or, *second*, personal and more radical, or knowledge by experience.[57] This does not mean that the experience of the patriarchs was superficial. Certainly Abraham's experience on Mount Moriah, to cite but one instance, is evidence of the depth of their experience.

The name Jehovah, or Yahweh, means I AM THAT I AM, or, He Who Is, or, I shall be that (or, what) I shall be. El Shaddai means God Almighty, or God All-Sovereign; it points to God's self-sufficiency and omnipotence, and this is close to Jehovah in meaning. As Oehler noted of Jehovah,

> Inasmuch as God is just what He is, and so determines Himself in the historical manifestation of His existence, instead of being determined by anything outside of Him, the name carries us into the sphere of divine *freedom*. It expresses quite generally the absolute *independence* of God in His dominion. Through this factor of its meaning the name Jehovah is connected with El-Shaddai.[58]

It can be added that all the terms applied to God in Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch point to *Jehovah*. We should not expect these terms to contradict one another.

The term *Jehovah*, I AM THAT I AM, suggests God's immutability, His eternity, and the fact that He is Life, the living God and the Creator; He is the Lord or Sovereign, and much, much more. The communicable attributes of God which make up His image in man, i.e., knowledge, righteousness (or, justice), holiness, and dominion (Gen. 1:26-28; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), man can to some degree understand, but His incommunicable attributes are only dimly apprehended. Some have been cited; others include His independent Being or aseity, His infinity, His unity of singularity and of simplicity while being a trinity, and so on. With respect to eternity, man can

only think of endless time, not a transcendence of time. We know God truly because all of His Being is harmonious and self-consistent, but we can never know Him exhaustively.

The Name of God, which is not a name, in that it is not a description but a denial of comprehensibility by definition, is thus a reminder to us that there is more to God than our world, mind, or experience can comprehend. To know or experience that term, Jehovah, means to come face-to-face with the absoluteness and the transcendence of God. Our definitions are time-bound; they are in terms of this world and time, i.e., the created world, whereas God in His Being is the Uncreated One. The Name Jehovah thus compels us to look beyond a man-bound, time-bound reference.

In v. 7, however, God says, "and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God" when I deliver you from Egypt. The word translated as *know* here, and as *known* in v. 3, is the Hebrew *yada* (*yawdah*), which means to know, to see, to recognize, to understand, to acknowledge, and so on. In Psalm 50:21, we are told by God, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; *thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself*; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." To know the meaning of the term Jehovah means to recognize the transcendence of God, that He is not such a one as ourselves, and that the categories and causalities of time do not bind their Maker. It was the implication of the term Jehovah that was not known to the patriarchs.

The royal pronouncement of Egypt's monarch began with the words, "I am Pharaoh" (Gen. 41:44). God begins His royal decree similarly: "I am the LORD," or, Jehovah, Adonai (v. 2). I am in command, not man. Pharaoh had said, "I know not the LORD" (Ex. 5:2), and God was now about to make sure that Pharaoh did know.

George Rawlinson said of the meaning of Jehovah, "The primary idea of 'Jehovah' is… that of absolute, eternal, unconditional, independent existence."[59] Both Pharaoh *and* Israel were about to learn something of the meaning of *Jehovah*. For both, the learning would be a hard experience; for Egypt, destructive judgment; for Israel, forty years in the wilderness.

In v. 5, God declares, "I have remembered my covenant." All that follows is because of the covenant. God in His grace and mercy gave His law to Abraham and His seed, because a covenant is a treaty of law. However unfaithful Israel was in Egypt, God was faithful. Hence, in terms of that covenant, God now moves to *redeem* Israel (v. 6). The word *redeem* is a legal term, and it means, as Clements has so aptly summarized it,

> the right of a member of a family to acquire persons or property belonging to that family which was in danger of falling to outside claimants. Thus if a member of the family was forced to sell himself into slavery, other members retained a special privilege of purchasing his freedom (Lev. 25:48). Here it expresses God's protective action towards those who were regarded as belonging to him.[60]

By His covenant, God makes Himself next of kin to the covenant people. In the incarnation, Jesus Christ, by becoming very man of very man while also very God of very God, becomes our next of kin and delivers us from the power of sin and death.

Not only is salvation a covenant fact, but also prayer. We pray "in Jesus' Name," in the Name of our next of kin, to God the Father.

We thus have here, as throughout Scripture, an amazing juxtaposition of things. We have a strong reminder that God is Jehovah, He Who Is, one far beyond our abilities of comprehension. He transcends in Being and Person our mind, time, and creation. At the same time, He declares His total command of time, history, and all creation in terms of His covenant grace and purpose.

In terms of His total memory, He remembers in due time His promise of the land of Canaan, as made to Abraham. It is perhaps not likely that many Israelites in Egypt remembered it, but God did.

In Revelation 6:9-11, we see all those slain for the word of God cry out from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" They are given the assurance that in God's "time," although more would be slain,

there would be a full accounting. The timing is not man's, but the covenant faithfulness is certain.

For the present, God assures Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to the Pharaoh; he will be forced to let them go, he will be forced to put them out of his country" (Moffatt). Everything Pharaoh does will increase his judgment, and the ruin of his land will be his own doing. An old saying has it, "Whom God wishes to destroy He first deprives of reason." Longfellow, in *The Morgue of Pandora VI*, cited it as, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," the more familiar form of the proverb. In any case, this was true of Pharaoh.

Chapter Sixteen

The New Leadership

(*Exodus 6:9-30*)

9. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

10. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

11. Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

12. And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?

13. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

14. These be the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these be the families of Reuben.

15. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman: these are the families of Simeon.

16. And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari: and the years of the life of Levi were an hundred thirty and seven years.

17. The sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimi, according to their families.

18. And the sons of Kohath; Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath were an hundred thirty and three years.

19. And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these are the families of Levi according to their generations.

20. And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years.

21. And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri.
22. And the sons of Uzziel; Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Zithri.
23. And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.
24. And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites.
25. And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.
26. These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.
27. These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron.
28. And it came to pass on the day when the LORD spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt,
29. That the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I am the LORD: speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee.
30. And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me? (Exodus 6:9-30)

God recommissioned the disheartened Moses in Exodus 6:1-8. He ordered Moses back to his task, and Moses accordingly "spake so," or, as God required him to, once again to the Israelites. We are told, however, that "they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (v. 9).

The people were apathetic and defeated in spirit. They had not only lost faith in Moses, but also saw him as the reason for their greater bondage. Therefore, when God ordered Moses to go to Pharaoh again with God's demand for the release of His people, Moses *logically* asked: "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" (v. 12). *First* of all, Moses is logically correct. Pharaoh would obviously know from his agents that Israel wanted no part of Moses and had bluntly rejected him. He

would thus lack any support in continuing demands in Israel's name. Humanly speaking, Moses was finished. Now, however, more was involved than Moses. In his youthful attempt to deliver Israel, he had worked alone and had failed. Now God the Lord was with him. To act without God was foolish; to refuse to act where God required it was more foolish and illogical by far.

Second, Moses was right: there was no reason why Pharaoh should hear him, but God had declared that, although Pharaoh would never agree voluntarily, God would break Egypt and Pharaoh and thereby deliver Israel. It would have been the mercy of God had Pharaoh heard, but instead judgment was ordained.

Third, Moses speaks of his "uncircumcised lips" (v. 12). This is the first of the many, many usages of the word "uncircumcised" to indicate a lack of the necessary qualifications for God's service, salvation, or His Presence. Moses is now sharply aware of his own sinfulness, his fearfulness, and his inability to cope with the immense task assigned to him.

God's response to this was to renew the charge to Aaron and to Moses to speak both to Israel and to Pharaoh (v. 13). What follows, then, is a genealogical list. The purpose of this list is closely tied to the recommissioning of Aaron and Moses.

The genealogical list is in two clear-cut sections. *First*, in vv. 14-17, we have the sons of Jacob. These are the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, except that the list cites only three of them, the eldest, Reuben, and his sons; then, the sons of Simeon; then, third, the sons of Levi. Reuben was the eldest, but had been set aside for his sin (Gen. 35:22). Simeon was the second born, and Levi the third; all three of these were Jacob's sons by Leah. However, both Simeon and Levi were set aside because of their covenant-breaking murders of the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:1-31). Headship had then passed to Joseph (Gen. 37), and, subsequently, to Judah (Gen. 49:8-12).

Now a reversal takes place: headship is given, for the purposes of deliverance, to the tribe of Levi in the persons of Aaron and Moses. Hence, the *second* genealogical list. Permanent leadership for the duration, from the Exodus to Christ's resurrection, remained with the line of Aaron, and the Levites generally, a primacy in religious worship, education, health, and, to a

degree, welfare. Moses personally was given great authority under God but was not given any dynastic power to pass on to his sons.

The Biblical pattern is not *personal* in that the transmission of wealth and power is not necessarily to the eldest. The *family* welfare takes priority, so that it is the godly and capable son who inherits, or, as in Caleb's case, his daughter (Joshua 14:6-15; 15:16-19). As Hertz noted:

> The firstborn according to nature is not always the 'firstborn' in the sight of God. This thought is general in Scripture. Abel, Shem, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Judah, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses, David were none of them eldest sons in their families.[61]

The reference to Israel's "anguish of spirit" in v. 9 means very literally "shortness of breath."[62] They were an exhausted people, lacking courage, and God was now providing new leadership.

The genealogy itself has some interesting sidelights. Thus, in v. 20, we read that Amram, Moses' father, married his father's sister, Jochebed. This could have been a half-sister by a later marriage and thus of an age comparable to that of Amram. The Amram of v. 18 was a son of Kohath (Num. 3:27-28); the Amram of v. 20 was a different person. With the giving of the law such marriages as Amram's were forbidden (Lev. 18:12; 20:19). Such marriages were commonplace in antiquity as Herodotus (vi, 71; vii, 239) makes clear, and they survived in many areas, as in Europe, into the early years of this century. Royal families destroyed themselves thereby, as did much of the nobility.

Some of the names in the list are Egyptian, such as Merari (v. 16), Putiel, and Phinehas (v. 25), and also the name Moses (2:10). The mother of Moses, Jochebed, had a thoroughly religious name, the LORD, or Jehovah, is Glory. Phinehas, who later distinguished himself, had a name meaning Ethiopian, black man, which seems to indicate that intermarriages took place in Egypt. Marriages in antiquity, and until the modern era was well advanced (at least to c.1800 in the Western world), were in terms of two basic considerations, *religion* and *family*. Increasingly since then, *race* and *romantic feeling* have governed marriage. One reason why the twentieth

century is so concerned about racism is because it has become more an issue now than ever before in all history.

It should be added that one of the worst errors in this area is to attribute racial hostility to the white races in particular, among whom, in fact, it is the least in force. Among black Africans, tribal hostilities predominate over racial ones, and yet, while tribalism prevails, it to a degree has racial elements. Among Asiatics, racism is very strong. The Japanese, for example, like the Hindus, have an untouchable class; they have the Ainus; and they also distrust their own people who have been too long abroad as deracinated.

Some scholars hold that religion and family as basic considerations lead to bigotry and persecution. That this has been true is not to be denied, but this is not necessarily so. In fact, with the abandonment of the propriety of religion in the body politic, bigotry, persecution, and executions have *increased*. Thus, influential proponents of the Enlightenment, and the eighteenth century, prided themselves on having ended religious conflict, but the fact of that era was massive executions to protect *class* and *property*. As E. P. Thompson has so clearly stated:

> In some respects the eighteenth century showed toleration: men and women were no longer killed or tormented for their opinions or their religious beliefs, as witches or as heretics; cashiered politicians did not mount the scaffold. But in every decade more intrusions upon property were defined as capital matters. If in practice the operation of the laws was modified, this did not alter the definition…. The escalation of the death penalty did perhaps emerge out of a 'subculture' which we can clearly identify: That of the Hanoverian Whigs.[63]

The Whigs saw themselves as the soul of Reason and toleration, whereas Christians were viewed as irrational and intolerant; Whig historians have since colored our perspective.

In the twentieth century, more people have been killed, and a higher percentage of mankind destroyed, than ever before in all of history, and yet our humanistic writers see the eras of faith

as intolerant! Racism, politics, and economics have led to mass murders in the twentieth century on an unequalled level in terms of numbers and ferocity.

In our text, we see God providing a new leadership for a new beginning. The leadership God provides now is not for Israel *per se*, because those who left Egypt were those who looked to the Passover. We are told in Exodus 12:38, that Israel left Egypt "a mixed multitude," or, in the Hebrew, "a great mixture." In Numbers 11:4-5 we see that these non-Hebrews were found morally wanting, but this same text tells us that the Hebrews were no different. All the races who were part of the Exodus were alike guilty before God, of ingratitude, rebellion, and faithlessness. The Bible thus discounts race as an advantage in favor of grace. In a devastating sentence, God through Amos declares, in Moffatt's blunt version,

> What are you more than the Ethiopians to me, ye Israelites, the Eternal asks? I brought up Israel from Egypt? yes, and Philistines from Crete, from Kir the Aramaeans. Mine eyes are on the sinful realm, to wipe it off the earth. (Amos 9:7)

When an age or a people are judged, God begins the judgment on their leaders, and He provides them with new men as their leaders.

Chapter Seventeen

God's Way

(*Exodus 7:1-7*)

> 1. And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.
> 2. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.
> 3. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.
> 4. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.
> 5. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.
> 6. And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.
> 7. And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh. (Exodus 7:1-7)

From the standpoint of a modern writer, the narrative here is slow; the point of radical conflict between God and Pharaoh is delayed. From the standpoint of Scripture, God was preparing Moses for that confrontation and the subsequent duties of leadership. Pharaoh was a willful and perverse victim by choice. Israel was acted upon instead of acting. Moses was the one person in this struggle who moved on God's orders; he was not a man who reacted to events, but instead served God in His determination of them. All others in the confrontation with Pharaoh and the plagues on Egypt were in a sense spectators to one of history's greatest moments; they were acted upon instead of acting as men under God.

Because of the significance of Moses' calling, God moves in terms of bringing Moses to an awareness of God's purpose, and the place of Moses in terms of it.

Moses as God's man had as his calling the duty to mediate God's law-word to Israel and to instruct them therein. The liberation of Israel from Egypt was the first step. Then came the giving of the law. To mediate God's word was a great responsibility, because it meant showing the covenant people the way of freedom and power. Moses was called to represent God's word to Egypt and to Israel, to speak in the name and power of the Lord. Ellison has pointed out that to pray in Jesus' name means to act as His *representative*.[64] To pray in the *Name* of the Lord means to pray in His power and authority.

God's purpose was that the Egyptians "know that I am the LORD" (v. 5). This expression is used by Ezekiel over sixty times. God's way is justice, and Egypt came to know it as judgment. It was then Israel's turn to know the Lord through judgment, and Psalm 78, a psalm of Asaph, is a vivid account of this, as is Psalm 106, which tells us that, after Israel was delivered from Egypt,

> 13. They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:
> 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.
> 15. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. (Ps. 106:13-15)

Moses was to be as "a god to Pharaoh" (v. 1). The Egyptian concept of a god was radically unlike the Biblical doctrine except that in practice Pharaoh was ultimate authority for Egypt. Moses was now to speak through Aaron as the voice of the living God, and, like Pharaoh, as one who spoke through a mediator. According to Cassuto, "The basic idea of this section is speech. On the one side, the Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron; and on the other, we have the utterance of human beings."[65] Even more, the basic idea is, whose word shall stand? Men seek to establish an independent word and plan in order to be free of God; God pronounces His word of judgment on all rebels.

In the proclamation of this word, Aaron is to be God's prophet by serving Moses, i.e., "and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" or spokesman (v. 1). This implies no demeaning of

Aaron but tells us how close he was to the center of God's power, and that he was in a place of trust.

In v. 4 we have a reference to Israel as God's *armies*; in Exodus 13:18, we are told that Israel left Egypt in some kind of battle array; Exodus 15:3 says, "The LORD is a man of war." There is an irony in this, in that a slave people hardly constituted an impressive army. It was precisely this disparity between what Israel was and what God did for them that led to a fear of Israel among the nations (Ex. 15:14-15; Deut. 2:25; 11:25).

In the verses which follow, v. 8ff., we have the beginning of the judgments on Egypt. Immediately before this, in v. 7, we are told that Moses at this point was eighty years of age, and Aaron eighty-three. The placement of this fact in this context is not accidental but especially purposive. We have, *first*, a very reluctant man, Moses, who knows the impossibility of his task, humanly speaking, and is very unwilling to embark upon it. *Second*, we have a slave people who prefer slavery to the hazards of freedom. Then, *third*, we have the power of Pharaoh and Egypt, determined to suppress a potential slave rebellion. *Finally and fourth*, we have the fact of the age of Moses and of Aaron, hardly young men. Egyptian records indicate that men in that era often lived and worked for a century. All the same, for a man to begin to make his mark at eighty is an unusual fact. In David's case, centuries later, God used a very young man. In both David's and Moses' cases, we have God confounding the normal human expectations.

A generation ago, a writer pleased many by writing a book entitled, *Life Begins at Forty*. God here tells us that a great career begins at whatever age He ordains. Moses is a man whom God uses, when He chooses, and makes into one of history's most powerful movers.

This has not made Moses a popular figure for the twentieth century, not even among Jews. Sigmund Freud tried to make an Egyptian out of Moses and thus exorcise him out of Judaism. Others have attempted the same task in other ways. Thus, a commentary on the Torah published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations says, of Exodus 7:

> Scholars have sought in vain for a historical kernel to these tales. Some have attempted to fit them into the context of the Egyptian natural environment. But such procedure leads nowhere. "The reality that the tale intends to convey is not past historical but present affective …"[66]

Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, held that the Egyptian Moses was killed by the Jews. However, as David Bakan observed, "It is Freud who wishes that Moses were murdered."[67] Bakan, a Jew, charges that what Freud did was to seek to break the hold of Moses and God's law on Jews. "The myth he fashions is not of one person murdering Moses. It is a murder which is committed collectively by all the Jews."[68] Freud saw himself, according to Bakan, in a messianic role as the deliverer of his people from Moses.[69] Bakan says, of *Moses and Monotheism*:

> Thus by writing this book, Freud becomes a Jewish hero in the history of the Jews. He performs the traditional Messianic function of relieving guilt, the very same function he ascribes to Jesus.[70]

Since Freud's death, the practical and working religion of most Jews has not been historic Judaism but Israel-worship, a secularized faith, a nationalistic religion.

Within the church, antinomianism has similarly killed off the relevance of Moses. Moses supposedly gave Israel a plan of salvation by law which Jesus is claimed to have invalidated. Thus, Moses is "dead" insofar as having any relevance for the church. Moses is not only misrepresented as to his significance, but is also pushed onto Judaism, which leads to rejection of Moses in most circles.

To deny the validity of the law as God's way of sanctification, to downgrade Moses, is to invite judgment for faithlessness and irrelevance.

Chapter Eighteen

Lying Wonders

(*Exodus 7:8-13*)

> 8. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
> 9. When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.
> 10. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.
> 11. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.
> 12. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.
> 13. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (Exodus 7:8-13)

We come now to a text that makes many churchmen cringe because it is scientifically "ridiculous." Other churchmen use it as a means of "probing," thus asserting that it is not the Bible which is to be trusted, but rather their "enlightened" scholarship.

The "problem" in this text is that, when Aaron cast down the rod, it became a "serpent." The word in Hebrew is *tannin*, which refers to a large reptile and can mean a crocodile. Cassuto in fact assumes that it here means crocodile.[71] This only increases the scope of the miracle.

Recently Dr. Amos Nur, chairman of the Department of Geophysics at Stanford University, commented on the Biblical account of the fall of Jericho. When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, their way was blocked by the powerful walled city of Jericho. Earlier in history,

Sodom and Gomorrah had been judged and destroyed by God; in both instances earthquakes were central to the judgment. Dr. Nur says,

> This unique combination, the destruction of Jericho, and the stoppage of the Jordan, is so typical of earthquakes in this region that little doubt can be left as to the reality of such events in Joshua's time.[72]

We are told that, "using the Bible, scientists have been able to trace earthquakes in the Holy Land back 4,000 years." They refuse, however, to see anything but natural disasters in a series of events which are remarkably providential in their timing as acts of judgment as well as deliverance. We are told:

> But, like many events of the Bible ascribed as acts of God, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah probably was an act of Mother Nature — not divine intervention passing judgment on mankind.[73]

This statement shows, *first*, poor use of language, in that "ascribed" is used for "described," and, *second*, even poorer science and theology in stating that these incidents were "probably…an act of Mother Nature" rather than the moral acts of God. There is nothing scientific in personifying nature, nor in seeing acts which are providential in character as merely naturalistic and chance events. Those who deny the God of Scripture are the great believers in miracles, because they see the universe as the product of chance: they affirm spontaneous generation, and they reject purpose because it points so clearly to God. In the name of science and reason, they embrace the greatest superstition of all, i.e., unbelief in God.

We have in this text a strange episode. Aaron's rod is turned by God into a reptile. Pharaoh's scientists ("wise men") and sorcerers do the same, but Aaron's rod devours them all.

In the years before World War II, missionaries, especially those under the Sudan Interior Mission, at times reported episodes very, very similar to this, as well as a variety of other manifestations which they saw as supernatural and demonic. As modern men, they were at first

skeptical and later convinced of the reality of these events. Almost nothing was written by these men, because most Westerners felt uneasy at the thought of such things existing.

Since then, occultism and Satanism have been an increasing force in the West, and more than a few people have reacted with panic to the demonic and very evil manifestations they have witnessed. In fact, many people now are more ready to believe in demonic miracles than in Christian ones, and the film world has catered to this new interest and *fear*. Where the fear of God is weakened or gone, the fear of evil powers grows rapidly.

The rod of Moses was comparable to a royal scepter. Moses had been given power in the Kingdom of God. His challenge to Pharaoh is thus centered on the rod, the shepherd's staff of royal and divine power. The wise men and sorcerers, as agents of Pharaoh, challenge Moses' calling and power in Pharaoh's name by casting down their rods. Their destruction at the 'hand' of Aaron's rod tells us the outcome of the developing conflict.

Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr. has called this incident a "demonstration of one's legitimacy."[74] It was, however, more than a contest between men: it was a conflict between the living God and the demonic powers which Egypt trusted.

It is of note that St. Paul refers to this episode and gives us the names of the two Egyptians who apparently performed the demonic miracle, Jannes and Jambres, and speaks of them as representative of all who "resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the truth" (2 Tim. 3:8).

Calvin spoke of this incident as typical of the refusal of the ungodly to recognize God's truth and power:

> For this is usual with unbelievers, to demand proofs of God's power, which they may still discredit, — not that they professedly scorn God, but because their secret impiety urges them to seek after subterfuges. The message is disagreeable and full of what is annoying to the proud king; and because he does not dare

> directly to refuse God, he invents a plausible pretext for his refusal, by asking for a miracle; and when this is performed, he seeks still deeper lurking places, as we shall very soon perceive. Since, therefore, it was certain that he would not pay a willing obedience to the divine command, and would not yield before he had been miraculously convinced, God furnishes His servants with a notable and sure testimony of His power.[75]

As we have seen, the word translated as *serpent* is the Hebrew *tannin* in vv. 9 and 10; in v. 15 it is *nachash*, from a root meaning *to hiss*. *Tannin* comes from a root meaning large, powerful, mighty, monstrous. Cassuto resolved the difference by pointing out that in vv. 9-10, the reference is to Aaron's rod, whereas in v. 15 it is to Moses' rod, and the text apparently bears this out and distinguishes between the two rods.[76] The word *tannin* in Genesis 1:21 is rendered "whale," elsewhere it is translated as "dragon." In Psalm 74:13, in a reference to the Egyptians, Asaph speaks of "the dragons in the waters." The dragon or crocodile in the seas or waters was a reference more than once to Egypt and to Pharaoh, as in Isaiah 27:1 and 51:9; we find the same reference in Ezekiel 29:2-3, which is specifically addressed to "Pharaoh King of Egypt…and against all Egypt." There is a like specific reference in Ezekiel 32:2. It is of interest that medieval imaginative depictions of dragons retained the image of a crocodile.

Viewed in terms of this, the episode becomes all the more clear. God declares through Aaron that He is the creator of the crocodile, i.e., of Egypt and Pharaoh as well as all things else, and, therefore, He is their Judge and destroyer.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul speaks of Satan, and of Satan's agents working after their master "with all power and signs and lying wonder." The word *lying* is *pseudos* in the Greek and means of a certainty a *falsehood*, something which is not what it appears to be; it means a trust in something other than God our Creator, a trust in a lie and living by a lie. *False brethren* are *pseudadelphos* (2 Cor. 11:26). In Romans 1:25, when we are told of the ungodly exchanging the truth of God for a *lie*, the word is *pseudos*.

We can thus say *the lie* is not in the thing seen but in what is behind it. *Lying wonders* have behind them the deception that God is not our Lord and Creator; they lie about the nature of reality.

Now, however, because the time of judgment has come, the *lying wonders* shall be smashed, and God and Moses shall triumph.

Chapter Nineteen

The First Plague

(*Exodus 7:14-25*)

14. And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.

15. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water;
and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

16. And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

17. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

18. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river.

19. And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

20. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

21. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

22. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.

> 23. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.
> 24. And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.
> 25. And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river. (Exodus 7:14-25)

The first of the ten "plagues" or judgments on Egypt was against the river Nile. Life was and still is possible in Egypt because of the Nile. An otherwise desert area is made fertile by the waters of the Nile. The Nile then, and even now, has a religious significance among the peasants. It represents the blessing of the land by the powers inherent in the natural world. For the Nile to turn to blood would obviously mean that Egypt was cursed, not blessed.

At this point, scholars of a modernistic bent hasten to "inform" us that there is a natural explanation for this and other plagues. From time to time, minute fungi or, in other instances, tiny reddish insects redden the water and make it unfit to drink. At other times, frogs become prolific, and so on. This may be true enough, but if the plagues were no more than familiar natural occurrences, no power could be imputed to Moses and his God. The Egyptians were good observers of natural phenomena; the plagues had to be different in nature and intensity to have any impact on the Egyptians.

Moreover, we are told that the Egyptians had magicians who were able on a limited scale to redden waters also (v. 22). This encouraged Pharaoh in his resistance. How Moses was able to affect all the water in Egypt, Pharaoh did not know. His answer was to retreat into his palace.

Parker wrote:

> There is a period in life when we can only see sin in the light of its punishment, that, indeed, is not to see sin at all, but that is the chronic sophism with which all high spiritual teaching has to contend, and to contend almost impotently, because of the deceitfulness of the heart. When we are in the right mind we shall not need

> to see hell in order to know what sin really is; we shall know it afar off, because it has shaped itself into overt evil behaviour. We should hate it as a spiritual possibility, if no stain had been made upon the snow of the universe.[77]

The basic sin of Egypt was to see the world in naturalistic terms; whatever powers or gods there were had to be essentially facets of the natural order. Pharaoh and Egypt were compelled to see that they were face to face with the judgment of the living God. Even Manetho, an Egyptian historian of the third century B. C., admitted that this conflict was a religious war, a fact cited by Josephus in *Against Apion*; Josephus was hostile to Manetho, and Manetho to the Hebrews. God plainly declares, "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" (Ex. 12:12).

Three rods or scepters are referred to in this text. In v. 17, *first*, we have God's scepter or rod. *Second*, Moses was to meet Pharaoh in the morning near the Nile with his own rod in hand (v. 15). Pharaoh's presence there was apparently a religious one, and it was here that he and his faith were to be challenged. *Third*, Aaron's rod or scepter (v. 19f.) is used to turn all other waters into blood.

The devastation of this plague included the fish in the Nile within Egypt's borders. That fish higher up later came back into the lower Nile meant a dilution of resources.

Pharaoh was determined that no concession be made. The witness of vv. 24- 25 went unheeded. There were in all ten plagues: 1) water turned into blood; 2) frogs; 3) lice; 4) flies; 5) murrain, a plague on the livestock; 6) boils; 7) hail; 8) locusts; 9) darkness; and 10) the death of the firstborn. All have a religious significance. Thus, the Nile was the life-line of Egypt, and blood is associated with life. As Cate wrote:

> In all of the ancient Near East, there was a common belief that blood was the source of life. This is also true in the Old Testament, which says, "the life of every creature is the blood of it" (Lev. 17:14). The Egyptians considered the Nile to be the source of life; but when it was turned to blood, the real source of life, it

> caused death on every hand. The two things that the Egyptians considered to be the source of life had combined to bring death.[78]

Bishop Hall observed, "Men are sure to be punished most and soonest in that which they make a corrival with God."[79] A humanistic trust in man and the natural order means that God's judgments will turn these things against man.

Earlier, Moses had given a demonstration of God's power. Now, "It was no longer a demonstration but became an attack."[80] Gispen makes it clear that this plague refers to blood, not to the Red Nile and its reddish clay silt. The Red Nile phenomenon added to the soil's fertility and did not kill fish. The Green Nile, caused by some plants, sometimes killed a few fish. This plague differs from both. The fact that the Bible at times uses words figuratively does not justify turning all of it into meaningless figures of speech.[81]

The purpose of the plagues is stated in v. 17, "In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD." The Knowledge of God is inescapable knowledge, but how we know Him will vary. We can know Him as either our Redeemer or as our unrelenting Judge.

O.T. Allis observed of the plagues:

> The Ten Plagues which were mighty signs and wonders (vii. 3) contain both a natural and a supernatural element. Frogs, lice, flies, murrain, etc., were all natural phenomena or "pests" well known to the Egyptians. But the record makes it plain that the plagues were far more than mere natural phenomena. They came and went at the command of Moses… They were evidences of the sovereign power of the God of Israel over Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and their gods. Those who are tempted to minimize or rationalize these wonders of old should read carefully Moses' appraisal of them as given in Deuteronomy iv. 34-40.[82]

In Deuteronomy 4:34-40, we are told that the plagues were the work of God and as supernatural as the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. It was an act of grace, and the necessary response to God's saving grace is to obey His law.

Youngblood called attention to the several purposes of the ten plagues. *First*, they were a judgment on Egypt and her gods (Ex. 7:4; 10:2; 12:12; 18:11). The plagues were in most cases directed against a specific aspect of Egyptian faith. *Second*, the plagues also had as their purpose the deliverance of Israel (Ex. 7:4; 18:10). *Third*, they demonstrated that God is the only sovereign and Lord over nature and history (Ex. 7:5; 9:14-15; 10:2; 18:11). *Fourth*, not all the plagues struck Goshen, where Israel was, and God thereby made it clear that Israel was His Chosen people (Ex. 8:22-23; 11:7; 12:27). *Fifth*, the plagues were a revelation of God and a declaration of His holy power and name (Ex. 9:6).[83]

The Nile was worshipped or revered under various names, as Apis, the sacred bull; as Osiris, and so on, by symbols of fertility. The Egyptians' trust was now a source of potential death.

Bamberger has said of the plagues, "Scholars have sought in vain for an historical kernel to these tales." It would be more accurate to add that any who find historical confirmation are thereby discredited by these modernistic scholars. Bamberger still admitted, "The story of the plagues has no true parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature."[84]

J. C. Connell said of the plagues:

> The plagues not only caused great physical affliction: they were a judgment against the gods of Egypt. The Nile was a main object of worship; the frog was sacred as a symbol of fertility; of the cattle, the ram, the goat, and the bull were sacred; the sun-god Ra was eclipsed and proved impotent by the plague of darkness.[85]

But this was not all. The Nile had been turned into a river of death by the murder of the Hebrew male infants. Now it was a sign of death to Egypt. Wells were sunk by the Egyptians to gain

water not yet polluted by percolation (v. 24), for the Egyptians did not know how long this plague would endure. The Nile had been the grave of innocent babes. Now, by their impenitence, the Egyptians were digging their own graves. They gained some water but no deliverance.

Chapter Twenty

The Second Plague

(*Exodus 8:1-15*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
2. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs;
3. And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs:
4. And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.
5. And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.
6. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.
7. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.
8. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.
9. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me [or, Have this honour over me]: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for they people, to destroy frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?
10. And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.
11. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.

12. And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.
13. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.
14. And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank.
15. But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (Exodus 8:1-15)

The modern mind is so schooled in the fictions of naturalism that it rejects at once all that contradicts these myths. When in the 1940s I worked among the Paiute and Shoshone Indians, I was confronted by things I could not understand. Their older Shoshone medicine men had a knowledge of the properties of plants which was amazing, but they also had recourse at times to things which I could not account for naturalistically and came to recognize in time as supernormal and demonic. Modern man has pushed such phenomena out of his world, only to have it recur among his children with the rise of occultism and Satanism.

The Egyptian world had a kind of resemblance to this, but a curious one. A naturalistic worldview is compatible with occultism and Satanism. Having a non-creationist perspective, it sees power as coming from below, not from above, and hence it is alert to subterranean sources of power. The volcano of power is below; its human expression is at the apex of power, and that apex is the expression of the underworld of power. We cannot understand the world of antiquity apart from this fact.

In this second plague, frogs, we have again the fact of warfare by God against Egyptian faith. Frogs were associated with the goddess Heqt or Heket, who helped women in childbirth. Frogs were a symbol of natural fertility. Regularly and normally, frogs bred each year in abundance, and their role in the ecology of the earth was recognized and honored. The goddess Heket was portrayed as a woman with a frog's head who gave life to her husband's progeny fashioned out of the chest of the earth. The worship of fertility was basic to the religions of antiquity and has been a persistent undercurrent in history. In terms of faith, the meaning of life is seen, not in God, but in children. As against this, a will to death becomes a hatred of fertility, as expressed in

abortion and homosexuality today. In the one instance, personal fertility replaces God as the focus of life, and in the other, the war against God becomes suicidal and murderous.

At the command of Moses, the rod of Aaron deluges Egypt with frogs, frogs in their homes, beds, climbing on their persons, and leaping into their food. The Egyptian wise men were able to produce more frogs, but they could not cause any to disappear. Pharaoh was thus compelled to turn to Moses and Aaron to beg for relief. Moses then prayed to God, and the frogs all died the next day. Egypt stank with their smell, so that men had to collect and dispose of them.

With this relief, however, Pharaoh's stubborn impenitence again took over, and he refused to listen to Moses.

Grant, quoting Geikie, noted:

> ...With the Egyptians, "the Nile was in the strictest sense regarded as divine, and was worshipped under a variety of names. As the bountiful Osiris, and under many other divine names, the Nile was the beneficent god of Egypt — the representative of all that was good. Evil had, however, also its god, the deadly enemy of Osiris — the hated Typhon — the source of all that was cruel, violent, and wicked. With this abhorred being the touch or sight of blood was associated. He himself was represented as blood-red; red oxen, and even red-haired men were sacrificed to him, and blood, as his symbol, rendered all unclean who came near it. To turn the Nile waters into blood was thus to defile the sacred river — to make Typhon triumph over Osiris — and to dishonor the religion of the land in one of its supremest expressions."[86]

Egypt's great asset, the natural order, had become its curse. The Nile was first turned into blood and then produced a plague of frogs.

Oehler said of the plagues:

> The order of their succession stands in close connection with the natural course of the Egyptian year from the time of the first swelling of the Nile, which generally happens in June, to the spring of the following year. But partly the severity of the plagues, and partly their connection with the word of Moses, make them signs of Jehovah's power. In them the triumph of the true God over the gods of the land (xii.12; Num. xxxiii.4) is shown, and thus they serve as a pledge of the triumph of the divine kingdom over heathenism (comp. Ex. xv. 11, xviii. 11). Even in the *heathen accounts* of the departure of Israel from Egypt by Manetho (Josephus, c. Ap. i. 26, and Diodorus, *Bibloth*. lib. xl. fragm.), it comes undeniably that there was a great religious struggle.[87]

It is true that the plagues resemble the natural succession of the year, but they also defy it. These first two plagues alone witness to that fact. After the river had been turned into blood, how could any frogs have survived and bred in it? Later plagues similarly defy a naturalistic logic.

The Nile as a source of life was cited by scientists less than three centuries ago in defending their idea of spontaneous generation. One writer asked disbelievers to "go to Egypt, and there he will find the fields swarming with mice begot of the mud of Nylus, to the great calamity of the inhabitants."[88]

The frogs entered the houses, polluted the food, invaded the beds, and climbed onto the legs of the people. The Egyptians saw the frogs as a symbol of fertility, but not as anything to fondle! No more than present-day champions of the rattlesnake want such snakes in their homes or yards, did the Egyptians want contact with frogs. The ancient Egyptians were notable for their emphasis on cleanliness, and this plague was distressing for all. Sleep would also have been difficult. The Egyptian frog is known to science as the *Rana Mosaica* and is described as "peculiarly repulsive and peculiarly noisy."[89] The Egyptians were obviously miserable and resentful, and Pharaoh impotent in his anger.

It is very important to remember that the plagues on Egypt were followed by God's judgments on Israel in the wilderness and later. To receive God's blessing and deliverance and then to be ungrateful is to invoke judgment. According to Asaph, in Psalm 78:34-57,

> 34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.
> 35. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.
> 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.
> 37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.
> 38. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.
> 39. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
> 40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!
> 41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.
> 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.
> 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan.
> 44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.
> 45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.
> 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.
> 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost.
> 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
> 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them.

> 50. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;
> 51. And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.
> 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
> 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
> 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.
> 55. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
> 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:
> 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Similarly, today churches and nations expect God's providential care to continue as in the past, despite their covenant-breaking ways.

According to Samuel Clark, "the frog was regarded as a symbol of regeneration."[90] Animals or insects which changed form, i.e., egg to tadpole to frog, such as the frog, the butterfly, and others, were common symbols of regeneration. Now this symbol had become a curse and a mark of degeneration.

There is a grim irony in these plagues. Our Lord declares, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). God strikes at the false securities and treasures of men with His judgments.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Third Plague

(*Exodus 8:16-19*)

> 16. And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.
> 17. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.
> 18. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.
> 19. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (Exodus 8:16-19)

The third plague, we are told, was of some small "insect." The King James Version reads *lice*. The Hebrew word, *Ken* (*Kane*) *Kinnim*, means small "insects" that fasten themselves to the body. It can mean gnats, and in Ecclesiasticus 10:11 (an apocryphal work) it means maggots; some read it as tick, or fleas, or mosquitoes.

We cannot know its precise meaning, perhaps, but we do know its impact. For a proud and clean people, it was a humiliating and revolting plague. Its essential damage was to human pride. We have only to imagine a similar plague today to realize its impact. It struck all classes equally, and it was felt by all to be a polluting and degrading thing.

This was more than an ordinary infestation. On one occasion in the last century, Sir Samuel Baker observed of Egypt, "it seemed as if the very dust were turned into lice."[91] Such infestations, however, tended to be local or regional; this plague was national and total.

In this plague, Pharaoh is not warned in advance, but apparently the wise men of Egypt were, since they attempted to duplicate the work of Moses and Aaron. The infestation was universal; it affected man and beast alike.

Grant said of this plague:

> Dust is frequently connected in Scripture with death… "the dust of death" (Ps. xxii. 15.) "Dust unto dust" was the original verdict which put on man the stamp of vanity. The book of Ecclesiastes shows us death as the great tormentor of man, leveling him, with all his wisdom, and his pride, to the beast.[92]

Since Egypt was in the process of being destroyed, this seems to be a valid comment. The land was no longer a hospitable place, nor was it their wealth; it was a source of judgment. The first two plagues fell on the Nile, this one on the sacred land of Egypt. Its fertile soil, normally its wealth, was now producing problems. The dust or dirt swarmed with this blight, and all were affected.

God was humiliating Egypt and shattering its pride. Egypt was being defeated, humiliated, and broken, not by great foreign armies, but by the invisible God using frogs and lice. As a result, there could be no consolation in defeat, only shame.

Pharaoh's magicians attempted to duplicate this plague but failed. They were unable to belittle the miraculous plague by duplicating it on the smallest scale. They recognized that they were confronted by a power beyond them. They told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (v. 19). They recognized that they were faced with a supernatural power. However, apart from warning Pharaoh of what they faced, these men made no attempt whatsoever to submit to God, *Elohim*. This was not unusual. We see it in Balaam, and in men over the centuries to our time. In fact, most men now will not even go as far as these men did, i.e., to acknowledge that they were confronted by God. It is easier for them to deny that God exists, to insist that He is dead, than for them to admit His power and presence. Their goal is life without God so that they may become their own gods, determining good and evil for themselves (Gen. 3:5).

Their pride, however, brought on humiliation. The repulsive infestation meant that their clean and carefully groomed bodies were overrun with lice, ticks, or some like "bug." Pharaoh was the priest of all the gods, of all the many forces Egypt revered. Since he could not give himself to this priestly function in all its details, he delegated his authority to the priests, who were purified for this function. The priest declared, as he performed his duties, "Now I am verily a priest; it was the king who sent me to see the god."[93] The king or ruler was called Pharaoh, meaning "The Great House," just as centuries later the Turkish sultans were referred to as "The Sublime Porte." Their significance was more than personal. They represented a holy function and government; they were the focal point of divinity and power. As such, they were the source of the land's fertility and power. For Pharaoh himself to be infested with some degrading vermin was a humiliating fact. The boundaries of power had been broken and violated by the God of Moses. This supposedly nonexistent God of Moses was reducing Pharaoh to humiliation and to degrading frustrations. We cannot at this distance visualize the full humiliation of the priests of Egypt, and of Pharaoh.

Because of the divine character of "The Great House," Pharaoh was an absolute monarch. He ruled Egypt with total authority and power. The sun, the great central natural force, was a symbol of Pharaoh, and the title of every pharaoh was "Son of the sun." Not until centuries later was a pharaoh referred to in the Bible by his personal name, Shishak, in 1 Kings 11:40 (c. 926 B.C.).

At times, Egyptian religion has been called pantheism but while there is a germ of truth in this, it is too abstract a concept for Egypt's very realistic religion. In pantheism, everything is an abstract oneness; in Egyptian religion, the abstractness is replaced with a proliferation of realistic things which merge into one another.

All men were interrelated and subordinate to Pharaoh, who was the divine human link between this world and the next. Because Egyptian salvation was a matter of man's works and of human efforts, there was an inescapable continuity between heaven and earth. As against this, Scripture declares that there is a radical discontinuity between God and man, between uncreated Being and

created being. Hence, salvation *cannot* be by works but is by grace alone; what man does cannot control God.

To shatter the doctrine of continuity was to destroy the Egyptian plan of salvation. The humiliation of Pharaoh, the fact that he, the divine-human link between heaven and earth, was covered with lice meant the humiliation of the Egyptian faith and its life. To acknowledge this supernatural power was, however, something neither Pharaoh nor his associates were ready to do.

Chapter Twenty-Two
The Fourth Plague
(*Exodus 8:20-32*)

> 20. And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
> 21. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.
> 22. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.
> 23. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.
> 24. And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies. (Exodus 8:20-24)

We see a difference now in the conflict between God and Pharaoh, between Moses and the men around Egypt's throne. *First*, these men no longer attempt to duplicate the acts of Moses. The skills of such men continue to this day in many areas of Africa. Thus, Noerdlinger wrote:

> It is recorded that the Egyptian cobra can be put into a state of rigidity. During our stay in Egypt in 1954 some of us observed a native snake charmer perform this feat, which we photographed. In fact, the Bible does designate the performance of Pharaoh's sorcerers a magician's trick (Ex. 7:11).[94]

What had occurred could not be seen as anything natural: Moses was tied to supernatural power. Certainly more than a few people are ready, then and now, to accept the fact of supernatural power in events, but these are regarded as occasional intrusions into history. The *normal* flow of history is seen as naturalistic. Because these supernatural events are seen as simply *interruptions* in the flow of time, they are not seen as compelling for everyday life. No more than men live in terms of possible tidal waves or earthquakes do such men live in terms of a concern for the power of God.

As long as God's supernatural power is seen as an occasional interruption of history, so long will naturalism govern men. The doctrine of *providence* tells us that God's supernatural power and government are in all events, and totally so. The "natural" order cannot exist for a second apart from God's power.

Second, God now separated Goshen from Egypt; and from the fourth through the ninth plague, only Egypt was affected. This was an act of covenant grace and faithfulness. Israel had earned no mercy, but God was merciful.

This separation would have an impact on Egypt. That they were singled out for judgment was clearly apparent, and that Israel, a slave people, had been singled out for protection was very clear. Such an act revealed both grace and judgment, and *mercy as Scripture declares it* was not an aspect of Egyptian religion. This concept is alien to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead;* theirs was not a joyful religion. A faith can affirm a variety of autonomous powers for man, but in so doing, it ensures pessimism and despair. Pritchard cited a moving prayer by an artisan of the Nineteenth Dynasty in gratitude for the recovery of his son from illness. It says in part, "Though it may be that the servant is normal in doing wrong, still the Lord is normal in being merciful."[95] The word translated as "normal" *may* mean "is disposed to." For Scripture, sin is not *normal* but the fact of *depravity*, and God's response is judgment or *redeeming* grace.

This plague was of "flies"; the English word translates a Hebrew word meaning *swarm* or *mixture*. Some render it insects, all kind of vermin (Luther), mosquitoes, beetles, and the like. The Greek word in the Septuagint is *kunomuia*, dog flies, whose sting causes bloody swellings.[96]

The whole land was filled with a phenomenal plague of these flies except for Goshen, an area that is now of about sixty square miles, about fifty miles northeast of modern Cairo.[97] Its boundaries in that era are unknown to us. Israel in Goshen was not affected.

As a result, Pharaoh was finally moved to at least the promise of action:

> 25. And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.
> 26. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?
> 27. We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.
> 28. And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.
> 29. And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.
> 30. And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.
> 31. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.
> 32. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go. (Exodus 8:25-32)

Pharaoh was moved to action by desperation. Few people in our time have been in areas abnormally thick with flies, mosquitoes, and like insects. In such places, it is difficult to breathe without getting the insects into one's mouth as a person moves, panting with exertion, through the area. We are told that the land was "corrupted" or ruined by this plague.

Moses, in agreeing to entreat God for the end of this plague, warns Pharaoh, "but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more (or, play false again) in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD" (v. 29). This statement is made respectfully, and yet it is all the same an indictment of Pharaoh: he has been deceitful. However exalted his civil and religious titles and powers, he is a thoroughly deceitful man. There is great audacity in this warning. Today civil authorities resent any questioning of their integrity; in Egypt, with Pharaoh's total power, such a challenge was a startling one.

If this plague included or were one of *beetles*, there was a further oppressiveness in that fact. The beetle or scarab was the emblem of the sun-god and was held to be sacred. Their natural world and its ostensible sacredness was now their curse.

Pharaoh was believed to be the main possessor of *maat* or justice and order. Now he was rebuked as an unjust and deceitful man.[98]

Moses insisted on the freedom to leave for the purpose of sacrifice. Even centuries later, Jews in Egypt were killed for sacrificing animals. There is no reason to believe that the Hebrews would not have returned after sacrificing in the wilderness. Their purpose was to reestablish Israel in God's covenant. Again and again we see renewals of the covenant in Scripture. It is an everlasting covenant, but neither Israel nor the church are everlasting entities. No generation can inherit covenant salvation because its parents or grandparents believed, and because they obeyed the covenant. In that era, circumcision marked entrance into the covenant, and the Old Testament as well as the New make clear that circumcision means regeneration. Baptism has now replaced circumcision. The Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us:

> Q. 94. What is baptism?
>
> A. Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's. (Matt. 28:19; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4)

A heresy from antiquity is to ascribe the everlasting aspect of the *covenant* to a *people*. Thus, whether believing or not, all Jews to the end of time are in the covenant. The British Israelites say that all the supposed descendants of the ten "lost" tribes are in the covenant and in the blessings thereof. Various churches insist that their version of baptism gives a certain and invariable covenant status and salvation. This viewpoint transfers the everlasting nature of the covenant from the covenant itself to an institution, or to a rite, or to a people. The result is theological confusion.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Fifth Plague

(*Exodus 9:1-7*)

> 1. Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
> 2. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still,
> 3. Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.
> 4. And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.
> 5. And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.
> 6. And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.
> 7. And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. (Exodus 9:1-7)

The fifth plague is often said to have been of anthrax, which can kill men and animals. This plague affected the Egyptian cattle "in the field" (v. 3), all varieties, i.e., cows, horses, camels, and donkeys. Since various animals personified natural forces, i.e., the bull-gods Apis and Mnevis; the cow-god Hathor; and the ramgod Khuum, and other gods had animal heads, this plague also struck at Egypt's beliefs. Nature was failing them.

However, as Cate noted, this plague struck directly at Egypt's property. It was now no longer a matter of inconvenience and humiliation; it was an economic disaster.[99]

Egypt was in the process of being broken, religiously and economically. At the end of an era or age, collapse in these two areas is commonplace. To witness this, the breakup of a false faith and a false economy, means to witness the coming collapse of a culture.

Egypt had a horror of animal sacrifices; Israel was unable to offer sacrifices within Egypt's boundaries. Now their false faith had led to the sacrifice of all their field animals; only those within shelters survived.

A set time was appointed for the beginning of the plague (v. 6), so that none could attribute the deaths to a chance epidemic. Moreover, since Israel's livestock was not affected, it was clearly a judgment directed against Egypt. An investigation revealed that "not one" (v. 6) of the Israelite's livestock had died.

This plague widened the gap between Pharaoh and Egypt which the plagues were creating. The military's horses, chariot horses, and protected household livestock were not affected, only those in the field. This would affect everyone, but especially the poor peasants. As a part of Egypt, the peasants were being judged by God for their tacit assent to that order. Where evil-doers are concerned, God's ways are without respect of persons, whether rich or poor. Since Pharaoh knew what the situation was in Goshen, it is obvious that he knew of the disaster among Egypt's peasants. The fact that he further hardened his heart may in part be due to this knowledge; his authority among his own people was being challenged and shaken.

Earlier, the Egyptian sorcerers had said, "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19). Now God says that His hand (v. 3) is upon Egypt. The judgment grows more intense and stronger. Destruction of an enemy's property is an act of war. God's war against Egypt is carried on in their own land, and Egypt is helpless to combat it. Pharaoh did not trust the reports which came in to him but sent his own investigators into the fields. Since Goshen was a low, flat area near marshes, under normal circumstances more diseases would be expected in that area. This was Pharaoh's first directed investigation of a plague; he had previously depended on reports made to him.

A notable aspect of God's work in all this is His patience. Eighty years had passed since the murder of the male infants. Instead of a single devastating judgment, we have a series of them. One result was that, before the plagues ended, some Egyptians and other foreigners were converted, and Israel left Egypt a "mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38) of diverse peoples.

Pharaoh in this instance did not ask for the removal of the plague; the damage was done, and dead livestock could not be restored to life, so he maintained a hard and bitter silence. Both his hostility and his bitterness were increasing.

The property loss was clearly enormous. Egypt saw an economic disaster of devastating implications. Where a field crop is destroyed, there is a possibility of recovery in a year because field crops require a short season to mature. Livestock, however, requires more time; the loss is of work animals and food animals. Purchasing new animals from neighboring countries meant a serious drain of capital.

Moreover, we must not underestimate the fact that in antiquity every state had its ways of gathering news. Informants regularly supplied a head of state with important data. Thus, the economic and military implications of the plague would be quickly known elsewhere. At present, the economic consequences were paramount. Livestock at high prices would begin to move towards the Egyptian market.

At the same time, an important and central aspect of the plagues must be remembered. In Exodus 5:2, we have Pharaoh's contemptuous statement, "Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice…?" Similar contemptuous references to God can be heard in American concerts and court hall-ways. God's answer to Pharaoh was clear:

> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. (Ex. 7:5)

Egypt was going to know the Lord, *first*, by His judgments on Egypt, and, *second*, by His deliverance of Israel.

The deliverance of Israel was to be both physical and religious. They had become Egyptianized to a degree. Their redemption thus had to embrace both spheres. Hence, God declares through Moses,

> And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burden of the Egyptians. (Ex. 6:7)

The meaning of their deliverance was religious, and this they had to know to inherit the Promised Land. To escape from bondage without a religious faith was, and is, anathema to God. Hence the stress is that, *first*, *Egypt* shall know that God is the Lord, and, *second*, *Israel* must know this also. To neglect this fact is to sin, and both Jews and the church have seen redemption as their privilege rather than an overwhelming requirement for covenant faithfulness and responsibility. God's judgments in history have as their purpose the bringing of the knowledge of God and His ways (ye shall know that I am the LORD) to both His enemies *and* to His people. If they will not learn, they shall be broken.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Sixth Plague

(*Exodus 9:8-12*)

> 8. And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.
> 9. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.
> 10. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.
> 11. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.
> 12. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses. (Exodus 9: 8-12)

The ailment or variety of ailment described as the sixth plague is referred to in Leviticus 13:12, 20, and 25, and it is cited also in Leviticus 13:18 with the same word as in Exodus 9:9. Some serious skin disease is referred to, but we do not know the specifics thereof. It is possible that this particular disease is no longer with us.

A new element is introduced now. The Egyptian sorcerers or magicians are themselves a specific target of the plague. They were no longer even remotely challengers or observers; their own condition had rendered them unable to stand before Moses in any sense.

In the presence of Pharaoh and his men, Moses and Aaron had taken ashes and sprinkled them into the wind to indicate the coverage of Egypt with the plague. This plague infected both man and beast.

Cate cited two effects of this plague. *First*, there was the fact of discomfort, a discomfort which affected both great men and the peasantry. The sorcerers were no longer in the contest; they were suffering in their own bodies from this plague. The previous plagues had created problems for them; this created problems *in* them, in their bodies.

Second, the reference to leprosy is real; the same word is used here as in Leviticus; it is a term covering a variety of ailments including leprosy. Anyone with a skin disease had to be isolated until the nature of the ailment were ascertained, i.e., to determine whether or not it was what we now exclusively call leprosy. This meant that the whole nation was temporarily unclean, i.e., suspected of being ill with a disease which barred them from religious exercises and civil functions. The result was a national paralysis of Egypt's entire system.[100]

We have a reference to this ailment in Deuteronomy 28:35:

> The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

Moses here cites this as one of the possible penalties, along with drought, war, famine, and other things, for abandoning God's law. To have an ailment which affects even the sole of one's foot means to be incapacitated. A boil-like ailment on the sole of one's feet means that a man cannot walk or work. Those who work contrary to God's law are then reduced to an inability to work at all, and finally, to death.

Youngblood saw this as a skin anthrax.[101] In recent years, one zoologist, Graham Twigg, has held that the Black Death was an anthrax epidemic.[102]

It is important to remember that Egypt at no time attempted to convert Israel to Egypt's faith. Egypt saw itself as an elite state and people; it was fitting for others to serve them, not to become one with them. The fact that Egypt made an alliance with Solomon and gave Solomon Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3:1) is virtually unique and testifies to Solomon's power. Egypt normally

never gave a royal daughter to a foreign power. In the modern world, forced conversions and absorption of various minorities is common. Both the Egyptian view and the modern one represent forms of elitism. Elitism refuses to learn from either God or man; it sees itself as the source of wisdom. Pharaoh's hardened heart is thus typical of all such men in history. In Revelation, as the plagues against the anti-Christian world are described, we are told:

> 10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast: and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
> 11. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Rev. 16:10-11)

This is a clear reference to the sixth plague, and it describes an aspect of God's judgment on the anti-Christian world order.

This judgment comes upon a culture when men, according to Paul, develop a homosexual culture, one of deliberate perversity and of hostility to God and to man. Its outcome is death:

> 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
> 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
> 30. Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
> 31. Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
> 32. 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. (Romans 1:28-32)

We fail to have an understanding of the plagues on Egypt if we do not see them as typifying God's judgment on His enemies in every era. When we resist the relevance of Scripture, we then

go astray into all kinds of fanciful readings to satisfy our own positions. To cite a sad example, one scholar has suggested that the ashes cast into the wind and becoming dust is perhaps an early announcement of the doctrine of transubstantiation.[103] Such interpretations are themselves an invitation to judgment.

The use of the word *blain* is interesting (v. 9f). According to Harford, well into the first half of the twentieth century, Scots and Yorkshiremen still called a big boil a *blain.*[104] The reference thus is not a trifling complaint.

In spite of all this, Pharaoh is unrepentant. God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart. God gives men up to the logic of their ways and thereby brings upon them that judgment which is the conclusion of their ways. God declares to Isaiah:

> 9. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.
> 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9-10)

These verses are cited by our Lord and applied to the people of Judea (Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40). Paul cites this text also (Acts 28:26f.; Rom. 11:8; 2 Cor. 3:14). It is also common to the prophets. Our sentimental age is not happy with it. Men want conversions to set in as soon as judgment begins; as soon as God begins to give man the just recompense for his sins, man supposedly should be allowed to repent and avoid the just conclusion of his ways. That the Lord redeems many who are deep into their depravities is a fact of Scripture and of history. At the same time, we must remember that, after a certain point known only to God, He gives corrupt men up to their depravity and their will to death (Rom. 1:24; Prov. 8:36).

Judgment, then, overwhelms that culture and those men, and they go blindly and willfully to their due end.

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Seventh Plague

(*Exodus 9:13-35*)

13. And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
14. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.
15. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.
16. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.
17. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?
18. Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.
19. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.
20. He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:
21. And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.
22. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.
23. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

24. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

25. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

26. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

27. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

28. Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

29. And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD's.

30. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.

31. And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled.

32. But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

33. And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

34. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

35. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses. (Exodus 9:13-35)

We are told by scholars like Cate that this storm and plague occurred in mid- January, when the flax and barley were up, but the wheat and rye still germinating.[105]

Some differences take place in this plague. *First*, God declares that this plague will strike Pharaoh's heart, and the hearts of his servants and people (v. 14). The religious implications will come home to them. They will be compelled to acknowledge to themselves that they are at war with God. This means epistemological self-consciousness, which always precedes judgment. Men normally disguise their war against God with moralistic language and noble purposes. After a certain point, their warfare becomes open, and their judgment becomes very near.

Second, God tells Pharaoh, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (v. 16). God declares that Pharaoh is predestined in what he does. Instead of being the proud lord he imagines himself to be, he is a creature of God, and God has ordained him for this course of evil. We face again the fact of God's absolute predestination of all things, and man's responsibility. We cannot understand this, but we can only reject it to our own devastation. Proud Pharaoh is told he is God's creature and can do nothing outside of God. This is as great an affront to Pharaoh as the plague itself.

Third, those among the Egyptians who had come to believe in God had an opportunity to protect themselves by placing their livestock under shelter, and they did so. Only a few years ago, I arrived in Helena, Montana, after a hailstorm which badly dented the fenders, hoods, and roofs of parked cars. Hailstorms can be very severe at times. This one in Egypt was without equal in all the history of that land. It was also accompanied by terrifying ground lightning. Both livestock and slaves who were in the fields were killed.

Fourth, in v. 17, Moses says, literally, God declares, "Do you raise yourself as an obstacle against My people?" Therefore, God promises to break Pharaoh and Egypt. Pharaoh set out to break God's people; therefore God makes clear He will break Egypt. It will not be an obstacle or a dam to hold back God's purpose.

Fifth, God makes clear that no rival claims or purposes are tolerated by Him. "The earth is the LORD's" (v. 29). This is the premise of God's indictment of all men and nations. No rival government, law, or will is tolerated. As against the human god, Pharaoh, the Living God

announces His purpose and judgment. The rarity of hailstorms in Egypt emphasizes the supernatural character of this judgment, and also the fact that no storm of like intensity had ever occurred in Egypt's history.

Sixth, as Honeycutt pointed out, God in v. 14, "there is none like me in all the earth," is declaring that there is "an absence of a likeness to me in all the earth." God cannot be known by an analogy to man, but, rather, man can be known only as we know God. Neither Pharaoh nor any other man will know the nature of God through anything on earth. Knowledge does not begin with an accumulation of data; rather, the data is understandable only when we know God. Until then, it is brute factuality, meaningless and unrelated facts which men tie together by their self-willed creation of meaning, as though they are creators. This statement, that there is "an absence of a likeness to me in all the earth," is not in conflict with Genesis 1:26-28, the creation of man in God's image. Fallen man has a false view of himself and hence of God. This statement, when linked to v. 29, "that thou mayest know that the earth is the LORD's," reveals the sovereignty of God in spite of Pharaoh's pretensions. As Honeycutt points out:

> Such an assertion, when read against the background of divine kingship and the Egyptian view of the natural world and the gods, suggests an element of triumph. It is not Pharaoh who controls the earth — not even the gods of Egypt. Yahweh, God of Israel, is Lord of creation (Ps. 24:1).[106]

Seventh, we have already cited God's counsel to Egypt, to protect both men and animals by remaining under shelter on the morrow. This was not only for the welfare of those Egyptians who had come to believe in God, but it was also spoken to Pharaoh and to all as an act of mercy. As David tells us concerning God, and the "froward" or treacherous,

> 26. With the merciful, thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.
> 27. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury (or, twisted.) (2 Samuel 22:26-27)

Eighth, Pharaoh's repentance is very shallow, although it is the first admission of wrong on his part. Moreover, Pharaoh says, "I have sinned this time" (v. 27). He does not admit to the evil of his stand but only that this disaster was a mistake on his part. Moses is not fooled by his words and warns Pharaoh of his dishonesty. As Calvin observed, "Yet, whosoever does not judge himself, and who does not frankly confess his sins, is assuredly murmuring against the judgments of God."[107]

Some scholars translate the word given in English as *rye* as spelt or emmer, two kinds of grain not in use in the West. The branches of trees were also broken by the storm.

The reference in v. 14 to the fact that the plagues will now strike home means this seventh plague and all successive ones will bring an inescapable knowledge of God the Judge to all Egypt. God's judgments will now paralyze and destroy an evil generation. This seventh plague is referred to three times in Revelation as typifying the devastation God brings on the enemies of Christ. Moreover, it sets forth their impenitence and their unwillingness to acknowledge God as the Lord:

> The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. (Rev. 8:7)
>
> And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (Rev. 11:19)
>
> And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Rev. 16:21)

God's mercy far exceeds the mercy of men, but His judgments also far exceed the judgments of men.

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Eighth Plague

(*Exodus 10:1-20*)

1. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him:
2. And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.
3. And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.
4. Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast:
5. And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field:
6. And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.
7. And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?
8. And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go?
9. And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.

10. And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you.
11. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.
12. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.
13. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.
14. And the locust went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.
15. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.
16. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you.
17. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.
18. And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.
19. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.
20. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go. (Exodus 10:1-20)

The eighth plague was of locusts. This is not a fact which registers too strongly with modern urban man. His life separates him from the earth and gives him a needless and unrealistic outlook. But locusts can lead to famine, if an infestation is widespread. In the West, since World

War I, locusts at times have been so thick that automobiles have skidded on highways as on ice; clothing on a clothesline, hung out to dry, has been completely eaten except for the tiny piece protected by the clothes pin; the opening of a door has brought hundreds into a house. For all of Egypt to be infested meant that the later grain crops were devoured, as were all the leaves on trees. Because the whole land was affected, food had to be purchased from other countries, decapitalizing Egypt. Ellison is right in describing locust plagues in antiquity and now as a thing of "terror" in the Near and Middle East.[108]

In v. 2, we are told that God requires that this and other plagues be remembered and the account thereof told and retold. Some paraphrases stress God's contempt for Egypt; James Moffatt rendered the central part of v. 2 thus: "You may tell your sons and grandsons how I made fools of the Egyptians." Robert L. Cate rendered it, "I have made sport of the Egyptians."[109] R. Alan Cole saw it also as God "made sport of" Egypt.[110] Those who treat God lightly find in due time that God treats them lightly.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh's authority was eroding. His servants or palace staff said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us?" Let the Hebrews go, as they requested. "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (v. 7). This is blunt speaking, and it tells us of the disintegration of Pharaoh's authority. As a result, Aaron and Moses were recalled to Pharaoh's presence. Pharaoh was willing, he said, to let the men go, but the women and children had to remain as hostages (vv. 9-11). Pharaoh denied Israel the freedom to leave when Moses found these terms unacceptable.

As a result, the locusts came upon Egypt. In such an infestation, not only is all vegetation eaten, in the fields and from all the trees, but even wood is attacked and marred.

Pharaoh, however, was a loser before the locusts were unleashed against Egypt. His retinue now bitterly resented his stubborn pride and its consequences for Egypt. As a result, Pharaoh's situation was a very precarious one. People are not long loyal to a ruler whose policies are destroying them. In Psalm 105:34-35, we have a reference to the destructiveness of this plague.

The memory of the plagues on Egypt lingered for centuries, and other peoples at times were fearful of Israel because of that knowledge. As Chadwick noted:

> And so we find, many years after all this generation has passed away, that a strangely distorted version of these events is current among the Philistines in Palestine. In the days of Eli, when the ark was brought into the camp, they said, "Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness" (1 Sam. iv. 8). And this, along with the impression which Rahab declared that the Exodus and what followed it had made, may help us to understand what a mighty influence upon the wars of Palestine the scourging of Egypt had, how terror fell upon all the inhabitants of the land, and they melted away (Josh. ii. 9-10).[111]

The loss of historical memory goes hand in hand with a loss of an awareness of consequence. Men devalue the past because they refuse to learn from it. As a result, one generation after another repeats the follies of the past. Men who ignore the past do so because they believe that they can or have transcended it. Sins are repeated because men assume that they now govern all consequences. Thus, whether it be the adoption of euthanasia and abortion, or the abandonment of the gold standard, men assume that their ostensibly new wisdom and power nullify morality and causality. Morality and causality are inseparably tied together. Paul tells us that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The causality of creation is a God-ordained causality and hence a moral one. We have today an assault on both causality and morality.

Pharaoh rejected God and God's man, Moses, and, as a result, God's causality exacted its price, a moral judgment on Egypt. A visitation of locusts in the Canary Islands three centuries ago is described thus by an eye-witness:

> The air was so full of them, that I could not eat in my chamber without a candle; all the houses being full of them, even the stables, barns, chambers, garrets, and cellars. I caused cannon-powder and sulpher to be burnt to expel them, but all to

> no purpose; for when the door was opened an infinite number came in, and the others went out, fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing when a man went abroad to be hit on the face by those creatures, so that there was no opening one's mouth but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing, for when we were to eat, these creatures gave us no respite; when we cut a bit of meat, we cut a locust with it; and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them. I have seen them at night, when they sit to rest them, that the roads were four inches thick of them, one upon another; so that the horses would not trample over them, but as they were put on with much lashing, pricking up their ears, snorting and treading fearfully. The wheels of our carts and the feet of our horses bruising these creatures, there came forth from them such a stench as not only to offend the nose, but the brain. I was not able to endure it, but was forced to wash my nose with vinegar, and hold a handkerchief dipped in it continually at my nostrils.[112]

This is not an account of as devastating an infestation as has repeatedly occurred, nor as severe as that upon Egypt. Hyatt described the damage from locust plagues in ancient and modern times as "enormous."[113] As a result, Pharaoh, knowing the devastation locusts could work, attempted for the first time "to negotiate with Moses in advance, to prevent a plague from coming on the land."[114] Martin North described the result of a plague of locusts as "dreadful famine."[115] Pharaoh knew this, but he refused to surrender to God. Instead, in v. 10, we are told that he charged Moses, "evil is before you," or, evil is what you purpose. Then as now, the evil ones charge the godly with evil motives and acts. By this they underscore *the necessity for judgment*.

We are told in v. 11 that Pharaoh had Moses and Aaron "driven out" of his presence. In so doing, he brought in judgment. The locusts in such infestations cling to a man's skin and clothing; they cover him when he attempts to sleep. They are a nightmare to live with. All this did not cause Pharaoh to do more than pretend repentance. Sin leads to, even as it begins in, not only moral evil but also irrationality. Pharaoh's men had declared, "knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (v. 7). Have you not yet realized that you have destroyed Egypt? This Pharaoh refused to acknowledge more than momentarily. Then as now men at war against God choose

death, because they are the enemies of life. Igor Shafarevich has said of Marxism that it seeks the abolition of private property, the destruction of religion, the death of the family, and the death of man.[116] Every form of unbelief is in pursuit of death to one degree or another. *Wisdom* declares always, as the expression of God's being, "he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36).

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The Ninth Plague

(*Exodus 10:21-29*)

> 21. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.
> 22. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:
> 23. They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.
> 24. And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.
> 25. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.
> 26. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.
> 27. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.
> 28. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.
> 29.And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. (Exodus 10:21-29)

The ninth plague is darkness; in v. 22, it is called a "thick darkness." The word translated as *thick* means gloom or dark, so that the darkness was one of especial intensity. We are told that it was "even darkness which may be felt" (v. 21). Since this plague occurred at a time when the weather was hot, the heat and darkness added up to an intensely difficult time.

This darkness was limited to Egypt; Goshen was not affected. We are not told how the darkness came about. More than a few scholars have said that it was probably a very severe sandstorm,

but there is nothing here to suggest that. In fact, the absence of any mention of a great windstorm and sand militates against that belief. All we are told is that it was an act of God. Men are determined to convert this plague and others into acts of "Nature." There is a reason for this. Acts of "Nature" are potentially understandable and controllable by man, whereas acts of God are not. Acts of God point to a causality governing man and ungovernable by man. Acts of "Nature," however, are potentially governable by man. The concept of "Nature" is anthropomorphic and posits an entity which, however unthinking, is able to evolve the complex and intricate world of creation. Man, as the high point of this world of "Nature," is now ready to determine the evolution of things. For this reason, the mythology of "Nature" is both popular and unquestioned. It means here that the darkness was not from God but from "Nature," and with this we cannot agree.

Pharaoh still wanted to bargain with God. Whereas God demands unconditional surrender, man wants to be able to control God. Pharaoh's condition now was that all the flocks and herds of Israel remain in Egypt as hostages (v. 24). After the loss of Egypt's herds, the seizure of Israel's livestock would have been a major asset to Egypt. If Israel left to offer sacrifices in the wilderness, Egypt could then seize all their animals and recoup some of their losses. With this, Moses could not agree (vv. 24-25). The words then exchanged in anger indicated, on Pharaoh's part, a threat to murder Moses if he again appeared before him (v. 28). Moses in return said that he was finished with Pharaoh (v. 29). In spite of this, the two men (and Aaron) did meet twice more (11:8; 12:31-32).

Egypt is not normally a cloudy land. It is a land of sun and light, so that darkness was a particular affront to Egypt and its faith. (This plague is referred to in Psalm 105:28.) It was an affront to Ra, their sun-god, and the Egyptian adoration of the dependability of "Nature." Now, we are told, it was so dark they could not see one another, nor work, transact business, or move out of their houses (v. 23). This continued for three full days. Pharaoh, the human embodiment of Ra, the sun-god, was in as much darkness as the rest of Egypt. His impotence in the face of God was being underscored.

Calvin, in describing the stubbornness of Pharaoh, wrote that Pharaoh "prepares himself for every extremity rather than simply to obey God."[117] This is a particularly telling comment. In the 1980s, with respect to AIDS, the one intolerable answer to the question, why AIDS, is to see it as God's judgment. John Lofton had the right answer to the cynical question, "Do you believe that AIDS is God's judgment?" His answer was, "Do you think it is God's blessing?" Men prefer every extremity and every answer "rather than simply to obey God."

Chadwick wrote:

> In the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom there is a remarkable study of this plague, regarded as a retribution in kind. It avenges the oppression of Israel. "For when unrighteous men thought to oppress the holy nation, they being shut up in their houses, the prisoners of darkness, and fettered with the bonds of a long night, lay exiled from the eternal PROVIDENCE" (xvii. 2). It expresses in the physical realm their spiritual misery: "For while they supposed to lie hid in their secret sins, they were scattered under a thick vail of forgetfulness" (v. 3). It retorted on them the illusions of their sorcerers: "as for the illusions of art magic, they were put down… For they, that promised to drive away terrors and troubles from a sick soul, were sick themselves of fear, worthy to be laughed at" (v. 7-8). In another place the Egyptians are declared to be worse than the men of Sodom, because they brought into bondage friends and not strangers, and grievously afflicted those whom they had received with feasting; "therefore even with blindness were these stricken, as those were at the doors of the righteous man." (xix. 14-17). And we may well believe that the long night was haunted with special terrors, if we add this wise explanation: "For wickedness, condemned by her own witness, is very timorous, and being pressed by conscience, always forecasteth grievous things. For" — and this is a sentence of transcendent merit — "fear is nothing else than a betrayal of the succours that reason offereth" (xvii. 11-12). Therefore it is concluded that their own hearts were their worst tormentors, alarmed by whistling winds, or melodious song of birds, or pleasing fall of waters, "for the whole world shined with clear light, and none were hindered in their labor: over them only was

> spread a heavy night, an image of that darkness which should afterward receive them: yet were they unto themselves more grievous than the darkness" (v. 20-21).[118]

We should also remember that for men in antiquity, darkness was a common symbol of chaos. While their rationalism had different presuppositions than that of modern man, it was similar in seeing the necessity of rational control and understanding. The Egyptians were familiar with sandstorms and eclipses; such things constituted a part of the known and rational world. An inexplicable darkness for three days and nights meant that the unknown and the non-rational was at work, and for Egyptians this meant the triumph of chaos. The plagues had reduced Egypt economically, and now total darkness was added to the chaotic state of Egypt. Work was now impossible. Chaos was triumphing.

In view of this, Pharaoh's threat to kill Moses is of particular importance. Pharaoh knew that Egypt was in chaos and facing death. In fact, Pharaoh was a dead man as far as his status was concerned; he still had power, but was discredited in the eyes of Israel and Egypt. In effect, Pharaoh said, if you return to announce another judgment, you shall die. His was an urge to mass destruction.

In this instance, darkness does not precede dawn, nor a renewal, but death. The tenth plague made clear that the return of sunlight did not end Egypt's real darkness.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Tenth Plague, Part I: The Announcement

(*Exodus 11:1-10*)

1. And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.
2. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold.
3. And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.
4. And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:
5. And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.
6. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.
7. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.
8. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.
9. And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

> 10. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land. (Exodus 11:1-10)

In these verses, we have the introduction to the tenth plague on Egypt. The land was devastated and economically crippled. Now God planned to strike directly at the people. Death had come to crops and to animals; now it would strike at families. The devastation in Egypt was very great, and the suffering of the people was no doubt severe. Earlier, Pharaoh's own men had cried out to him, "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (10:7). In terms of the modern mood, many would say that Egypt had suffered enough. Joseph Parker's comment was a sound corrective to this attitude:

> …suffering is often mistaken for penitence…. When we think of punishment instead of thinking of sin, we are very likely to think that suffering is the equivalent of contrition. We say "the poor man seemed to be suffering intensely." So he may have been; but there may have been no contrition in his heart. It was a physical or mechanical suffering, not a moral pain....[119]

Modern views of criminal "justice" are governed by this kind of sentimental thinking, so that time spent in a prison, perhaps only a few years, is seen as atonement for murder. Suffering on the criminal's part has come to replace restitution. The spoiling of the Egyptians (v. 2) was God's requirement of restitution to Israel. The Israelites had to require restitution for their enforced service. This demand comes later, as does the death of the firstborn (12:29ff.). This last plague, God declares, will compel Pharaoh's courtiers to demand the total expulsion of Israel (v. 8). Moses told Pharaoh this plainly. The palace revolt against Pharaoh was gaining ground on a pragmatic basis. Moses left Pharaoh "in a great anger" (v. 9). We can assume that a like anger was felt by many Egyptians, anger, but not repentance.

Pharaoh's authority was now almost altogether broken. The same was true of Egyptian religion. As Ellison pointed out, perhaps no other country "in antiquity was more obsessed with death than Egypt." Their religion offered a safe passage through death to the "Western World" and to

Osiris. Now it was clear that Israel's God, not Egypt's, was Lord over all things, nature, life, and death.[120]

This chapter is an announcement of the tenth plague, not an account of the plague itself. The death of all the firstborn of man and beast is declared. It will affect the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor (v. 5). After this blow, Egypt will beg Israel to leave instead of trying to hold them. Eighty years before, Egypt had drowned the male babies of Israel. The judgments on Egypt began with the Nile, and they now end with the death of all Egypt's firstborn. The Egyptians in many cases may have forgotten what occurred eighty years earlier, but God had not forgotten.

Up until now, God had commanded Moses and Aaron to begin each plague with their outstretched staffs. God now acts directly to bring in this final judgment. In v. 1, God says, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh," and this is the first usage of the word *plague* (*nega'*), a stroke or plague, a wounding.

We are again told that the Lord had hardened Pharaoh's heart (v. 10) Judicial blindness is imposed by God on men after a certain point "lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isa. 6:10). A murderer cannot restore life to the man he kills. Similarly, after a certain point he is morally, *irrevocably* dead in his sin, and there is no turning back. There is, then, only judgment. F. B. Meyer said, "Judgments compress into a sudden flash the inevitable results of wrong-doing."[121]

We are told, "the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (v. 3). It was clear that the center of power had shifted, but not religiously. Egypt made no move to expel Pharaoh and retain Moses. They recognized the power of Moses, but they later begged him to leave Egypt. They saw the power manifested, but they were by no means interested in its source. Today we have clergymen as well as unbelievers who refuse to say that AIDS, the drought, and other judgments are coming from the hand of God.

The end was near, and soon Israel would leave Egypt. This meant severe dislocation as well as freedom. Homes had been built, and local roots, despite the sufferings, were now deep. The purpose of the demand for compensation was that God did not want His people to leave in poverty. In a time of judgment, they suffered, but they were also enriched.

In v. 6, we are told that the death of the firstborn would result in "a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt." In our time, such vocalizing is limited to sports events, to rock and roll "music," and similar artificial occasions. In much of history, the basic events of life and death evoked strong responses. C. D. Ginsburg noted:

> The shrill cries uttered by mourners in the East are well known to travellers. Mr. Stuart Poole heard those of the Egyptian women at Cairo, in the great cholera of 1848, at a distance of two miles. Herodotus, describing the lamentations of the Persian soldiers at the funeral of Masistius, says that "all Boettia resounded with their clamour" (ix. 24). The Egyptian monuments represent mourners as tearing their hair, putting dust upon their heads, and beating their breasts.[122]

According to Egyptian belief, Pharaoh and his order preserved the realm from disorder and death. Pharaoh was a living god and the incarnation in the political realm of the sun, the life of the natural realm. Each night the sun supposedly kept the great snake Apophis at bay and maintained peace and order amid the darkness.[123] Egypt's faith was being shattered as well as its economy.

It should be noted that the Hebrew word for firstborn indicates the male line. To announce the death of the *firstborn* at midnight was to reduce Egypt's families, economies, and faith to confusion and defeat.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Tenth Plague, Part II: The Passover

(*Exodus 12:1-10*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying,
2. This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.
3. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:
4. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.
5. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:
6. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.
7. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.
8. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.
9. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.
10. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. (Exodus 12:1-10)

This passage gives the rules for the preparation of the passover. God first gives the rules, and then, in the following verses, the reason for the passover. God requires obedience because He is the Lord; the understanding follows obedience.

The passover is the establishment of God's covenant with the slaves in Egypt prior to their release. We are told in v. 1 that this was done "in the land of Egypt" before the departure and the giving of the law at Sinai. The passover marked Israel's covenant deliverance from Egypt into the life of freedom under God and His law.

Israel's calendar was to be remade by the passover (v. 2). Dating henceforth was to begin with the time of redemption. The first month was called *ʾâbîyb*, newly ripened 'corn' or barley (Ex. 13:4); later, it was also called *Nisan* (Neh. 2:1). On our calendar, it is roughly mid-March to mid-April.

With the covenant, time has a new beginning, and time is reckoned in terms of salvation and is to culminate in God's triumphant kingdom. With Christ's renewal of the covenant as Himself the Lamb of God, time's great renewal began, and the years are now reckoned *Anno Domini*, from the year of our Lord.

In v. 3, we are told that "all the congregation of Israel" shall observe the passover. The term translated as congregation is *ʿêdâh*, meaning also *assembly* but better understood as *community*. The covenant establishes a community with God by His grace; it requires a community among the covenant people. In Deuteronomy and elsewhere, *qâhâl* is used; these two words are rendered in the New Testament as *ekklēsia*, church, or, the community and kingdom of God.

The sacrificial animal was a lamb, but might also be a kid, or young goat (v. 5), a year old, unblemished, and male. This sacrificial lamb set forth God's atonement by means of an unblemished substitute. The death penalty on man was assumed by the Lamb of God, and the passover enacted what in time would be Christ's atoning sacrifice.

The lamb was to be consumed in its entirety at the passover meal. Hence, if a family had too few members it was to unite with neighbors to observe the meal. The sacrificial animal had to be roasted, not boiled or prepared in any other way; after being skinned and cleaned, it was to be roasted whole.

The blood of the lamb was to be kept and then sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts (v. 7). Blood in Scripture represents life. Those whose doors are marked with the blood of the lamb are spared the tenth judgment. The premise is that a life has been laid down, so that the dwellers' lives are spared.

The passover sacrifice was to be eaten with unleavened bread, and with "bitter herbs." What these were originally, we are not told. In modern observances, it is often horseradish. Because of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, Judaism now uses only a shankbone for the passover meal.[124]

Four days before the passover, the lamb was to be set aside (v. 3). Every member of the family was now to regard the lamb as holy. At first, all ate generously of the lamb; ten to twenty persons were reckoned to one lamb, according to Josephus. Later, the passover became more a symbol than a meal, and each person received a portion the size of an olive.[125] Anything remaining from the lamb was to be burned.

The passover could not be a solitary feast. It had to be a community observance centered in the family. Life in community is not easy, but it is a religious necessity. Life in isolation can be autobiography, but it cannot be history. As Chadwick observed, "History is the sieve of God."[126] The problems and tensions of community life are the testing ground for men. As a slave people, Israel had suffered more than it had been tested. Soon, with freedom, the testing would begin. It is a myth that men love freedom; fallen man seeks security, not freedom, because his goal is irresponsible power, not maturity in liberty.

Since passover was a family observance, it imposed a religious duty on every family man. The faith of the family was primarily his responsibility.

It is a curious fact that the religious New Year for Israel, in spite of the passover, is at the beginning of the seventh month, Rosh Hashanah, in September. Rosh Hashanah is a harvest festival, whereas Passover is in the spring; it precedes the harvest.

By ordering the passover, God claimed Israel as His property. He had judged Egypt and was now about to deliver Israel. By establishing His covenant with Israel, He now required Israel to keep His law. The response to redemption must be obedience to God's law.

The passover narrative, like most of the Bible, has been the target of skepticism by modernist scholars. Thus, Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., was troubled by the fact that God killed children, i.e., the firstborn. He held that, either God's character has "changed" or improved since then, or man now better understands the meaning of this and other events. He held that God used some "fatal epidemic," and hence the deaths.[127]

Such interpretations change nothing. They reveal the sentimentality of modern man, his inability to understand God, God's law, or God's judgments, and they are influential in furthering moral corruption.

We now have a generation which cannot execute hardened, habitual criminals, nor murderers, nor anyone else deserving death. Yet it favors abortion and the death of millions thereby; *every year* it legalizes sodomy; it is permitting euthanasia; and, as it steadily increases the murderous scope of its evil, it rejects God's righteous judgments as cruel. Such men are tender-hearted towards evil and merciless towards God, His people, and His laws. They are the modern Egyptians.

Chapter Thirty

The Tenth Plague, Part III: Blood and Blessing

(*Exodus 12:11-17*)

> 11. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover.
> 12. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.
> 13. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.
> 14. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.
> 15. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.
> 16. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.
> 17. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. (Exodus 12:11-17)

First, Israel is instructed with respect to the passover: it is to be eaten "with your loins girded" (v. 11). Both the later rabbis and Christian commentators have usually disregarded this comment. It is routinely referred to the fact of an immanent departure and as having no further significance for the meaning of either the passover or communion.

To understand its implications, let us first consider its plain intent. The peoples of many nations in the Mediterranean world and elsewhere once wore robes, which were short in some instances, but more often long. The long, loose robe was practical; it did not cling to the body, and it was cool to wear under a hot sun. When action or haste was required, a girdle around the waist fastened the robe, and sometimes brought the robe above the knees for better freedom in work. To gird up one's loins thus became an idiom for preparing for action.

Thus, Israel was to gird up its loins, i.e., prepare for departure. However, the departure did not follow the passover immediately. The girded loins required at this first passover indicated that God's people must be ready for action. Since the action was into freedom, the girded loins pointed to the passover as the prelude to victory.

In neither passover nor communion observances is there any stress on the fact that the meaning of the rite is that it is to be seen an indication of certain victory. Edersheim observed:

> It is a beautifully significant practice of the modern Jews, that, before fulfilling any special observance directed in their Law, they always first bless God for the giving of it. One might almost compare the idea underlying this, and much else of a similar character in the present religious life of Israel, to the good fruits which the soil of Palestine bore even during the Sabbatical years, when it lay untilled. For it is intended to express that the Law is felt not a burden, but a gift of God in which to rejoice.[128]

While the passover was a most solemn occasion, it was also a joyful one, because it was to be followed by deliverance and victory. As a result, passover and now communion celebrate not an end but a beginning, a victory begun and anticipated. Sam Levenson reported a rabbinic comment which is appropriate:

> When man ultimately faces his Maker he will have to account to Him for those God-given pleasures of life of which he did not take full advantage.[129]

The passover-communion celebrates the life of victory, responsibility, and joy.

Together with the requirement that one's loins be girded is the summons to have "your shoes on your feet" (v. 11). Shoes were not normally worn in the house in those days, and to wear them meant to be ready for action. It is a misreading to see this as preparation for flight; rather, because on the night of the passover Egypt's judgment would be complete, it was a sign of victory and acting on a triumph. The "staff in your hand" (v. 11) also referred to the same fact, as well as the eating in haste.

Second, God would in that one night destroy all the firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast.

Third, we are thrice told in Scripture that blood stands for life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; Deut. 12:23). Life is God's creation and cannot be taken apart from His law. Permission is given to kill for certain offenses, in self-defense, war, and so on, and also to kill certain animals for food. Animal blood could not be eaten: life belongs to God. Animal flesh is God's gift to men for food, and it is to be eaten with thanksgiving. A covenant was made in blood, to signify the death penalty for breaking the covenant. Egypt's firstborn died in this tenth plague; the firstborn male represents that which is prior, the strength of a family, its nearest future in carrying on a family's responsibilities. To cut off the firstborn is thus a severe judgment. The passover is initially celebrated as the firstborn of Egypt die. Communion marks the death of the firstborn and only-begotten Son of God, to atone for our sins and reestablish us in God's covenant.

Fourth, the passover was to be observed on the 14th day of the month Abib, and the feast of unleavened bread from the 14th to the 21st, for a week. All leaven was to be removed from the house on the day before the passover. The leaven or yeast signified corruptibility, that which passes away, man's work. The passover and communion set forth God's work, which cannot pass away. The absence of leaven signifies our eternal security in God's salvation. The seven days took place at the beginning of the barley harvest, and in Leviticus 23:9-14, a sheaf of barley is offered at this time.

Fifth, God says that the blood on the doors "shall be *to you* for a token" that God will spare that house. It was not God who needed the sign or token but the people. By recognizing the necessity of shed blood they confessed their need for a substitutionary and vicarious sacrifice to spare them the judgment of God. It is thus "to you for a token," and also an annual "memorial" (v. 14). They are to remember what God has done for them.

Sixth, failure to observe the passover properly, i.e., to eat leavened bread, for example, meant excommunication (v. 15). Basic to the life of a people is atonement, and the neglect of this fact, or its careless treatment, means an unregenerate man.

Seventh, God declares that the death of the firstborn is a judgment on the gods or princes of Egypt, on their faith and their leadership.

Eighth, the event is to be observed annually as a memorial. The emphasis of the ritual is on action, on responsible advance; the girt loins, shod feet, and a staff in hand do not refer to normal table postures. At the same time, a ritual is markedly different from an armed march. The two emphases are inseparable, and the separation of the ritual from action has seriously hurt the meaning of the rite. Both in Jewish and Christian circles, mystical thought has clouded the meaning.

Blood is shed, signifying the shed blood of God's substitute, God the Son, Jesus Christ. The shed blood signifies deliverance from death, but also much more, deliverance from death into life and blessings. To omit this aspect is to cloud the meaning. Paul writes:

> 7. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:
> 8. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:7-8)

The word *feast* here is the Greek *heortazo* or to keep a festival. According to Hodge,

> Let us *therefore* keep the feast. That is, since our passover Christ is slain, let us keep the feast. This is not an exhortation to keep the Jewish passover — because the whole context is figurative, and because the death of Christ is no reason why the Corinthians should keep the Jewish passover. Christians are nowhere exhorted to observe the festivals of the old dispensation. Neither is the feast referred to the Lord's Supper. There is nothing in the connection to suggest a reference to that ordinance. A feast was a portion of time consecrated to God. *To keep the feast* means, "let your whole lives be as a sacred festival, i.e., consecrated to God."[130]

Hodge's last sentence is superb; what precedes it argues too much. Christ is our passover; he is sacrificed for us; the word *passover* ties Christ's work to both the Jewish passover and the Lord's Supper and tells us that the sacrifice of Christ and the ordinance *require* that our "whole lives be as a sacred festival,… consecrated to God." There is for us a necessary connection between blood and blessing, and the necessary response of joy and gratitude.

Chapter Thirty-One

The Tenth Plague, Part IV: Unleavened Bread

(*Exodus 12:18-20*)

> 18. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.
> 19. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.
> 20. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:18-20)

The feast of unleavened bread, or Mazzoth, is easily understood. For seven days, unleavened bread was to be eaten, and no leaven or yeast in any form was to be kept in the house. Violation of this law meant that one would be "cut off" from the people; in this context, this means excommunication.

A common evangelical interpretation of leaven is that it means sin. This is clearly wrong and absurd. Leviticus 7:13 requires an offering of "leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of (one's) peace offerings." If the Scofieldian interpretation of leaven as sin is right, this means that God requires an offering of sin! Leaven represents man's work, which is temporal and corruptible, i.e., it passes away. All the same, our work, our service to the Lord, is required by Him. In sacrifices related to atonement, man contributes nothing, and hence a leavened offering means a belief that we have a hand in our own salvation.

Those who did not share in the faith but were in the same land as the believers were required to abstain from all leaven during the week. The premise was this: we are not allowed to share in the advantages of life among God's people and yet manifest disrespect for their faith.

In Deuteronomy 16:3, we have a reference to unleavened bread which is important:

> Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it: seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

Unleavened bread is called "the bread of affliction," not because of any imagined bitter taste. The Hebrew word used and translated as affliction means depression, with a hint of *self*-affliction. The explanation for this is, "for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste." From long established houses, they were going into tents in the wilderness. From a stationary existence, they were moving into a nomadic one. This meant discarding some possessions and securing others. While the goal was freedom, the process was not an easy one. It was a venture of faith, a move from a stable situation of bondage into the risks of freedom. This *responsibility* was thus an affliction, as freedom and responsibility always are, but an *affliction* that alone opens the door to future blessings. No man can be blessed without first eating the bread of affliction. Edersheim wrote:

> The Passover, therefore, was not so much the remembrance of Israel's bondage as of Israel's deliverance from that bondage, and the bread which had originally been that of affliction, because of haste, now became, as it were, the bread of a new state of existence.[131]

There is a reference to the feast of unleavened bread, and of separation to the Lord, not only in 1 Corinthians 5:7, but also in Isaiah 52:9-12:

> 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.
> 10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;
> and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
> 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing;
> go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

> 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

Isaiah tells us that our exoduses in history from captivity into God's freedom will not be in haste nor by flight, but with triumph. His verses are "crowded" with references to the original exodus.

In Exodus 23:14-17, the law of the covenant requires the observance by all males of three feasts: the feast of unleavened bread; the feast of harvest or of the first fruits; and the feast of ingathering, or harvest. The second and third feasts stress harvests, results. The first, the feast of unleavened bread, points to the beginning of all godly results and consequences: the venture of freedom, of going forth in godly freedom and responsibility. There is no harvest without risk. Slavery gives security; freedom offers risks before results.

The feast of unleavened bread cannot be separated from the passover. Passover celebrates redemption; the feast of unleavened bread means a total reliance on God's work for salvation. The meaning of the unleavened bread is that God declares, "ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44; Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

In the later history of Israel, on the day before the feast, the father, with a lighted candle, led the children in a search, throughout all the house, for leaven. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 11:28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Food has a place in all religions, and no culture exists in which all things are edible without restriction. Food makes life possible; man cannot exist without food. This obvious fact is lost sight of in modern cultures where food is abundant and is taken for granted. During the student demonstrations of the 1960s, a girl at Berkeley, California, in a rally to further the goal of a work-free world, (work being seen as a capitalistic deception), was asked by a reporter, but what about the production of food? Her lordly and disdainful reply was simply, "Food IS!" Such an attitude is humanism gone mad.

The Biblical festivals are food-related. They require of us a recognition of our dependence on God for all things, from our daily bread to our redemption. They stress the fact that we are creatures, dependent creatures, and we need food to live, and we need one another. Supremely, we need the Lord. Paul tells us that, to put off the old man, and to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind," means honesty towards our neighbor and living with our brethren as "members one of another" (Eph. 4:22-25). Our Lord declares, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, cf. Deut. 8:3).

Especially in an era of humanism, fallen man prefers to stress mystical or rationalistic abstractions as the meaning of his religious rituals. Scripture stresses our need and dependence. No more than we can live without food and water can we endure as men and nations without the Lord. From one end of the Bible to the other, most of the required rites are food based. Without food material and spiritual, men and nations cannot live. Unleavened bread reminds us that both the provision and the very fact of life represent the creating and regenerating power, mercy, and salvation of our Lord.

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Tenth Plague, Part V: The Blood of Atonement

(*Exodus 12:21-28*)

21. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.
22. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.
23. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.
24. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.
25. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.
26. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?
27. That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.
28. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. (Exodus 12:21-28)

We have here Moses' instructions to the elders of Israel concerning the passover. We think of the word *elders* primarily in terms of a church office, whereas the Biblical references are to heads of families who are also heads of their clans or tribes and who rule in either the civil or ecclesiastical spheres. This is not a minor matter — Scripture gives us a family-based faith in both Old and New Testaments. The essential test of an elder (presbyter, or bishop) as given by Paul to Timothy is his ability to govern his family wisely in terms of God's requirements (1 Tim.

3:1-16). Because the family is so basic, God uses familistic language, calling Himself our Father, the church His household, and so on.

This centrality is also stressed in the fact that children must be taught the meaning of passover — communion (vv. 26-27). In the early church, children old enough to understand raised the question concerning the meaning of communion as a part of the earliest liturgies, and they partook of the elements. In the modern church, the rite is neither family nor action oriented.

The passover is still observed as in Moses' time by a small number of surviving Samaritans. Among Jews, the main outlines are kept in ritual form. Their ceremony begins with *Kiddush*, or sanctification, cleansing the house of leaven. The order of service is called *Seder*. The unleavened bread is *matzah*. The "bitter herbs" (v. 8) are dipped in *haroseth*, "a mixture of apples, nuts, raisins, cinnamon, and wine, to symbolize the mortar (1:14) used in building store cities for pharaoh (1:11)."[132]

The blood of the passover lamb was to be used to mark the lintel and the two side posts of the door. A bunch of hyssop was used to do this. Hyssop was also used in other ceremonies, as in the cleansing of leprosy (Lev. 14:4ff.) and in the red heifer rite (Num. 19:6ff.), and it is referred to in 1 Kings 4:33 and Psalm 51:7. David's use of it makes clear that purging with hyssop was a synonym for atonement:

> 7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
> 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
> 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. (Ps. 51:7-9)

David's words also make clear that lack of atonement meant not only moral grief, but also that sin in effect cripples a man just as broken bones do, whereas atonement means freedom from sin and a life of joy and gladness.

All the covenant people were restricted to their houses on the first passover. Our Lord, after the passover meal, went to Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39; John 14:31), but we do not know what the restrictions on going out were after the first passover. There is a relationship here to the law of the cities of refuge (Num. 35:28). A man seeking refuge in such a city had to remain there until the death of the high priest, a type of Christ.

In v. 21, the lamb is referred to as "the passover." This is a significant fact. Not the rite but the slain lamb is the passover. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 5:7 is in conformity with this: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." It is a dereliction of faith to transfer the term passover to an ecclesiastical ritual when it means the Lamb of God; both church and synagogue have sinned at this point.

The requirement to remain in the house all night at the first passover meant that the blood of the lamb was their shelter. To remain within during the first passover did not mean that God could only then know who should live, but rather it witnessed to God that the covenant people knew that their only shelter was the blood. Death would enter all other houses not protected by the blood of the atonement. Hence, "None of you shall go out" (v. 22). The sprinkling of the blood was not repeated after this first occasion. On this occasion, the blood plus the requirement to remain indoors made clear that their only security and shelter was in God's atonement. Only after resting in total trust in the sole security of God's atonement could they march out of Egypt as free men.

The blood of the lamb provided atonement. In Leviticus 17:11-14, we read:

> 11. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.
> 12. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

> 13. And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.
> 14. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

This requirement is repeated in Acts 15:20. Blood is equated with life. No man can shed blood except as God's law permits or requires, for food, self-defense, in war, and so on. Life is God's creation and it is therefore entirely subject to His laws.

There is a very important aspect to the passover which must not be overlooked. Plagues one through three hit both Egypt and Goshen; plagues four through nine struck Egypt alone. Both Egyptians and Hebrews were now vulnerable to the tenth plague, which set forth God's judgment on all unatoned sin. Thus, Israel had to realize that in God's sight they also merited judgment and death, even as Egypt did. Their only deliverance was by placing the blood of God's appointed lamb between themselves and God. They had no other immunity from the plague, from death. Being the descendants of Abraham gave them no protection: only the substitutionary blood could do that.

We are told of the elders of Israel to whom Moses and Aaron spoke concerning the passover, that they "bowed the head and worshipped" (v. 27). The fact of the forthcoming deliverance from Egypt made them ready to worship now, but subsequently in the wilderness, their complaints and lack of faith became apparent. It was obvious that they had given a fearful and formal compliance to God's requirements. The death sentence on them had only been delayed. Their generation died in the wilderness, barred by God from the Promised Land, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua.

There is an aspect of Leviticus 17:11-15, which is common to much in the law, that must be considered here. It is clear that the law recognizes that not all people in the covenant land will be covenant believers. The persecution of unbelievers *for their unbelief* is nowhere permitted.

However, disrespect by the unbelievers for the faith is not allowed. No penalty is set forth here, but the law requires respect for the faith of God's covenant people. Just as the godly have no right to abuse or penalize the unbeliever for his unbelief, so must the unbeliever observe a respectful attitude towards the faith and do nothing to show contempt or disrespect for it.

Chapter Thirty-Three

The Tenth Plague, Part VI: Death of the Firstborn

(*Exodus 12:29-30*)

> 29. And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.
> 30. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (Exodus 12:29-30)

There are two things in this text which are very offensive to modern man. *First*, all the firstborn are killed, and, *second*, God did it. An era which commonly sees God only as love will not view the death of the firstborn with anything but disbelief that God could do it, or that it occurred. Thus, Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., wrote:

> One should face realistically the moral problem raised by the assertion that the Lord smote all the firstborn. The total witness of the biblical revelation concerning the nature and character of God suggests that while God may utilize fatal epidemics or other catastrophes in nature, he hardly goes about slaying children. Thus, either the nature and character of God has changed, or man's comprehension of that nature has enlarged with the fuller appropriation of God's self-revelation.[133]

The Bible is God's self-revelation. Only by playing god over God and picking and choosing from the Bible to fashion our own idolatrous image of God can one escape the fact that this is God's handiwork. To say that "God may utilize fatal epidemics or other catastrophes in nature" does not "exonerate" God! It is like absolving a man of a killing because he hired a professional killer to do it. "The moral problem" referred to by Honeycutt is not in God nor in the Bible but in himself.

There is more to this matter. Thus, it was held in the past that the Messiah was He who smote Egypt's firstborn, and:

> The Chaldee paraphrase on this passage has, 'And the Word of the Lord slew all the first-born.' Many orthodox writers hold this opinion. He was the same Being who appeared to Moses in the bush (ch. iii.2), and indeed, as the whole of those special proceedings were pursued by Him for vindication of the Divine character, and for advancing the scheme of grace, there is no more incongruity with His personal attributes in inflicting the previous plagues, than the terrible catastrophe which closed the series (cf. Rev. xix. 13-15).[134]

The records are clear: God ordained the death of the firstborn, and He accomplished it "at midnight"; the supernatural character of the judgment is emphasized by the fact that it occurred simultaneously in every house at the same time. It is an evasion to say, "Nature accomplished God's purposes under His control."[135]

The death of the firstborn meant the firstborn of any age, grandfathers, fathers, and sons. The firstborn in much of history has had governmental responsibilities in the family and represented the family's future, someone who could assume major tasks before younger sons. When Jacob cuts off Reuben from headship, he still tells him what a firstborn means, even though Reuben forfeited that position:

> Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. (Genesis 49:3)

The firstborn of animals were also killed. Since the Egyptians had been driven to buying cattle and horses from other countries to replace those killed earlier, this was a further loss. All classes were thus affected: they lost men and animals. Prisoners in the pit-house were no less stricken than Pharaoh. Death came to every house.

This is the tenth and *last judgment* on Egypt, and also a type of the last judgment at the end of history. It is a merciless reckoning, because the time of repentance is past.

The terror was thus nation-wide. We are told that "there was a great cry in Egypt." In many cultures, weeping, wailing, or keening are commonplace at times of death. In this instance, there was more than ritual mourning. The terror was everywhere.

Both God's judgments and His grace are irresistible. Because of the routines of time and work, men assume that all things continue as they always have (cf. 2 Peter 3:4). The judgments of history thus come as a surprise to men who should have known their inevitability.

This plague echoes the death of the Hebrew male babies in the Nile. Men may forget, but God never forgets. His judgment overtakes Egypt and destroys it.

But what happens when men say, as did Herbert C. Alleman and Eliner E. Flack, that this judgment was something other than the plain words of Scripture tell us? They wrote, "It was undoubtedly a sudden visitation of an epidemic disease."[136] It would have been better had they denied the historicity of the event. It is easier for people to cope with open unbelief, but, when men who are Biblical scholars at one and the same time affirm something Biblical to be historical but not supernatural, they undermine men's faith in the power of God in history. No honest reading of the text can give us the conclusion that this event "was undoubtedly a sudden visitation of an epidemic disease." The world of Biblical scholars has for some generations had a visitation of unbelief.

Another instance of this was S. L. Brown, representing Bishop Gore's school of "true" churchmen. According to Brown,

> The tenth plague, like the other nine, is connected with the natural conditions of the country, epidemics being common in the spring and often accompanied by great loss of life, but in course of time it was invested with a supernatural character, and a plague which was the immediate occasion of the Exodus and

> perhaps particularly fatal to children became, under the influence of the Israelitish custom of dedicating the firstborn, one which spared the firstborn of Israel and destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt.[137]

Gore believed strongly, as did his associates, that the Church of England could only be saved by their Anglo-Catholic views. The passionate devotion of these men to high church views was not accompanied by a high view of Biblical inerrancy or even authenticity. Canon George Harford held views similar to Brown's.[138]

It did not occur to these men that while spring *may* be a time of ailments for children in Britain and the United States (a questionable assumption), it does not follow that this was so in Egypt.

The issue, however, is *not* the death of the firstborn of Egypt as much as it is God Himself. These men will not accept the God of Scripture. They insist on remaking God in their own image, a scholarly god who abstracts himself from the world and contents himself with grading examination papers at the end of history. We can be grateful that God is not such a one as these professors are! We can rejoice that, given the evils of this world and its Egypts, "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

Chapter Thirty-Four

Curses and Blessings

(*Exodus 12:31-36*)

> 31. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.
> 32. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.
> 33. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.
> 34. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.
> 35. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:
> 36. And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:31-36)

To the modern mind, the strangest aspect of this text is Pharaoh's statement, "bless me also" (v. 32). Because of the series of judgments which has overwhelmed Egypt, Pharaoh ordered Moses to take Israel out of the land. The Egyptians welcomed this, for they said, "We be all dead men" (v. 33). The plagues had ruined Egypt politically, economically, and agriculturally, and also had shattered their families and their religious faith. The Egyptians clearly saw themselves *accursed* because of Moses and the Hebrews. The reverse of a curse is a blessing; Pharaoh, in asking for a blessing (for himself, and therefore for his people), was asking for a reversal of the curse upon all Egypt. A curse is malediction or imprecation; it declares that a person is not faithful to the laws of God and of all created being: he is at war with God's very Person as well as God's creation. The curse therefore invokes the judgment of God against the enemy of God. The greater the privilege under God, the greater is the curse or judgment. For this reason, Pharaoh

and Egypt, being prosperous and privileged, gained a more severe judgment because they despised God's people, and especially God's man, Moses. For this same reason, Peter tells us, "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). The church, enjoying the greatest privileges of all, is the object of God's singular wrath.

A curse is a form of prayer, because it appeals to God in terms of His covenant law to bring justice to bear on men and nations. Similarly, blessings too can be a form of prayer. Such prayers become impotent where there is no faith in God's law.

An oath is a conditional self-curse whereby the oath-taker invokes God's judgment on himself for a dishonest or violated oath.

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are very important in this context. They are basic to the covenant. A person, church, or nation covenanted to God and calling itself the Lord's, places itself under the blessings and curses invoked in those chapters for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Deuteronomy 28 was once commonly used as the text to which the Bible was opened and upon which an office-holder placed his hand on being sworn into office. Failure to use the text does not remove the application of the blessings and curses, because they are God's conditions for life.

To *bless* means to declare that a person's faithfulness is a joy to us, and we therefore thank God for him or her and invoke God's rewarding gifts upon that individual. It is also a recognition of godly authority; hence, parents are to be blessed, not cursed (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20; 30:11; 31:28). Judges and rulers should not be cursed because their authority requires honor (Ex. 22:28). To curse those who are weak or handicapped, as the deaf and blind, is also prohibited (Lev. 19:14).

A blessing invokes life; a curse, death. A blessing invokes health, happiness, and victory, whereas a curse invokes sickness, grief, and defeat. One Biblical oath says that, if the person is guilty, "The LORD makes thee a curse and an oath among thy people" (Num. 5:21).

In addition to this, we must remember that, even among the Egyptians, there was a recognition that a governing reality prospered or judged men and nations, so that what occurs in history was seen as tied to ultimate reality. Pharaoh thus, however unwillingly and rebelliously, had come to know that the God of Moses had cursed Egypt. By releasing Moses and the Hebrews, Pharaoh hoped to undo the curse. Hence, in freeing Israel, he said, "bless me also." Moses made no response.

We have, then, the "spoiling" of the Egyptians. The Hebrews did *not* ask for loans: they asked for their wages for their enforced servitude, and the Egyptians gave them gold, silver, and raiment in generous amounts. They did so because they, too, sought a transition from being accursed to being blessed.

The fallacy in the Egyptian view was that they saw curses and blessings in terms of their treatment of Israel rather than their relationship to God. They were accursed for their murder of the Israelite male babies, not simply because these children were Israelites, but because they were sinning against God. At present, all over the world, abortion is prevalent. God's judgment will not fall simply on those who kill white babies, but upon all who kill any unborn children because they are thereby at war against God. The test then was not Israel; it is not now the church, nor the white race: it is God's order which is violated, and it is God who is offended.

So Israel prepared to leave; the women took their dough before it was leavened, wrapped their kneading bowls in their mantels, and prepared thereby for a quick stop in the wilderness to bake unleavened bread.

The concluding phrase in v. 36, "and they *spoiled* the Egyptians," means, according to one scholar, "ye shall *save* the Egyptians." The word is *natsal*, to snatch away, defend, deliver, preserve, save, or recover; it occurs 212 times in the Old Testament; and in 210 instances it means to rescue or to save. Thus, the context determines whether or not the meaning of *natsal* is good or bad.[139]

Taken as meaning *save*, it tells us that, while Pharaoh received no answer to his request for a blessing, the people did. Pharaoh gave nothing except the freedom which was Israel's due; the people of Egypt gave of their possessions readily. As a result, the power of Pharaoh was soon to receive another judgment or curse.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Times of Observances

(*Exodus 12:37-42*)

> 37. And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.
> 38. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.
> 39. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.
> 40. Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.
> 41. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.
> 42. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. (Exodus 12:37-42)

The Hebrews assembled for their departure at Rameses, and the first stage of their journey was to Succoth, the Egyptian *Thuku*. The men numbered 600,000; a more precise figure is given in Numbers 1:46, "on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt" (Num. 1:1), 603,550. This did not include the women, nor the children. We are also told that "a mixed multitude" (v. 38) of non-Hebrews left with them. These could have been non-Hebrew slaves who chose to leave with Israel, and also believing Egyptians. It also included instances of intermarriage. It is interesting to note that in Nehemiah's day, "a mixed multitude" went to Jerusalem with the Jews (Neh. 13:3). These were separated from the Jews by Nehemiah in terms of the law of Deuteronomy 23:3-8. Such a separation had reference to membership in the covenant; no other discrimination was applied to them. They were simply

barred from any governing power in Judea until specified generations had passed and the people of alien origins had developed the moral character to become fully a part of the covenant nation. This same law had applied to King David's ancestors, because of his Moabite ancestress, Ruth.

Given the number of Israelite males, and the mixed multitude, the common estimate of 2,000,000 persons is a reasonable one; 3,000,000 is also a tenable count.

At the same time, the Hebrews had large holdings of livestock. Although enslaved for the state-imposed work levies, the Hebrews still had their own herds in Goshen. They were thus a nation on the march.[140]

It should be noted that the main preoccupation of many Biblical scholars with this text is, *first*, to question the population data as preposterous, and, *second*, to question the length of the Egyptian sojourn as stated in v. 41. It is wiser to question our own understanding, because at this distance in time many factors are unknown to us. The statements of Scripture are here clear and obvious ones. To question them at this distance is absurd. Moreover, *our* inability to leave quickly should not lead us to question Israel's departure in so short a time. Near the close of the eighteenth century, 400,000 Tartars left Russia in a single night for east Asia.[141]

We are also told that, on the fifteenth of Nisan, 430 years of captivity ended. Here again our knowledge is limited. To declare that no Scripture can stand unless *we* verify it is to make ourselves god over God.

Robert Jamieson wrote, concerning Israel's departure:

> It is a groundless objection to say that this vast multitude, so widely dispersed, and so encumbered with old and young, and cattle, were summoned to march at a moment's notice. They had been fully apprised of their approaching release, immediately after the return of Moses to Egypt (ch. iv. 29-31). Every successive plague awakened brighter hopes, and they were led, in prospect of the last awful judgment, to make active preparations for the journey (ch. xi. 2). So that, so far

> from being taken by surprise, the entire Hebrew population were in the attitude of eager expectation for the signal to depart.[142]

To leave so quickly meant all kinds of inconveniences and problems. "Calvin observed that God's blessings are always accompanied by some inconvenience so that the souls of the devout will not be spoiled by too much pleasure."[143] Whether this is always true or not, it was so in this case. We are told that the women hastily baked unleavened bread. At the moment, Israel had every inducement to leave. There is clear-cut evidence that those who left, both Israelite and non-Israelite, were not godly in the main, and hence that generation perished in the wilderness. God did not see them as fit for the responsibilities of the Promised Land. Calvin said of the mixed multitude, but it applies as well to Israel:

> But if any should think it absurd that ungodly men, with no better hope before them, would voluntarily forsake a rich and convenient habitation in order to seek a new home as wanderers and pilgrims let him recollect that Egypt had now been afflicted by so many calamities that by its very poverty and devastation it might easily have driven away its inhabitants. A great part of the cattle had perished; all the fruits of the earth were corrupted; the fields were ravaged and almost desert; we need not, therefore, wonder if despair should have caused many sojourners to fly away, and even some of the natives themselves. It may be also that, having been inhumanely treated, they shook of the yoke off tyranny when a way to liberty was opened to them.[144]

This is true, but not only of the ungodly. We often take steps without realizing the problems which will ensue; it is the grace of God that the future is at best only dimly known to us.

In v. 42, we have a reference to the passover, because the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was not Israel's work, but God's. It was due, not to Israel's merits, but to God's grace. Hence, in the account of their departure, God's work of mercy is again stressed. James Moffatt's rendering of v. 42 is telling:

> It was a night when the Eternal was on the watch to bring them out of Egypt, a night when all Israelites must keep watch for the Eternal, age after age.

This verse is given to us with a particular emphasis. First, the omnipresence and providence of God is stressed in a very personal and particular way. We are not permitted to think of God's care as a remote determinism. The totally personal triune God is a very present help in time of need, and also when we are not aware of any needs. In the words of James Russell Lowell (1845):

> … Behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadows
> Keeping watch above His own.

Secondly, we are told of the Passover that it is "a night when all Israelites must keep watch for the Eternal, age after age." The latter part of this is rendered by the Berkeley Version, "the Israelites shall keep watch in the presence of the LORD." We also have these readings:

> A night of solemn observances it is unto Yahweh, for bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt, this same night pertaineth to Yahweh, for solemn observances, by all the sons of Israel, to their generations. (Joseph Bryant Rotherham)

> A night of watchings it is to Jehovah, to bring them out from the land of Egypt; it is this night to Jehovah of watchings to all the sons of Israel to their generations. (Robert Young)

Some have rendered it as "a night of vigils." What is clear is that God *requires* us to observe and celebrate certain holy days. Time is marked, not only by the cycle of weeks and sabbaths, but also by God's acts in history. For this reason, national holidays (or, holy days) were all once religious observances. In our own lives, there are times of providential blessings and deliverances which we need to commemorate. God's blessings must mark our times and days.

Chapter Thirty-Six

The Priority of Grace

(*Exodus 12:43-51*)

43. And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:
44. But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.
45. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.
46. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.
47. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.
48. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.
49. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
50. Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.
51. And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies. (Exodus 12:43-51)

Moses is once again commanded to instruct Israel concerning the meaning of the passover. To be in communion with God and to receive His grace, mercy, and blessings means that we must recognize and obey the divisions ordained by God. Human relationships cannot legitimately be determined by human considerations; they must be grounded in the word of God. Men prefer their humanistic standards to God's law. As a result, a wealthy, educated, and art conscious homosexual is commonly regarded as socially acceptable when a poor and honest Christian is not. Men want their world and their relationships to be determined by their tastes and standards,

and they thereby pervert the social order. Faithfulness to the Lord is a matter of life; Jesus Christ declares, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). For Socrates, being a sodomite was no bar to talking about virtue as an authority. Ellison was right in stating, "The stress on verbal orthodoxy, which has brought so much suffering and division to the Church, is a part of the early Church's legacy from the Greeks."[145]

Israel then, and the church now, cannot be a part of the "family of man," which means membership in the fallen Adam and acceptance of his war against God (Gen. 3:1-5), and an insistence on human unity. Hence, no stranger, i.e., anyone alien to God's covenant, can partake of the passover. No foreigner nor hired servant who is outside the covenant can approach the table. If a slave of foreign extraction accepted circumcision, i.e., entered the covenant, he could do so. (This also meant freedom for him when his purchase price was worked out in labor.)

The passover lamb was to be eaten in its entirety, so that a family too small to eat a lamb shared one with a neighbor. The meat could not be carried from one house to another: it was to be eaten in its entirety where it was prepared. Moreover, "neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (v. 46). This verse is cited in John 19:36, when we are told that, unlike other crucified men, the bones of Jesus were not broken by the soldiers.

The separation required by the passover (and communion) have as their purpose our peace with God and our unity in the faith. Our Lord's passover prayer is, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11).

We are told, "This is the ordinance of the passover" (v. 43), i.e., the *law* God has established. It is not a suggestion but a requirement. This is restated in v. 49, "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." Things cannot be made easier for the stranger nor for the homeborn. Circumcision meant recognizing the necessity of rebirth, regeneration, by God's electing grace. Passover or communion set forth God's grace and blessing to His covenant people.

An important indication of the difference between Judaism and Christianity can be noted here. According to the very learned late chief rabbi of the British Empire, Dr. J. H. Hertz, circumcision is "the sign of Israel's election."[146] This transfers election from the individual to the race or nation, dramatically different from fact. Since this text stresses that the covenant and the table are open to believing strangers, it is a serious warping of the meaning. It then becomes membership, not in God's community of grace, but in Israel. This, *not the law*, was the issue in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and in the early church. This is a violation of v. 49, the requirement of one law for the homeborn and the stranger. The one law is God's, not Israel's. It has reference here to the passover, but elsewhere it is applied more generally, as witness:

> Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 24:22)
>
> But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:34)
>
> These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: That every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither. (Num. 35:15)

These and other texts stress, *first*, that all men and peoples are under God's law, so that no nation can legitimately make laws contrary to God's law. *Second*, although all men must be equally under God's law and justice, their approach to Him in worship must also be in terms of His law. In both the spheres of justice and of worship, God's law prevails. If a man is a thief or a murderer, he is an *outlaw* in the sphere of justice. However, if he does not kill, steal, bear false witness, and so on, he has the protection of God's law, but, without faith, he is an *outlaw* in the sphere of worship and in relationship to God.

Isaiah 56:3-8 gives us a prophetic declaration of the place of foreigners in God's covenant: it is not national but God-centered.

The failure of Judaism at this point is being repeated by the church. In the New Testament era, the moral superiority of the Jews when compared to other peoples was very marked: the Gentiles simply were not on the same moral level. Much of the hatred of the Jews was due to their obvious superiority. Much was also due to the fact that the Jews often insisted upon their superiority and made others feel it invidiously. The church in our time has made two errors. *First*, in the past two centuries it has regarded with contempt races other than certain European groups. *Second*, in reaction to this, many have insisted on racial equality and have added to that a contempt for Christianity and the European peoples. Both positions are false. A Biblical faith can give people a great advantage, but the advantage is one of *grace*, not *race*. Both perspectives overlook the priority of God's electing grace as the determining fact in the lives of men and nations. Thus to celebrate communion without a belief in predestination is to pervert its meaning.

Chapter Thirty-Seven
The Meaning of the Firstborn
(*Exodus 13:1-2*)

> 1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
> 2. Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. (Exodus 13:1-2)

The firstborn have an important place in Biblical faith. This significance resembles the widely prevalent concept of primogeniture; in some circles and nations, the eldest son invariably inherits everything. In England, for example, among the nobility, the eldest son inherits the estate whether he is qualified or not; the same rule prevailed among most European royal lines. This is not the Biblical view.

According to numerous texts, the firstborn male belongs to God and was to be redeemed (Ex. 13:11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20; Lev. 27:26; Deut. 15:19-20; cf. Rom. 11:16). The firstborn son belonged to God, and his life was redeemed by a payment. With redemption came responsibility, and an irresponsible firstborn son could be set aside for another, as in the case of Ishmael, Esau, and Reuben. The firstborn stood for the whole, and he was a tithe to God; the validity of God's claim was recognized by the act of redemption.

If godly, the firstborn received a double-portion of the inheritance, according to Deuteronomy 21:15-17. This double-portion meant responsibility for the care of the parents, and leadership in dealing with problems in the family and among kindred.

The redemption price was five silver shekels, according to Numbers 18:16; the current price among orthodox Jews is $5 US. Because the firstborn represented the whole family, he had a priestly function, because the priest is the people's representative to God. The Levitical priesthood functioned in relationship to the sanctuary and to civil government, to church and

state, in modern terms. The family priesthood functioned in relationship to family members and towards God. As Rule observed:

> It was an important principle; because the firstborn were naturally the representatives of the entire community. It was part of God's covenant that "ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). This we know was a fore-shadowing of the priestly character of the Christian Church, as a body. It was, therefore, important to keep up the idea that the priesthood was a *representative* priesthood; and the rule as to the firstborn emphasized this. When soon afterwards the *Levitical* priesthood was formally established, the fact that the Levites were accepted as substitutes for the firstborn, showed that they in their turn were representatives of the nation (Num. 3:12-13; 8:13-18).[147]

Non-Biblical primogeniture makes a difference between the sons, and in the landed property goes to the eldest son with no qualification on his part other than prior birth. It confers power and status.

Biblical primogeniture, if we can use that term, confers responsibilities to the son. He belongs to God, and, under God, exercises a religious function, a priestly office.

Non-Biblical primogeniture is a natural and civil fact which is primarily oriented towards the preservation of property and family powers. In Scripture, there is a dramatic difference. To be the firstborn is a *religious* fact. Hence, God declares, "*Sanctify* unto me all the firstborn" (v. 2). The firstborn of Egypt had just been slain by God to signify that Egypt was now set apart for judgment and ruin. This command to set apart all the firstborn would immediately bring that fact to mind with all Israel. Earlier, God had declared to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, my firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn" (Ex. 4:22-23). Pharaoh was thus clearly warned. There is another aspect to this. The firstborn has a responsibility towards all other sons and daughters. God, in declaring Israel to be his firstborn, was giving Israel a responsibility to Himself and towards all other peoples. Failure to discharge this responsibility meant a priestly failure and judgment.

Solomon, in the prayer at the dedication of the temple, asked God to give particular attention to the prayers of aliens from far countries who came there (1 Kings 8:41-43), which indicates that Israel was then manifesting a firstborn's concern for other sons. Psalm 87 has in mind all the foreigners whose true citizenship is in the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of God. When, later, Pharisaism arose, the election of Israel *per se* rather than of individuals out of every people, tongue, and nation, came to replace the earlier faith. Instead of God's firstborn, Israel, under Phariseeism, saw itself as an only-begotten son, so that membership in Israel became necessary for salvation. The result was judgment. A like error among the peoples of Christendom is now bringing judgment, which only a true priesthood can escape.

In Hebrews 12:22-24, we are told:

> 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,
> 23. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
> 24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The true church is thus described as the "church of the firstborn," i.e., a church mindful of its priestly responsibility to all other peoples. The name "firstborn" means responsibility; the true church is thus more than a group coming together to worship. It is an assembly, an army, dedicated to bringing all things into captivity to Christ to the end that it may be proclaimed:

> And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 11:15)

Humanistic perspectives on primogeniture make the firstborn the *privileged* son; the Biblical requirement is that he be the responsible son, and, if not *responsible*, he must be set aside. Hence, God declares, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among

the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine" (v. 2). These were all God's tithe, His firstfruits, so that, whether the domestic animals or the grain, all belonged to God.

All of life must be God-centered, and most certainly the family.

There is another aspect to this. God has spared the firstborn of Israel, not because of any merit on their part, but as an act of sovereign grace. He did it remembering His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As a result of His judgments on Egypt, Israel was saved and delivered. Israel as a totality now owed its life and service to the Lord. Hence, in the person of its firstborn, it had to give itself to God's Kingdom.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

(*Exodus 13:3-7*)

> 3. And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.
> 4. This day came ye out in the month Abib.
> 5. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.
> 6. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD.
> 7. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. (Exodus 13:3-7)

The feast of unleavened bread is virtually identical with passover (v. 6). No work was to be done during the seven days of the feast (v. 16). The unleavened bread commemorated the Exodus from Egypt (v. 17), and the passover the deliverance from the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn.

These verses and more in Exodus 13 have been called “repetitive.” This is only superficially true. Things required previously, in the emergency state in Egypt during the plagues, are now set forth as part of the cycle of life. Gratitude, thanksgiving, and joy must be basic to the life of godly man, given the fact that he lives, moves, and has his being in God’s government, grace, and mercy.

There are thus two important requirements here, *commemoration* and *rest*. God requires us to commemorate and celebrate days important in our lives under Him and as heirs of the grace of life. Never in the history of Christendom have they been fewer perhaps than now. Those that remain are largely secularized. The Christian calendar once governed society, and the holy days were central to the calendar, year in and year out. They also provided a great many days of rest. Productivity has not been enhanced by taking joy out of the calendar, and joy has left as men have abandoned Christ.

The unleavened bread is called "the bread of affliction" (Deut. 16:3) because it recalls the affliction or bondage in Egypt *and* celebrates deliverance. It is therefore a joyful celebration. Israel had been delivered from bondage into service to the Lord. Hence, the sanctification of the firstborn (Ex. 13:1-2) precedes the law of unleavened bread, because, having been under Egypt before, they are now under the Lord.

This celebration was to take place in the month *Abib*, which means "green ears of corn" or wheat, because it was then that the wheat came into ear, and things turned green all around them. The central Biblical reference to passover and the feast of unleavened bread is in Exodus 12:1 - 13:16. The emphasis is on deliverance, and joy in that fact.

To understand this feast it is necessary to understand the Biblical meaning of *leaven*. Few words in Scripture are more consistently misinterpreted. It is said by many to typify evil and sin. This is a serious misreading of the text. Two words are basically used in the Hebrew: *chametz* (*khahmates*), and *se-or*; the first means yeast-cake, the second yeast. If leaven means sin, why does God require "leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of … peace offerings" (Lev. 7:13; cf. 23:17)? Is sin an acceptable offering to God? It is true, at times leaven has a negative usage, as in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and Matthew 16:6, but it is used in these texts to typify a permeating influence and power. In Matthew 13:33, it is used in the same sense of a permeating power to describe the Kingdom of God. It is a radical dishonesty of exegesis to insist, as Scofieldians do, that in Matthew 13:33 it means evil:

> Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Scofield's long comment on this verse rests on his presupposition that:

> Leaven is …invariably used in a bad sense … Interpreting the parable by these familiar symbols, it constitutes a warning that the true doctrine, given for the nourishment of the children of the kingdom, would be mingled with corrupt and corrupting false doctrine, and that officially, by the apostate church itself. [148]

With such a method of interpretation, the Bible can be made to mean anything. If Scofield was right, Leviticus 7:13 means that God requires false doctrine of us! Scofield said of Leviticus 7:13, that here "leaven fitly signifies, that though having peace with God through the work of another, there is still evil in him."[149] In this, he is closer to the truth. Leaven or yeast produces bread which can mold. A loaf of leavened bread is *not* an evil loaf, but it is a loaf which can grow moldy. Our offerings to God, our works, are subject to mortality and decay. The passing of time dims or erases the works of men. This, contrary to Scofield, does not make them evil; our human labors for God's Kingdom can be at times somewhat tainted with our vanity and sin or, they can be truly holy in a creaturely sense. In either case, they fade or pass away with the years. God, however, requires a leavened offering from us. All man's works this side of heaven and the fulness of the new creation are indeed mutable and limited, but our sanctification, although a faulty process here on earth, is still a necessary one.

Turning again to the feast of unleavened bread, let us remember that the reference in Deuteronomy 16:3 is to "the bread of affliction," and yet the feast is a joyful one. It is at this point that the meaning of this festival comes into focus. The Scottish Presbyterian divine, Thomas Boston (1676-1732), in *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (1720), ridiculed the belief of the Arminians that man could go easily from a state of depravity into a state of grace without a shattering of his life. He wrote:

> And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration, in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please; and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom?[150]

What the feast of unleavened bread tells us is that we eat the bread of affliction before we enter into the joy and power of our life in the Lord.

There is another aspect to this festival: almost all Biblical holy days are food related. As creatures, we require food to live. Modern man often forgets how basic food is because he takes it for granted. Some years ago, Thorold Rogers said of food, that,

> Even in the highest stages of civilisation, all wealth can be ultimately resolved into the elementary form of food…. The provision of food is the primitive form of labour; its accumulation is the primitive form of wealth.[151]

Even more, we no longer are familiar with the meaning of bread because the bread we eat is no longer the staff of life. The religious meaning of bread is a very rich one. Our Lord declares, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). The unleavened bread of the feast points ahead to Jesus Christ, the bread from heaven, the bread of life. In much of Christendom, unleavened bread is used as one of the elements in communion. Thus, in the Christian passover the place of unleavened bread remains.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

The Consecration of the Firstborn to God

(*Exodus 13:8-16*)

8. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.
9. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.
10. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.
11. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,
12. That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's.
13. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.
14. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:
15. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.
16. And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt. (Exodus 13:8-16)

We have seen how important *commemoration* is in God's eyes; now we see a like emphasis on *narration*, on history. We are twice told in this text alone, "Thou shalt tell thy son." All the

children are to be taught. Because the firstborn represents all, this commandment is a requirement to pass on to our children the history of God's working in history, His redemptive work and providence. This is a law against rootlessness: we must know our past under God. This narration cannot be self-glorification. It is not an account of what our ancestors have done, but an account of what God has done.

These verses have to do with *the consecration of the firstborn*. Basic to that consecration is the narration, the stress on the meaning of the event.

Also involved in the fact of commemoration was the fact of frontlets or phylacteries, which marked the dress of every Hebrew. It was a means of public confession, a witness to one's faith, something comparable to a lapel cross worn by Christians.

The phylacteries were comparable to tattoo marks. Tattoo marks were religious and social in character. In India, they identify a man's caste; in some African tribes, a man's status as a warrior, and so on. The tattoo has normally been indelible. In Leviticus 19:28, all tattooing and like markings of the body are forbidden.

The kind of identification provided by tattooing is usually indelible and unchanging, whereas phylacteries could readily be discarded. The point is an obvious one. Whereas a Hindu Brahmin is always a Brahmin, and a member of the outcast group always an untouchable, the covenant believer has no analogous status. His is a profession of faith; he cannot identify himself permanently with the covenant if he betrays or abandons it. His status depends on an act of will, not the accident of birth. Even more, man's status depends on God's act of grace, not man's inherited status. It is God who classifies us, not we ourselves. The tattoo is still to some degree a means of self-classification.

A fundamental premise of Scripture is that "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). Since the firstborn of man and beast represents all, the redemption of the firstborn means recognizing the ownership of God as Creator and Redeemer in the lives of all men, and their possessions. Their redemption means acknowledging

that, no less than Egypt, we all deserve God's judgment on us as the firstborn, and we recognize that we are free by His grace. "Inasmuch as the first birth represented all the births, the whole nation was to consecrate itself to Jehovah, and present itself as a priestly nation in the consecration of the firstborn."[152]

Whereas the clean male firstborn animals were given to the priests, the unclean had to be redeemed at a price, as witness the ass (v. 13). The firstfruits also included grains. As Fairbairn wrote:

> The religious presentation of the first ripe grain of the season was like presenting the whole crop to God, acknowledging it to be His property, and receiving it as under the signature of His hand. It thereby acquired a sacred character; for "if the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy." The service bore respect to the consecration of the firstborn at the original institution of the passover, and was therefore most appropriately connected with this ordinance. Those firstborn … represented the whole people of Israel, and in their personal deliverance and future consecration all Israel were saved and sanctified to the Lord.[153]

The redemption of the firstborn is the acknowledgment of "God's higher right of property" in us and in our children. Circumcision and baptism witness also to the same fact. In every non-Biblical culture, property rights over children, and therefore over all, are vested in the father or in the state. In Roman law, as in Greek law, fathers in antiquity could decide whether or not the newly born child should live, or be exposed to die. In later years, the child could be sold into slavery. Where such "rights" existed, there were also statist "rights" over the life and death of all subjects. The consecration of the firstborn declared that all were the property of God. Because all are God's possession, the education of all is God's concern and is governed by His law, as such texts as the following indicate:

> 9. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

10. Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. (Deut. 4:9-10)

6. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up....
20. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?
21. Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:
22. And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:
23. And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.
24. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.
25. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. (Deut. 6:6-7, 20-25)

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut. 11:19)

And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. (Deut. 32:46)

These are simply the key verses in Deuteronomy alone. The whole of the Bible shows the emphasis. As Oehler summarized it, the "rights of parents over their children is limited — a remarkable difference from the laws of other nations" of antiquity.[154] It should not surprise us that the Hebrews became the first literate people of history centuries before others. The necessity of knowing God's law led to this.

Moreover, circumcision and baptism attest to God's property rights over our children. The child is presented to God with a promise to rear the child as God's possession by his nurture and admonition. The part of the child in the passover service, and then in communion in the Christian era, similarly witness to God's claim upon our children.

The dedication of the firstborn, and, through them, of all, to the Lord meant and means that they are God's property and not the state's. For this reason, Molech-worship, which required the dedication, and sometimes the sacrifice, of the firstborn to the state is regarded by God with such detestation, because it means that the state claims to be god. The claims of the modern state over the child and the family are evidences of modern Molech-worship. Failure of Christians to see the consecration of the firstborn as anything more than a relic, an outmoded ritual, have been deadly. The baptism service continues the same rite for all, children and adults. Churches perform the service blindly, even as do orthodox Jews, oblivious of its meaning. We have in the consecration of the firstborn to God a powerful requirement of anti-statism.

God makes the issue very clear. No man nor institution, neither church, nor state, nor anything else, including our families, can claim powers over us contrary or prior to God's claims. He alone is the LORD.

Chapter Forty

The Firstborn of Every Creature

(*Colossians 1:12-18*)

> 12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
> 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
> 14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
> 15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:
> 16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
> 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
> 18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:12-18)

An understanding of the meaning of the Biblical doctrine of the firstborn is essential to Christian faith, because so much in the New Testament depends on it. Jesus Christ is described at His birth as the *firstborn* (Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7). Because He is the firstborn of God's new creation, He is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). The old humanity born of Adam has death as its destiny, whereas the new humanity of Jesus Christ has an eternal inheritance (1 Cor. 15:39-50). The firstborn of Adam, the old humanity, has a future like that of Egypt's firstborn (Heb. 11:28). It is the "general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23) who are heirs of all things.

Paul, in Colossians 1:12-18, declares that in Christ we have a great inheritance, because the kingdom is Christ's. Through Him who is our Lord, we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). His creation is the totality of all things created, spiritual and material, visible and invisible, and all things were made for His sovereign purpose. "By him all things consist" (Col. 1:17), so that the meaning, coherence, and direction of all things is governed by Him and is only understandable in terms of Him. He is the head of the *ekklēsia*, the Kingdom; He is the beginning of all things, the *archē*, their meaning, origin, and ruler. He can thus declare, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,… which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8; cf. 1:11). In all things He has "the preeminence" (Col. 1:18); the word in Greek is *prōteuōn*, the first and absolute power.

The firstborn represents all. In Luke 3:38, we are told that Adam was of God, i.e., His first creation in the old humanity. Hence, all who are of Adam share in his sin and death, whereas all who are in Christ share in His righteousness or justice, and in His eternal life.

The significance of the birth of our firstborn Head, Jesus Christ, was not lost on the early church. Very early, Jesus Christ was hailed as man's tree of life.[155] Those who believe that the Christmas tree is of pagan origin know neither the Bible nor church history; in Genesis and Revelation, the tree of life is a type of Christ, and evergreen trees have been used to typify the tree of life. St. Ephrem of Syria (d. A.D. 378) wrote:

> On this day to us came forth the Gift, although we asked it not! Let us therefore alms bestow on them that cry and beg of us. 'Tis today that opened for us a gate on high to our prayer. Let us open also gates to supplicants that have transgressed, and of us have asked (forgiveness).[156]

He said also of Christmas day, "Blessed by the Babe that made manhood young again today!"[157] For our present concern, St. Ephrem's statement tells us that "This day is the firstborn feast, which being born the first, overcometh all the feasts."[158] The early church saw the fulfilment of the feast of the firstborn in the birth of Christ, and in the celebration thereof. Also important to note in the emphasis by St. Ephrem, and not original with him, is the fact that Christmas, the

feast of the firstborn, is a time for gifts. Having received the gift of Jesus Christ by God's grace, we must manifest grace by giving gifts to the needy.

As we have seen, Jesus Christ is called the firstborn of God, and of the new creation. By His resurrection, He became "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20), so that both terms, *firstborn* and *firstfruits*, are applied to Him, and their meaning made plain in Him.

In the early church, at the time of communion, the firstfruits of grapes and grains were offered.[159] There was a recognized relationship between the firstfruits and the firstborn. Priority belongs to the Lord in every sphere: hence, the firstfruits are given to the Firstborn of God, Jesus Christ.

The same is true of the tithe, the first tenth of our increase. It, too, is given to God with the recognition that the totality of our lives and increase belongs to Him. All that we retain is to be used to live in terms of His covenant grace and law.

Paul says that Christ is preeminent in all things, because "by Him all things consist." He is the cosmic Christ, Lord over all. Bruce, commenting on Colossians 1:16, said:

> Christ, then, is prior to all creation and, as the firstborn of God, is heir to it all. But more: it was "in Him" that all things were created. The preposition "in" seems to denote Christ as the "sphere" within which the work of creation takes place; more commonly the preposition "through" is used, denoting Him as the agent by whom God created the universe.[160]

In Col. 1:18 Paul declares that Jesus Christ "is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning the firstborn from the dead." The word church is in the Greek *ekklēsia*; it refers to Christ's Kingdom, His new humanity in all its spheres. It is thus far more than the worshipping congregation: it is church, state, school, family, and every other sphere of life brought under His dominion. He is, as Creator, Lord of all; as Redeemer, He has a further lordship, that of the motivating and ruling power in His new humanity.

This headship is subject to the fact that "he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:17). Whereas a nation can continue its existence when the head of state dies, and the life of a family goes on when the father dies, the reverse is true here, and more. The life of all creation comes from the Lord's creating word; it is sustained in life by Him. In both its existence and the new humanity in its renewed life, humanity and creation are absolutely and totally dependent on Him. Hence, Paul declares:

> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. (Col 1:16)

The Greek reads *en autōi*, by Him, because, as John 1:4 declares, "in Him was life." The sum of things, their every detail and totality, found its being by His word: He created them. We are told that "*all* things were and are His creation." This denies a division between the material and spiritual realms such as Hellenic thought maintained. Thus, "all things 'stand created' through him and for him."[161]

The rites of the firstborn therefore set forth the priority of life. The world does not exist for our purposes, nor do we exist to serve ourselves. Our lives point beyond us, and our focus must be found in God's purposes in Christ. The rite of the firstborn points to Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection, to His creation of a new humanity, and to His redemptive purpose for all creation.

Chapter Forty-One
The Bones of Joseph
(*Exodus 13:17-19*)

> 17. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:
> 18. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed (or, by five in a rank) out of the land of Egypt.
> 19. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straightly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. (Exodus 13:17-19)

This is an exciting and important text which is often overlooked and seen as merely a transitional one. It does, however, tell us about two important facts: *first*, it tells us why God led the Israelites to their Promised Land by a slow, round-about way, and delayed their entrance by a generation; *second*, we are told that the mummified body of Joseph was carried with them, as Joseph himself had ordered centuries earlier.

The shortest route from Egypt to the Promised Land would have been along the northern area of Suez, then along the sea to Gaza. This would have meant an immediate confrontation with the war-like Philistines, and Israel was not yet ready for such a head-on clash.

In Isaiah 59:16, we are told that, at another point in history, God, in looking at Israel (and the world), "saw that there was no man," nor any intercessor. In the Berkeley Version, this reads, "The LORD saw, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man; He was amazed that there was none to interpose." There was no man to interpose himself

between the people and injustice. It was not enough that there was, in the case of Exodus, only Moses. Men were needed for the future.

The result was the training experience of the wilderness years, to make men of the Hebrews. They had been slaves; now they must be free men. Hillel is said to have declared, "Where there is no man, try to be one." Michael Walzer has noted that, in some political thinking, such as in

> Calvinist Christianity,... tyranny and license go together. The childish and irresponsible slave or subject is free in ways the republican citizen and Protestant saint can never be. And there is a kind of bondage in freedom: the bondage of law, obligation, and responsibility. True freedom, in the rabbinic view, lies in servitude to God. The Israelites had been Pharaoh's slaves; in the wilderness they became God's servants — the Hebrew word is the same; and once they agreed to God's rule, He and Moses, His deputy, force them to be free.[162]

Too often, men stress freedom rather than responsibility; the demand for freedom *per se* is too often a desire for license, i.e., license in the sense of a supposed right to deviate from and show no regard for morality and God's laws for freedom with justice. The Hebrews, when they left Egypt, wanted neither slavery nor freedom; they longed for the security of slavery together with the license to go their own way. Newly created nation states, or minority peoples or countries which gain independence, usually have a bad record for some time. Independence does not confer responsibility, and even the best of men must learn with many sorry misadventures and errors the responsibilities of true freedom. Moreover, free peoples who lose their sense of responsibility do not readily regain either responsibility or freedom.

The second aspect of our text is closely related to this. The closing verses of Genesis tell us:

> 24. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

> 25. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.
> 26. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen. 50:24-26)

Joseph saw the future, not in terms of any possible prosperity in Egypt, but in terms of God's purpose. In his day, Israel flourished in Egypt, but his concern was with God's ordained future. In Hebrews 11:22, we have a reference to Joseph's faith:

> By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

This requirement was fulfilled by Joshua. After the conquest of Canaan, we are told:

> And the bones of Joseph, which the children brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph (Joshua 24:32).

This purchase is cited in Genesis 33:19; the date of the purchase was perhaps 1739 B.C. The burial there of Joseph's mummified body was about 1427 B.C., or about 312 years later. As Cole observed, "This was more than mere sentiment; this was a last exhibition of faith in the promises of God."[163] This tomb still exists.

We are also told that, as the Hebrews left Egypt with the bones of Joseph, they "went up harnessed." This means prepared for war, if need be, moving ahead in organized fashion. The root of the word translated as *harnessed* implies ranks of fifties or lines of fives. In any case, Moses was not allowing a disorganized mob to surge forward. Although the line of march included livestock as well as women, children, and wagons, it was an orderly movement.

This was a planned departure; from the transfer of Joseph's mummified body to the movement of the tribes, all had apparently been decided by Moses in advance. Moses had been promised deliverance by God, and he acted in terms of God's word.

In addition we are told that God led the people in a round-about way "lest peradventure they repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (v. 17). There would be military opposition on their way. James Moffatt translated the word which the King James Version renders as "repent" as "have regret," i.e., lest they long for the security of slavery. The English text gives also the modern name, Red Sea, whereas the text reads, "Sea of Reeds."

In v. 18, we have a reference to the *wilderness*. For us, a problem in reading the Bible is that we visualize that part of the world in modern times, as dry, desert lands. This was not true in antiquity. North Africa was once rich and fertile, with the Sahara area marked by streams and lakes. By the time of the Romans, it was drier but still fertile. With the rise of Turkish power especially, the Near East and North Africa were deforested and many areas were turned into desert lands.

The reference to the bones of Joseph is too often by-passed with little comment, but Scripture gives attention to it in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Hebrews. It has a twofold purpose. *First*, Joseph expressed his faith in God's promise that Canaan would be Israel's land, God's Promised Land. His requirement that he be buried there was an act of confident faith. At the time of his death, the Hebrews were free and prosperous in Egypt, so the temptation to remain and to merge with the Egyptians would have been great. By requiring that he be buried in Canaan at the time of Israel's return, Joseph was affirming what Moses and Jesus were later to declare, namely, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

Second, Joseph's act and Moses' faithfulness indicate the necessity for respect and honor towards our forebears. The patriarchs honored their dead with their burials, and their descendants remembered their ancestors. Rootless peoples have no future. While having roots is no assurance of a good future, since it is not our past that blesses us but God, all the same, to despise or to

neglect the past is to act in terms of an unrealistic and ungodly independence. Paul sharply attacks man's imagined freedom in 1 Corinthians 4:7:

> For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

In Bristol, England, Otto Scott told a group which expressed contempt for Britain's imperial and colonial past, that God requires men to *honor* their father and mother (Ex. 20:12). To honor does not necessarily mean to love or agree with; it does mean in the Hebrew *weighty*, *heavy*, a heritage from the past to be carried as a part of life. To honor the bones of Joseph, to honor our father and mother, means to assume the burden of history, our history, in order to move forward under God. The bones of Joseph are thus very important. Where there is no honor for our past, there is no future. We, then, have the new barbarians, the rootless ones, who destroy past, present, and future.

Chapter Forty-Two
The Pillar of God's Glory
(*Exodus 13:20-22*)

> 20. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.
> 21. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:
> 22. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Exodus 13:20-22)

The pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day give us a fact about The Exodus from Egypt which has captured the minds of artists and hymn writers over the centuries, but not the scholars, who have at times sought naturalistic explanations. We are told by Scripture that the Lord was in the cloud or pillar (Ex. 13:21; 14:24); also that He spoke to His people from it (Num. 12:5-6; Deut. 31:15-16; Ps. 99:6-7). Both the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire are mentioned in Psalms 78:14 and 105:39. When the tabernacle of God was finally ready, we are told that the glory of the Lord filled it, and, for a time, entrance was impossible (Ex. 40:34-38). The same thing occurred centuries later, under Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). In Isaiah 6:3-4, we have another account of the reappearance of the cloud: God in His glory comes near to pronounce judgment, whereas in Isaiah 4:5, the reappearance of the cloud of glory marks, we are told, the triumph of God's Kingdom in latter days. The *nearness* of God means both His very particular care and blessing, and also His very particular wrath and judgment. Both of these aspects are apparent in the wilderness journey. Cloud and fire are often cited as forms of the manifestation by God of His presence, as in Exodus 19:18, Matthew 17:5, and Acts 1:9.

Some scholars have seen the cloud as "some kind of desert whirlwind," and the fire as volcanic activity, comments which tells us more about the scholars than the Bible.

This fact of the pillars of fire and of cloud resembles other like aspects of Scripture that trouble the modern mind. Men whose minds are governed by the presuppositions of modern thought want only a "god" who is the same to everybody: what he does for one, he must do for all. In brief, what is objected to or denied is God's *particularism* as set forth in Scripture. To illustrate, shortly before World War II, a fellow student who was Jewish expressed to me his resentment for the God of Scripture. He said that, if God is "real," why did He not do for German Jews what He is said to have done for the Jews of Exodus? Were those ex-slaves better men than the German Jews, a very superior and advanced group? His problems were many. Among them was the fact that, besides opposing particularism on God's part, he also wanted humanistic determination, i.e., the caliber of German Jews, as against God's sovereign grace.

In a remarkable statement, our Lord sets forth both God's particularism *and* God's indifference to our priorities:

> 28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
> 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.
> 30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
> 31. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:28-31)

First of all, we have here a very emphatic statement about predestination. It includes every sparrow, and every hair on our heads. It is total, and there are no limitations to it. *Second*, it is totally God-ordained and God-centered. It *does* include the fact that some who are clearly God's chosen ones may be killed for their faith. We are not to fear the men who may kill us, but the God who "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Our hairs are numbered, but so too are our days. The determination is from God, not from us. *Third*, we are commanded to trust God as *our Father*. His determination of all things includes the grass and sparrows, but in His sight we "are of more value than many sparrows."

Modern, naturalistic thinking demands what is called *uniformitarianism*. All natural processes are held to be the same at all times over billions of years. Certain unchanging natural forces, such as the struggle for survival, govern all things. Hence, particularism is invalid.

The religious analogue is Hinduism and the doctrine of Karma. All men face the same unvarying consequences. No grace, i.e., no particularism, can exist. Karma exacts the same toll of all, or the same release. Thus, a man's destiny is his to determine, since he can overcome his bad karma by certain rules.

As against this, we have a very powerful statement of God's particularism in Ezekiel, who declared that God's grace was extended to men irrespective of what they were prior to repentance, and His judgment to men who sinned, irrespective of their prior virtues. Israel wanted a *balanced* judgment from God, not a *particular* grace. As Ezekiel said,

> 17. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.
> 18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.
> 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.
> 20. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways. (Ezekiel 33:17-20)

Man demands that his standards of equal and fair rights determine God's ways, whereas God declares that His sovereign grace will judge every man's ways.

Grace and *predestination* are two terms which describe essentially the same fact, God's sovereign exercise of power and determination. If they be denied, God's particularism is undermined and denied, *and* the fact of personality is undermined. It is a truism that Calvinism produced stronger persons and personalities. One of the reasons for hostility toward Calvinists

has been this fact. Men like Calvin, Knox, and Cromwell are too strong for their fellows and are therefore resented.

Arminianism stresses, not God's election or choice of man, but man's choice of God. God is treated as a resource or option for man. "Why not try Jesus?" All men have an equal opportunity to try Jesus, and to see if He meets their needs.

This is the kind of world fallen man wants, one in which the options are all in man's hands, with an equal opportunity for all men to use God, and an equal opportunity for all men to determine whether or not God is usable.

The pillars of fire and cloud set forth God's absolute sovereignty and the particularity of His ways with men. This means that the Bible requires a radically different view of men and history than do the various forms of humanism. The Bible is objectionable to many because of its particularism; for Arminians, particularism with respect to salvation is rejected. At any rate, many reject the miraculous in the Bible because it means that determination rests with God, and God's ways then do *not* conform to man's views of equality and human rights.

There is another aspect to this. Israel experienced God's particularity in the wilderness journey, the pillars of cloud and fire, and in other ways as well. They then assumed that they were thereafter *entitled* to God's particular interventions on their behalf. They therefore carried the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines, only to lose the battle, their freedom, and the ark (1 Samuel 4:1-22).

God's particular grace has been manifested in the histories of many nations, as, for example, the United States. To assume that God's particular grace means an abiding status and privilege is blasphemous, and an invitation to judgment.

The pillars of fire and cloud represent the particular presence and grace of God to His people. His glory is not a general fact, like a magnificent sunset, available to all who chose to see it, but a particular grace to those to whom He chooses to manifest it.

There is a relation between the pillars of God's glory and incense. Incense was required in worship, and it had to be made according to God's specifications (Ex. 30:37). The cloud of incense in the sanctuary resembled faintly the glory cloud of God. In Revelation 5:8, we are told of the twenty-four elders, representing the redeemed of the Old and New Testament eras, that the Lamb of God came,

> And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours [or, incense], which are the prayers of saints.

This was the ancient and God-given meaning of incense. David says, in Psalm 141:2,

> Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

In Revelation 8:3-5, we are told:

> 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
> 4. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
> 5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Incense thus refers to prayer, and it is also analogous to the cloud of God's glory. What is the relationship between the two? The pillar, column, or cloud represent God's particularity in grace and judgment. God is not man's common resource but man's sovereign Creator and Governor whose every act, the placing of the very hairs of our head included, is specific, particular, and

totally personal. All prayer asks for particularity. It is you and I as particular persons expressing our very particular petitions. In common worship, collects give expression to those petitions we have in common; in personal prayers, our petitions are very personal and particular. The offense of prayer to the modern mind is similar to the offense of the pillars of fire and cloud: it represents a faith in the ultimate concern of God and of His whole creation in our particularity. To deny that is to deny the whole of Biblical faith. To say that the pillar of cloud was desert dust, and the pillar of fire a volcano, is to show a childish intelligence and a determination to rid the world of particularity. Not surprisingly, those who deny God's particularity as set forth in Scripture are readily prone to favor totalitarian utopias. The person or the particular is to them insignificant: their man-made universal ideas must prevail.

Chapter Forty-Three

Entrapment

(*Exodus 14:1-4*)

> 1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
>
> 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.
>
> 3. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.
>
> 4. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. (Exodus 14:1-4)

As we have seen, God's particularity is offensive to the modern mind. Confronted by the miraculous in Scripture, and its particularity, the modern "thinker" rejects everything which is not naturalistic and equalitarian.

The world of academia of necessity limits the areas of study, but it thereby often falsifies things. The various strands of thought which culminated in the French Revolution had a profound influence on more than political theory: they also affected Biblical scholarship.

Thus, the belief in "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality" colored every area of life and thought, including theology and Biblical scholarship. The meaning of *liberty* for the French Revolution was essentially liberty from God, and from the church. It is all too easy to document the fact that the Revolution diminished freedom, increased repression and the death of dissidents, and turned France into a prison. The leaders, however, believed that true freedom meant release from

bondage to Christianity. Two Jacobins, d'Herbois and Fouche, together with a temporary commission, issued an edict which began, as Otto Scott has pointed out, "All is permitted those who act in the Revolutionary direction."[164] This meant that freedom was the exclusive possession of those in power, who were thereby permitted to kill at will.

Fraternity meant wiping out all distinction and compelling fraternization on a Day of Reconciliation, July 14, Bastille Day.[165] People had to love one another and see no differences between men.

Equality meant that all men other than the revolutionary leaders were equal, and none dare think otherwise. Property, money, and other evidences of inequality on the part of some had to go.

The revolutionary thinking which developed in the nineteenth century embraced these goals. Not suprisingly, some such thinkers saw the future ideal society as an ant-hill or a beehive society, depersonalized and totally equalitarian.

These intellectual currents meanwhile were having a great influence in academic circles and among Biblical scholars. The supernatural in the Bible was discarded as mythical: there could be no particularity in the ways of God. In our century, John Dewey condemned Christianity because it insists on an ultimate particularism, an unequal and non-democratic division between good and evil, right and wrong, and heaven and hell.[166] God for Dewey had to be "a union of ideal ends."[167] No true God could distinguish between saints and sinners, the saved and the lost. Logically, Deweyism came to mean no failures, and no true report cards.

Given this mentality, as it approaches the Bible, Exodus, and the miracles of the Red Sea crossing, it refuses to accept the validity and truth of the Biblical account. It is held to be non-historical because it presupposes, *first*, a God whose ways are not equal to all men, and, *second*, a God who is the governor and determiner of history, whereas the modern mind insists that only man is.

That offense of Scripture appears in Exodus 14:1-4, as well as elsewhere. God tells Moses to give Pharaoh his last opportunity to reveal his evil heart. He is to turn and take a route which would seem to indicate confusion. With the Hebrews gone, a vast compulsory labor force of hundreds of thousands of men was gone from Egypt. This was not a loss which either Pharaoh or Egypt welcomed. It meant, for one thing, that Egyptian forced labor would have to take its place. All these calculations were very much in the minds of Pharaoh and his people. Because God ordered Israel to take a route which seemed to indicate confusion, it gave Egypt the opportunity they wanted. Israel's God was no longer guiding them with certainty, apparently.

The sites listed are not, in the main, unknown. The Egyptian name Pi-ha-hiroth means "region of salt marshes," and Baal-zephon means "Baal of the north."[168] Migdol means "Watchtower."[169]

Pharaoh's conclusion, "They are entangled in the land" (v. 3), means, they are wandering in confusion; they do not know which way to go. The Egyptians had border fortresses and watchtowers in different areas, and they were thus well informed of Israel's journeying. The word translated as "entangled" can also be rendered "perplexed." They had earlier traveled somewhat southward and were now turning north.

Here again we encounter a problem. What God was doing is to the modern mind *entrapment*! In the name of "fairness," we are not supposed to give evil men the opportunity to reveal themselves and thereby receive their just punishment. Entrapment means giving a criminal an opportunity to do his work and thereby to be caught. The criminal when caught cannot be identified as a habitual criminal, as a man who may have a record of convictions for murder, rape, or theft. He must be given protection against entrapment, protection which his victims do not have, and he must face trial with the judge and jury ignorant of the fact that he is a professional and habitual criminal. This is *equality*. The criminal is free to entrap his victim, but the law cannot entrap the criminal. This is modern "justice."

God, however, gives us the opportunity to reveal ourselves. In fact, this kind of testing is routinely God's way. Often the greater the responsibilities God plans to give to a man, the more

rigorously he may test him, entrap him, humble him, and, in various ways, prepare him for responsibilities.

This is resented by equalitarians. In the name of their virtue, equality, we see high school and university education increasingly promoted for all; the results are destructive for both the schools and the students. Education becomes a farce.

God's particularism is offensive to the modern mind for this reason. With the Enlightenment, the *Magnificat* of the Virgin Mary was banned by some courts for this reason, and it is again out of favor:

> 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
> 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
> 48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
> 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
> 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
> 51. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
> 52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
> 53. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
> 54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.
> 55. And he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. (Luke 1:46-55)

In this equalitarian day, the *Magnificat* is no longer as important to men as it once was. The good news is that it is as important as ever to our God.

Chapter Forty-Four

"The Salvation of the LORD"

(*Exodus 14:5-14*)

5. And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?
6. And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:
7. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.
8. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.
9. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal-zephon.
10. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.
11. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?
12. Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.
13. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.
14. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. (Exodus 14:5-14)

The inclination of fallen man is to posit a God and a religion which conform to man's reason and the natural world. Such a faith is resentful of any supernatural intrusion into the realm of time and history, because it asks no more of God than to provide the inspiration or idea while man provides the action. For God to *act* in history means, *first*, that He moves against evil men and nations. Through supernatural action, all these forces are defeated and set aside. This, superficially, seems to be a most desirable action, but men are not comfortable with it, because, *second*, God's actions in history are a contradiction to the adherents of a rational and natural religion. For God to act in history means that the decisive determiner of events is not man but God. It means that, whether God's work is a supernatural intervention or a providential ordering of events, God is the Lord of time and history, not man. Hence, all Biblical events, from creation through the resurrection, are regularly given a naturalistic interpretation. Only so can man retain his priority and keep God in His imagined place.

With the Israelites gone, Pharaoh and the Egyptians began to regret their decision. The plagues took second place, if any, to their realization that they no longer had the forced labor levies of the Hebrews. We can assume, given the fact that there were 600,000 adult men in Israel, that these were the labor levies used by Egypt. Their replacement had to come from the ranks of native Egyptians. This would have greatly altered Egyptian life and weakened the place of Pharaoh. Hence, it was that so many were ready to say, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (v. 5).

As the Egyptian forces drew within sight of Israel, we are told that "the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD" (v. 10). The content of this "cry" is best known by their "cry" to Moses. They declared, *first*, were there not enough graves in Egypt that he brought them out into the wilderness to die? (v. 11). *Second*, Moses was at fault: they had told him "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians" (v. 12). *Third*, they were better off serving the Egyptians than being killed in the wilderness (v. 12).

Israel displayed a singular lack of faith. This is an important fact. They were the *chosen* people. Since then, the church has been the chosen group, and more than one nation has been chosen by God for very important and particular blessings. To be chosen does not imply merit, but rather

grace on God's part. Unhappily for them, chosen peoples, Jews and Christians, have seen that fact as indicative of a special merit on their part. For this sin, Israel was set aside, and many Christian groups may be, for presuming that their God-given mercies and privileges constitute a hereditary virtue on their part. The arrogance of chosen peoples is evidence of a lack of grace and an impending judgment.

The Israelites now had the mountains on two sides, the south and the west, the sea on the east, and the Egyptians to the north. All that God had done for them in the plagues on Egypt was quickly forgotten.

Moses' words to them are magnificent:

> 13. …Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.
> 14. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Clements has very wisely noted a fact which modern men prefer to overlook because of, *first*, a blanket condemnation of all wars, and, *second*, an unwillingness to think seriously of a strictly just war. But, in Clements' words,

> … it was a basic feature of Israel's understanding of war that it was a sacred activity in which God participated. Primarily such 'holy' wars were defensive, although not exclusively so, and required special regulations to ensure the proper dedication of Israel's soldiers, and to ensure that all credit for the victory was accorded to God, to whom all the spoil was devoted.[170]

Israel was being pursued by Pharaoh and his charioteers, and Israel panicked. Scholars tend to see the miraculous Red Sea crossing as the miracle which causes them problems, and which is difficult to believe. In a sense, however, the amazing fact here is the "miracle" of unbelief, if we can so speak of a lack of faith. Israel had witnessed ten amazing and miraculous plagues on

Egypt, more than enough evidence of God's grace and power. Failure to trust in such a God was clearly evidence of an amazing lack of faith and vision. Joseph Parker's comment here was excellent:

> Did the miracles as here reported actually occur? Why not? You can only be puzzled by a miracle when you are puzzled by a God.[171]

If our conception of God be faulty, then our expectations of life will also be in error. Then we will view God with humanistic eyes. Either He will withdraw from history and allow man to prevail, *or* He will cater to human expectations. If God is no more than an ideal, or an inspiring impetus, then fallen man's will shall prevail in time and history. Logically, then, might will be right; the tyrants of history will determine its agenda and course. This has been the usual outcome of reducing God to the status of an idea: evil men see *their* idea as more logical and necessary.

If God is given some capacity to act in history by philosophies and theologies, it is often in order to make Him the great resource for men. God is then the bail-out power, the one who rescues man when man has troubles in his courses of action. Here again, man dominates history, and God acts as a paramedic ambulance service to rescue man.

God, however, is governed not by man's needs, but by His sovereign purposes. His plan for us covers time and eternity, and His grace and wisdom exceed our man-bound hopes and plans. Hence, we are commanded, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD … The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (v. 13f).

One point more with respect to Israel's emotional response to the approaching Egyptians: it is a mistake to assume that this was a "normal" reaction. Emotionalism and panic in a time of crisis are the reactions of the people who have had too much security, and slavery is one form of security.

Many years ago, I recall talking with elderly Indians who could remember seeing the first white men come over the mountains into the intermountain areas. Earlier, Indian bands roamed a given territory in small numbers, about twenty, but sometimes more. Children were taught by their grandparents how to live and survive. One boy of about four to five years was with a few adults when an enemy band killed and robbed his group one night. In terms of long teaching, he crawled into a hole and covered the entrance. Hours later, he came out to find all dead, save his father, who was dying and who reminded him of his grandfather's teachings. In a cold fall and in the mountains, the boy survived many days. He approached Indians only with the wind in his face to avoid arousing dogs, until he found one who spoke his language; he then joined that band. In a world of danger and threats, that man and his generation could not afford emotional responses. People who are overly secure because of wealth or slavery can indulge in emotionalism. Our small children can also be very emotional; it is a product of security as well as immaturity.

Israel's emotional and faithless reaction had to be put to the test, broken, and disciplined, before entrance into the Promised Land was possible.

Chapter Forty-Five
God's Honor and Glory
(*Exodus 14:15-22*)

15. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.
16. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.
17. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them, and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.
18. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.
19. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.
20. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.
21. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.
22. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on their left. (Exodus 14:15-22)

Robert L. Cate has said of Egypt, "Few nations in the history of the world seem to have been as concerned with tombs, death, and funeral practices as was Egypt."[172] Ancient Egypt has left us some remarkable monuments to its dead. It was thus an ironic comment by the Israelites, "Were there no graves in Egypt, that you brought us here to die?" (v. 11).

The funeral practices of the various nations are an interesting commentary on their preoccupations and faith. We have everything from a fear of the dead and their bodies to extremes of care and a morbid preoccupation.

In many cultures, as that of ancient Gaul in the Roman and Merovingian eras, the dead were unclean. Graves were in isolated and remote places. The American Indians took steps which they believed would prevent the ghosts of the dead from finding their families.

With Christianity, a major reversal took place. The dead were buried in or near a church; because they were saints, i.e., recipients of God's grace, the Christian dead were not feared but honored, and their graves treated with respect.

Cultures with ancestor worship also honor their dead, but only because they must be placated, feared, and worshipped. The dead were thus sometimes a burden on the present.

What Christianity did with its churchyards and its respect for the dead was very important. As Edward James wrote of the Franks, "from the Carolingian period onwards, the dead could be brought within the community."[173] This is an excellent observation. The sense of history which marks Christendom is a consequence of the sense of community with the dead as fellow-members of Christ's Church; the two segments of that body, the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant, are together in Christ and thus have an essential unity. While Protestants rightly regard the doctrine of the intercessory work of the saints as erroneous, it cannot dissent from the premise, namely, the community of the living and of the saints in heaven one with another in Christ. This concept of community results in a radically altered view of time and history and is indeed father to historiography.

A startling fact of mind I encountered among Pauite and Shoshone Indians in the 1940s is related to this. The older generation of Indians included a few who could remember their first contact with the white man, and who lived in roving bands and used bows and arrows. Their memories of the past were sometimes astonishing, and, where a remote location not seen for many years

was concerned, precise. Their accounts of the succession of time were not so clear. What happened in their grandparents' time, and what happened generations before, had no clear dividing line. Those who became Christians tended to see the past sequentially and less flatly. The Bible gives men a pattern, direction, and purpose to history which is now being lost. Like the ancient Franks, men again see death as polluting, and their interest in history is minimal, because their sense of community with the dead, with their past, *and with their future under God*, is gone because they have no faith.

The reaction of the Hebrews to the pursuing Egyptian forces was one of sheer terror. The Hebrews numbered 600,000 men; the Egyptian forces were 600 chariots, but the total was probably greater because of horsemen and others, 1,800 men, with some chariots only holding three men. These were the finest of Pharaoh's fighting men. The Israelites were then a slave people, at this point almost certainly possessing very few weapons. They had no experience in combat and were not yet a cohesive force.

Moses was faced with a terrified people and an Egyptian army. He apparently began to pray very earnestly to God, Who cut him short, saying, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (v. 15). God is impatient with prayer where action is needed, or where prayer is not accompanied by action or works.

God's command is that Moses, at the appointed time, lift up his rod to *divide,* or make a valley in the sea, for Israel's passage (v. 16). Meanwhile, the pillar of cloud moved behind Israel, and the night was so darkened by it that the Egyptians could not move and thus made no attempt at a night attack. We are told that this pillar represents "the angel of God," as in Exodus 3:2, the presence of God with His people. They thus had God as their Protector.

God declares His intention to gain *honor* or glory over Pharaoh by this coming judgment (vv. 17-18). The word in Hebrew is *kâbed*, meaning "heavy," "weighty," signifying an important and major victory or power. God's honor and glory are made manifest in judgment.

Judgment is an inescapable fact of history. Where men will not serve God's justice nor apply it, God then moves in judgment against those men and nations. Justice and judgment cannot be evaded, and, if deferred, become all the more severe. According to Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., "The Lord's deliverance demanded trust which expressed itself in quietude."[174] God, having chosen the way they should go, would now provide the deliverance. Their route seemed to be a foolish one, but is was God's ordination for His purpose.

We are then told that, when Moses stretched out his rod over the Red Sea, two things happened. *First,* God divided the waters miraculously. The statement in v. 22 that the waters were as a *wall* on their right hand and on the left means, not that the waters stood as a wall, although they obviously did stand something like that, but that the waters on either side were like a protecting wall. *Second,* we are told that all through the night "a strong wind" (v. 21) dried out the sea floor to make it passable. Had this not been the case, the two million Israelites and their livestock would have found the sea floor impassable.

All "natural forces" are God-created and serve God's purposes. To assume a contradiction between the natural and the supernatural is not a Biblical premise, but is very much a modern one. It presupposes a dualistic world order in which two alien powers exist rather than a theistic creation which totally serves the Creator God. Those who insist on a dualism between the natural and the supernatural will view this narrative as "mythical." Those who believe in the God of Scripture know that there are no problems for Him. As God reminded Abraham, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" (Gen. 18:14).

God's Presence in a supernatural way was given to Israel at this point and thereafter in the pillars of cloud and of fire, manifestations of "the angel of God" (v. 19). For Genesis alone there are several accounts of Him (Gen. 16:7; 22:11,15; 24:7,40; 48:16; cf. Hosea 12:4 and Gen. 32:24ff.). Prior to the incarnation, the Angel of the Lord from time to time was the visible appearance of God the Son.

In many cases, and in this instance as well, the appearance of the Angel of the Lord is associated with judgment. Cornelius Van Til wrote, "The Kingdom of God must be built upon the

destruction of the enemy."[175] This enemy is God's enemy. If we force our categories of thought onto Scripture, we in effect rewrite it to become our book, our own self-revelation, not God's. As Van Til said of Greek philosophy,

> The God of the Greeks should be taken as evidence of the fact that the "noblest" product of man's thought is idolatry. In their gods, the Greeks indirectly worshipped themselves.[176]

All too much preaching, Biblical commentaries by scholars, and theology manifests this kind of idolatry. God's revelation is reinterpreted to become man's self-revelation and wisdom. As Paul wrote,

> 18. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.
> 19. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
> 20.Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
> 21. For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:18-21)

The Berkeley Version renders, "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh" (v. 17), as "Through Pharaoh, through his armed forces, his chariots and his horsemen, My honor will be sustained." The power and wisdom of men is shattered.

Chapter Forty-Six

Judgment in the Red Sea

(*Exodus 14:23-31*)

23. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.
24. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,
25. And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.
26. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.
27. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.
28. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.
29. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.
30. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.
31. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses. (Exodus 14:23-31)

The time of the event here described is "in the morning watch" (v. 24), which meant between 2 A.M. and 6 A.M. (1 Samuel 11:11). In v. 25, the reference to taking off their chariot wheels may mean binding or clogging the chariot wheels as the ground began again to be muddy rather than dry.

A point of dispute is whether or not Pharaoh followed or led his forces into the Red Sea and drowned with them. According to Psalm 136:15, Pharaoh was with those who were destroyed at that time. Egyptian records may not record this, but defeats were not recorded by the pagan empires, usually only victories. Of course, Exodus 15:19 also refers to Pharaoh's death. There is no good reason to doubt Pharaoh's presence and death.

In v. 31, we are told that, at least for the day, Israel "feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, *and his servant Moses*." This is an important statement. As Keil and Delitzsch observed, "faith in the Lord was inseparably connected with faith in Moses as the servant of the Lord."[177] God often acts independently of men, but He also often ties His work to a man and tests people by their reaction to that man. Calvin wrote:

> Meanwhile, let us learn from this passage that God is never truly and duly worshipped without faith, because incredulity betrays gross contempt of Him; and although hypocrites boast of their heaping all kinds of honor upon God, still they inflict the greatest insult upon Him by refusing to believe His revelations. But Moses, who had been chosen God's minister for governing the people, is not unreasonably united with Him, for although God's majesty manifested itself by conspicuous signs, still Moses was the mediator, out of whose mouth God willed that His words should be heard, so that the holy man could not be despised without God's own authority being rejected. A profitable doctrine is gathered from hence, that whenever God propounds His word to us by men, those who faithfully deliver His commands must be as much attended to as if He himself openly descended from heaven. This recommendation of the ministry ought to be more than sufficient to refute their folly, who set at nought the outward preaching of the word. Let us, then, hold fast this principle, that only those obey God who

> receive the prophets sent from Him, because it is not lawful to put asunder what He has joined together. Christ has more clearly expressed this in the words, — He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."[178] (Luke 10:16)

Calvin opposed the common silence at false preaching, and the rebellion against faithful teaching and preaching.

Many years later, Joshua reminded Israel of what God had done for them, to incite them to faithfulness and obedience. Among other things, Joshua said, God "put darkness between you and the Egyptians" (Josh. 24:7).

This pillar and cloud were indicative of God's particular presence and concern. This same presence was in the Holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple as the Glory of God. Asaph, in Psalm 77, in a time of trouble, looked back on God's deliverance of Israel and described it thus:

> 14. Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.
> 15. That hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.
> 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.
> 17. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.
> 18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.
> 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.
> 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. (Psalm 77:14-20)

It would appear that, when the Egyptians were well into the Red Sea, lightning, thunder, rain, and an earthquake brought quick terror to them. It is no wonder they said, in Moffat's rendering, "Let us flee from the Israelites! The Eternal is fighting for them against the Egyptians!" (Ex. 14:25). According to v. 27, "the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." The marginal reading gives us a clearer picture: "The LORD shook them off," i.e., the wet ground from the pouring rain, plus the earthquake broke the chariots as they clogged their wheels and threw out the men with such force that they were, with their armor, buried in the sand and mud.[179]

Thomas Scott (1747-1821) wrote of the death of the Egyptian armed forces:

> The Egyptians had drowned the male children of the Israelites in the river; and now the righteous Lord took vengeance on them for those cruel and multiplied murders, by drowning all the strength and flower of the nation in the Red Sea! — It is probable that very many of the dead bodies were driven on shore, near the place where the Israelites went up out of the sea, the Lord thus ordering it; and they were furnished with arms, as well as enriched with other spoils, by that means. — The Egyptians were renowned for their art in embalming the dead, and for their attention to the bodies of their relatives, and especially their princes and grandees; but God now poured contempt upon all the great ones of the nation, and caused their bodies to be left unburied on the sea shore![180]

Israel was now better equipped for war, and also further enriched.

We have here a remarkable miracle. The modernists usually regard this event as a myth: because of the supernatural aspect, it cannot be history. Evangelicals sometimes turn everything into a vindication of antinomianism. Thus, F. W. Grant used this event to speak against law in the name of faith! He said of law, "it implies strength in us; faith finds it in Another. God honors it, and works by it, because it honors Christ."[181] Such a position assumes perpetual weakness and perpetual bondage to sin in this life. But Jesus Christ, as the new man in us, is He who makes us a new creation and now the people governed by the Holy Spirit and His law-word. To neglect

this fact leads to irresponsible doctrines of salvation and irresponsible lives. Is sin alone powerful in man, and not grace and the Spirit of God?

Michael Walzer was right in stating,

> The deliverance from Egypt is unconditional; it doesn't depend on the moral conduct of the slaves. But it is crucial to the Exodus story that this deliverance brings Israel only into the wilderness, only to Sinai, where the conditions of any further advance are revealed.[182]

Salvation is entirely from God; it is His act of sovereign grace. Sanctification is our growth in His grace, and it is a maturing in which both the Spirit and the believer are involved. Where there is no growth, there is no life.

A final note, and a sad one: in v. 31, we have a reference to God's servant Moses. Moses is called "the servant of the Lord" in Deuteronomy 34:5 and Joshua 1:13,15. This became a familiar title for him. However, as Rabbi Plaut wrote, "in rabbinic times he was no longer so called because Christianity had appropriated the term for its savior."[183]

Chapter Forty-Seven

The Song of Moses

(*Exodus 15:1-22*)

1. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
2. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.
3. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.
4. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.
5. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.
6. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
7. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.
8. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.
9. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy [or, repossess] them:
10. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
11. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods (or, mighty ones)? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
12. Thou stretchedest out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.
13. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

14. The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

15. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

16. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

17. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

18. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

19. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

20. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

22. So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out in the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. (Exodus 15:1-22)

The Song of Moses (15:1-18) is comparable to the psalms. It is an exuberant praise of God, as well as a sermon. It is also a very personal statement: Moses thanks God for sustaining him. God is Moses' personal "strength and song," and also Moses' "salvation" in every sense of the word. God has demonstrated in an awe-inspiring way that Moses is His servant and prophet. Moses, as a man of the tribe of Levi, and as a believer, says, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation," a sanctuary (v. 2). This is not all Moses says of the Lord: "He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him" (v. 2). We know very little about Moses' father, Amram (Ex. 6:20), other than the fact that he and his wife were strong believers. Moses' parents were apparently long dead, but they had moved on faith in casting the infant Moses into the Nile in a basket. They

never saw Israel's deliverance, but they apparently never disavowed from their faith in Him. Now, on the shores of the Red Sea, Moses does not speak of the Lord as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but as "my father's God." Amram's faith and prayers were apparently being vindicated. We at times remember in crisis things which have marked our lives, and Moses now sees God as the Deliverer whom Amram trusted, "my father's God." This is Moses' *first* and basic reaction.

Then, as Cate pointed out, the song has "three major ideas," although we can say there are four, if we include Moses' personal statement in v. 1. The *first*, for Cate, is Moses' declaration that Israel's salvation is totally God's act. He does not remind Israel of its fearfulness and complaining; he simply says, it is God who alone and without any help or effort delivered Israel. His opening statement is, "The LORD is a man of war" (v. 3). Both pacifists and anti-pacifists have made heavy use of the Bible to argue their cases. The Bible does speak for peace, but it also speaks of war as at times necessary and just. God moves against evil, and so too at times must we.

In this instance, without any effort on any man's part, the Egyptian army, with its best officers, is drowned in the sea. There was a miraculous parting of the waters. The enemy pursued Israel into the sea, determined to exact vengeance and repossess or destroy them. Instead, the Egyptians were destroyed, because the natural world is God's creation and totally serves His will and purpose.

Modern man's evolutionary faith is in the natural order; so, too, pagan man believed in the natural order as determinative and hence sought control of natural forces. Over the centuries, a variety of means, occultist, magical, alchemical, scientific, and non-scientific, have all been employed in the attempt to understand and control the natural realm as supposedly the ultimate order. Power in that sphere is seen as the key to total power. This natural order which Egypt deified had now become its death.

When the United States detonated nuclear weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, near the end of World War II, the initial reaction was one of horror. Then we were told, the key to

nature had been unlocked, and that a world of utopian possibilities was opening up. The Livermore, California laboratories were set up to subsidize this utopian scientific effort. Little has resulted from it, however.

Moses stresses another aspect of God's nature. Having dealt with God's justice, he now turns to His mercy (v. 13). All that God has done for Israel is to be merciful. There was no reason why Israel was not also destroyed in the Sea other than God's mercy.

Thus, *second*, we are told much about God's nature and being. It is emphatically clear that God is neither a vague nor abstract thing. He is not reducible to the Greek idea of a first cause who starts creation and disappears. Eighteenth century Deism had Greek roots. To have a god who is also only a source of principles is not Biblically tenable. The God of Scripture, and of the Song of Moses, is the God who creates, predestines, governs, and incarnates Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. For humanistic intellectuals, this is a crude view of God because they reject any God who challenges their supremacy. They do not want a God out of their control, one of whom Moses sings that He is "fearful in praises" (v. 11), i.e., fearful and awe-inspiring, terrifying, in His works which are worthy of praise. As Joseph Parker observed, "The song of Moses is simply history set to music."[184] This is history as man sometimes lives it, but, if left to the scholars, history could never be set to music because it is dehydrated, dehumanized, and stripped of God.

Third, Moses expresses "a magnificent hope for the future."[185] The peoples of Canaan would hear of this event at the Red Sea, as well as the plagues, and be afraid. The same would be true of Edom and Moab. "Fear and dread" would possess them. Years later, Rahab would speak of this fact (Josh. 2:9-11). Israel's failures were due to its unbelief. Its enemies at times were more fearful of Israel's God than was Israel.

Moses concludes by saying, "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever" (v. 18). Unlike man, He does not grow old or feeble in power. The power manifested against Egypt will mark God's justice in all of history. There can be no true vision of history without first knowing God. The blindness of contemporary rulers and peoples to God is comparable to the blindness of Pharaoh, and, too often, the blindness of the church is comparable to that of Israel. An ostensibly orthodox

and reformed periodical that went into my wastebasket not so long ago dismissed my writings as invalid because I expect victory for Christ's Kingdom in time! To believe that we are called to defeat by Christ is an amazing example of blindness.

After Moses' song, his sister Miriam took a tambourine and led the women in a joyful dance, singing, "Sing to the LORD, glorious is He. The horse and his rider, He has hurled into the sea" (v. 21).

Miriam is here called "the sister of Aaron." Since Moses was not in the household, but with Pharaoh's daughter until he reached maturity, and then with Jethro, Miriam was closer to Aaron and is identified with him.

In v. 22, we have a blunt reminder that God's blessings do not remove trials and testings. They may increase them, and often do. After "three days" journey in the wilderness of Shur, the great Israelite encampment had a serious problem: no water. God, having saved them, now began to teach and discipline them.

I once knew a woman who never lost an opportunity to say that she was saved (a questionable statement), and that, since her salvation, *all* her troubles were over. The woman was totally mad. She refused religiously to face-up to any problems, and she herself was her most notable problem.

Chapter Forty-Eight

The First Statute

(*Exodus 15:23-27*)

> 23. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah [Bitterness].
> 24. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?
> 25. And he cried unto the LORD: and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.
> 26. And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.
> 27. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters. (Exodus 15:23-27)

God has a sense of humor as He educates us. After a great miracle in the waters of the Red Sea, He gives Israel a shortage of water. After seeing walls of water on both sides of them, now they see no water at all for three days. Would God's miraculous care for them be remembered, or would the present problem alone concern them?

Existentialism is a logical philosophical statement of fallen man's thinking; it is radically present-oriented, or, more accurately, moment-oriented. Existentialism denies meaning to the world and life, and it is hostile to personal and historical memory. Sigmar von Fersen said of existential philosophy, in defining it, that it

> Determines the worth of knowledge not in relation to truth but according to its biological value contained in the pure data of consciousness when unaffected by emotions, volitions, and social prejudices.[186]

Modern thinkers exclude the supernatural because of their naturalistic bias; anything supernatural is held to be mythical. However, the anti-historical mentality does not stop there. Since reality means the autonomous mind of man, and since for Hegel the rational is the real, all history is seen as unimportant because it is not rational. To have an historical memory is then to be unreal and irrelevant in an existential world.

Because of this, the Israelites in three days forgot the power of God to deliver, and the only reality for them was their *present* need and demand. As a result, they "murmured against Moses" (v. 24). This murmuring against Moses is still with us, by both Jews and Christians who resent God's law and want love without responsibilities. Sigmund Freud wrote *Moses and Monotheism* to "prove" that Moses was not a Jew, and most churches try to leave Moses and the law to the Jews and insist it is not applicable to them.

We have, however, the beginning of God's law-giving through Moses in this incident. The waters of Marah were not drinkable. Twentieth century Americans have little experience thus far with this problem. A century ago, pioneers moving westward often had shortages of water, and also encountered undrinkable water on their way. After three days with no streams for fresh water, the Hebrews came to Marah and to undrinkable water. God, in answer to Moses' prayer, "shewed him a tree" which purified Marah. According to Cate, "Modern Arabs say there are such trees."[187] Clements wrote:

> From the religious point of view this period spent in the wilderness serves to illustrate two fundamental truths: man's innate tendency to unbelief; and God's ability to provide, if need be miraculously, sufficient for man's need.[188]

Israel in the wilderness did have a major problem, in that it was a large and numerous group, about two million people, and many animals. Arabia in those days was not the arid area it is now,

nor was north Africa, for that matter. Both areas have suffered two things. *First*, a weather change has left these regions much drier than in the years before Abraham. *Second*, man has destroyed the forests and watersheds in both areas; Turkish rule was particularly destructive. Among other things, Turks taxed trees, so that non-fruit-bearing trees were too costly to maintain on one's land.

Israel had another problem, very aptly summed up by Cole. They were now nomads, but they were not camel nomads, but donkey nomads with flocks. A camel nomad can strike out into areas with no water, but the donkey nomad has a more restrictive course.[189]

As stated earlier, we have here the beginning of God's law-giving in this incident at Marah. We are told that there God "proved" or tested Israel, and there He gave them "a statute and an ordinance" (v. 25). Cassuto called it "a preliminary introduction to His statutes and ordinances."[190] Hertz said of this:

> The moral and social basis of the Hebrew Law is here taught the people in connection with the sweetening of the bitter waters. God sets before them the fundamental principle of implicit faith in His providence, to be shown by willing obedience to His will. The healing of the bitter waters was a symbol of the Divine deliverance from all evils.... Man is tried by the gifts of God, and also by the lack of them.[191]

Calvin said of vv. 25-26, "The sum of it is, that if the Israelites were tractable and obedient to God, He on the other hand would be kind and bountiful to them."[192]

God "proved," tested, or tried Israel. This can be called a trial by water. He then gave them a law which can be called a preliminary to what was given at Sinai and is basic to any understanding of God's law.

> 26. If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep

> all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

In the early church, there was great stress on the two ways, the way of life and the way of death. Antinomianism has dulled that emphasis. God here *first* requires faithfulness, obedience. We are to hear Him and to obey Him. This means giving "ear to his commandments" and keeping "all his statutes." To do this means, *second*, health, because to be in harmony with God and His law-word is to be in harmony with life. This does not mean that if we are sick we are in sin, but it does mean that if we are faithful in our obedience, our health will be better, and we will have a better life. We are just beginning to understand the religious roots of health and the importance of our faithfulness to God and His word in relation to our physical as well as spiritual existence.

Third, God concludes by saying, "I am the LORD that healeth thee" (v. 27). It is an error to look at God only for salvation in terms of heaven. He is our guide and protector, our healer, and our strength. Unless we see God's hand in all things, we end up seeing Him in nothing.

Chapter Forty-Nine

Probation

(*Exodus 16:1-8*)

1. And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.
2. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:
3. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.
4. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.
5. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.
6. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:
7. And the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?
8. And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD. (Exodus 16:1-8)

We come now to another session of whining and complaining by the chosen people. A few days previously, they had been singing triumphantly at the sea shore. Their attitude towards salvation was one which is with us still. Some years ago, a woman of note told me that the idea that

Christians would have to go through tribulation was ungodly, and she could never believe it. She had given up dancing, she said, which she loved greatly, and smoking and drinking, for the Lord, and He certainly would not then "ask" her to go through tribulation. I reminded her that many people, such as the Armenians, have gone through grim tribulations, and why should she be exempt? (She and her husband then went to another church.)

The supposition then and now is that salvation must mean deliverance into a trouble-free life. In reality, it is into competence to cope with troubles. Our faith often makes us a target of hostility, because friendship with God brings on enmity from the world.

Israel was murmuring or grumbling against God. They said, we would have done better to die in Egypt, implying that it would have been better for them to die with the Egyptians, or to share in their general destruction, rather than to be put through the hardships of the wilderness journey. In Egypt, they said, "we did eat bread to the full" (v. 3). They may have wished that God had handed Egypt over to them, with all its assets, rather than compelling them to go to Canaan and develop their own resources.

God, however, was requiring His people to develop first of all the asset of trusting in Him, and then they would be prepared to gain the material assets.

They left Egypt with much livestock. After the early days, much was probably slaughtered for food, leaving only the necessary breeding stock. Although they had seen God's miracles as few in all history have, the Israelites still were unable to walk by faith.

The people disguised their rebellion against God by grumbling against Moses and Aaron. Their leaders were somehow responsible. The text does not tell us that there was a food shortage or famine situation. Rather, Israel faced a dwindling food supply and grumbled in advance of any great crisis.

God promises to "rain" bread, or food, on the people. There was a special gift of quail, and then the manna six days a week. God's purpose is "that I may prove them" (v. 4), or *test* them — He

tests them to see "whether they will walk in my law, or no" (v. 4). God tests men in both adversity and prosperity, and both are tests of faith and character. All of life is a continual testing, and men can fail the test both in good time and bad. Had this account represented a Hebrew perspective, we would not see so unflattering an account of Israel throughout the Old Testament. God's account through His servants is unflattering of all men.

We have in v. 5, the first requirement of Sabbath observance. The manna would be provided for six days, with enough on the sixth day to care for the seventh. The meaning of the Sabbath is *rest in the Lord*; cessation from work is the outward aspect of an inner trust. The Sabbath rest means that we do not believe that our work and planning determine the future, but rather that God does. The Sabbath is an affirmation of God's providential care and predestination. By taking our hands off our work and planning, we affirm that it is God's purposes that are determinative.

In v. 7, we are told that Moses and Aaron told the people, "in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD." Keil and Delitzsch said of this statement,

> Bearing in mind the parallelism of the clauses, we obtain this meaning, that in the evening and in the morning the Israelites would perceive the glory of the Lord, who had brought them out of Egypt. "Seeing" is synonymous with "knowing." Seeing the glory of Jehovah did not consist in the sight of the glory of the Lord which appeared in the clouds, …but in their perception or experience of that glory in the miraculous gift of flesh and bread (ver. 8, cf. Num. 14:22).[193]

Many years later, Moses referred to this incident in calling God's people to faith and obedience, to faithfulness:

> 1. All the commandments which I have commanded thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

> 2. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.
> 3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. (Deut. 8:1-3)

It is this text that our Lord quotes in the temptation in the wilderness, His own time of testing. Tertullian referred to our Lord's statement as His answer to Israel: they had grumbled against God, but Christ returned the reproach to them. In Tertullian's words,

> But so far as I, with my poor powers, understand, the Lord figuratively retorted upon Israel the reproach *they had cast on the Lord* (by their murmuring for bread).[194]

Psalm 106:15 has a telling reference to Israel's grumbling on another occasion: "And he [God] gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Chadwick observed of God's ways, "Perhaps we are allowed to be comfortable because we are unfit to be heroic."[195] Men tend to forget what George Rawlinson observed in the nineteenth century:

> Human life is probation. God proves and tries those *most* whom He takes to Himself for His "peculiar people," and the trial is often by means of positive precepts, which are especially calculated to test the presence or absence of a spirit of humble and unquestioning obedience …. Men are very apt to prefer their own inventions to the simple rule of following at once the letter and the spirit of God's commandments.[196]

Most men, however, resent the idea of probation and insist on demanding that life on earth be a heaven without testing. The essence of modern politics is the insistence on a heaven on earth as

man’s entitlement without any necessary probation and work. It is this belief that so readily produces hell on earth.

Chapter Fifty

Manna

(*Exodus 16:9-21*)

9. And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings.

10. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

11. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

12. I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

13. And it came to pass, that at even quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

14. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

15. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

16. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

17. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

18. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

19. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

20. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

> 21. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. (Exodus 16:9-21)

God promised Israel *bread from heaven* to satisfy their hunger. In John 6:31-35, our Lord tells Israel that He is the true manna, the bread from heaven: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger..." In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses reminds Israel that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." Our Lord, in the temptation in the wilderness, restates this, declaring, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

There are some parallels in mind. Adam was tempted in Paradise and failed the test. Israel, with every evidence of God's power and blessings, was tested in the wilderness, and failed. Our Lord was also tested in the wilderness, and He passed the test triumphantly.

Israel failed, *first*, by its grumbling and its distrust in God. The plagues, the Red Sea crossing, and more had not made Israel either grateful or trusting. *Second*, it failed again when it distrusted God's word even when He was blessing them. Failure to believe that God's manna provision would come daily six days in seven was a distrust of God Himself and indicative of no small depravity.

The daily provision of manna was one omer, or about two quarts, per person. To collect two quarts per person of the small manna was backbreaking work. This was a miraculous provision, but it was not welfarism: it required very real work.

The manna is described "as small as the hoar frost on the ground," and it became visible as the dew lifted (v. 14). The manna was thus somewhat frosted.

On the evening before the first appearance of manna, a cloud of quails descended on the camp and became a ready source of meat. Again, work was involved, in catching and cleaning the quail. The quail were not repeated as was the manna, except for the episode of Numbers 11.

Of the daily miracle of manna, Joseph Parker wrote:

> Observe how the most astounding miracles go for nothing. Then the miracles were nothing to those who observed them. They were applauded at the time, they sent a little thrill through those who looked upon them with eyes more or less vacant and meaningless; but as to solid result, educational virtue and excellence, the miracles might as well not have been wrought at all. It was the same in the days of Jesus Christ. All his miracles went for nothing amongst many of the people who observed them. A miracle is a wonder, and a wonder cannot be permanent. Wonders soon drop into commonplaces, and that which astounded at first lulls at last, yea, that which excited a kind of groping faith may by repetition soon come to excite doubts and skepticism and fear. What wonder, then, if the miracles having thus gone down in importance and value, the most splendid personal services followed in their wake? This is a necessary logic; this is a sequence that cannot be broken.[197]

Parker was right: fallen man treats miracles as his due, and, too often, the Christian believes they are his daily due. We are all the recipients of daily manna care and fail to recognize it.

It is worth noting that the usually skeptical scholars usually admit that the plagues in Egypt, the Red Sea Crossing, and manna have some historical basis, but their every effort is to find naturalistic causes. This should not surprise us. Men who ascribe the origin of the universe to chance will certainly not hesitate to call lesser miracles accidental and naturalistic.

The Israelites who distrusted God's providence and attempted to gather manna for two days or more found that, left overnight, it bred worms and stank (v. 20). Moses was rightfully angry with them for their distrust of God and His miraculous provision.

This distrust is all the more striking coming immediately after the revelation of "the glory of the LORD" (v. 10). We are not given a description of this manifestation, but we are told that all Israel witnessed it. The gift of the quail and the manna was a part of this revelation of God.

Apparently the dew fell at night, then the manna on the dew as small flakes, and then again dew over it. More than once, our Lord's comments tell us much about the meaning of manna. Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 6:31-34, we are told:

> 31. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
> 32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
> 33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.
> 34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Trusting God comes hard for man, for we prefer to trust in ourselves. From man's perspective, God is usually a failure, because He does not satisfy man.

Moreover, men resent what they cannot control, no matter how rich or blessed it may make them. At one time, in Scotland, servants would give a condition, "Salmon not more than once a day!" A French expression is similar: "Partridge again!"[198]

Perhaps because the manna, bread or food from heaven, came between two layers of dew, the Jews, in memory of the event, would sometimes place bread on the table between two cloths. It is likely that our Lord refers to this when He speaks of Himself as "the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17), our food which the world cannot see.[199]

One of the clearest implications of this incident comes from the fact that the manna was, by God's ordination, highly perishable, except when collected for the sabbath. The meaning is clear: blessings cannot be hoarded. To put a greater trust in our own providence than we do in God's providence is a sin, a serious moral evil. God is not absent-minded, nor forgetful, as men too often assume. Elijah rightly ridiculed the prophets of Baal, saying, "Cry aloud; for he is a god;

either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kings 18:27). It is far worse for us to treat the living God in this way.

Chapter Fifty-One

Manna and the Sabbath

(*Exodus 16:22-36*)

22. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

23. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe ye that which ye will seeth; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

24. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

25. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field.

26. Six days shall ye gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

27. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

28. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

29. See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

30. So the people rested on the seventh day

31. And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

32. And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

33. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.
34. As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.
35. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.
36. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah. (Exodus 16:22-36)

The Exodus account, from the plagues on through the Red Sea and the wilderness journey, is a series of miraculous events, none of them the kind of event which modernistic or atheistic man finds believable. At the same time, the impact of these events had clear historical consequences and imprints. As a result, the skeptic has a problem. He must account for these events naturalistically, and his efforts have been pathetically silly.

Certain aspects of this episode need to be cited before calling attention to their theological meaning. *First*, manna, which was like coriander seed, white, and tasted like wafers made of honey (v. 31), was on the ground six days a week. *Second*, on the sixth day, instead of gathering one omer of manna, about two quarts, they were to gather two omers. Instead of spoiling overnight, in this instance the manna remained fresh for sabbath use. *Third*, the manna could be eaten baked or boiled, and, apparently, without any cooking. *Fourth*, while the manna was normally perishable, a pot of it was kept among the holy things, and, later, in the Holy of Holies, as a reminder of God's providential care. This did not perish. It is of interest that pagan nations had a great curiosity about Israel's religion, the lack of an image of a god, and the remarkable contents of the Holy of Holies. The ark of the covenant was thus prized by Israel's conquerors. *Fifth*, Israel was fed with manna for forty years, until they reached the borders of Canaan before taking Jericho. *Sixth*, in spite of the miraculous provision of manna, some refused to believe that God would not provide it on the sabbath and went out that day to gather it, only to find none. For this, God rebuked them.

We have in this text the first reference in the Old Testament to the sabbath. It is possible that some kind of worship and rest had occurred previously, but only now is the sabbath a matter of calendar and law. Some explanation was thus necessary by Moses (vv. 25-30). The pot of manna remained as a testimony to God's providence and to the Sabbath. By the time of Solomon, the manna had disappeared (1 Kings 8:9), perhaps as a result of the Philistines' victory over Israel some generations earlier, under Eli (1 Samuel 4:1-22). In Hebrews 8:4, we are told that the manna in the Holy of Holies was kept in a golden vessel.

It is interesting to see that Israel did not show any religious excitement over the quails. They saw that, apparently, in spite of Moses' statement, as a natural event, whereas the manna seemed strange to them.

The sabbath is at the heart of this episode. Because sabbath observance is a national and covenantal fact, its origin is in this event. Pharisaism saw the origins of sabbath regulations in the manna rule, rest on the sabbath. The prohibition of all sabbath travel above 2,000 yards supposedly marked the distance from any part of the wilderness encampment to the center, the site a little later of the tabernacle.

The sabbath law with respect to manna was an aspect of God's testing. As Macgregor wrote of the desert Hebrews, "In every way they went on showing, when tested, that they were not true servants of God, but slaves let loose."[200] The Arabian wilderness was a good place for slaves, because slaves do not exercise providence. For centuries, Arabia was exploited by its peoples, who cut down its trees to carry on a charcoal trade and thereby turned fertile lands into dry deserts.[201]

The giving of manna and sabbath observance are closely linked. One aspect of this is to cultivate historical memory. Again and again, Israel was told to commemorate and to remember the acts of God. The pot of manna had this purpose. We too are required to remember God's mercies and to be grateful. We must remember God as the source of all good and all judgment. We pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11), so that we may daily remember whose

government is total and all inclusive. In Chadwick's words, "The bitter proverb that eaten bread is soon forgotten must never be true of the Christian."[202]

In the wilderness, Israel had milk and butter from its own flocks, and some meat. At different encampments, where they remained long enough, they perhaps grew enough grain to provide some flour. We do have, in texts such as Numbers 7:13, 19, 25, 31, etc., references to offerings of fine flour mingled with oil. In Deuteronomy 2:6, we have a reference to the purchase of food with money from the Edomites; water in this instance was also purchased. We are not told that Israel lived solely upon manna, but that it was their basic daily food.[203]

In Numbers 11:7-9, we are given more data on manna, namely, that it could be ground in mills, or beaten with a mortar, or baked into cakes, and thus prepared in a variety of ways.

This text, vv. 29-30 in particular, led one Jewish sect of old, the Masbothei, i.e., Sabbatarians, to maintain that "no man should change his position from the morning to the evening of the Sabbath."[204] Over the centuries, men have been prone to substitute rigorous absurdities for simple obedience, as though such things mean a higher obedience and sanctity.

According to J. Coert Rylaarsdam, the word *sabbath* may be related or cognate to the Babylonian *sappattu*. "On the Babylonian sabbath there was a cessation of activity. Sabbath days were considered to be days of evil."[205] This fact pinpoints the uniqueness of the weekly Biblical sabbath. Man lives, not in an evil world governed by evil forces, i.e., metaphysical evil or governed by a blind fate, but in God's creation. Instead of an evil day, the sabbath therefore celebrates the goodness and the government of God. We take hands off our lives in the confidence of His absolute government and His providential care for us. Manna was evidence of this provision and care, and, at the same time, a testing of Israel's faith and trust in God. At the heart of the sabbath meaning is our trust in God and our recognition that the reality of time is not determined by time but by God. All meaning comes from Him, not from the events we face, nor from ourselves. "The people were to understand that their life was to be daily dependence on God."[206]

The sabbath, or Lord's day, has a long association with joy and gladness, and with freedom. To view life and whatever powers there may be in the universe as evil, or merely as blind and meaningless forces, is to rob life of peace and freedom. Outside of the sphere of Biblical faith, fear and darkness permeate the mind of man. There is no ground for an ultimate trust. Life is treacherous and the world untrustworthy.

Given, however, the ultimacy of the triune God of Scripture, we face a world created and governed by our Redeemer. Only then is a sabbath rest possible. Our Lord promises, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17), meaning that in Him we have unseen and supernatural resources. The sabbath thus means not only rest, but also strength.

Chapter Fifty-Two

Massah and Meribah

(*Exodus 17:1-7*)

1. And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.
2. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?
3. And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?
4. And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto these people? They be almost ready to stone me.
5. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel, and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.
6. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.
7. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not? (Exodus 17:1-7)

Man's basic and original sin is the attempt to be his own god, to determine good and evil for himself (Gen. 3:5). God is the source of all law, and He is therefore the essential and ultimate judge over all creation. When man presumes to be his own god, he then assumes it to be his "right" to pass judgment on all things.

This is the issue in the episode at Rephidim. The presupposition of Israel was this: since God has all the power that is His, why does He not deliver His people into a new Eden immediately? Why does He allow all kinds of unpleasant things to happen to them? Why, among all men, should His covenant people be subjected to ugly trials and troubles?

This is not an academic question, nor is it restricted to the Hebrews of Moses' time. Whenever men gain power and attempt to play god, they seek to create the trouble-free life and to eliminate the testing of men. The modern state seeks to limit the trauma of competition, of testing, of unemployment, and so on and on, but its efforts only lead to grim and ugly disasters. Similarly, many parents, having become successful, try to ensure that their children will never encounter the problems they faced, and, as a result, their protectionism encourages their children in evil.

Israel refused to understand why God, who had performed such great miracles in Egypt and after, was not now giving them an easy and cushioned life. Why was there no social security from God? Somehow, Moses was to blame for all this, and they were almost ready to stone or kill him (v. 4). Moses had very good reason to be alarmed.

The religions of antiquity were humanistic attempts to account for the universe. They saw its origins in some kind of "creation" by the gods, but their view of origins was dramatically different from the Biblical account. The pagan stories told of a primeval chaos, and the gods moved all this to bring order out of the universal chaos. The persistent problem faced by man and society was the possible return of chaos. Since all vitality and power came out of chaos, various fertility cults regularly required a return to chaos, as in the Saturnalia, to revitalize society and the state. This created a paradoxical situation. Social order required a continual war against chaos in order to survive, and yet survival required a periodic revolutionary upheaval, a saturnalia, in order to regain the vitality that order needed to survive. Order was thus an unnatural necessity which went against life's urge to chaos.

For Scripture, chaos is not the problem. Chaos is a man-made disorder in society and the world. Not chaos but sin is the problem. To declare that chaos is the problem is to posit and aver that an ultimate and unchangeable metaphysical fact is the source of all troubles. To say that sin is the

problem is to tell man that it is a moral question and a soluble one. Man can change morally, but not metaphysically.

Israel was denying the need for, or the existence in themselves of, a moral problem. The problem was in God, not themselves. Most pious praying in our time asks God to change instead of seeking to be remade and then blessed by Him.

Moses told Israel that they were really testing, challenging or putting on trial, God Almighty (v. 2). The names Moses gave to the place tell us what Israel was doing: *Massah* means testing, and *Meribah* means quarreling; they were testing God, and they were quarreling with Him because He would not be ruled by them. Moses later reminded Israel of the meaning of Massah:

> Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah (Deut. 6:16).
>
> At Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath (Deut. 9:22).
>
> And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with the holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah (Deut. 33:8).

In Psalm 95:7-9, we have a reference to this episode at Massah, and Hebrews 3:7-8,15 refers to it also; these texts call attention to Israel's sin. The miracle of water out of the rock is celebrated in Psalm 78:15-16,20; in Psalm 105:41, 114:8; and in Isaiah 48:21. Massah may have been the name Moses gave to the *place*, and Meribah the name of the *waters*.

More than a century ago, Joseph Parker saw the Christian community approaching its own Rephidim, a place where necessities would test our faith. We have not, he observed, gone an inch beyond Rephidim, the place of necessity, because, with all God's provisions and care, we see only our needs, our necessities, not what God has done and is doing.

> We have almost a new English. We have been so complete in our criticism and progress as to have almost established a new alphabet of things. We rejoice in this, and call it progress, and boast of it with honest and legitimate triumph. But the preacher's question is: How far have we advanced, *morally*, spiritually, and in all the higher ranges and Diviner outlooks of our being? Here we seem to be still at Rephidim. Geographers say they cannot find out the exact locality. Verily, there need be no difficulty about the exact locality — it is just where we are. We carry the locality with us.[207]

God instructed Moses to take the elders of Israel as his witnesses, and to use his staff with which he signaled God's judgments, beginning with the Nile, to strike the rock and bring forth a stream of water. The staff had been used essentially as God's instrument of judgment. Now it would bring to them the much-needed water, *but it was still a witness to judgment*. They had insisted on judging God; they were now being judged, even though the immediate result was a blessing. God would in time deal with them. Their question to Moses had been, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (v. 7). They assumed it to be God's duty to serve them, and, in time, He would, with judgment.

The historian Macaulay observed,

> It is the nature of man to overrate present evil. A hundred generations have passed away since the first great national emancipation of which an account has come down to us. We read in the most ancient of books that a people bowed to the dust under a cruel yoke, scourged to toil by hard taskmasters, not supplied with straw, yet compelled to furnish the daily take of bricks, became sick of life, and raised such a cry of misery as pierced the heavens. The slaves were wonderfully set free; at the moment of their liberation they raised a song of gratitude and triumph; but in a few hours they began to regret their slavery, and to reproach the leader who had decoyed them away from the savoury fare of the house of bondage to the dreary waste which still separated them from the land flowing with milk and

> honey. Since that time the history of every great deliverer has been the history of Moses retold. Down to the present hour, rejoicings like those on the shore of the Red Sea have ever been speedily followed by murmurings like those at the Waters of Strife.[208]

How little Israel learned from this experience we see in Numbers 20, when, in the desert of Zin, they again grew angry with Moses and with God because they had no water. *Their premise was, if God is our God, then there must be no problems for us*.

In v. 6, there is a reference to "the rock in Horeb." Horeb and Sinai are often used interchangeably, and yet as two places. Apparently, the name of the mountains was Horeb, and Sinai was a particular peak.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Amalek

(*Exodus 17:8-16*)

8. Then came Amalek; and fought with Israel in Rephidim.
9. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.
10. So Joshua did as Moses had said unto him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
11. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.
12. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.
13. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.
14. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.
15. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi [The LORD my banner]:
16. For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. (Exodus 17:8-16)

The five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, give us *the alphabet of theology*. They provide us with the essential elements of the doctrines of God and man, of sin and salvation, and of the ways of God with man. This may be one reason for their neglect. They go against the grain with most people. Men, both the godly and the ungodly, want *a final order now*. They hunger for instant utopia, especially in the era since the French

Revolution. Politics too often becomes an effort to gain utopia now. They want, in Thomas Boston's phrase, to leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom.

Together with this effort to gain utopia now goes an inability to recognize what man is, both other men and ourselves. We believe ourselves to be better than we are, which means belittling God's grace in us and to us, and we often fail to admit the evil in other men.

Perhaps this is the reason for the indifference to knowledge about Amalek. Moses, in Deuteronomy 25:17-19, reminds Israel that they must remember Amalek:

> 17. Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;
> 18. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.
> 19. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

In Numbers 24:20, we see that Balaam described Amalek as "the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever." This troubles many, and so we try to read it as meaning that Amalek was the first to attack Israel. The word *first* is in the Hebrew *rêʾshîyth* (*ray-sheeth*) and refers to primacy, headship, or rank. Because we do not know more about Amalek does not mean that this nation was not important in its day.

According to Velikovsky, the Amalekites were the Hyksos, known to Egypt as a people who "undertook to destroy the whole world." They took a delight in evil, according to many references, and, according to Moses, first attacked the weak, straggling members of Israel who had not yet reached Rephidim. Because the plagues had weakened Egypt, Velikovsky said, Amalek rushed towards Egypt, and conquered and occupied it for some time as the Hyksos rulers.[209]

According to Genesis 36:12, the Amalekites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. The Ephraimite, Joshua, the son of Nun, appears here for the first time as Israel's military leader. The name *Jesus* is a form of Joshua; it means "Jehovah saves." Hur was apparently the grandfather of Bezaleel, mentioned in Exodus 31:2 as an artisan; according to Josephus, Hur was the husband of Moses' sister, Miriam.

In v. 18, we are told that God required Moses to record this battle with Amalek, and to "rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." This seems strange, since Joshua was in the battle, until we realize that Joshua was not asked simply to remember the action, but also the meaning of Amalek and God's perpetual war against it. Ancient Jewish records ascribe particularly brutal acts to Amalek, combined with a deliberate contempt for God.

As we have seen, men are unwilling to face the evil in all men, and they are also unwilling to face up to their dependence on God. God's requirement in this instance stresses human action combined with dependence on Him. Joshua and his men fight against Amalek; Moses must raise his hands and staff in supplication to God. When his hands weakened, Israel began to lose. The point is an obvious one. As we face our battles and problems, we must indeed take action, but we must be equally untiring in our dependence on God. The raised staff was a witness and a remembrance of God's previous miraculous judgments, and it invoked God's continuing care.

Verse 8 begins, "Then came Amalek." The rabbis of old said that this was a consequence of Israel's grumbling about God. They held that whenever Israel began to complain about God, or to doubt Him, He sent them something like Amalek to humble them.[210]

According to Delitzsch,

> In Amalek the heathen world would commence that conflict with the people of God, which, while it aims at their destruction, can only be terminated by the complete annihilation of the ungodly powers of the world.[211]

This conquest is a part of the Great Commission, the requirement to convert and to teach all nations. At times in history, as with Amalek, it means actual warfare.

According to v. 15, after the battle, Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-nissi, The LORD my banner. This means that the Lord Himself is the standard or banner under which Israel fought. According to many scholars, v. 16 is "obscure" in meaning. According to George Rawlinson, the marginal reading is the correct translation: "Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the LORD, therefore the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Rawlinson commented:

> The Hebrew can scarcely be said to be "obscure." It gives plainly enough the sense which our translators have placed in the margin. Amalek, by attacking Israel, had lifted up his hand against the throne of God, therefore would not God war against him from generation to generation.[212]

In v. 14, we see that God commanded Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book;" in Hebrew, it is literally "*the* book." Thus, Moses was keeping a record at God's requirement to record Amalek's evil and God's hatred of Amalek. The recording of history was thus God's mandate.

This raises a very important point. Apart from the Biblical world of faith, the writing of history is to all practical intent nonexistent. We do have a number of pagan chronicles, but there is a difference between chronicle and history. A chronicle simply lists names and events. It is sometimes no more than a series of dynastic tables. Some pagan writers, like Herodotus, are called historians, but their purpose differs from history. Such men list curious customs and events. Others will give us purported history, with idealized accounts and invented speeches given to notable men. Such works can be source-books for history, but are not themselves history. History-writing gives us an account of events in terms of their meaning and purpose. Since neither the persons nor the nations involved are the goal of history, true history is critical in terms of an overall meaning which transcends man. Christianity and the Bible have made possible a non-Christian historiography, but the results are troublesome. Marxist history sees the meaning of events in terms of a class struggle, but the world of borrowed meaning is a problem.

Because Marxism presupposes the world of Darwin and evolution, a purely historically derived meaning wanes rapidly. The meaning of history cannot be sustained from within history itself, but only by God.

The command to Moses is, "Write this for a memorial in the book." The Hebrew word for *memorial* can mean what our English word says, and also *record*. Many religions, such as Hinduism, despise time and history in favor of things more "spiritual." It should be apparent thus far in Exodus alone how different Scripture is. God *commands* an historical memory, and the Bible is the great historical record. Failure to stress the historical character and interest of Biblical faith is to depart from it.

Some very "spiritual" people are appalled by God's attitude towards Amalek and regard it as an example of Old Testament primitivism. Such people are unwilling to recognize essential moral conflicts because the unity of all being is more important to them than truth and justice. This text tells us that God "will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (v. 16). Humanism is not happy with this, because, for humanism, man is good, hence God is not, especially if God judges and punishes men.

Chapter Fifty-Four

Jethro

(*Exodus 18:1-12*)

1. When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt;

2. Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,

3. And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land;

4. And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was thine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:

5. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God:

6. And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

7. And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.

8. And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them.

9. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10. And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

11. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

> 12. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God. (Exodus 18:1-12)

In this text we have an account of the visit paid to Moses by his father-in-law, a truly godly man and apparently a man of wisdom. He comes with Moses' wife, Zipporah, whom Moses had sent back as an impediment to his calling in Egypt. There is no indication that Moses did not love his wife; in fact, he may have been unduly patient with her in the matter of circumcision (Ex. 4:24-26). The fact that she did not share his strong faith did not mean a lack of love on his part.

The name of Moses' father-in-law is usually given as Jethro, in the ten times he is mentioned in Exodus (3:1; twice in 4:18; 18:1-2,5-6,9-10,12). The name Jethro means *pre-eminence*. He is called Hobab in Numbers 10:29 and Judges 4:11, a name meaning *beloved*. In Exodus 2:18, Jethro is called Reuel (meaning *God is friend*). For us, such a plurality of names is strange; however, in the New Testament we find that some men had a Greek name as well as a Hebrew one. In cultures where several differing peoples and languages are common, men have often had names derived from each particular tongue. Jethro's names are all Hebraic, which may mean that related languages were spoken by various groups.

Jethro came, according to Honeycutt, with two related concerns. *First*, Jethro came after hearing of the deliverance and victory of Israel to lead a celebration of God's salvation. *Second*, Jethro was a priest, and, because "the dispensing of decisions was originally a sacral act, Jethro advised Moses to adopt a better method of dispensing justice."[213]

Justice is a religious fact; to separate justice from God is to destroy it. The contemporary view of justice as the distillation of human experience is destructive of social order and leads to a variety of differing opinions of the nature of justice. As a priest, Jethro felt it was his duty to instruct Moses in this area. The modern insistence that the church be silent in matters of justice is a great impediment to the furtherance of order in a society.

In v. 11, Jethro says, "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them." The word translated as *gods* is *elohim*. It can mean pagan gods; it can refer to the triune God; and it can also mean magistrates or judges, who are referred to as gods because they are concerned with the administration of justice. Jethro says that the LORD is the source of all true justice; when rulers such as Pharaoh dealt arrogantly and unjustly with Israel, He was above them and greater than they were, and thus He dealt with them. For refusing to give justice, God brought His justice into action against the Egyptians. Similarly, in our time God is above all our human administrations of justice and will judge them all. Asaph, in Psalm 82:6-7, refers to this:

> 6. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.
> 7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

Because of the influence of Greek philosophy, men tend to read v. 11 as a concern with an idea, an abstraction, whereas the Bible is specific and anti-abstractionist. This verse is thus not an early statement of monotheism, as some say, but an affirmation of God's justice.

In verse 7, we have an interesting fact. Moses, on hearing of Jethro's approach, went out to meet him, bowed before him, and kissed him. Although Moses was the more powerful figure, he recognized Jethro as his elder and, as father-in-law, a family superior. Respect for age and authority is commanded by God repeatedly in such statements as this:

> Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:32).

The lack of respect and civility in a society is an indication of inner decay.

Verses 8 and 9 tell us that Moses gave a specific report to Jethro on all that God had done for Israel, and Jethro rejoiced.

It is worth noting that both Amalek and Midian were, like Israel, descended from Abraham. The difference between the men of Amalek and Midian as against those of Israel was not a genetic one, but a religious fact. Jethro, as a Midianite, was, like Moses, a godly man and unlike other men of Midian, even as Moses was unlike other Israelites.

There is an important fact in v. 1 which must not be overlooked. We are told that Jethro came when he "heard of all that God had done *for Moses*, and for Israel his people." We cannot legitimately see Scripture abstractly. Moses is more than God's *instrument*; an instrument is used; things are not done for it. But Moses was God's *servant* who was not only used by God, but also blessed and honored by Him. It is anti-Biblical to reduce ourselves or anyone else to no more than tools used by God. God works in history with men and nations, but at the same time He is mindful of us as persons.

In v. 12, we are told that Jethro, after hearing Moses' account of God's deliverance of Israel, offered a burnt offering and other sacrifices, and the elders of Israel joined Jethro and Moses in a communion meal before God, to witness to their peace with and gratitude towards God, and their own community in faith. This was a covenant celebration and an affirmation of faith in God's grace and justice.

The specific character of the Bible's account is a problem for many men. Reared in the context of Hellenic philosophical premises, profundity for them means abstractions. Modern man is so in love with abstraction that he has carried it into the spheres of art and music, among other things. The religious respect and love of Hellenism born of the Enlightenment and made even more prominent by Romanticism, has led to depersonalizing men and history. We are given accounts of social movements and the so-called collective mind as though persons are irrelevant to history. Scripture allows no compromise with such a view. It is centered on the triune God, and He works in history in many ways, and, very clearly, through persons, not abstract "social forces."

Chapter Fifty-Five

Justice and its Administration

(*Exodus 18:13-27*)

13. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people;
and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.
14. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?
15. And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:
16. When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.
17. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.
18. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform thyself alone.
19. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shalt be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:
20. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.
21. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:
22. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.
23. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

> 24. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.
> 25. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.
> 26. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.
> 27. And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land. (Exodus 18:13-27)

As we have seen, justice is a religious matter. All law and all concepts of justice are religiously derived from the god of a particular system of thought. The word "god" may not be used, but law and justice are concerned with issues of ultimacy, with what is explicitly or implicitly religious. In democracies, the voice of the people is said to be the voice of God, and law and justice are then expressions of the general will.

In this episode, we see Moses taking all day to adjudicate cases brought to him by the people. As he told Jethro, "the people come unto me to enquire of God" (v. 15). Good or bad, the people wanted justice; every man wants justice for himself, whatever else he may desire. The people recognized that justice is a religious fact and so came to Moses, because God had already greatly used Moses and was close to him.

Jethro had a solution to the oppressive burden Moses faced. He held it to be God's counsel and asked Moses to look to God for verification (v. 23). This Moses did, because in Deuteronomy 1:9-18, he declares that it was God's decision.

What Jethro proposed and God confirmed as His purpose was a system of graded courts. Elders of the tribes would be chosen, over ten families, over fifties, hundreds, thousands, and on up to what became the Sanhedrin, seventy elders plus the high priest. This was originally the general plan of the college of cardinals.

In Deuteronomy 1:13-17, we are told that Moses took from the leaders of the tribes, men chosen apparently by the tribes, and made them elders on the various levels of authority and rule. These Moses instructed in God's law.

Earlier, when Jethro questioned Moses, Moses said, of the cases he tried, "I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws" (v. 16). Some raise a question here: since the law was not yet given at Sinai, how did Moses know the law? The assumption of some that it was by "general revelation" or "natural law" is a modern view and an abused one. Because God had entered into covenant with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with Israel in the Passover, He had given them his law orally. A covenant is a treaty of law and a contract. Israel knew the law; at Sinai, the law was given in written form. It is a wooden reading of Scripture to assume that the covenants were made but the giving of the law delayed.

In v. 12, we see that the elders had a part in the sacrifices; this almost certainly meant judicial functions as well. Because justice comes from God, the communion meal sets forth the nature of justice. It means community with God and therefore with men in terms of God's covenant grace and law. Moses, as a Levite and God's prophet, was the highest human judge. All the elders up to Moses had a duty to give justice in terms of God's law to the people. To give the people justice is an act of grace and mercy. Humanistic justice is relativistic even when it claims to uphold eternal truths. Thus, Plato held justice to be a universal idea and eternally valid; at the same time, Plato held to a separate justice for philosopher-kings, another for soldiers, and still another for workers. His justice meant minding your own business by staying in your ostensibly ordained station in life. Socrates says,

> And again, we have often heard people say, that to mind one's own business, and not be meddlesome, is justice; and we have often said the same thing ourselves….
>
> Then it would seem, my friend, that to do one's own business, in some shape or another, is justice….

> Thus, according to this view also, it will be granted that to have and do what belongs to us and is our own, is justice.[214]

Such a view simply enthrones tyranny and gives it a pompous façade.

The characteristics of the men who would share with Moses in the administration of justice are of interest (v. 21). *First*, they are to be *able men*. The word *able* is in the Hebrew *chayil*, meaning a force, an army, virtue, wealth, or strength. The judges or elders are to be a moral force, an army of virtue and hence a wealth to the people. *Second*, they are to be men who *fear God*. They must be men of religious dedication to justice, men strong in upholding God's law. *Third*, they must be *men of truth*. The word is *ʾemeth*, meaning that they must be firm in their adherence to truth. The connotation is one of dependability, of being a strong support to the cause of God's justice. *Fourth*, they must hate covetousness, which means despising bribery and payoffs. A godly character is mandatory for a godly office, and the administration of justice requires this.

Moses is told to "provide" these men out of all the people. The word *provide* (in the Hebrew, *châzâh*, *khawsaw*) means to have a vision in a prophetic sense. The primary criterion is ability in faithfulness to the covenant law.

In this plan, there is decentralization of the administration of justice combined with the availability of appeal.

What these judges were supposed to be appears much later in Israel's history in the charge by Jehoshophat, king of Judah, to the judges, echoing Moses:

> 6. And [he] said to the judges, Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.
>
> 7. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. (2 Chron. 19:6-7)

The judgment is the Lord's, and He will deal with unjust judges. Hence, judges should fear God. Since there is no iniquity in God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes, for judges to be guilty of these things is to face God's vengeance. In Psalm 82:7, God's sentence on all such judges is death.

Alfred the Great established his justice system in terms of the Biblical pattern. The hundreds-courts became the basic local division, and this pattern was transferred to the American colonies. Much of the strength of early America was due to the combination of a strong Christian faith and an emphasis on local justice.

In v. 27, we are told that Jethro, having done his work counseling Moses, was allowed to return to his own country. Jethro, while having a certain authority over Moses, apparently had no desire to remain and exploit it. Moses, grateful for Jethro's guidance, made no attempt to hold him in order to enhance his own authority via Jethro's support. Each man was faithful to his calling.

Finally, an important point must be made with respect to God's qualification for judges, God's law, and the Biblical requirement for social order. There is in Scripture an essential relationship between law and morality. In the modern world, there is virtually none; the essence of statist law is enactment or legality. There is also an hostility to any moral critique of the law in terms of God's word. This should be expected. If man through the state is the source of law, man will totally resent God's declaration that He alone is the sovereign and the lawgiver. Whether admitted to or not, this means that humanistic man's greatest enemy is the God of Scripture, and man will wage unremitting warfare against God. Since the French Revolution, this warfare has increasingly become an open fact.

As against the Biblical requirements for a judge, as cited in vv. 21-22 and elsewhere in the law, the statist requirement is increasingly in favor of a party hack for whom justice is the will of his class or his political party. Justice in such a state is steadily replaced by the will of some men.

Chapter Fifty-Six

The Covenant and Justice

(*Exodus 19:1-9*)

1. In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.
2. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.
3. And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;
4. Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.
5. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.
6. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.
7. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.
8. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.
9. And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. (Exodus 19:1-9)

Three months to the day after leaving Egypt, Israel came "to the desert of Sinai" (v. 2). Sinai is mentioned thirty-one times in the Pentateuch, three times more in the rest of the Old Testament, and, in the New Testament, in Acts 7:30,38 and Galatians 4:24-25. There are allusions to Sinai but without naming it, as in Hebrews 12:26-27. This is an interesting and important fact. We

would normally expect such a place to be commemorated and rank highly in a people's veneration. There was, however, no cult of Sinai in Israel's history.

Among the reasons for this is, *first*, the fact that the law of God was not greatly loved by the people, if loved at all! During much of Israel's history, the law was neglected, and at times almost completely forgotten. God's law set Israel apart from the nations, and, as the people told Samuel, they did not want to be different (1 Sam. 8:5). The Book of Judges tells us how rapidly Israel declined in faith after Moses and Joshua. Then, *second*, God chose a desert area and mountain as the place for the giving of His law. Paganism associated power with fertility. As a result, in pagan cults the holy places were areas of fertility, of trees, streams, and abundance. For God to give His law to Moses in so bleak a place as Sinai was to go against all current opinion and belief. This set God apart as outside the realm of power as men saw it. From this fact alone God had to be seen as hardly respectable in the eyes of the world, and as an outsider at best.

We also see that God speaks to Israel through Moses, and Moses reports back to God with Israel's answer. In this respect, God was making it clear that, more than any human power, He could only be reached by means of a mediator. A mediator is a go-between in the reconciliation of two parties, and also one who has access to the greater power. In such instances, there is no approach possible without a mediator, nor can any communion be established without him. Thus Moses, as a mediator, is a forerunner and type of Christ Himself.

Moses' status as the mediator is very formally established in these verses because they are the prelude to the giving of the Law; the covenant was now to become more fully set forth, the Law inscribed, and the people instructed. Hence, Moses' mediatorial status becomes pronounced: he carries the word of each party to the other. Since the transgression of the covenant and its Law carried the penalty of death, all communication had to be carefully and clearly articulated. God, in extending His law and grace to Israel, was requiring them to be the people of faith and justice, a requirement now laid upon the church.

In v. 5, God's word to Israel is that they must *keep* His covenant. The word *keep* is the Hebrew *shâmar*, to hedge about, protect, and guard. It is the word used in Genesis 2:15, when Adam is

commanded to *keep* the Garden of Eden. It means to be instructed with, to have charge of, a trust or treasure, which in this case is God's Law; justice must thus be guarded and prized. We cannot underestimate the importance of this. God's grace is to give His Law to men and nations, and His chosen people, then Israel and now the church, are the guardians of the Law, of God's justice. Psalm 2 tells us that the ungodly nations conspire together against God and His bonds or Law, and they rage at God's restraints upon them. The penalty for custodians of God's law who fail in their calling is death. Their failure is the frustration and perversion of God's justice, no small offense.

Because of this calling to *keep* the covenant, to uphold and advance God's law and justice, Israel is also "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (v. 6). Justice is a religious concern; it deals with moral ultimacy. Hence, a chosen people must be a priestly people and nation.

The meaning of being "a chosen people" should now be apparent: it means the people who set forth God's grace and justice to the world. Many nations, Christian and non-Christian alike, have seen themselves as a chosen people, as, for example, Rome, Byzantium, Britain, the United States, France, Germany, Spain, Japan, and others. It is seen as a position of privilege, whereas in Scripture it means responsibility, responsibility for justice, God's justice. This is what it means to be a "peculiar (or, unique) treasure" (v. 5). "All the earth is mine" (v. 5), God says, as He summons one nation to erect the banner of salvation and justice for all men and nations. Solomon, in the prayer of dedication for the Temple, was mindful of this world mission and prayed that foreigners coming to the Temple might especially be heard by God and their prayers granted so that they might return home as witnesses to the Lord. Psalm 87 celebrates the foreign believers who come to the Temple.

The phrase, "a kingdom of priests," is referred to in Isaiah 61:6, but nowhere else in the Old Testament. It is, however, cited several times in the New Testament, in 1 Peter 2:5,9, and Revelation 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6. "A holy nation" (or, people) is referred to in Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2,21; and 26:19, and Isaiah 62:12.

By making Israel His unique treasure, God adopted the people as His children, a status now possessed by the church. Adoption into a family once meant adoption into both privilege and duty, and this emphatically applies here. A holy nation is an obedient nation which has been given covenantal responsibilities to witness to God's grace and justice. It is, indeed, God's peculiar or unique treasure or possession. According to Cole, the expression means " 'special treasure' belonging privately to a king (*e.g.*, 1 Ch. 29:3). This implies special value as well as special relationship."[215]

God tells Israel through Moses, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I have bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (v. 4). Moses refers to this again in Deuteronomy 29:2. It is a beautiful image of God's supernatural deliverance and care. It is a reminder that their history, and indeed all history, is not natural: it is God's work. There is a pattern and purpose to all of history, and it comes from God. Men seek to determine history independently of God: their plan, not God's, must prevail, they hold. Men conspire together against God, trying to impose their plan on history, and the results are devastating for all.

Which of the peaks in the Sinai desert is the Mount Sinai of Exodus, we do not know, although Elijah did (1 Kings 19:8). When in recent years this area was the subject of controversy between Israel and Egypt, neither country mentioned Sinai as the place where the Law was given. Both Israel and Egypt, Judaism and Islam, say they revere Moses and God's law, but possession of the peninsula was sought on other grounds.[216]

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Preparation for the Law-Giving

(*Exodus 19:10-25*)

10. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,
11. And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.
12. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:
13. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.
14. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.
15. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.
16. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.
17. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.
18. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.
19. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.
20. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

> 21. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.
> 22. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.
> 23. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.
> 24. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them.
> 25. So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them. (Exodus 19:10-25)

We have here the incidents immediately preceding the giving of the Ten Commandments. The Law is delivered to Moses to give to the people, and the people are commanded to prepare themselves to receive God's covenant law.

They are told, *first* of all, through Moses, to *sanctify* themselves (v. 10). The Hebrew word, *qâdâsh*, means to make morally or ceremonially clean. In this instance, the stress is on physical cleanliness. According to W.H. Bennett, it means "bathing, washing of garments, etc., in order to become ceremonially fit for the worship."[217] This was a public function, the receiving of God's covenant law, and all the outward forms and signs of respect were therefore commanded. To depreciate the physical marks of respect and conformity is a cheap rebellion common to small minds. Three days were allowed for this thorough physical preparation. It was thus emphatically important.

Second, the people were to stand at the foot of the mountain (v. 17). No man or animal was to pass a marked boundary and cross over into the mountain proper. There was no mistaking the meaning of this rule. To come before any king meant coming into his presence by invitation only; anyone crossing a given boundary without permission was subject to death. The Lord, as King over all kings, makes known that He cannot be regarded lightly nor approached casually. Neither men nor animals could thus enter the mountain area unless summoned.

Third, only those summoned could cross the boundary, and this was normally a privilege given to Moses alone, although Aaron is also included (v. 24). In Exodus 24:1 we are told that, on one occasion, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel were permitted by God to go part way up the mount. God was thus declaring His kingship and power, and He was insisting upon reverence and humility. The priests (v. 22) were to sanctify themselves with especial care, because they were the people with access to the throne. Hence, their duties required particular respect on their part towards God.

Fourth, during this period, beginning with the three days, all Israel was to abstain from sex. In the fertility cults, a variety of sexual practices, including very perverted and abnormal ones, were obligatory to worship, because it was believed that sexuality meant man's participation in the ultimate fertility creation. Thus, the barren Sinai desert, and the abstention from sexuality, meant that God was requiring a thorough separation from humanistic doctrines of man's power and potential. What God was requiring as necessary for the reception of His covenant, man saw as irreligious and profane. The rise of Freudianism is related to the modern revival of the premises of fertility cult faith and practices.

Fifth, God required people to recognize that, for the time, the mountain itself was sanctified (v. 23); it was set apart temporarily as God's throne. We are no longer concerned about sanctifying buildings, furnishings, utensils used in worship, or homes and places of work as was once commonplace. Ritual purification does, however, have deep Biblical roots. Our Lord, in sending out the Seventy, said:

> 12. And when ye come into an house, salute it.
> 13. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. (Matthew 10:12-13)

The word *house* is in the Greek *oikia* in v. 12 and *oikia* in v. 13; it refers to a dwelling, a building. In Matthew 12:4, it is *oikos* and refers to the Temple, the House of God. The modern usage restricts reality to the state and to individuals. The Bible speaks of blessing a house, and it

sees blessings and curses as abiding on a building (Matt. 10:14-15). The family gives a house its character. Thus, in Proverbs 25:24 we are told:

> It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

This same proverb appears also in Proverbs 21:9. In the New Testament, the word appears twice in the Greek, in 1 Timothy 3:3, where we are told that a bishop or elder must not be a *brawler*; it is used in a like manner in Titus 3:2. The word is *amachos*, *amakhos*, meaning not peaceable. The meaning is that there is no peaceful or relaxing atmosphere in a house ruled by a brawling woman, nor in a church ruled by a brawling elder. The point is that, despite our modern desacralization of everything, there can be holy places as well as holy people, and also evil places and people.

Sixth, when the trumpet or ram's horn blew, the people were required to come up to the barrier point at the foot of the mountain. There was in this same verse, v. 13, the death penalty for going beyond the designated point, but a requirement to come and stand or sit at that point. There would be thunder, lightning, and smoke, but no direct communication to them. This, from a modern perspective, was senseless and meaningless, because now everything must have a directly personal value or meaning, or it has no worth. Here God simply says, you will stand and wait because I say so. The point of reference is not what suits man, but what God requires. Hence, Moses is told to warn the people against violating God's fiat word.

Seventh, in these verses, stress is laid on outward conformity and sanctification. Some see the spiritual and inner sanctification as uppermost in v. 6, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Calvin, however, saw the essential meaning of this statement and observed:

> The nation is here called holy, not with reference to their piety or personal holiness, but as set apart from others by God by special privilege.[218]

This did not by any means absolve Israel from a duty to be holy; it does make clear that man's primary holiness is found in God's calling and election.

Eighth, in v. 24, we have a reference to priests. Some scholars see a problem here, because supposedly there could be no priests yet, since the Levites had not yet been designated as a priestly tribe. However, in Exodus 24:5, we see "young men," probably the firstborn, taking part in sacrifices. Because of the myth of evolution, many scholars assume that a priestly development and class came late in human history, but no research has turned up evidence for such a view.

Ninth, thunder, lightning, smoke, and earthquakes marked the presence of God at Sinai. Matthew Poole's (1624-1679) comment here is excellent:

> The *thunders and lightnings* were sent partly as evidence and tokens both of God's glorious presence, and of the anger of God, and the dreadful punishments due to the transgressors of the law now to be delivered; and partly as means to humble, and awaken, and convince, and terrify proud and secure sinners, that they might more reverently attend to the words and commands of God, more willingly yield obedience to them, and be more afraid of the violation of them. A thick cloud was both a fit means for the production and reception of the thunders and lightnings, and a signification as well of the invisible and unconceivable nature of God, as of the obscurity of the legal dispensation in regard of its types and shadows, &c, 2 Cor. iii. 13, 18; iv. 6. *The trumpet* was a fit instrument both for the promulgation of God's law, and for the signification of that war that is between God and sinners….[219]

Tenth, v. 13, as scholars have repeatedly pointed out, should read, "There shall not an hand touch *him*," not it, referring to the transgressor. A century ago, George Rawlinson commented:

> To stop him and seize him (i.e., the transgressor), another person must have transgressed the bounds, and so have repeated the act which was forbidden. This

> course was to be avoided, and punishment was to be inflicted on the transgressor by stoning him, or transfixing him with arrows, from within the barrier.[220]

This severe penalty must be seen in the context of v. 6, the calling of Israel to be "a kingdom of priests." Despite this fact, authority had to prevail, and God here makes clear that a kingdom of priests is not a democracy, and no man can presume to be more than he is. Because Israel had been a slave people, they had to learn now that freedom did not mean a radical equality of all men. Freedom does not mean the destruction of authority and differences, but rather responsibility. In time, this equalitarianism would lead to the rebellion of Nadab and Abihu. The fact of law, however, is an important one, because God's law begins by denying that there is any equality between good and evil, between a law-keeper and a law-breaker.

Chapter Fifty-Eight
The First Commandment
(*Exodus 20:1-3*)

> 1. And God spake all these words, saying,
> 2. I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
> 3. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)

The giving of the Law was preceded by a requirement for physical sanctification. The Law was given on Mount Sinai, in an unlikely place from a humanistic perspective. In every respect, God's requirements went against humanistic anticipations. The sum total of humanistic views and expectations can be expressed in the word *magic*. The word for us usually carries the meaning of childish or primitive beliefs, and this prevents us from understanding its meaning and danger.

Magical beliefs begin with two basic presuppositions: *first*, a belief in the continuity of being, so that what man does can affect or govern whatever forces or being are ultimate in the universe, and, *second*, a worship of power. There are other key beliefs, but, for our present concern, these alone must be considered. Magic is usually naturalistic rather than supernaturalistic; its view of natural phenomena can include the super-normal. Gerardus Van Der Leeuw (1890-1950) said of ancient religions and their magical perspective that " 'god' is above all the name for some experience of Power." The word "god" for us is a "much too personal term" to give a clear idea of what pagan gods were. Van Der Leeuw wrote:

> From the emotions of the young maidens of Troezen, for instance, who before marriage sacrificed their tresses, there arose the name and later the form of Hippolytus. This, however, implies no anthropomorphic theory nor Feuerbachean wisdom. The power in the experience leads to endowment with form. Surrender

> of maidenhood involves contact with some strange power, and this contact receives name and form.[221]

The goal of magic is control and domination. Magic is thus closely related to science, and its essential perspective is hostile to religion. Whereas religion normally seeks to know and obey the ultimate power, magic seeks control of ultimate power. It is closer thus to science and statism.

To understand magic further, let us examine examples of it, both ancient and modern. In some cultures, prior to planting, men and women copulate in the field to stimulate its fertility; in India naked women drag a plow across a field by night; Kamchadale tribesmen who dream of winning a girl's favor in their dream tell her so, and she submits.[222]

In a more modern example, a Pentagon official, as a juror, succeeded in gaining the acquittal of a young hoodlum on drugs and involved in criminal activities. When asked for his reason, he answered, "Next time it could be my son." What relationship was there between acquitting a hoodlum, and a future possible trial of his son? The man was using power to establish a precedent in order to create, in the chain of being, a future mercy for his son and other sons. Another example: a man insisted *religiously* on mercy for a depraved criminal guilty of a vicious offense. In answer to objections, he said, "I do not believe God will be less merciful than I am." He was trying to teach God something about mercy! Because magic denies the Biblical division between the uncreated Being of God and the created being of all other life and things, and because it affirms the great Chain of Being, it believes that man's acts can affect *all* being. Magical practice embraces the power of contagion because of this continuity. Thus, it is held that, if we disarm, the Soviet Union will disarm; if we are "good" to criminals, they will become good, and so on.

God deals with this perspective through the prophet Haggai:

> 11. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

> 12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.
> 13. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. (Haggai 2:11-13)

This means that in the physical sphere neither cleanness nor health are contagious, whereas dirt can pollute something clean, and disease can affect the healthy. In the moral sphere, justice and morality are not contagious, whereas evil and injustice are. Man being fallen can pollute, but he cannot purify; this is God's prerogative and in His power.

Thus, God begins by declaring that the good in Israel's life is entirely His doing: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage" (v. 2). Deliverance was not Israel's doing but God's. God's statement to Paul sums up the matter: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Any trust in a humanistic power system leads to magic, because it assumes the ultimacy of human action.

Next, God declares, as the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (v. 3). This can also be rendered "beside me," "to my face," or, "in my presence." It can also be read, "no other God."

The phrase, "before me," or, "to my face," was seen by Cole as related to a like phrase in Leviticus 18:18, forbidding polygamy. He wrote:

> This slightly unusual phrase seems also to be used of taking a second wife while the first is still alive. Such a use, or breach of an exclusive personal relationship, would help to explain the meaning here. It then links with the description of God as a 'jealous God' in verse 5.[223]

This is a telling observation, because this law requires "an exclusive personal relationship." It means that no other source of power, blessing, hope, or anything else is to be sought outside the God of Scripture. We cannot limit God's power and effectiveness to any sphere while excluding it from others.

The King James Version is very accurate at one particular point. Unlike modern versions, it reads "*Thou* shalt have no other gods before me." *Thou* is the singular person of the second personal pronoun form, and *you* is the plural. Modern English had dropped the singular form, whereas the true reading here is personal. While all the covenant people are addressed, God does not speak to them as a group but as individuals. The covenant was with Israel as a group, and every person in particular.[224]

Another point: according to Martin Buber, the laws of the Ten Commandments are more accurately translated as "You will not have …you will not make."[225] We have a series of orders. God is not negotiating a treaty, contract, or covenant with Israel: He is granting it in His grace and mercy, and, as a result, the commandments are unilaterally given. Negotiated laws represent a consensus, not an ultimate order of justice. Humanistic law expresses not God's justice, but either a man-created and imposed fiat will, or a democratic consensus. As such, it is by nature unrelated to justice. It represents either human logic, as the older judicial scholars held, or experience, as Oliver Wendell Holmes insisted. Experience has now triumphed as the key to all spheres. The U.S. Supreme Court rules on the cases before it in terms of popular and legal experience. State schools increasingly stress "the learning experience." Students are now taken on credit-course trips to France, for example, in order to gain learning by experience.

Law, however, must not be logic or experience. Its only valid foundation is in the being and nature of God. Any other doctrine of law will destroy a society; it is comparable to removing the bones from the body and bidding a man to stand.

The Ten Commandments are variously divided. In the Jewish form of our times and somewhat earlier, the first two verses are made the first commandment, and verses 3-6 are made the second one. St. Augustine added the second commandment to the first, and then divided the tenth; this

division is still used by Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches. The Reformed and English arrangement is now more generally used. The only difference in these three forms is the division of the verses, not the content.

Finally, it must be noted that the First Commandment, by condemning any other god or source of power, is condemning syncretism. Syncretism is the attempt to unite two alien things or concepts in order to increase the available power. Syncretists in religion attempt to bring together their ideas of the best in all religions in order to increase their effectiveness and power. In the economic sphere, syncretists believe in a mixed economy, uniting capitalism and socialism, among other things. In politics, syncretists believe that a better world will emerge if conflicting political beliefs are merged into one order.

In every sphere, syncretism is a violation of the First Commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (v. 3). Syncretism in every sphere emerges wherever there is a disregard for this law.

Chapter Fifty-Nine
The Second Commandment
(*Exodus 20:4-6*)

> 4. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:
> 5. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;
> 6. And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

Over the centuries, and into our time, there have been bitter disputes over the meaning of this, the Second Commandment. For many, both in ancient Israel as well as in the church, it has been a prohibition of *all* sculpture, paintings, and representations of anything, whether religious in character or not, whereas others have rejected this interpretation. It should be noted that both sides have claimed orthodoxy and have sought to be faithful to Scripture.

In the early church, in the post-apostolic era, there was a very strong hostility to all painting and sculpture. Art has always been essentially tied to religion, and, for many converts, art meant paganism and occultism. For a time, artists who were converted had to either abandon their vocation or renounce the making of any image of any form.

A little later in the post-apostolic era, images, paintings, and mosaics began to abound. There was a very extensive use of them, and often a veneration of them. Those who used images were no less zealous in their faith than the non-users, and their theology was essentially similar.

In assuming either of these positions, it is important to understand the reasons behind them, *and* why it is necessary for us to condemn both.

As we have seen, the great evil which the First Commandment prohibits, among other things, is the concept of continuity between God and creation. The Greco-Roman world accepted the continuity of all being, so that an inner link existed between the ultimate power or powers and the world of men and things.

Gordana Babic has observed, "Judging by legends and lives of saints, it would seem that pictures of Christ and the saints were mostly regarded by the common people as objects themselves imbued with supernatural powers."[226] The logic in this position was this: any painted image or sculpture had a link with ultimate power, and, by representing it, became a concentration of that power. No pagan idolater has equated his image with the totality of the power represented; rather, he has seen it as a focus concentrating some of the power locally. Thus, idolatry has religious and philosophical roots. Because of the belief in the continuity of being, a man could have an image carved in the belief that, like a lightning rod, it would localize an ultimate power.

Those who were iconoclasts shared this view and therefore opposed all images. In Isaiah 44:9-20, the *futility* and *absurdity* of idols is bluntly stated: they are *nothing*. The problem was that to many iconoclasts as well as iconodules, they were *something*.

Because of this belief, rulers, such as the Roman emperors, on gaining power, sent their image throughout the empire to indicate who the current earthly deputy of the gods was. Emperors' portraits were venerated; candles were lit before them, and accused persons fled to a portrait of the emperor for sanctuary.[227]

In part, the rise of icons of Christ and the saints was a challenge to this faith, because those who advanced the Christian icons thereby expressed their belief that the icons of Christ and the saints were the focus of power. Hence, candles were lit to the Christian images.

Is was John Calvin who made the dearest and most dramatic break with the whole concept of the continuity of being, also known as the Great Chain of Being. His writings clearly set forth God as uncreated Being, not to be confused or mixed with His creation, created being. Calvin wrote:

> 17. As in the preceding commandment the Lord has declared himself to be the one God, besides whom no other deities ought to be imagined or worshipped, so in this he more clearly reveals his nature, and the kind of worship with which he ought to be honoured, that we may not dare to form any carnal assumptions of him. The end, therefore, of this precept is, that he will not have his legitimate worship profaned with superstitious rites. Wherefore, in a word, he calls us off, and wholly abstracts us from carnal observances, which our foolish minds are accustomed to devise, when they conceive of God according to the grossness of their own apprehensions; and therefore he calls us to the service which rightfully belongs to him; that is, the spiritual worship which he has instituted. He marks what is the grossest transgression of this kind; that is, external idolatry. And this precept consists of two parts. The first restrains us from licentiously daring to make God, who is incomprehensible, the subject of our senses, or to represent him under any visible form. The second prohibits us from paying religious adoration to any images.[228]

It is very important to note that Calvin saw this commandment as essentially related to worship: it is about "the kind of worship with which he ought to be honoured."

The three verses of this Second Commandment are one sentence. This one sentence has to do with worship and our representation of God. If taken generally, as some Hebrews did and some Christians have, it will then mean an abolition of all painting, sculpture, *and* photography. Such an interpretation is absurd and contrary to Scripture. God Himself, in giving the orders for His sanctuary, *required* the making of the images of the cherubim, the brazen bull, carved pomegranates, and so on. These were not for worship, but to adorn His sanctuary.

Keil and Delitzsch observed:

> It is not only evident from the context that the allusion is not the making of images generally, but to the construction of figures of God as objects of religious

> reverence or worship, but this is expressly stated in v. 5; so that even *Calvin* observes, that "there is no necessity to refute what some have foolishly imagined, that sculpture and painting of every kind are condemned here." With the same aptness he has just before observed, that "although Moses speaks of idols, there is no doubt that by implication he condemns all the forms of false worship, which men have invented for themselves."[229]

Homemade gods of all kinds, material and intellectual, are forbidden, along with all forms of false worship.

Disobedience to this commandment, and the practice of false worship, means judgment "unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (v. 5). Ellison has called attention to an important aspect of this phrase. Since the Depression of the 1930s, which began among farmers in the 1920s, changes have taken place in family life in the United States. Education has been diluted and prolonged, a process which began with Horace Mann in the 1830s. In the 1930s, the idea was to keep people off the job market by raising the age of mandatory schooling. Many parents since then live to see only their grandchildren, not the fourth generation. In Israel, the third and fourth generations were usually close at hand.[230] Judgment for false worship and false doctrines of God affects the entire family, and hence an entire culture very quickly.

As against this, the meaning of v. 6 is that God's mercy extends to the thousandth generation "of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Deadly as the results of evil are, even more powerful and enduring are the consequences of faithfulness. There is great reason for hope because of this sentence.

It is important to note that, while no image can comprehend the meaning of God, and hence is false on this ground, the *reason* God gives for His prohibition is, "for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (v. 5). The stress is on God's *exclusiveness*. We are told,

> I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Isa. 42:8).

> …I will not give my glory unto another (Isa. 48:11).

The Hebrew word *jealous* is closely related to *zealous*; there is neither indecision nor any halfway measure in the Lord.

Because of this fact, God's order exacts penalties. Just as diseases can be transmitted in a family, so too can sin and its consequences be transmitted. A man who lays waste a family inheritance penalizes the succeeding generations; so too does a man who worships God falsely and holds erroneous beliefs.

Josephus' comment on this commandment, and the first and third as well, is of interest:

> The first commandment teaches us, That there is but one God, and that we ought to worship him only; the second commands us not to make the image of any living creature, to worship it; the third, That we must not swear by God in a false matter.[231]

Rawlinson saw the meaning of this commandment as, "Thou shalt not make to thee any graven image … so as to worship it."[232]

We saw earlier that, because art is so essentially tied to religion, many Christians in the early church rejected art because they saw it as pagan. There is a need to formulate a Christian doctrine of art and to see its implications for our faith.

Chapter Sixty
The Third Commandment
(*Exodus 20:7*)

> 7. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

Like so much else in the law, the Third Commandment has been cheapened by cheap and limited interpretations. It is commonly confined to the prohibition of idle swearing, which is true, but the commandment means far more. The word translated as *vain* is in the Hebrew *shav*, from a root meaning to rush over, devastate, lay waste, or destroy; it means to desolate, to be destructive and evil, idolatrous, useless, or false. Both James Moffatt and the Berkeley Version translate it in Exodus 20:7 as *profanely*, "You should not use the name of the LORD your God profanely."

The meaning of this law appears also in another statement of it:

> And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:12).

In this verse, *profane* is *châlal* (*khawlal*), to bore, pierce, wound, dissolve, or break. Thus, the commandment means that we must not dissolve, break, devastate, or destroy God's order.

There is an essential reference here to a court of justice. God's order is itself inseparable from justice, and to swear falsely by God's name is to take part in the destruction of justice. An oath in God's name is a conditional curse (Lev. 6:1-7); a false witness brought judgment on the swearer. A witness must testify, especially against a false oath (Lev. 5:1). A false witness must be punished by the same penalty as the case involves; for instance, in a murder case, a false witness incurs the death penalty (Deut. 19:16-21).

It is a serious error, and a form of antinomianism, to limit the application of the law to individuals. The law applies to men *and* to society. There is an essential link between the faith and character of men and the social order they live in. To assume that a society can be just when the people are not is a modern heresy. It gives an independent life and character to a state and a society apart from the people in it. This illusion is essential to the errors of the U.S. State Department and millions of Americans: they assume that the United States, its Constitution, and its laws have an independent character from the people. All that is necessary is to allow the immigration of alien, non-Christian peoples into the U.S., and to assure them of equal rights, and they will become what the Americans of 1800 or 1900 were. This same illusion marks Europe.

Blasphemy was once seriously regarded in Europe and the Americas because it was recognized that at the core of Western civilization's order was reverence for the Name of God and the justice of His order.

In April, 1989, at Brown University, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., confessed to "a certain amusement when I hear the Judeo-Christian tradition praised" as the source of the good in our world. Rather, he said, "the age of equality" has been the great source of good. Amazingly, Schlesinger listed as one of the benefits of modern egalitarianism "the abolition of torture!" Torture, common to antiquity, was reintroduced by the Renaissance and has never been more prevalent than in our time.

Both Schlesinger and those who are indifferent to the moral evils of our time despise God's order. We can seek to dissolve or break God's Name, to profane His justice and order, either by a dishonest and false use of His Name and order, or by separating that order from God and assuming it to be man's creation. Jose Ortega y Gasset defined the new barbarians as those who believe that civilization is a natural product, "that civilisation is *there* in just the same way as the earth's crust and the forest primeval."[233] We despise God's Name when we separate Him from His creation and ascribe its order and purpose in terms of something else.

The Westminster Larger Catechism cited the wide application of this law:

> 112. The third commandment requires, that the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others.
>
> 113. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God's name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked, mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursing, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and fulfilling them if of things unlawful, murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious and unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lust and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by uncomfortable, unwise, unfruitful and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.

Notice the scope of all this: it includes "the not using of God's name as is required," and also "misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it," and also failing to acknowledge "God's decrees and providences."

This commandment is inseparably linked to oaths. Calvin said of oaths, "It consists in calling upon God to witness, to confirm the truth of any declaration that we make." "Execrations" are falsely called oaths, he added, and "are not worthy to be mentioned among oaths."[234] The common use of oaths is on taking office, and before giving testimony in a court of law. In the Name of God as the absolute Truth (John 14:6), we affirm in our oath our intention to uphold

God's justice. The fact of the oath is basic to social order. It declares that there is an order and a Person beyond man and this world Who is the supreme Judge over all creation and whose word and order alone endure. In oath-taking, we appeal to that order and declare our faith in His eternal justice in the face of all human tyrannies.

Calvin said of the oath,

> … we are justly said to profess our religion to the Lord, when we invoke his name to bear witness to us. For thereby we confess that he is truth itself, eternal and immutable; whom we call not only as a witness of the truth, excelling all others, but also as the only defender of it, who is able to bring to light the things which are concealed, and in a word, as the searcher of all hearts.[235]

The godly oath is virtually gone from the courtrooms and the oaths of office of the United States. Men now solemnly swear they will uphold their office or tell the truth, but they swear by themselves, not by God. In other words, such a person swears by himself as ultimate. This assumes that ultimate truth and order depend on man, not on God. Such a view is a logical consequence of humanism. It is erosive of society because it denies any ultimate truth and order beyond man. Every man then becomes his own god and king.

Retaining the Name of God in oaths while using it falsely is equally sinful, for in so doing we make a hypocritical claim to authority. The Name of God is then invoked to cover our pretensions to truth, power, and justice.

To *take* the Name in vain can be rendered, "You shall not lift up (or, take up) the name of the LORD...." God will not hold such a one guiltless or *unpunished*.[236] A trust in lies is a part of general lawlessness. According to Jeremiah 7:8-11, God declares:

> 8. Behold ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.
> 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

> 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?
> 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

In Matthew 21:13, our Lord cites v. 11; when God's Name is falsely used, then faith in God and His order are gone, and all sins are commonplace.

According to Cate, this commandment was also a prohibition of the belief that the mere use of God's Name would have magical properties, i.e., appeals to God as a general insurance agent, the coupling of "God and country" and like usages, under the illusion that this would place us on the side of justice and order.[237] However, to bless and curse in the Name of the LORD "was virtually a proclamation of His revealed will and purpose to different categories of men."[238] To tell a rapist, a homosexual, a murderer, or a perjurer that he is under God's curse is thus to declare God's word to him, whereas to tell someone who serves God faithfully that he or she is blessed is again to declare God's word.

Our Lord condemns all trivial oaths in Matthew 5:33-37; He does not speak of execrations but of oaths made for trifling reasons. Some, like the Quakers, have taken this as a prohibition of all oaths. Such a view sets aside to the Old Testament and then misinterprets the New.

Chadwick said that "the name of God is not taken in vain when men … are conscious of His nearness."[239] Men may talk about someone freely if he is not present, but they fall silent when he walks into the room. If we are constantly conscious of the presence of God, we do not take His Name in vain, nor do we doubt the reality of His justice and order.

Chapter Sixty-One

The Fourth Commandment

(*Exodus 20:8-11*)

> 8. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
> 9. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:
> 10. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:
> 11. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

One of the clearest distinguishing marks of Christianity is its requirement of a unity of faith and life, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). As against Pharisaic formalism, St. Paul declared, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly … But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:28-29). This fact applies clearly to all the Law, and certainly to the Fourth Commandment.

According to Leviticus 23:1-3,

> 1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
> 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.
> 3. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

God classifies the sabbath as a feast day. The idea of a joyless sabbath is a contradiction. The old-fashioned Sunday dinner and family gathering, inclusive of kinfolk, is in terms of Leviticus 23:1-3, the sabbath as a feast day, a celebration of rest. A weekly feast day is God's mandate.

Another text is also revelatory, Ezekiel 20:12:

> Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

The Hebrew word for *sign* is *ʾôwth*, meaning a signal, omen, prodigy, or evidence; it implies a miraculous appearing. The sabbath is a sign in this sense between God and His covenant people. God made heaven and earth, "and all that in them is" in six days "and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). Because God is the absolute sovereign, and because "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18), there are no surprises or new events for God in time and eternity. God rests in His total government and providence, His absolute control of all things.

The sabbath, God's ordained rest for us, is a sign for us because it is a weekly remembrance that the future does not depend upon us but upon God, and we rest in the confidence of His victory. It is a feast day because of this fact. As Christians especially we rejoice that He, upon whose shoulder is the government of all things, has come (Isa. 9:6).

Calvin saw three purposes in the sabbath rest:

> For it was the design of the heavenly Lawgiver, under the rest of the seventh day, to give the people of Israel a figure of the spiritual rest, by which the faithful ought to refrain from their own works, in order to leave God to work within them. His design was, secondly, that there should be a stated day, on which they might assemble together to hear the law and perform the ceremonies, or at least which they might especially devote to meditations on his works; that by this recollection they might be led to the exercises of piety. Thirdly, he thought it right that

> servants, and persons living under the jurisdiction of others, should be indulged with a day of rest, that they might enjoy some remission from their labour.[240]

With respect to Ezekiel 20:12, Calvin added: "We must rest altogether, that God may operate within us."[241]

Calvin saw the Sabbath "abrogated" as man's rest because Jesus Christ is our rest, "the true fulfillment of the sabbath."[242] It is now, he said, a day of worship and prayer, and rest from labor. The abrogation was for him in the relocation of rest primarily in Christ rather than in the day.

The term *sabbath* is applied not only to the seventh day and the seventh year, but also to the day of atonement, clearly indicating the relationship of rest to redemption.

Before Exodus, we have no reference to sabbath observance. Some see the use of the word "remember" as evidence of prior observances. However, we routinely use the word "remember" in instruction to stress something important. The sabbath is a covenantal day, and its proper observance requires *national* participation. While family and church observances are essential, they are partial. A covenantal nation and people is the goal of the sabbath. The sabbath was introduced to Israel just before the Law was given when the rules of manna gathering were set forth in Exodus 16:16-31.

The Fourth and Fifth Commandments differ from the other eight in being positive statements: "Remember the sabbath day" and "Honour thy father and thy mother." The others are all negative: "Thou shalt not …." Because law is a restraint on sin, laws generally must be negative. They are a restraint upon man, and also upon civil government, whose concern must be to restrain evildoers. To honor father and mother is a personal command to further the authority of family life, and the sabbath commandment in this form again calls for positive action in observance rather than restraint.

This positive aspect is very clear: "Remember the sabbath day, *to keep it holy*" (v. 8). It is to be a separate and dedicated day; it requires a cessation of labor in order to celebrate God's feast day, a day of assurance in God's victory, and our rest therein.

It is important to remember that animals are included in the sabbath rest. In earlier years, when animals were the means of transportation, many people would give the horses which carried them to church extra oats on their return so that the horses would also have their feast day and rest for the remainder of the sabbath.

The Hebrew sabbath was observed from sundown the night before until the morning after, and many Christians keep a like observance.

In v. 11, we are told that God commands the sabbath rest as our Creator. Because He is the Creator, He establishes the rules of life, and the Sabbath is such a rule. We are therefore to keep the sabbath as a means of respect for God and for the life He has given us. The day of rest is a day of feasting and worship because He so ordains it.

In God's law, all fasting on the sabbath, *except* for the Day of Atonement, is forbidden. Jewish practice excluded mourning on the sabbath, as does Christian usage; nor are funerals held on the sabbath.

More than fifty years ago, Chief Rabbi Hertz of England predicted that,

> Without the observance of the Sabbath, of the olden Sabbath, of the Sabbath as perfected by the Rabbis, the whole of Jewish life would in time disappear.[243]

Honeycutt tellingly called attention to the dedication of the firstfruits to God: "the whole of the crop was compressed into the first offering." This was "the principle of *par pro toto* (the part may stand for the whole). This also applies to the sabbath: it represents the whole of the week to follow; all of time is dedicated to God in the observance of the one day:

> By refraining from his own efforts on that day, man effectually recognized divine ownership. Thus, all time belonged to God, as did the whole of the creation. Just as all of the grain, grapes, flock, herd, fruit, etc., belonged to him, and man acknowledged this by sacrificing a part of the whole in lieu of the whole, so in case of the sabbath. Man sanctified a part of the week, and in so doing acknowledged that in reality the whole was the Lord's. Rest allowed the whole of creation to return to its primal condition with the Lord.[244]

The sabbath finds expression also in the rest decreed for the seventh year, and in jubilee.

In pagan cultures, work is seen as misery, and the goal is an escape from work through wealth. Escapism is both a religious and an economic goal. George Rawlinson observed:

> His law of the Sabbath established a conformity between the method of His own working and that of His reasonable creatures, and taught men to look on work, not as an aimless, indefinite, incessant, weary round, but as leading on to an end, a rest, a fruition, a time for looking back, and seeing the result and rejoicing in it. Each Sabbath is such a time, and is a type and foretaste of that eternal "sabbatizing" in another world which "remaineth for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9).[245]

Time is not for us a dreary round leading only unto death. Despite its ugly discoloration by sin, it is a glorious process of redemption. Time is God's feasttime for man. The six days have their griefs and troubles, but on the seventh we declare our faith and celebrate life and victory.

Chapter Sixty-Two
The Fifth Commandment
(*Exodus 20:12*)

> 12. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Exodus 20:12)

This commandment is restated in various ways, and the most notable instances are Leviticus 19:3 and Ephesians 6:1-4:

> Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:3).

> 1. Children, obey your parents in the LORD: for this is right.
> 2. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;
> 3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
> 4. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

In Leviticus 19:3, the Hebrew word for *fear* is *yârê*, and it means both reverence and fear. Family authority is so basic to life that its disappearance means the disintegration of society. Failure to honor and fear parental authority means decadence in a culture. This is connected with keeping the sabbath. It is the recognition of an order beyond man which must be honored; its destruction is to be feared.

While adults are to *honor* their parents, children are commanded to *obey* them. This is to be an obedience "in the LORD" (Eph. 6:1), because only then is it righteous or just and not simply fearful. Only "this is right," says St. Paul, because it is an obedience as part of God's order. Paul tells us that this is "the first commandment with promise," and the promise is "that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). The word translated from

the Greek as *first* is *prōtos*, meaning chief, best, or foremost in time, place, order, or importance. It means that honoring one's parents is in God's sight the foremost commandment in human affairs, and by His ordination carries a promise. The promise has two emphases: *first*, "that it may be well with thee," and, *second*, "that thou mayest live long on the earth." This is a very practical commandment, as our Lord makes clear: it begins with the care of elderly parents. In Mark 7:9-13, we read:

> 9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
> 10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:
> 11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.
> 12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;
> 13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.

Our Lord places the fulfillment of our responsibility to our parents *above* our responsibility to God as a *practical* test of faith. It is easy to talk of loving God, and many do who will not tithe nor observe moral requirements in many spheres. God does not publish a report on our delinquencies here and now. How we treat our parents reveals what our faith is, according to our Lord. Faith has practical consequences, or it is not faith.

Parents, however, are not allowed to exploit this commandment. The children do not exist for their sake but the Lord's; hence, "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Children are not to be reared to buttress parental pride and purpose, but the Lord's kingdom.

In the New Testament Greek, the word *honor* means *pay*, and in 1 Timothy 5:17, the statement, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," refers to double-pay. In the

Hebrew, as in Numbers 22:17, it also refers to very great pay. Thus, to honor parents means plainly to support them well.

It is a mistake to assume that, because in Hebrew and pagan antiquity, the family was often highly regarded, that this meant a uniform respect for parents. Even in cultures dedicated to ancestor worship, parents were often abusively treated. Men have usually been worse than their verbal professions would have us believe. In Proverbs 19:26 and 28:24 we read:

> He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach (Prov. 19:26).
>
> Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer (Prov. 28:24).

To *waste* one's father means to slander or derogate him, and to drive out a mother means to deny her support. To rob one's parents is to deny them their due support, as well as to defraud them of their portion of the estate.

The Fourth and Fifth Commandments are closely linked. The sabbath represents God's order and God's requirement concerning time. God governs time, not man, and to keep the sabbath is to recognize that God governs all time absolutely. Honoring parents is to recognize God's order with respect to life and to honor it accordingly. God promises life to those who honor His ordained temporal source of life.

The "right to life," a modern term and not a Biblical one, can in a sense be applied to the Fifth Commandment. We are given a *promise* of life in return for godly obedience to our immediate source of life.

Over the centuries, many theologians have seen in this commandment a basis for respect and honor for all duly constituted authorities under God. Rome made parental authority the basis for all authorities, and this concept has long influenced the church. This is an interpretation which

has often been misused to justify tyrants. There is little question, however, that we are not permitted to be abusive of our origins, our past, and valid authorities.

As we have seen, this commandment requires the support of parents where needed. In Exodus 20:12, the father is named first; in Leviticus 19:3, the mother, to indicate that both are equally entitled to our care and support.

The order of the commandments is not an accident. The sabbath law calls for respect for God's order, and honoring parents means to respect life as well as God's order. The subsequent commandments are closely related to these. Thus, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13) requires a respect for all life in terms of God's law, and "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14) respect for family life.

Antinomians have argued against the whole law of God, as though God did not give it. Many, like C. H. M., argue that no man can keep the law, and, while not Calvinists, at this point they stress the enormity and power of man's sin.[246] Their obvious presupposition is that the sin of man prevails over the grace of God in man's life. Theirs is a new form of Pelagianism. Whereas Pelagius stressed the moral powers of man without grace, the new Pelagians stress the morally evil power of man as against grace. In either case, we have heresy.

The new Pelagians are content to trust the state to restrain man, because they do not believe that grace can do so. Thus, statist coercion becomes the solution. It does not occur to them that coercion by an evil state compounds evil rather than restrains it.

Whenever men limit the sovereign and predestinating grace of God, they enhance the powers of man. The shift in power may accrue to individual man, to the family, or to the church, but the major transfer is to the state. In every sphere of life, the effect of the shift becomes evident, but most clearly in the "sovereign" state. The issues of life are then transferred from God to the civil order, and the state provides, through its branches, agencies, and bureaucracies, a new hierarchy of power. The pomp of power leaves the church, where democracy and equality with God begin

to be stressed, to attach itself to the state and its functions. Ultimate power, whenever separated from God, attaches itself to the human order.

Chapter Sixty-Three
The Sixth Commandment
(*Exodus 20:13*)

13. Thou shalt not kill. (Exodus 20:13)

There are in the Hebrew ten words which are translated in the King James version as *kill*. In nine of these words, the meaning is inclusive of murder, of lawless killing, and this is true of Exodus 20:13. The word *murder* usually restricts the meaning normally to human life, whereas in Scripture these are restraints on all killing apart from God's law. The use of animals and vegetation for food is of God's ordination (Gen. 9:3-4), but restrictions are placed on the killing of animals for food, in that, in hunting birds, both mother and young could not be taken (Deut. 22:6-7; Lev. 22:28), and a like provision governed other animals (as, perhaps, in Exodus 34:26). The use of the word *kill* thus preserves the broader meaning.

In our time, we have a strange situation: on the one hand, there is a fanatical dedication to preserving the life of trees and animals, and, on the other, fierce protection of abortion "rights," as well as a high number of murders combined with a hostility to the death penalty. We exalt life in a century of mass murders and vicious rulers. The roots of this are in the separation of life and law from God. Life is now seen as an evolutionary accident, and law is an instrument of rule and authority created by the state. By separating life and law from the totally personal God of Scripture, we have depersonalized both life and law.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Albert Schweitzer was regarded by many as one of the greatest men of all history. His philosophy of reverence for life is still with us in the persons of many environmentalists and also animal rights advocates. Schweitzer felt strongly about the life of worms crawling onto a sidewalk during a heavy rain. By shifting reverence from God to all life as such, Schweitzer depersonalized life and helped destroy reverence.

Writing from a very different perspective than orthodox Christianity, Anton C. Ziyderveld noted:

> Religion no longer binds together the different sectors of life; it has been institutionally isolated into one sector among many, and in the process, it has been relativized into merely one possible explanation of life and the world. In the consciousness of modern man, religion is largely restricted to a particular institutional sector (the Church) where it functions as a kind of private preference on the part of individuals…. By and large, religion has lost its integrating function with regard to society as a whole.[247]

The result has been a decay of authority in its historic meaning. Ziyderveld held that this was not a collapse into anarchy but the replacement of the authority of religion by a new authoritative and coercive force:

> I propose to view *modern bureaucracy as the general coercive force in a pluralistic society that keeps this society together as a functionally integrated whole*.[248]

The title Ziyderveld gave to what has resulted is *the abstract society*. We can add that this is a return to the Greek ideal of abstractionism: truth as ideas, ultimate reality as abstract forms, and the personal as a transitory thing.

But the abstract society reduces men to abstractions, and the results are deadly. In the modern age, we have seen the triumph, and now the growing collapse, of economic man. Both capitalism and socialism describe man as an economic animal; while capitalism carries with it elements of its Christian past, it reduces man to a worker, a hired *hand*. A *hand* can be a man, a machine, or a robot. To treat a man as a hand is to deny that he is a creature made in God's image, a person. We can junk a machine, but can we junk a man?

In a very important parable, one of the longer ones, our Lord tells us how God works, and how a godly householder works (Matt. 20:1-16). The Lord of the vineyard hires men, some early in the morning, others at mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon. He then pays them all the same wages

promised to those who began in the early morning. Those who worked all day protested, but the Lord silenced them, saying in part, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" *Good* is a translation of *agathos*, which we have as the name Agatha. It refers to being good in a moral sense, in this case, charitable. The crisis of our age is that we have separated economics and morality: it is routinely assumed that economic concerns alone should govern the monetary and commercial realms, because moral concerns supposedly do not apply. This segregation of morality and economics is a violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." It depersonalizes man into a hired hand. We do have class hostilities now, not because the workers are not better off than previously, but because they are only better off economically. They have been depersonalized, and this is demeaning. I recall meeting in my travels an older executive who was fired during a recession because his very high pay made him expendable: perhaps four or five young men could have been added to the staff for the same sum. While he had some financial security, he was deeply hurt. He could not keep from repeating two things: they had admitted that they could not fault his work, and, he said, "I thought we were friends, working together to promote the company."

In our abstract society, men are physically murdered every day, but men are also spiritually murdered by depersonalizing tactics. In the 1950s I met a minor corporate figure who regretfully told me that he could not establish roots in the church or community because his corporation wanted loyalty only to itself and would transfer him and others regularly to keep them loyal as company men. For this he was well paid, at a price to himself. Some jobs *require* moving; this is different. It is the deliberate espousal of abstractions that is deadly.

Our Biblical faith tells us that religion is not one aspect of life, but the governing and total force in all of it. We are persons created in the image of God, and we must not be depersonalized in any sphere of life and thought.

But depersonalization is basic to the abstract society. Many today insist on environmental causes for crime. Such views increase the evil by denying responsibility and depersonalizing the offender. An obstetrician who recently telephoned me spoke of the absence of the personal sense of sin among those whom he sees regularly. He delivered the baby of a ten-year old girl, and was

present at her birth, her mother's birth, her grandmother's birth, and had delivered the children of the forty-five year old great-grandmother, all illegitimate.

If we reduce life to economics, or biology, or anything else, we deny its God-given meaning, and we violate the Sixth Commandment. To keep this law positively means,

> 37. … Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
> 38. This is the first and great commandment.
> 39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
> 40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

The Soviet Union is an example of the abstract society, one in which abstract social goals are more important than people. It is God's grim irony that Marxism, with its plan of salvation by political-economic abstractions, is so great a failure in both spheres and is a murderous regime. If abstractions govern men, the lives of people become a minor consideration.

Abstractions are today *reality* to many people. Thus, *by definition*, it is held by many that the revolutionary group is always democratic, progressive, and liberty-loving, and the facts of revolutions from the French Revolution to the present are disregarded because the abstract idea of revolution is seen as the reality. *By definition*, all who oppose a revolution are reactionaries, evil capitalists, and enemies of the people. The word *people* becomes an abstraction to represent what the revolutionists insist is their following. At point after point, abstractions replace God's reality.

In statist education, abstractionism and anti-Christianity prevail, with deadly results for men and society. Not surprisingly, death education is more and more a part of the curriculum. As Proverbs 8:36 tells us, "all they that hate me love death."

Chapter Sixty-Four
The Seventh Commandment
(*Exodus 20:14*)

20. Thou shalt not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14)

The history of attitudes towards adultery is one of amazing extremes. At times in history, it has been regarded as of no importance whether or not a man or a woman were adulterous. In the court of Louis XV, for example, and in other courts of the era, a husband who objected to his wife's adulteries would have been regarded as a fool. In other cultures, the penalties for adultery have at times included the disfigurement of the woman (such as cutting off her nose), the emasculation of the man, and death, often by very torturous means.

How adultery, and other sexual offenses, is regarded by a culture depends on its views of the family. If the family is seen as the basic institution, then adultery is treason in that society, as it is in Biblical law. If the state is central to a culture, then treason is a crime against the state, and sexual acts increasingly become a matter of choice rather than governed by public necessity. Every society protects its core, its life-center; if this is faith in the God of Scripture and the Biblically-governed family, the protection of faith and family is a matter of *public necessity*. The life of society, then, depends on respect for the faith and the family. If, however, the core of a society is the humanistic state, then everything centers on the defense of the state as a *public necessity*. The family and sexual conduct thus are relegated by the statist culture to the status of private choice. There is a progressive denial of the public consequences of "private" acts, and family life and sexuality are seen as belonging to a realm of private choices which are irrelevant to society.

In Scripture, the purpose of punishment is to protect God's order, give protection and justice to the righteous, and to suppress evil. However, as H. B. Clark pointed out,

> In the modern view, the aims of law are justice, liberty, and peace, and the happiness and welfare of the people.[49] Primarily it is the purpose of law, as always, to maintain peace and order,[50] or, it has been said, "to insure domestic tranquility."[51] Justice and law, as words, have no necessary connection, nor is the law necessarily an instrument by which justice is attained.[52]

Clark's footnotes to this statement are as follows:

> [49]See Preambles to U.S. and Texas constitutions; also 1 Root's (Conn.) Reports (1789-1793) 16.
>
> [50]See 14 Or. LR (1934-35) 455.
>
> "The triumph of the law is not in always ending conflicts rightly, but in ending them peaceably. And we may be certain that we do less injustice by the worst processes of the law than would be done by the best use of violence." Robt. H. Jackson, Associate Justice US Supreme Court. Address before the Amer. Bar Assn., Indianapolis, Oct. 2, 1941.
>
> [51]See note 49, supra.
>
> "The law is, after all, simply a method of social control." 9 Am. L. Sch. Rev. (1942) 1284 (Shepherd).
>
> [52]28 Yale LJ (1918-19) 842, 843.

The nature of God is inseparable from His Being; God is by nature totally just, true, good, and holy. The state has no *given* nature, except that its existence depends on the exercise of power. As a result, the state becomes more and more an expression of accumulated powers and less and less the exponent of professed virtues and liberties.

The state, as it accumulates power, becomes less happy with powers in the family, church, business, farming, the community, and all other spheres. It, accordingly, diminishes liberties and increases license. To illustrate, the family today is so heavily taxed that its ownership of property is becoming nominal. To spank a child is to be guilty of child abuse. Families home-schooling their children in many U.S. states and countries abroad are found guilty by the courts. Children

are encouraged by some school counselors to rebel against their parents. Much more can be added.

At the same time that these liberties are curtailed, license is increased. Abortion and homosexuality are legal, and there are attempts at legalizing incest and child molestation. There can be no prayer nor Bible-reading in state schools, but sexual license can be taught. We have seen, in the twentieth century, a dramatic shift in what constitutes public necessity. The rise of statism has been central to this shift.

In Proverbs 6:27-29, adultery is described as playing with fire. It is declared to be *personally* destructive. In Exodus 20:14, the law is given as a *covenantal law* and as basic to the life of a people; its covenantal and social implications are uppermost; in Proverbs 6:27-29, the counsel is addressed to a young man and is hence personal. In our era, the personal aspect is often alone stressed, and sexual morality is seen in its personal rather than social dimensions. Both need to be stressed.

In Leviticus 18, we have a list of sexual offenses which are prefaced by these sentences:

> 4. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.
> 5. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD (Leviticus 18:4-5).

Verse 4, and 5a, give us an order from God: "Ye *shall* do" what I tell you, God says. Because "I am the LORD," you must obey irrespective of what you want or think. Then to this fiat command is added the statement, "which if a man do, he shall live in them." The Berkeley Version rendered this, "whoever practices them enjoys life through them." Life means God's law and grace. God having created all things has ordained the conditions of life and happiness. This is the reason why God's law provides us with the only valid public necessities. When the state plays god, it redefines public necessities in its own image and relegates God and His law to the realm of private choices.

A private choice in its clearest sense means, for example, that I am free to choose between vanilla and strawberry ice creams. The choice of neither, or the rejection of both, has no social consequences for God or man. This is what private choice means. To relegate faith in God and His law, the family and sexual conduct, to the realm of private choices is a decision of momentous consequence for man and society. It constitutes history's major revolution. Yet, we are asked to believe that this is freedom.

There can, however, be no return to God's law in this sphere without a return to Biblical faith and a reestablishment of the priority of the family and its life. A culture is the expression of a people's life, and, life now being seen in statist terms, it cannot by anything other than a reversal of priorities become again family centered. Statists believe in social change by statist coercion, not by the Holy Spirit working in the life of man.

One of the more influential books on the family in the modern era was Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), a thoroughly evolutionary study. Morgan saw the family as developing out of a primitive promiscuity. For him the family was a stage in the development of civil government, and he confidently concluded:

> The foregoing sequence may require modification, and perhaps essential change in some of its members; but it affords both a rational and a satisfactory explanation of the facts of human experience, so far as they are known, and the course of human progress, in developing the ideas of the family and of government in the tribes of mankind.[249]

Today, at many points, Morgan's thesis has been set aside, but, in its essential aspect, Morgan's view still stands in that it is accepted as valid that an evolutionary and natural origin for the family must be found, and that the family is a stage in human evolution towards another form of social organization.

The Bible declares that man, sexuality, marriage, and law are all of God's creation and ordination and hence totally under His government. A naturalistic determination in this sphere is a violation of it and is anti-God and hence anti-life. God's order, and not man's sinful will, must prevail.

Chapter Sixty-Five
The Eighth Commandment
(*Exodus 20:15*)

15. Thou shalt not steal. (Exodus 20:15)

There is scarcely a culture anywhere in the world without a law in some form against theft. These laws, however, have a very different character from the Biblical legislation. According to J.A. MacCulloch, in various societies,

> Again, we generally meet with the idea that the weight of the crime varies both according to the rank (and often the age and sex) of the offender and according to that of the victim. Chiefs or men of rank may commit crimes with impunity or with slight punishment, but crime committed against them is generally punished more severely than that against lesser men.[250]

In our time, the U.S. Congress regularly exempts itself from laws it passes to control others. This kind of exemption has been a common fact in history.

To a great degree, this problem stems from the nature of sovereignty. The sovereign is the *source* of law, but is not *under* the law. With the God of Scripture, we have a difference. He is the source of law, and His law is the expression of His being and nature. God does more than require justice of us; He is in all His being justice, so that all His ways are perfect righteousness (or justice) and holiness. God cannot be other than just because He is justice. This, however, is emphatically not true of all human would-be sovereigns, nor of judges, nor of any man. Human authorities, by setting themselves up as the source of law and justice, free themselves from God's justice and become evil.

As a result, while laws against theft are routine around the world, they do not bind their human sources. This means that the rulers or states which issued and issue laws against stealing see no

restraint against theft on their part. Non-Biblical laws against stealing are ultimately humanistic, and they bind the people, not the rulers.

This means that the state is free to steal, but the people are not. Because we in the United States have abandoned God's law for the state's, the state is now free to steal from us because it rejects a law higher than itself. Some of the results of this are the property tax, the income tax, and a variety of forms of confiscation of property.

If the state, as the central power in society, is not under restraint and is free to expropriate by law whatever it chooses, then it follows that freedom will not long endure. In this century, we have seen the rapid decline of man's freedom as the state's powers have increased.

The implication of this commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," should be clear now. It is central to the doctrine of the limitation of all human powers, including emphatically the powers of church and state. The state is not the ultimate source of this law; God is.

This means also that the state is not the source of property. In the Lockean tradition, property is the creation of the state; or, the state was a social compact established to ensure the private ownership of property. In either form, control of property is in statist hands *as the source of law and ownership*. The Lockean world has thus moved logically from private ownership to ownership by the state as the trustee of the people. If justice has its origins in the state, then whatever the state does is therefore just.

There is a distinction in civil law between public crimes and private crimes. Public crimes are offenses which affect the whole community, whereas private crimes are seen as "murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, perjury, and the like."[251] According to Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." Crimes against fruit trees, for example, are religious in nature in Scripture, as in Deuteronomy 20:19-20; war could not justify damage to fruit trees. Now "crimes" against trees or waters are seen as offenses against the state, and such "crimes" include accidental oil spills. In some instances, murder has been treated more lightly than an environmental offense. The reason is that murder is now a

private crime, as are adultery and theft where persons are involved, and perjury as well in similarly "private" cases. Public crimes are treated with increasing severity.

Many crimes have been shifted from one sphere to another. In ancient Greece, debasing the coinage was a crime punishable by death.[252] This penalty, however, applied then as now to private debases or counterfeiters, not to the rulers who ordered the adulteration of money, whereas in Biblical law it is an offense against God's order.

In the Bible, there is no word for crime; what we call crime is in Scripture a sin, *a form of evil*. In terms of Biblical law, a power state is not possible; it is a rebellion against God and His law. It is a denial of *the limitation of all earthly powers* mandated by God's law-word. As such, it is warfare against God, and it is a revolution with devastating consequences for men. In 1 Samuel 8, we have that prophet's warning against a departure from God's government in favor of man's. It means the drafting of a people's sons and daughters for compulsory state service; it leads to the confiscation of the people's land and money, and to heavy taxation. In time, Samuel says, the people will complain against all these things, but God declares:

> And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day (1 Samuel 8:18).

The solution to our problems today, as many see it, is stricter law enforcement. The answer is that we are getting stricter law enforcement of public crimes, of crimes against the state and its agencies. The Internal Revenue Service of the U.S. is giving us ever stricter enforcement; the same is true of state property taxes, and all taxes on all levels. Private crimes, being of lesser importance in modern law, are given a lower priority.

Where law comes from God, as in Scripture, strict enforcement is required of all. We are told:

> 16. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

> 17. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it (Deuteronomy 1:16-17).

When the state defines justice, justice then becomes the will of the state. In modern legal theory, the state is the definer, and there is no justice beyond the state.

In Biblical law, restitution is mandatory to the offended person, and to God. In modern law, restitution to the state is required, but not to private persons, although in recent years, some states have restored restitution to persons.

Roman law under the Republic in theory treated all citizens as equal before the law, but not many were citizens. Under the empire, in time all freemen who were in the empire were granted citizenship, but the higher groups had certain immunities, so that the change was more superficial than substantial.[253]

The distinction between public and private crimes is one which has strengthened the power of the state, enabled it to play god, and has been used to destroy the people's freedom. As long as the state is the source of law, this problem will remain. Many a reformer has gained power with a desire to help the people, but has failed miserably because of a failure to understand the nature of law, its legitimate source as God, and the fallacy of the distinction between public and private law. If the law is not God's law, it will be a form of subjugating "private" man, or, the people. There can be no solutions to unrecognized problems.

Chapter 66

The Ninth Commandment

(*Exodus 20:16*)

16. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)

"False witness" has primary reference to a court of law. While there is a general requirement of truth-telling, there is a difference of context. A court of justice must hear the truth from a witness, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in order to expedite justice. A man whose purposes are evil is not entitled to the truth from us, nor to any communication. With regard to the processes of justice, the law concerning perjury is very specific:

> 15. One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.
> 16. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong;
> 17. Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;
> 18. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;
> 19. Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.
> 20. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.
> 21. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Deuteronomy 19:15-21).

Perjury today is routine in the courts and rarely punished. According to Deuteronomy 19:15-21, the laws of testimony are very strict. *First*, there must be corroboration before there can be

conviction. Two or more witnesses, or forms of evidence, are necessary (v. 15). *Second*, if there are contradictions in testimonies given, there must be an investigation to determine if false witness has been given. This investigation will require both priests and judges, i.e., experts in God's law as well as knowledgeable trial judges (v. 16-19). This requires that testimonies not only be heard but also be assessed, so that, in a very real sense, not only the suspect on trial, but the witnesses also are liable to the court's judgment. To give false witness is as much against justice as the offense of the suspect. *Third*, this equivalence of the offense and the false testimony concerning it is borne out in the penalty for perjury. If the witness testified in a murder trial falsely, whether for or against the suspect, he incurred the death penalty for his perjury. The false witness received the penalty for the offense involved in the trial.

This commandment concerns offenses against our "neighbor." The law also defines who our neighbor is:

> Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:18).

> 33. And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.
> 34. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:33-34).

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, our Lord makes it very clear that our neighbor includes all men (Luke 10:25-37; see v. 29).

This commandment against false witness thus, *first* of all, requires us to give priority to justice above ourselves and our loyalties to friends. Since we are not the source of justice, we cannot bend our testimony to suit ourselves or our friends. God's justice must prevail. It is more important that our friend be damaged than that God's justice be frustrated, because where God's justice is neglected all society suffers.

Second, our neighbor must include all men. We are not the judge: God is, and both the judges and the witnesses will be judged by Him. Therefore God's justice must prevail, and all society prospers when this is so. Our testimony must not be partial to some men, but rather faithful to God's justice.

Third, this commandment has to do with speaking with *words*. Unlike God's other creatures on earth, man speaks; he has a vocabulary, and words are central to living. When a man defiles words and speech by using them to lie, he then helps damage communication between men. Thinking requires words, and speech is an expression of thought. False witness pollutes language and thinking. It is an aspect of a radical social disorder, and to be indifferent to perjury is to assume as normal the reduction of language from a means of communication to a means of warfare. Marxism regards language as a tool to be used, as an instrument for class warfare. Its abuse of language is an aspect of its abuse of man.

Language is a wealth men take for granted, and which they abuse casually. The sometimes fragile ties which make community possible depend very strongly on language. From the evolutionary perspective, language as we know it has been called an "artificial" language as compared to grunts, screams, and various similar thoughtless and wordless expressions. In all such thinking, words, and man are separated from God and the image of God in man. As a consequence, for such men language is merely instrumental and expressive, like grunts of joy or belching. For the Christian, thinking, talking man is the recipient of the revelation of God, the enscriptured word. God created man in His image, to hear and to receive the word of God, and to speak the praise of God, to serve Him, and to rejoice in Him. The various languages express the growth and character of a people.

The growth of evolutionary thinking has sharply eroded language and meaning. *Greetings* on going and coming were once religious, i.e., goodbye was once "God be with you," and, in Spanish, "Vaya con Dios" means "Go with God." The forms and acts of life were invested with meaning because, all things being God's creation, all things derive their meaning from Him.

Even among cultures where the shamans were and still are given to trances and possessions which we see as demonic, the emphasis was still on the spoken word. The shaman spoke of the mandates from a spirit-world, and the people waited for his word. The word was a power-word because it was an index, ostensibly, to the true order of being. With evolutionary thinking, the *word* has been eroded. What meaning can it have in a universe of chance? How can it communicate when no meaning exists? Given the meaninglessness of the universe, it follows that man is also meaningless, and so too is speech. This led Darwin to a disturbing conclusion:

> But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?[254]

The destruction of words and speech by such thinking means the denial of valid communication, and revelation. Where the word of God is doubted or denied, there is in time a cynicism for all words. Language is cheapened, and society is damaged.

This commandment forbids false witness. To bear false witness is to disobey God; it is a form of insubordination and an assertion that our way is best. To bear honest and true witness means that we believe that God's justice and order are best for us and for all men. It involves a respect for truth, and for speech. It is also related to prayer, because it recognizes the majesty of the truthful witness, and God's ability to hear our every word and to know our every thought. Hence, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

Chapter 67

The Tenth Commandment

(*Exodus 20:17*)

> 20. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. (Exodus 20:17)

This verse is cited by St. Paul in Romans 7:7:

> What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The Greek word Paul uses, translated as *lust,* is *epithymia*. *Covet* is *epithymeō*. They are forms of the same word. The word can express a legitimate desire as well as an illegitimate one. Paul sees this desire as a driving power in man, as a sinful force in man which leads him to envy his neighbor and to seek to possess his neighbor's possessions by means legitimate or illegitimate. Thus, Paul refers to an evil desire which leads man to lawless goals. In 1 John 2:16, we are told that this desire is "of the world," i.e., an aspect of The Fall. Our Lord declares that this evil desire comes from the devil (John 8:44). We have in Paul's reference to this commandment a clear indication of its meaning. Neither in word, thought, nor deed are we to desire or seek to defraud anyone of that which is rightfully theirs. The prosperity of others must not make us envious or ready to subvert the people we envy. Micah speaks of such covetous or envious men who even in their beds are planning the oppression of others:

> 1. Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

> 2. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress [or, defraud] a man and his house, even a man and his heritage (Micah 2:1-2).

The envious man despises what he has and covets his neighbor's things. Jeremiah 5:8 characterizes such men in these words: "They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife."

Our Lord's Prayer requires us to pray for daily trust rather than envy: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). Paul makes the meaning very clear:

> 6. But godliness with contentment is great gain.
> 7. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
> 8. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

We are to be governed by our *calling*, which comes from God, not by our envy of other men. Most people are governed by envy, not by their calling.

In Matthew 20:1-16, the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, our Lord speaks of being gracious. The Lord of the vineyard pays well the men who worked all day, but he pays all who are hired later in the day the same wage. In answer to protests, the Lord of the vineyard says, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matt. 20:15). The word *evil* is the Greek *ponēros*. It can refer to Satan in some forms, as perhaps in Matthew 6:13, "deliver us from evil." The word refers to opposition to God, as in 2 Timothy 3:13.

"Thy neighbor's house" means the totality of his household, i.e., his dwelling-place, land, family, wealth, or "any thing that is thy neighbor's." The commandment then gives some specifics, his wife, servants, and animals. Because all things come from God, what we have is an aspect of God's providence, and we are to use that gratefully rather than regretfully. Resentment over our limitations leads to envy towards others.

Envy is a corrosive force socially, and a great percentage of legislation in the twentieth century is a product of envy and a desire to penalize those who are more successful than we are. Socialism is politicized envy. The envious man does not seek to advance himself so much as to debase the other man. Solomon tells us, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30). Envy thus warps both men and their society. We are told also:

> Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? (Proverbs 27:4)

Envy is thus a very serious and deadly thing. It is revelatory that the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (1973) had no entry for "Envy." It is indicative of the irrelevance of the modern world of ideas to the reality around us that, apart from a very small group of scholars, few have concerned themselves with envy. All around us, however, the sense of community is destroyed by envy.

In Christendom, envy in the past was on all lists of the Seven Deadly Sins (pride, anger, envy, sloth, lust, covetousness, and gluttony). Since the Roman Catholic version listed both envy and covetousness, one can say that it appeared twice, because the two are essentially the same in Scripture. (The seven chief virtues were held to be faith, hope, charity, providence, temperance, chastity, and fortitude).

Envy or covetousness is described by our Lord as a sin which dominates and blinds a man:

> 21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
> 22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.
> 23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt. 6:21-23)

If our moral vision is governed by covetousness, then we have blinded ourselves; we cannot see reality because we have no room in our perspective for anything other than our envy.

In Colossians 3:5, Paul speaks of "covetousness, which is idolatry." It is a way of saying, my will be done; it is a belief that the world is not good unless our envious wants are met. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and again in Ephesians 5:5, Paul gives us a list of the kinds of people who are excluded from the Kingdom of God. The covetous man is placed in ugly company, with thieves, homosexuals, extortioners, whoremongers, and the like.

Avarice has often been cited as a aspect of covetousness. Avarice leads to the accumulation of wealth in all forms for the sake of appearance and domination. The avaricious man may be unable to enjoy his gains because he is too concerned with besting other men and gaining more wealth to find rest in his possessions. Our Lord calls such a man a fool (Luke 12:20). Death comes to strip him of all his gains.

Envy or covetousness paralyzes a society because men are separated one from another by this sin. In many pagan societies, men who gain wealth must divest themselves of their gains in order to live peaceably with others.

Covetousness is marked by a love of plunder and spoliation; the covetous man has a grasping nature. He cannot be a servant of God because he is his own god.

There is another aspect to this Tenth Commandment that E.R. Achtemeier called attention to, namely, that it is a part of covenant law, given to a people who in time would possess Canaan. Every family would receive its share. "To deprive a man of his property is thus to deprive him of his God-given inheritance (c.f. Mic. 2:2; Rom. 7:7; 13:9)."[255]

Feminists have expressed resentment against this law because they see it as listing a wife as property. The answer is, *first*, that Scripture sees both men and women as having property rights to one another, as 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 makes clear. *Second*, it is a false spirituality which despises this fact. We are God's property (Psalm 24:1), and we belong to one another. *Third*, the feminist view is a warped one because it fails to recognize that covetousness seeks to grasp whatever is a neighbor's possession. It is a proud exploitation of what others possess by treating

them as one's creatures, to be used at will. The law speaks realistically about the nature of a fallen world.

That fallen world is called by Augustine the *Kingdom of man*. It may well be called the Kingdom of Envy. Otto Scott has called attention to the fact that men also envy the virtues of others, and seek to tarnish or destroy them. Those who excel must be toppled. Much of what passes as critical analysis is a form of envious hostility.

A major consequence of envy in our time is to make those envied feel guilty because they are richer or more successful than others. Many rich people give foolishly to various unworthy causes to assuage their sense of guilt. Since false guilt cannot be assuaged, the results are unsatisfactory to all but the recipients of the giving.

Chapter 68

The Fear of God

(*Exodus 20:18-21*)

> 18. And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.
> 19. And they said unto Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.
> 20. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove to you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.
> 21. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21)

In these verses, we return to the narrative, and an account of Israel's fear at the supernatural occurrences on Mount Sinai. The word "lightnings" in v. 18 can be rendered as torches, flashes, or fireballs.[256]

Robert L. Cate is right in stating that God came near to Israel in order to *prove* or test them, something basic to all of Exodus.[257] Israel was afraid, and fear can be good and healthy, but it can also be evil. "The true fear of God is to be the desire to avoid sin rather than to avoid the consequences of sin."[258] Moses refers to this distinction with respect to fear in v. 20.

The people asked Moses to be their mediator with God. They wanted no direct confrontation with God. In itself, there was nothing wrong with their request, but it was apparently motivated by a desire not to be too close to God, "lest we die" (v. 19). Again, this could have a favorable meaning. However, later events make it clear that they preferred a remoteness to God because God's covenant and law were not in their hearts. Because their hearts were far from Him, they wanted God to be far from them.

We are told by Moses in Deuteronomy 5:22-31 that God approved of Israel's words but recognized what was in their hearts.

The people asked that Moses be their mediator with God. God approved their request, with knowledge. Thereafter, Israel complained readily and freely about God's mediator in a way in which they would not have dared to address God. Pastors in all ages have been used as scapegoats by people who are really lashing out against God when they indict His servants. They kick the one who is available for kicking and is religiously restrained from lashing back. Their fear of God, like Israel's, is superficial. During World War II, a popular saying was, "There are no atheists in foxholes," i.e., during bombardment. A soldier on furlough, an atheist, laughed as he described his fervent foxhole prayers during battle; his fear-filled prayers did not alter his life or conduct.

Fear is a necessary aspect of man's life. Fears can be real or imagined, but a healthy fear is an awareness of the reality around us, and of actual dangers. A man who on a treacherous mountainside acts recklessly and without fear of consequence is a fool. Shortly before World War II, a classmate of mine was given an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army Air Force. Lacking any sense of fear, he was dangerous in a plane because of the risks he took for the sake of risks. His fearlessness made him dangerous. He did not live too long thereafter on the ground.

The central object of fear tells us much about a man. Is he most afraid of man or of God? *Fear which is healthy* is not a product of thinking, but is a reaction to serious danger and leads to caution, not cowardice. It is a mistake to equate cowardice and fear; cowardice comes from a type of thinking.

The Bible tells us that fear has a moral content, both good and bad. The fear of God, we are told, is good and holy:

> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (Ps. 19:9)

> Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. (Ps. 34:11)
>
> The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. (Ps. 36:1)
>
> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever. (Ps. 111:10)
>
> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7)
>
> In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. (Prov. 14:26)
>
> The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. (Prov. 14:27)
>
> Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. (Prov. 15:16)
>
> The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. (Prov. 19:23)

We are told that the fear of the Lord is healthy; it is a restraint against doing evil. It is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge to fear God. It is the fear of God which gives us the confidence to face men and their evil and to be confident of ultimate victory. Such a fear tends to and fosters life. It is in fact a fountain of life.

A false fear is an unpleasant thing, to say the least, and it stresses our helplessness, whereas the fear of God makes us aware of His absolute power and assured victory. This is why the fear of

the Lord is described as *clean*, unlike the fear of nightmares, where paralysis and helplessness prevail.

The fear of man places us in the realm of nightmares, because, when the fear of man is paramount, we see our radical helplessness in the face of an ocean of evil. Modern man feels strongly a sense of dread because he is without the fear of God. Of the fear of man, we are told:

> There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. (Ps. 53:5)

> The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe [or, shall be set on high]. (Prov. 29:25)

The rise of existentialism has made the concept of *dread* important to modern man, because the dread of life and of men has replaced the fear of God among such people. Whereas the fear of God empowers us with confidence and courage, the fear of man is dangerous and turns our own mind into a snare or trap to destroy us.

Slaves are governed by the fear of man, and, whenever the fear of man replaces the fear of God in a society, slavery reappears and increases. We are helpless before whatever is ultimate and final in the cosmos. If we know God to be ultimate, if for us God is God, then we know we are totally in His power, and that He empowers His chosen ones to be more than conquerors, and to overcome (Rom. 8:37; 1 John 5:4).

Charles Buck (1771-1815) defined the fear of God in these words:

> FEAR OF GOD, is that holy disposition or gracious habit formed in the soul by the Holy Spirit, whereby we are inclined to obey all God's commands; and evidences itself, 1. By a dread of his displeasure. 2. Desire of his favour. 3. Regard for his excellencies. 4. Submission to his will. 5. Gratitude for his

> benefits. 6. Sincerity in his worship. 7. Conscientious obedience to his commands, Prov. 8:13; Job 28:28.[259]

In other words, the fear of God empowers man to an active obedience. In ancient rabbinic thought, this aspect was clearly seen, and the doctrine of the fear of God was based on several verses, especially Leviticus 19:14:

> Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

The fear of God means a recognition that God is all-powerful and all-seeing:

> Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:13)

This is basic to the fear of God, the fact that there are no unseen or anonymous thoughts or acts in all creation. This, too, is why men prefer the government of man to the government of God. Men are commonly tyrannical, and their rule evil, but, in a world of people only, anonymous thoughts and acts are possible. The division between public and private is very important to the ungodly for religious reasons. They want the freedom to be public when they choose, but also to be private at will. This is impossible if God is indeed God: in His government, all things are public and open to His eyes. More than fifty years ago, I heard a professor declare that one of the most distasteful aspects of Christianity was the idea of the record books being opened on the total life of man on judgment day (Rev. 20:12). For the Christian, there is promise:

> I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (Isa. 43:25; cf. 44:22; Jer. 31:34)

This is not anonymity but grace and forgiveness, regeneration and a blotting out of all transgressions.

It is interesting to note by way of conclusion that during most of the history of Western civilization, it has been recognized that, without the fear of God, no society can long endure. Where men believe they can be anonymous, they are more free to express their evil.

Chapter Sixty-Nine
Approaching God
(*Exodus 20:22-26*)

> 22. And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.
> 23. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.
> 24. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shall sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.
> 25. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.
> 26. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon. (Exodus 20:22-26)

In these verses, we have some laws of worship. *First*, there is a prohibition of idolatry (vv. 22-23), and, *second*, instructions concerning an altar (vv. 24-26).

The law against making idols specifies images of silver and gold. Gispen's comment is very good:

> "Gold" and "silver" are mentioned specifically to make clear that even the most precious and valuable things could not be compared to Him who spoke from heaven. It does not mean that simple images made of wood or stone were permissible.[260]

Idolatry is the attempt to make God comprehensible to man by giving an intellectual concept a physical form. Thus, some gods are depicted, as in India, with many eyes, to indicate they are all-seeing, or with many hands, to indicate that they are omnipotent. The fallacy is, among other

things, that it delimits God to what man considers important. The same thing can be done intellectually. Thus, liberals in the churches tell us that "God is love," a Biblical statement (1 John 4:8), but, taken alone, it represents a falsification, for we are told, among many other things, that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). In idolatry man plays the revealer; he tells us what God is and seeks to give us what to him is a nobler view of God.

Polytheism develops logically out of humanism, because humanism refuses to recognize an ultimate unity in and behind the universe. We are told that we live in a multiverse, not a universe, which means that many conflicting "truths" exist, as well as conflicting powers. The creation of images in history has been a rejection of any ultimate unity in favor of a multiplicity of powers. Such religions can posit an ultimate oneness as a blind source of things while ascribing authority to the many powers which have arisen. This is true of Hinduism and Buddhism.

In idolatry men reshape the facts of reality to suit themselves. They refuse to see the wholeness of God and His creation and insist on giving us an edited view of reality. There may thus be idolatry where there is no mention of God. Men who insist, for example, on the natural goodness of man, or on his moral neutrality, are creating an idol whether they acknowledge it or not.

In vv. 24-26, we have laws regarding altars. The Hebrew word for altar is *mizbêach*, meaning sacrificial slaughter. An altar is a table whereon gifts to God are placed, or where God requires certain sacrifices. An altar is clearly associated with food, which represents life. Until recently, the family table retained some aspects of the altar: it was a place for food, for family communion, and for prayers (the family altar). To be invited to eat at a man's table meant, and still means for many, to be offered friendship and communion, a bond of peace. In some countries a foreign man is not safe until someone receives him into communion at his table.

In the Bible, the altar received clean animal sacrifices, grains, wine, and incense in the main. The altar also provided asylum. Whatever foods were placed on the altar were called food or "the bread of your God" (Lev. 22:25). The altar was also called "the Lord's table" (Ezek. 41:22; 44:16; Malachi 1:7,12). It was at the altar that God's glory appeared to His people in Leviticus

9:22-25. With the Reformation, the importance of the family table came in for renewed emphasis as a place of grace and thanksgiving. If this is lacking at the family table, this recognition that God makes tables a place of grace, thanksgiving, and peace, the sacrament of communion will be little more than a mystical self-communion.

The table and its food are necessary for life. Hence, the blood, which is the life of all flesh (Gen. 9:4), had to be restored to God. It could not be eaten. It had to be dedicated to God. Animals slain for food had to be slain at the tabernacle door (Lev. 17:1-5). Game animals could be bled in the field, but the blood had to be covered with dirt (Lev. 17:13-14). To this day, Armenian Christians take their animals to a stone near the church steps to slaughter, and to give the priest his portion.

The altar represented first of all atonement, and then peace with God. After the fall of Jerusalem in the Jewish-Roman War, A.D. 66-70, the Jewish family table replaced the altar in Jewish thought. A like concept of the family table developed in time in Christendom, especially with the Puritans. Repeatedly within the church there have been strong emphases on the Lord's table; such concerns for liturgical renewal usually wane if there is not an analogous emphasis on the family table.

We have in vv. 24-26 laws concerning the nature of an altar *before* God Himself gave the laws for the construction thereof. God *can* prescribe the manner of construction for an altar, but man *cannot*. Three rules are laid down. *First*, an altar of earth was acceptable. This could be no more than earth heaped up, or, better, a natural high spot where the earth was naturally packed and hard.

Second, an altar of stone would be a more convenient one where stones were available and could be piled up to make a high and large surface for sacrificing animals. The stones could not be hewn, but had to be natural. No implement could be used to make the altar, only stones collected and placed together as in some drywall stone construction.

Because the altar signifies atonement, peace, and communion, all God's work of grace towards us, man could have no part in shaping the altar by his handiwork. Later, God would give precise directions for the marking of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings; the altar was thus made only at His direction.

Third, there could be no steps against the altar lest man's "nakedness" be "discovered" (v. 26). Subsequently, in Ezekiel 43:17, we see directions given for steps on the east side of the altar. This is not a contradiction, because here God requires it, as in Exodus 20:26 He forbids it. The objection in this latter case is to man's design, not to steps as such. Man's ideas are not to govern salvation.

"Nakedness" has reference to the same fact. Although priests were to be garbed fully as the law required, the essential nakedness was a religious one. It refers to man's attempt to negotiate with God on the premise of the validity of man's thinking. This entire passage is against such a belief. We can only approach God on His terms, never on ours. When He says, Come, we must come, and when He says, Go, we must go. The best that we can offer does not commend us to God, neither gold nor silver (v. 23), nor our best efforts nor thinking; only His work and word can bring us to Him and bless us and our service. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10:

> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Chapter Seventy

Dependency

(*Exodus 21:1-11*)

1. Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.
2. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.
3. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.
4. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.
5. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, my children; I will not go out free.
6. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear though with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.
7. And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the manservants do.
8. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.
9. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.
10. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish.
11. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money. (Exodus 21:1-11)

Texts like these are embarrassing to many churchmen, and a delight to those who want to ridicule Scripture. Of course, given the evils of this century, such attitudes are hypocrisy.

These laws are usually titled "laws of slavery." This at once creates a false impression, because what we have here is very different from what we call slavery. *First* of all, the law has reference to Hebrews only (v. 2). The economy and polity of Hebrew life was familistic. Virtually all of life existed within the circumference of the family. This is why any offense against the family was so serious a matter.

Second, the word *slave* is nowhere used. The Hebrew word in v. 2 is *ʿebed* (*eh-bed*), meaning servant, bondsman. The reference was to someone who, either because of debt or poverty, entered the service of a man for a six-year period. True as this is, it still does not describe what such a person was. As long as he was in the family, he was a lesser member thereof. Abraham, before Ishmael's and Isaac's births, had as his steward and his heir a man born in his household of such a bondservant (Gen. 15:2-3). Such persons could inherit, because they belonged to the family, and the family included everyone. This is very far removed from slavery as we know it.

Third, at the end of six years, this bondservant could go out freely. His presence in the house was a form of welfarism with a work program. Whether working off a debt, making restitution, or seeking refuge from economic distress, his presence and existence was to be one of grace and kindness and of being given status as a member of the family. If while in the family he married another servant, perhaps an orphaned girl or one from a poor family, he could not take her freely on leaving; she remained, unless he redeemed her for her service. Under normal circumstances, a man had to provide a dowry for his wife, and this gave evidence of his responsibility. The bondservant could not get a wife freely; either he redeemed her, or he remained with her, if the marriage was to continue. Otherwise he left the family as he came, alone, and his departure constituted a divorce.

Fourth, the man could say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free" (v. 5). We can assume that, when such a man married, knowing the alternatives, he usually decided whether or not to remain, or to work to redeem his family. If he remained, his ear was pierced to indicate a subordinate status. Earrings used by women were often very costly; they

indicated a woman's status under a man and also his wealth and power. One pierced ear in a man indicated that he was a subordinate member of a household.

Fifth, in vv. 7-11, we have laws relative to women and bondservants, specifically young unmarried girls. Other women came into service with their families, their father, or husband. If, however, a man were deeply in debt, he could settle his debt by means of his daughter's bondservice. This depended on the willingness of the man to whom the money was owed to receive the young girl as a potential wife for himself, or, if he had sons, for a son. Until such marriage, she was to be treated as a daughter and could not be worked like the men; she could not be a field-hand (vv. 7-9).

Sixth, if the girl did not please the man, her contracted bondservice could not be sold to another, least of all to a foreigner. She was to be redeemed as soon as possible (Lev. 25:4-8). Since the period of bondservice was a time of training within the family circle for marriage, the master who broke the promise is said to have "dealt deceitfully with her."

Seventh, polygamy is forbidden in Leviticus 18:18, which reads, "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time." Polygamy is seen by God as an inferior form of marriage. The law forbids it but also imposes regulations on those who practice it. In vv. 9-11, we have the law relative to a marriage with a girl who is a bondservant. Since she comes from a poor family, she has no powerful brothers and father to protect her interest, and the husband thus could feel free to take a second wife. In such an instance, her maintenance could not be diminished nor her sexual rights. Furthermore, her son could not be set aside in favor of the second wife's son; the firstborn remained heir (Deut. 21:15-17). God's law thus provides safeguards for the helpless. The marriage of a girl who was a bondservant was thus accorded special attention and protection. If these terms were broken, "then shall she go out free without money" (v. 11), which meant no small disgrace to the man, since she was legally a member of the family. If this recourse to divorce were available to a bondservant, how much more so to a free women.

We must remember the statement (in v. 5) of the bondservant who chose to remain: he said, "I love my master." Hebrew "slavery," if we can use that word, was unlike any other in that the servant was *legally* a member of the family. The "hireling" or wage laborer did not have the loyalty of a master or of a bondservant (John 10:12); he was not a member of the family.

The fact of young bondservant girls was perhaps not too common. We do have a reference to it in Nehemiah 5:5, but this law tells us the right to divorce of even such a girl.

These laws are located here, shortly after the giving of the Ten Commandments. They are particularly important in this context. The first word from Sinai has reference to Israel's bondage in Egypt:

> I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Exodus 20:2)

The ownership of slaves by these ex-slaves must have been a rarity. This makes it all the more striking that we have these laws following the Ten Commandments. However low their recent condition in Egypt, their children's future in Canaan was a very promising one. It would be easy to forget their past, and their low estate. For them to reproduce Egyptian practices would be a fearful offense. Hence, if they in the future had power over others, they were to treat them as members of their families.

The piercing of the ear was an important religious ceremony. It took place before God's appointed judges or governors. What was involved was, *first*, that some men prefer to be cared for and governed by others. What the law recognizes is the dependency of some men. No society has ever existed without a number of such men. Many attempts have been made in history to care for dependent men, from feudalism to welfarism. The impersonality of welfarism has been very destructive.

Second, no shame is attached to dependency in Biblical law, but it does require a recognition of his place in society by the dependent man. Hence, it was necessary that he present himself to the

judges, have his ear pierced, and publicly recognize his dependency. Many of our problems today stem from the fact that dependent men (and women) are given the same status of citizens and voters as are free men. This is not good for any segment of society.

Biblical law associates power with responsibility while placing dependent people under God's protection.

Given these facts, the modern attitude towards these laws is a curious one. Perhaps modern man thinks at times that what he did not himself devise cannot be true or valid.

Turning once again to vv. 7-11, the female bondservant who was taken as a wife for a son, the law is very specific: the head of that family "shall deal with her after the manner of daughters" (v. 9). In a marriage, a father required a dowry of the young man; here, the girl bondservant was to be treated similarly. In v. 11, failure to provide for her properly meant that "then she shall go out free without money," i.e., without the payment of any redemption money and with whatever dowry the father required of his son, her husband.

This makes very clear that God's law protects even a girl who is a bondservant from any abusive use by her husband. She is a daughter in Israel and is to be given all the privileges thereof.

Now, if a girl who is a bondservant is so protected, and is given grounds for divorce, how much more does this apply to free women? In every instance, the husband is not allowed to abandon a godly woman and to exploit his superior position. His headship does not mean that she ceases to be God's daughter in Israel, and God is her defender against ungodly divorce. Thus, the idea that in the Old Testament divorce is exclusively a male prerogative is a myth. If a female bondservant had a legitimate ground for leaving her husband, how much more so any woman then and now who is denied her due marital privileges?

Chapter Seventy-One
The Death Penalty
(*Exodus 21:12-17*)

> 12. He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.
> 13. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.
> 14. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.
> 15. And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.
> 16. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.
> 17. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 21:12-17)

These verses are concerned with several death penalties. Verse 12 has a parallel in Leviticus 24:17: "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." In Biblical law, we do not have the many gradations of murder common to civil legislation today. Unless it is an accidental death, the penalty is death. In v. 13, we have a reference to accidental death; such incidents were cases where no guilt existed. If, for example, an axe-head came loose, flew through the air, and killed a man, no guilt was incurred unless a defect in the axe was previously known. A third kind of killing, in v. 30, we shall consider later. For accidental deaths, the cities of refuge were created as havens (Num. 35:11-34). The statement, if "God deliver him into his hand" (v. 13), means, if in the providence of God this accident occurs. The first half of v. 14 can be paraphrased thus: if a man "slay another in deliberate defiance of law and justice."[261]

The premise of the death penalty is the fact that man is created in God's image, to be God's dominion man and steward, and to take a man's life is therefore an attack against God and His order. For this reason, the right to sanctuary, and the cities of refuge, were subject to religious review; any person who sought sanctuary was given a priestly hearing to determine whether or

not he was entitled to sanctuary. Since life and social order are God's creation and ordination, all aspects of murder or killing must be governed by His law. There was thus no unlimited right to sanctuary.

Since God is the creator and owner of all things, we cannot take our own life without sin, because we are God's property, and our life is not our own. Theocratic law excludes our "right" to do as we please, and also the pretended right of other men or civil powers to use us at their will. As George Bush observed:

> … In the first place, no authority was vested, by the Mosaic constitution, in any one man or body (of) men, nor even in the whole nation, to elect a chief magistrate, nor gave any power, even to the whole nation, to elect a supreme governor. It was the especial prerogative of Jehovah to appoint the title of *judge*, as his own immediate vicegerent. And such men, we know, were from time to time raised up as the exigencies of the state required them, and, under a special commission from heaven, wrought the most signal deliverance for their countrymen.
>
> Another important consequence of the Theocratic polity was, that idolatry became not only the transgression of a moral precept of most character, but also *an act of treason against the state*. It was a virtual rejection of the authority of their acknowledged Ruler.[262]

The law of murder in v. 12 has no qualification; it applies equally to a freeman, a bondservant, and a foreigner (Lev. 24:17-22); all received life from God and were under His law.

In v. 16, we have the death penalty for kidnapping. Given the premise that all men are God's creation and property, to steal a man is to steal from God. The Phoenicians and the Greeks were given in antiquity to kidnapping and selling people.[263] In the ancient world, coastal living, while often necessary for the purpose of trade, was hazardous for this reason. Cities were located at times in terms of safety as well as commerce.

Over the centuries, kidnapping for enslavement became very common. In America's slave years, such incidents were often common, especially with very poor immigrants. Thus, in 1791, William Cunningham confessed when dying to the kidnapping of Irish children and the subsequent sale of them in America. Courts ruled against those blond and blue-eyed slaves when they sought freedom, as in the "celebrated" case of a German woman, Salome Mueller, whom the Supreme Court of Louisiana declared a Negress. William Chambers, the encyclopedist, visited the United States in the 1850s and reported on efforts to further enslave whites. Poor whites in the North and South sometimes sold their children into slavery; others were kidnapped. G. Fitzhugh, author of *Sociology for the South, on the Failure of Free Society*, held: "Race! Do not speak to us of race — we care nothing for breed nor color. What we contend for is, that slavery, whether black or white, is a normal, a proper institution in society." Fitzhugh also wrote: "Slavery, white or black, is right and necessary." The *Richmond Inquirer* held: "While it is far more obvious that Negroes should be slaves than whites for they are only fit to labor not to direct - yet the principle of slavery is, itself, right and does not depend on difference of complexion."[264] The light-skinned complexion of many blacks is routinely ascribed to the sexual abuse of black women by their masters; one should not overlook the presence in the slave quarters of kidnapped whites. While some slave-owners were Christians who were especially gracious towards their slaves, the driving force in the slave economy was indifference or hostility to Christianity.

The selling of girls and women into prostitution was, and is still, a major form of kidnapping. What used to be called "the white slave trade" attracts less notice today simply because the moral concerns of other eras is lacking; it is still a major form of kidnapping on all continents. God's death penalty covers all forms. Moreover, we should remember that when a nation does not enforce God's laws, God enforces His judgment against them.

In vv. 15 and 17, we have the death penalty against a physical assault on one's parents, and for cursing them. Such laws have existed in many societies whenever the family has been the basic societal unit and central to life and government. Some years ago, a Scottish commentator observed:

> An old Scottish law made the same offense to be punishable by death "without mercy." Yet Canaan and old Scotland are the two famous lands of song (*i.e.*, the two happy lands). Perhaps profound reverence for parentage is near akin to godliness, which made a people to be happy.[265]

This seems horrifying to the modern mind, which fails to recognize that Biblical law, and Scottish law among others, saw such offenses against parents as the ultimate anarchism. The old word *anarch* means literally no ruler, or, rulerless. Modern man associates anarchism with a denial of the state as the basic governing power on earth; it seems unreal and remote to him to see the family as central. The laws of Hammurabi were secular, but they still represented an awareness of familistic society. Offenses against parents meant the loss of a hand.

God's right to legislate over every sphere rests on His property rights as Creator. This means that all things are under His law, and, in the family, parents as well as children. In pagan families given to ancestor worship, no such restraint on parental power exists, and parents could and did sell their children at will. In terms of Exodus 21:16, this would be stealing the child from God. Job clearly stated God's claims on us, and His property rights over all:

> 13. If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me;
> 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?
> 15. Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?
> 16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;
> 17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;
> 18. (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;)
> 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;

> 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
> 21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:
> 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. (Job 31:13-22)

God's property right over us is seen by Job as the ground for our responsibility towards one another. As against murder, we must manifest love, community, and charity. Murder denies God and His law, our need for community among men, and our responsibility to obey God in all things by manifesting His justice and mercy.

Chapter Seventy-Two
Laws of Liability, Part I
(*Exodus 21:18-27*)

> 18. And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed:
> 19. If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.
> 20. And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.
> 21. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.
> 22. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.
> 23. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.
> 24. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.
> 25. Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.
> 26. And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.
> 27. And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. (Exodus 21:18-27)

These are laws of liability, case laws giving us examples which embody a general premise. These are also mainly unintentional crimes, committed in anger or in a fight. The fact of these penalties was in itself a restraint upon rage; it also penalized unfair fighting. Some versions render v. 18 as referring to striking another man "with a stone, or with his spade," i.e., we have a reference to the use of vicious means to defeat the other man.

Basic to all these liability laws is restitution. It is commonplace among scholars to refer to vv. 23-25 as the *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation. This radically warps the perspective. The concern of the law here is not retaliation but restitution, and the difference between the two is a very serious one. Retaliation means getting even; its framework is personal, and it involves returning evil for evil, according to Webster's *Dictionary*. Restitution is radically different: its purpose is restorative, to further justice, not to inflict harm. The word "retaliation" has "talionis" as its root; it does not belong in this context.

What restitution means is that the punishment must fit the crime, such as the death penalty for murder. It means justice, not retaliation.

The first case deals with two men fighting. Whatever may have caused their fight is not in question, nor their freedom to fight it out. What is forbidden is the use of unfair means to defeat the other person. The implication is that in such an instance, if the man dies, the offender must also die. By resorting to lawless and unfair tactics, he has forfeited his status as an innocent party. If the victim does not die, but is bedridden for a time, the offender must a) pay for the loss of his time, and b) for his medical expenses.

The second case involves the corporal punishment of servants or hirelings, bondservants, or foreign slaves. If the angry master or mistress beats such a person to death, then he or she must also die. If, however, the victim is simply bedridden a day or two, or even more, then no penalty follows. The loss of work by the master is sufficient penalty, for the man has hurt his own interest by his evil anger. The servant's enforced idleness costs the master a man's labor.

In v. 21, the reference is to a foreign slave, and, if this is true of a foreign slave, how much more so is it true of a fellow covenant member. The expression, "for he is his money," has in mind a foreigner.

The third case is concerned with involuntary abortion. The premise is that, if these penalties apply to an accidental abortion, how much more do they apply to deliberate abortion. The example of an accidental abortion is of men fighting, and, in the process, injuring a pregnant

woman (v. 22-23). If the pregnancy is aborted, but the child lives, and the mother is unharmed, the guilty man is still punished. He is fined by the judges, who also consult the husband concerning the extent of his claims. If, however, harm follows, either the death of the baby or of the mother, or both, then the death penalty is required.

The common argument against this text by pro-abortionists is that no reference is made to the fetus as a person. Since the death penalty is required, that should be statement enough. What is very clear is that a pregnant woman must be treated with great care when even an accidental abortion is punished so severely.

The fourth case gives us two similar instances of injury. One is the loss of an eye, the other the loss of a tooth, by either a manservant or a maidservant. In both cases, the reference is to an angry master's action in lashing out against or punishing a servant. The eye and the tooth are cited to illustrate the consequences of such injuries and like ones. The injured party went free; whether a foreign slave or a Hebrew bondservant, freedom was mandatory.

The primary reference in these verses, where servants are cited, is to foreigners. The laws of protection extend to them, and no man could treat another, however much an enemy alien or a despised foreigner, as other than a creature made in God's image.

In antiquity as well as since, in most cultures a master has had full freedom over his servants, and sometimes over his family. These laws clearly diverge from such a perspective. The idea that vv. 23-25 refer to the *lex talionis*, or retaliation, is common to commentators and others. Some scholars in various areas of study have seen retaliation as basic to our justice system, and hence they oppose the death penalty. G. Armitage-Smith saw protective tariffs as forms of retaliation and free trade as more peaceable in spirit.[266] Curiously, the *Dictionary of Anthropology* is almost alone in distinguishing between retaliation and restitution, although it wrongly cites Exodus 21:24 as an example of retaliation:

> *retaliation*. A type of private vengeance in which the punishment of the offender is like the injury he inflicted. It is the lex talionis, expressed in the typical formulation, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."
>
> *retribution*. A punishment like the injury the offender inflicted. Based on what Aristotle called "corrective justice," it is designed to restore the balance of the social universe, which was upset by the crime.[267]

While this errs on two counts, *first*, by citing Exodus 21:24 as an example of retaliation, and, *second*, by citing Aristotle as the key source for restitution (which is called retribution), these definitions are better by far than most.

The moral confusion over retaliation and restitution is not a trifling matter. At stake is the fact of justice. Without restitution there can be no justice in a society. Because Western civilization has abandoned restitution, we have seen ineffectual replacements work to destroy society. The early alternative was the prison system, which was intended to reform guilty men. The names "reformatory" and "reform school" still survive to witness to the incompetence of such institutions. A more recent "solution" has been psychiatric therapy, with an equal record of failure.

In contrast, let us see what Richard Watson, not a great thinker, had to say on the subject of restitution in 1831, reflecting as he did an older perspective:

> RESTITUTION, that act of justice by which we restore to our neighbour whatever we have unjustly deprived him of, Exod. 22:1; Luke 19:8. Moralists observe, respecting restitution, 1. That where it can be made in kind, or the injury can be certainly valued, we are to restore the thing or the value. 2. We are bound to restore the thing with the natural increase of it, that is, to satisfy for the loss sustained in the mean time, and the gain hindered. 3.When the thing cannot be restored, and the value is not certain, we are to give reasonable satisfaction, according to a liberal estimation. 4. We are at least to give, by way of restitution,

> what the law would give; for that is generally equal, and in most cases rather favorable than rigorous. 5. A man is not only bound to make restitution for the injury he did, but for all that directly follows upon the injurious act: for the first injury being willful, we are supposed to will all that which follows upon it.[268]

Because restitution is no longer the essential part of justice, we see increasingly the decline of justice in society. One prominent religious figure has expressed his disinterest in justice; his concerns are prophecies about Israel and salvation. Basic, however, to the fact of salvation is our Lord's atonement, an act of restitution for us. Restitution is fundamental to Christianity, and it is the essence of God's justice. To deny restitution in human affairs is to deny justice, and, implicitly, our faith.

Chapter Seventy-Three
Laws of Liability, Part II
(*Exodus 21:28-36*)

28. If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.
29. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner shall also be put to death.
30. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him.
31. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him.
32. If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.
33. And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;
34. The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.
35. And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide.
36. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own. (Exodus 21:28-36)

In these verses, we have further examples of the meaning of liability. These cases give us instances which set forth a general premise. In *the first case*, v. 28, a goring ox is cited, but the law means that any farm or household animal can incur liability for itself and its owner. If the ox gores and kills a man or woman, the ox is to be killed, but the owner is not guilty.

The flesh of the ox is not to be eaten, because the ox is unclean due to its offense. The ox is "stoned," which means that it is killed without being bled thoroughly; any way whereby no full bleeding occurs would be legitimate for the execution. This would prevent use of the dead animal's meat by any covenant person.

The second case, v. 29, involves an ox which had been known to gore people, and yet the owner had not kept him penned. If such a known vicious animal of any kind then kills a man or woman, not only the ox dies, but also the owner. In such a case, the owner, by his negligence, shares in the liability with his animal. He is guilty of murder.

The third case, vv. 30-31, tells us that, whereas in the other kinds of killing there is no escape from the death penalty, in the case of a known dangerous animal, the owner can pay a ransom for his life. The family of the slain person can set a ransom, and the court then approves it or alters it. The term, "a sum of money," (v. 30) is *kôpher*, a covering, meaning a propitiation or an atonement. The sum of money would be given as a weight of gold or silver. This applies whether or not the person were an adult, or a child, a boy or a girl.

The fourth case, v. 32, refers to a like killing by a farm or household animal of a manservant or a maidservant. The reference is to a foreign slave. In this instance, the restitution is clearly specified: thirty shekels of silver. The shekel then was not a coin but a weight of silver. This was the price, "thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:15), paid to Judas for betraying Jesus. Because it was the price of a slave, it was a way in which the chief priests evaluated Christ's worth. This ugly act has colored our ideas ever since about Exodus 21:32. Precisely because a man in court would agree that the life of a foreign slave, or a foreign worker, was not worth much, a high ransom price was set. The man then faced either death or the price of thirty shekels of silver; while it was a ransom for his own life, well priced, it also clearly set forth that the humblest person even among aliens was under God's concern.

These laws simply give us the details of what God commanded of Noah in Genesis 9:5-6:

> 5. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.
> 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

The reason is thus clearly stated: all men are created in God's image, and hence neither men nor animals can kill man without guilt. Hence, the ransom paid by the animal's owner for his life was high, even if the dead person was a foreign slave or hired hand.

The fifth case, vv. 33-34, concerns the death of an animal that falls into an uncovered pit. This pit could be any excavation, but it was normally a cistern. If, for one reason or another, the cistern was not fenced in, or the gate left open, or the cover removed, a stray animal, could fall in and die. The cistern may have been left uncovered to catch the night rain. This case, however, applies to any excavation. The owner of the cistern was liable for the dead animal; he had to pay for it, and then the dead animal was his. It was a compulsory sale at the market price that the animal would bring, if it were alive. The dead animal would have little value except for its hide, although some foreigners preferred dead, unbled animals for food. There was an added problem for the careless owner: he had a cistern full of contaminated water. Such a drowning animal often loses control of bowels and bladder.

The sixth case, v. 35, has reference to a case of two oxen fighting, and one dying. No fault is involved; the two animals simply fought, and one died. In such a case the loss is divided. The live ox is sold (or, possibly, half its value is paid to the owner of the dead ox). The dead ox is sold, and the receipt for it divided. Even though neither owner was guilty of any wrongdoing, the consequences had to be shared.

In *the seventh case*, (v. 36), there is guilt on the part of one owner. His ox, bull, or whatever other animal was involved, had a record of dangerous behavior. Instead of keeping this animal penned, the owner allowed him to graze freely. In such a case, the guilty owner had to compensate the other man; the dead animal was then his. There is an interesting sidelight to this.

The dead animal might still be worth something for its hide, or as meat to some pagans. However, it might be so badly torn and gutted as to be worthless. In any case, because the dead animal was his, he had to remove the carcass.

The specific character of Biblical law is embarrassing or painful to many. Many religions use vague, high-sounding, and general affirmations of supposedly spiritual truths. Religion for such faiths is not concerned with mundane affairs. Neoplatonists and Stoics refused to believe that the material world and its affairs should be any concern of the philosopher. This attitude was prevalent also in the monastic movement within the church; marriage was a concession to a lower element in man. Among some Calvinists, major battle lines were drawn over the issues of lapsarianism (sub-, infra-, and supra-lapsarianism). Such thinking blasphemously projected a time sequence into the mind of God, making Him subordinate to time and subject to the limitations of human thought.

Conversely, from the Romans to the present, law has been subjected to childish specificity, to a detail of amazing nature. The medieval canonists were guilty of this also. For example, there was a difference of opinion as to how many lovers, paid or unpaid, a woman needed to be classified as a prostitute. Johannes Teutonicus held that it required a minimum of 23,000, although on other occasions he said, either forty or sixty. Some Spanish authorities set the figure at five or more.[269]

As against such concepts of law, Scripture gives us a little more than 600 laws which establish understandable premises for all kinds of problems. Many of these laws must not be enforced by either the church or the state: they are between God and man. As a result, we have in Biblical law, *first*, a limited number of laws, and an even more limited number of penalties. *Second*, the emphasis is covenantal: man in covenant with God is a governmental power. If his faith and character are bad, no law can make him good or create a good social order. Thus, the essential ingredient for a good society is true faith on the part of the people. *Third*, the law is written for and addressed to the people, not to lawyers, because the essential enforcement comes from self-government. The law is not a monopoly of church, state, lawyers, or anyone else. It is for the self-government of the people, and of every sphere of life and thought.

Currently, liability laws are in sorry disarray. Total liability is insisted on by the courts for what was once considered "an act of God," an incident in which no guilt was involved and natural causes were at work. The reason for this is the loss of Biblical faith, a loss of belief in the God of Scripture. There are no accidents or errors in God's work; because He is omnipotent, perfect, and omniscient, all His ways and works infallibly serve His sovereign purpose. If God be denied, then His sovereignty and infallibility accrue to other agencies. One of these is the state, which normally cannot be sued without its consent. There being no higher law beyond the state in humanistic thought, there can be no valid criterion for judging the state — unless the people are sovereign, and their general will expresses itself in the state as infallible!

The courts, however, seem to assume that the modern corporation, as the great humanistic power of an earlier generation, is infallible also, but only in an evil sense. The corporation is routinely held to a total liability for any and all incidents occurring within its jurisdiction, even though no guilt in any historic sense is involved.

A sound doctrine of guilt requires Biblical faith. Neither man nor the corporation, nor the state, for that matter, can be perfectly accountable for everything that occurs within its jurisdiction. Accountability is essentially to God in terms of His law, not man's feelings.

Chapter Seventy-Four
Laws of Liability and Restitution, Part I
(*Exodus 22:1-6*)

> 1. If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.
> 2. If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.
> 3. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.
> 4. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.
> 5. If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.
> 6. If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. (Exodus 22:1-6)

These verses continue the laws of liability and restitution, and we are told of the character of restitution.

In *the first case* (v. 1), the theft of farm animals is cited to illustrate the premise of the law. Restitution is to be governed by the value of the thing stolen. An ox had particularly great value in antiquity because of several factors. Much training went into making him "a beast of burden," i.e., pulling a plow or hauling freight. While an oxen team was slow, its ability to pull heavy loads far surpassed that of horses. It was valuable also for its hide and for its meat. It was the most important single farm animal in some cultures. Restitution for the theft of an ox had to be fivefold. For sheep it was fourfold; sheep provided wool and meat and were next in importance to oxen. There is a reference to such restitution in 2 Samuel 12:6. The premise in such restitution

is the present and future value of the thing stolen. The reproductive capacity of the animal is also taken into consideration.

The second case (v. 2) refers to a thief breaking in during the night, whether into the house, into the barn, or into the sheep pen. In the dark, it is not possible to see if the man is armed or unarmed. If he be killed, no guilt is incurred by the property owner or any member of his household.

The words, "be found breaking up," are, literally, "by the digging through" of a wall. Since many houses, sheds, and "barns" were made of adobe, it was possible to break through the walls. This fact itself indicated evil intent, and the householder was not held liable for killing the thief.

The third case (v. 3) concerns a daylight theft. In such an instance, the man breaking in might have assumed that no man was present. To kill such a thief, except in self-defense, was not permitted, and it would result in a murder charge.

Cattle rustlers today often kill the cow or steer in the field and then load the carcass into their truck. This makes the meat anonymous, the hide having been left behind. In v. 3, full restitution is required of all such thieves, even when caught in the act. If restitution were not made, the thief was sold as a slave.

In *the fourth case* (v. 4), reference is made to a thief caught with the stolen animals still alive. In such an instance, restitution was double, not fourfold or fivefold. This was true whether or not the thief was caught in the day, or surrendered at night before being killed. The premise of these laws should now be apparent: crime was not to be profitable. The old proverb, "Crime does not pay," had reference to Biblical law; under modern statist laws, it definitely pays. God's law intends to penalize the sinner and protect the just by the law of restitution.

In *the fifth case* (v. 5), the offense, whether intentional or not, carries the same penalty. A man's animal might break loose, enter another man's field or vineyard, and do considerable damage in the course of one night. Or, the owner might put his animal in a neighbor's field. Then and now,

more than a few lawless men have placed an animal in a neighbor's field and then removed it before dawn. In Ecclesiastes 10:8, we have a telling reference to such acts: "whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." The hedge means a hedge fence; until recently, these were common in certain parts of England. The hedge fence in antiquity would be made up of trees, hedges, thorn-bushes, and the like. It would be therefore a natural habitat for birds and small animals, and it would also attract snakes. To break through a hedge fence was thus to risk snake bite. Solomon's point is that, even as breaking through a hedge fence is to invite a snake bite, so to break God's law is to invite and ensure judgment.

In this instance, restitution was specific: the guilty man, whether the offense was intended or not, had to make restitution in kind from his own farm, if he had the equivalent grain, vines, or whatever else were destroyed. If not, restitution was made in other ways.

This law made necessary the maintenance of good fences and gates to prevent one's animals from breaking out. A man was responsible for what his animals did, and hence the necessity of careful fencing.

In *the sixth case* (v. 6), again a man is responsible for the consequences of his actions whether or not they are intentional. If a fire that a man has lighted to burn up weeds, trash, or anything else gets out of control, that man is responsible for the consequences of the fire. Arson may not have been intended, but destruction occurred as a result of something he did: his neighbor's standing grain, whether in shocks or in the field, is destroyed, and restitution must thus be made.

This case deals specifically with destroyed grain, and then more than now, grain provided the mainstay for life. As Joseph Parker wrote, "Destroyed bread is destroyed life."[270]

In this case, "he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." We are not given a specific number for the restitution, whether double or fivefold. There is a very good reason for this. The value of the grain varied from year to year. In a year of food shortages, a field of grain would have far more value than in times of plenty.

The subject of restitution has been largely ignored in our century, and even earlier. Biblical scholars ignore the subject, or, if they comment on it, their statements sometimes make no sense. Thus, Poucher said, "In NT morals it was taught that the guilt of theft could not be compounded by restitution."[271]

In restitution, as well in all offenses and punishments, innocent family members could not be penalized for a father's sin (Deut. 24:16).

One form of restitution is that which applies to false witness. In such cases, the penalty which would have fallen on the innocent person is applied to the false witness. This can mean restitution in kind, or the death penalty in some cases (Deut. 19:15-21). In cases of false witness, there was to be no pity for the guilty witness (Deut. 19:21).

God's law differs from statist law in its objective. Man's law often seeks the reformation of the criminal, whereas God's law has justice in mind, and the restoration of God's order. Where the focus becomes reformation, justice is replaced by concern for the potential welfare of the criminal. The result is a serious warping of society and of justice. This is why Deuteronomy 19:21 is so emphatic:

> And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

The focus of the law must be God's order, God's justice. It cannot be even the welfare of the godly. What we are seeing in modern society is an undue concern for the rights of criminals, of animals, and of much else, resulting in what Cornelius Van Til so tellingly described as "integration downward into the void."

Chapter Seventy-Five
Laws of Liability and Restitution, Part II
(*Exodus 22:7-13*)

> 7. If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double.
> 8. If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.
> 9. For all manner or trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.
> 10. If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it:
> 11. Then shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good.
> 12. And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof.
> 13. If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn. (Exodus 22:7-13)

In vv. 8-9, we have a reference to the *judges*, to *elohim*, a word which is usually used to refer to God, but at times it is also used to refer to judges, who were God's agents in the administration of justice. In ancient Israel, according to Cassuto, "the expression remained a stereotyped term signifying the place of the court."[272] Various commentators disagree as to whether or not to render the text here as *God* or *judges*. For us, the important point it that law is seen so thoroughly as the province of God, and the court as no less a meeting place with God than the Temple. From the Biblical perspective, the idea of a non-theistic law is no law at all, or anti-law, because God alone is the valid source of the law. In terms of this, the secularization of law and the courts is

injustice. The text, however read, means that when cases are brought before the judges in a godly society, they are brought before God.

In *the first case* (v. 7) cited in our text, a man who is perhaps traveling gives his valuables, money and various items, to a neighbor for safekeeping. A theft takes place, and the thief is caught. Double-restitution is required of the thief. This is a simple, straightforward case of obvious theft and a thief caught and convicted.

In *the second case* (v. 8), there is no sure evidence of theft. While theft is a possibility, so too is embezzlement. A court hearing is then required, to investigate the evidence, to see whether or not the trustee is to be charged, and whether a trial is required.

In *the third case* (v. 9), a man suspects that another man, whether an actual thief or a receiver of stolen goods, has something which is rightfully his. In the court case which follows, the man who is condemned by the judges must make double-restitution. This penalty falls on the complainant if his charges are shown to be false. Because of such laws, false charges and nuisance suits could not be filed lightly. This penalty applies for "every manner (or, matter) or trespass."

In *the fourth case* (vv. 10-13), we have laws on custodial care. If a man placed any animals in the care of another man, certain rules governed that relationship. The normal examples of much caretaking would be shepherds and herdsmen, but it could be a neighbor providing pasture for an animal. Several possible problems are cited: (a) animals could be unintentionally maimed, driven away (as by lightning and thunder), or killed through no fault of their keeper. If the caretaker took an oath to his innocence, then he went free. The oath then, and until fairly recently, has been an important aspect of trials; where the fear of God has prevailed, oath-taking has been a reliable recourse. However, (b), if an animal were stolen, the keeper was liable, because an important part of his keep and work is to prevent theft. He thus incurs a liability if he fails to prevent theft. Then, (c), if a wild animal killed the sheep, cow, or whatever other animal was in the keeper's charge, evidence was required in the form of the remains of the dead animal. No restitution was

required in such cases, because this was an unforeseen hazard. It is assumed that no negligence was involved.

How these laws were applied is important to understand. Thomas Scott, about 170 years ago, referred to these as laws concerning *breach of trust*.[273] A few years later, George Bush titled them "Laws respecting Deposits."[274] Both terms are important in describing the scope of these laws. Historically, they have been used to adjudge cases of borrowing as well as deposits.

While it was possible that at times a friend took care of one's property, normally someone was paid to do so. In any case, liability was potentially incurred, and hence payment was common for this reason; to assume responsibility means to incur a possible liability.

There is a troublesome area of interpretation with respect to these laws, one very much with us and with deep roots in medieval rabbinic and church decisions, namely, that gambling debts are like theft and cannot be collected. This is still the law in many areas.[275] The reasoning varies. Sometimes such debts are declared non-collectible by the courts because gambling is illegal in that jurisdiction. At other times, as with the rabbis and some churchmen, gambling was and is regarded as a form of robbery, and hence outside the jurisdiction of the court; at times, money lost has been held recoverable.

The fallacy in such thinking is that the man who gambles does so voluntarily. If we agree that gambling is robbery, then we must say that the man who gambles, loses, and refuses to pay his debt is simply a failed thief. Short of demonstrable fraud in the gambling, all parties involved must be held to be on a common level, good or bad. To penalize only the winner is hardly sound morality. Restitution in such cases is the real act of theft. To use courts of law to avoid gambling debts is to trivialize both the courts and the law. However, in the courts of our time every absurd case has been and is being heard, e.g., whether or not a school can govern the dress or the hair style of children, and other such matters. When the courts depart from God's law, they begin to play god and to govern all things, including every triviality. They seek a total government which, unlike God's, cannot be providential but is rather totally prescriptive and regulative.

Where God's law prevails, restitution is to the person offended. In statist law, it is the state which is offended and exacts a penalty in the form of fines or imprisonment. The result is not a restoration of order but an increase of statist power and control over all. Biblical restitution restores the balance by penalizing the offender to effect restoration to the offended. This is justice.

We began with a reference to the meaning of *elohim*: the name *God* is applied to courts of law because, like the Temple, it was there that in a godly society men were confronted with God in His justice. *Justice* and *truth* are the normal expectations of men from Temple and court, from church and state, and men are with difficulty weaned from a traditionalist expectation of these things. When, however, justice departs from church and court, and truth is seen pragmatically, the whole of society is warped and becomes suicidal. There is then no sound direction to life, and the death of that society becomes immanent.

Chapter Seventy-Six

Laws of Liability and Restitution, Part III

(*Exodus 22:14-20*)

> 14. And if a man borrow ought of his neighbour, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good.
> 15. But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire.
> 16. And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.
> 17. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.
> 18. Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.
> 19. Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.
> 20. He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed. (Exodus 22:14-20)

The first case (vv. 14-15) with respect to liability in these verses has to do with trusteeship. A borrower becomes, by the act of borrowing anything from another person, a trustee with full responsibility for the borrowed property. If any damage occurs while the thing borrowed is in his possession, he is responsible even if he did not by any personal act damage the thing. His negligence in protecting the thing borrowed makes him liable. As James Macgregor summed up the legal implication, "Omission is commission."[276]

If, however, the tool or animal was hired together with the owner, then the owner is responsible. To use a modern example, if we borrow a friend's power saw, and it malfunctions while we are using it, we are responsible for repairing it. On the other hand, if we hire someone to cut down a tree, any problem resulting to his equipment is the hired man's responsibility. In borrowing, the borrower takes the risk. In hiring, the hired man assumes the risk as part of his pay.

The second case (vv. 16-17) has to do with the seduction of an unbetrothed virgin. In Deuteronomy 22:25-29, we have the law of rape, but in this instance the word used is "entice." Although the girl participates in the act, the responsibility still rests primarily on the male. In Biblical law, the greater the responsibility the greater the culpability.

Without any qualification whatsoever, the guilty man must pay the virgin "the dowry of virgins." The amount is not specified here, but in Deuteronomy 22:29 we are given the amount, fifty shekels of silver, a very large amount in those days.

This dowry is to be paid whether or not he marries the girl. Seduction was thus too costly to be commonplace in times when the law was kept.

Whether or not a marriage followed depended on the girl's father. If he "utterly refuse" the man as a son-in-law, the dowry still went to the girl. Since a subsequent suitor also paid some kind of dowry, the girl went into her marriage well endowered.

This law stresses the priority of the father over both his daughter and her possible husband. It was his duty to protect his daughter and to ensure a good marriage for her.

The third case (v. 18) says simply, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The word in Hebrew translated as *witch* appears here, in Deuteronomy 18:10, and in 2 Chronicles 33:6. It is rendered by the Septuagint as "poisoner." Scripture has other terms for those who divined, cast spells, and so on. Although those who were witches could also dabble in occultism, attempts to contact the dead, and so on, they were primarily dealers in poisons. They are thus dispensers of death, and therefore they must be executed.

The medieval view of witches at times brought together pagan ideas as well as the prohibition of poisoners. Pagan views stress occult powers. We are seldom told that American Indians feared "witches" in their midst, i.e., claimants to occult powers, and often killed them in great numbers. Indian medicine men knew poisonous drugs, and they warned people against evil practitioners who occasionally specialized in killing for hire.

One reason for our contemporary impotence in dealing with some of our problems is a neglect of God's law.

The fourth case (v. 19) concerns bestiality. This was a religious practice in many pagan religions, especially among Canaanites. Its religious uses still survive. Its purpose was revitalization through ritual chaos; because primeval chaos was seen as the source of all life and power, chaos was regularly invoked, as in the Saturnalia, to renew and regenerate man and society. This law appears in several forms: in Leviticus 18:23 and 20:15-16, and in Deuteronomy 27:21.

Evolutionary theory has the same premises as the ancient chaos cults, and it is leading to like practices. Biblical law is equated with a restraint on the human potential, and sin is seen as freedom. Hence, it is held that man can only realize his potential in violating God's law.

The penalty here is again death, because it is a practice which is in defiance of the order of life. The death penalties of Scripture are few, but they are protective of the family and of God's covenant order.

The fifth case (v. 20) strongly forbids sacrificing to any god save the Lord. This is a law addressing treason to the covenant God and to His covenant. It forbids sacrificing "unto any God, save unto the LORD only." It is concerned with *acts* of sacrifice, of worship. The literal reading of the last clause is, "he shall be devoted," or banned. Some scholars see this as equivalent to the Amish practice of shunning, whereas others understand it as the death penalty. We cannot say for sure which it is. In 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, St. Paul refers to the necessity of maintaining excommunication; the sinning person is "devoted" or given to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

Commentators often tell us of similar laws to these in pagan nations of antiquity. The resemblance is superficial. Middle Assyrian laws with respect to seducers apparently gave the father of the girl the right to kill the seducer.[277]

Hittite law forbade bestiality with a sheep, a cow, or a pig; trial was held in the king's court, with death or pardon as options; the law did not apply to horses or mules.[278]

These pagan laws were humanistic. The offenses were viewed with an orientation based on the priority of the created order and of man and the state. The pagan perspective was thus very different from the Biblical one, even where there was a coincidence. The reason given for the laws in Scripture is very simple: Thus saith the LORD. No other explanation or justification is necessary. The Creator makes the rules. The covenant people are reminded again and again that the law expresses God's will and justice, not man's will or pleasure. However good the law of God is for man, it must be obeyed, not for its benefits, but because God requires it. Israel is reminded,

> For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. (Deut. 18:12)

The Hebrew word translated as *abomination* is *tôwʿêbâh*, meaning something loathsome, disgusting, *and* idolatrous. There are three other Hebrew words meaning "abomination," but this is the most important. It is applied to moral evils, sexual evils, prohibited foods, magic, and idolatry. The word refers to things particularly repulsive in the sight of God, and which are therefore to be so regarded by men as well.

An abomination is something repulsive: it is loathsome to think about, let alone practice. It tells us something about our time that the word "abomination" is not in common use and is essentially a Biblical word. This means that things once repulsive to most people are now tolerable. Behind such a situation is a reversal of the moral order.

As against abomination is God's call to holiness. This chapter of Exodus concludes with God's commandment, "And ye shall be holy men unto me" (Ex. 22:31). The word *men* is *ʾĕnôwsh*, whose root is a word meaning *frail*; hence, the word means *mortals*, often male mortals. God holds men primarily responsible; they are more severely punished for their transgressions.

Because of their greater responsibility, the requirement of holiness, while the duty of all, is especially important in men.

Whereas moral and other offenses against God's law can be termed abominations, holiness is the antithesis of the loathsome and repulsive. The term, "the beauty of holiness," appears three times in the Psalms:

> Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (Psalm 29:2)
>
> O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. (Psalm 96:9)
>
> Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. (Psalm 110:3)

(This last psalm has reference to Christ.)

God's law is the way of holiness, and the command to be holy is repeatedly given in the law. This holiness means a personal and covenantal relationship to God and His law. According to Gierke, "The Romans discovered the abstract idea of law."[279]It can be argued that the Greeks preceded them in this. In other cultures, law came from a ruler and was not abstract. In Biblical law, God expresses His nature and justice in the law, which is His totally personal word. Modern law is again abstract, and, in addition, it is a creation of men and the state. The erosion of law and the rise of lawlessness can be traced to these sources, abstraction and humanism. Biblical law rests on this premise: *Thus saith the Lord*.

For the Greeks and the Romans, law expressed abstract ideas, the forms of being. All the same, law became very personal for them. With no sovereign God behind law, powerful men made law the expression of man's will, their own. The same impetus triumphed with the Enlightenment. Men now use laws to do their will, to express their hatreds and purposes, and there is no fear of

God before their eyes (Ps. 36:1). If God is not behind the law, some man will be. Law presupposes a sovereign will, and a will is personal. Abstract law becomes an evil personal tool because it denies God as the source of all law.

Chapter Seventy-Seven
Laws of Liability and Restitution, Part IV
(*Exodus 22:21-27*)

> 21. Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.
> 22. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.
> 23. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;
> 24. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.
> 25. If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.
> 26. If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:
> 27. For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious. (Exodus 22:21-27)

In these verses, *the first case* (v. 21) forbids affronts to, and the maltreatment of, aliens. Like so many of God's laws, no man-administered penalty is cited. God Himself will punish the transgressors. There are numerous references to this law: Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33; 25:35; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Jeremiah 7:6; Zechariah 7:10; and Malachi 3:5. Again and again, God also reminds Israel that they were once aliens in Egypt, and hence they should manifest grace towards aliens in their own land.

In ancient Rome, the word for stranger "came to mean enemy."[280] In varying degrees, such attitudes have prevailed in all parts of the world. Christianity has made another standard basic, and, despite violations, it has become basic to Christendom. The enemies of Christianity cannot subvert this fact. Not only aliens, but also widows, orphans, and the needy are in God's eyes tests

of our faith. Many texts make this clear: Exodus 22:27; 23:6-12; Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11,14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Psalms 10:14,17-18; 68:5; 82:3; 146:9; Isaiah 1:23; 10:2; Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3, Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5; Matthew 25:34-45; etc.

The second case (vv. 22-24) protects the widow and the orphan, who, like aliens, are people in a vulnerable position. Verses 23-25 apply also to the oppression of aliens, so that the penalty cited, God's judgment, is the liability and judgment for these sins.

There is an important qualification to this judgment in v. 23: if "they cry at all unto me." God as Judge and Avenger acts when there is an appeal unto Him. This qualification places a duty on the covenant community. If they want justice, whatever else they do, they must pray to God. If there is no appeal to Him for His judgment, there is no judgment from Him in these cases. The Supreme Judge acts when His judgment is sought in such matters.

God promises death to the guilty, and He will make widows of their wives, and orphans of their children. This is simply an application of Exodus 21:23-25, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

In Biblical law, justice is to be open to everyone, to the weak and the helpless, to aliens, and to social outcasts. In 1 Kings 3:16-28, we see two prostitutes appealing to King Solomon for justice. Widows and orphans, however, are given especial prominence, not simply because of their helplessness, but because the protection of the family is basic and essential to God's order.

The third case (vv. 25-27) refers to loans to the poor; it does not refer to commercial loans or loans to a successful man. The person in mind is a poor man, probably landless, whose robe is also his covering in the cold of the night. The law of pledges or pawns is given in detail in Deuteronomy 24:6,10-13,17:

> 6. No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.

> 10. When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.
> 11. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.
> 12. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:
> 13. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.
>
> 17. Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.

Several things become apparent from this. *First*, the poor man or woman is a working member of the community. He or she is to receive an interest-free loan as an aspect of our covenantal community life. The only charity involved is that no interest is charged. Outright gifts of charity are a separate matter.

Second, it is legitimate to ask for a pledge or a pawn. While not required, it is seen as normal. A poor man faced with a crisis may be tempted to use the same article as a loan pledge with more than one man, hence the pledge. Nothing which is essential to a man's livelihood could be taken as a pledge, as witness millstones used to grind corn. A man's outer robe could be taken, but not a widow's; such garments had to be returned each night because the very poor used them as their blankets. Garments were woven in antiquity and hence not cheap; they also had a long "life" expectancy.

Third, the borrower's dignity could not be breached. The lender could not enter the house to carry out the pledge. The man who was borrowing was a covenant brother, and he had to be treated with kindness and courtesy.

Fourth, the fact of a pledge meant that failure to repay resulted in forfeiture. Poverty did not give the borrower freedom to exploit his wealthier covenant member. This law calls for brotherly love, not sentimentality or self-victimization.

Fifth, if the poor man is himself exploited, then, God says, "it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear: for I am gracious." Again God promises to hear *if* there is an appeal for justice, an appeal directed to Him whatever else is done. The poor man can be exploited by the lender if he is encouraged to borrow more than he can afford to repay, and to pledge more than he can afford to pledge. This is a common ploy in many cultures. In the United States in recent years, many farmers lost once debt-free farms because loan officers persuaded them to borrow far more than they could hope to repay.

In these three cases, the offender incurs a liability, and God's restitution is to destroy the offender and the unjust social order.

The law requiring interest-free loans to the working poor has a long history. Many Jewish communities had the Institution of a Free Loan Society.[281] Many churches also have a special fund for interest-free loans to needy members. Because God is merciful, His people must be merciful. God is described by David in Psalm 68:5 as a "judge of the widows," their high court of appeal. Appeal, however, must be made for God's justice to follow.

God makes aliens, widows, orphans, and the needy a test of society. He rejects a society which practices injustice, but the requirement of justice does not mean sentimentality or self-victimization. The law of pledge militates against the lender or the borrower exploiting the other.

Throughout history, God uses very practical tests to reveal the character of a people. Thus, in Zechariah's time, two sins are specifically mentioned as revelatory of the people's lives. These are, *first*, stealing, "representing all violations of the rights of one's fellow man," and, *second*, false oaths and vows, which manifest a man's actual disbelief in God's presence and judgment.[282] In such a society, Zechariah said, men are no longer covenant men. He charged the merchants with being Canaanites, "intent only on gain and personal profit."[283] For them and all

others, the center was gone, and life's focus was a purely personal one. Instead of being God-centered, they were focused on their private goals: they were Canaanites, and no more. Like the Canaanites, they would be judged and ejected.

In a powerful poem, "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats wrote:

> Things fall apart, the center cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

No center to hold society can exist where each man is his own center, when the church thinks only ecclesiastically, and business is unconcerned about Christianity and society, nor where workers see no logic apart from their demands. When the various segments of a country become specialized in their interests to the exclusion of all else, "the center cannot hold."

The purpose of God's law is to center us on Himself and His Kingdom. Our Lord declares, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness [or, justice]; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Thus God's law is very important for us to know and study. Christ is our Savior, and the starting point of the Christian life is His atonement, our justification and our regeneration. If, however, we concentrate on our salvation, we bypass the inescapably God-centered character of true Christianity.

When men, both in the church and out of it, center life upon themselves, they warp reality and create anarchy. Man's world then begins to fall apart. We live in such a time.

So too did the men of Israel when young Rehoboam took the throne. At the national assembly, when the crown council made it clear that its policy was heavier taxation and more control, most of the leaders present broke up the meeting with the cry, "to your tents, O Israel" (1 Kings 12:16). Living in tents was then remote to most of them; only a limited number lived pastoral lives that required nomadic practices. What the cry meant was, in a sense, back to basics, back to the elemental forms, because the center no longer holds. The sad fact is that, in this episode, neither the Northern Kingdom (Israel), nor the Southern (Judah) returned to the basic covenantal

faith. Their reaction to a strongly centralized state was to divide into two strongly centralized states.

The study of God's law is the best and only true response to the cry, "to your tents, O Israel." The church which professes Christ but not His law soon professes neither. It wants deliverance by God, but not obedience to Him. This is profanity.

J. Michael Hittle concludes a study of the development of cities in tsarist Russia from 1600-1800, in which the relationship of the state to the cities is carefully traced by a reference to Matthew 9:17. Christ there declares that new wine cannot be put into old bottles or wineskins because it will break them. This, however, was what the state faced as it tried to cope with change. Hittle noted:

> But that, of course, is precisely the point. The new wine could only be poured into the available skins …. It was only in the latter decades of the eighteenth century that the government could begin to entertain the notion of altering the skins: but even that exercise, as it turned out, relied in practice as much on old materials as on new ones.[284]

The modern state, with its humanistic doctrine of justice, has become a very old wineskin. John Taylor reported on what happened to a member of a prominent family who stained his summer house at Tahoe City:

> When Alustiza who stained his house in Tahoe City was finished with the job he went to the roadway to clean oil-based stain and paint thinner from his brushes and paint pans with a garden hose. In all, Alustiza dealt with seven agencies in the ensuing excitement. "We arrived to find a very large puddle of water with something on top," reported a firefighter from the Meeks Bay Fire Department who responded. The Meeks Bay Fire Department, the Tahoe City Fire Department, the California Highway Patrol, the Eldorado County Sheriff's Department, the El Dorado County Environmental Health Department, the

> Lahontan Regional Water Control board, and the California Fish and Game Department were notified of the dumping. The sheriff's man said "it was very obnoxious smelling." The fire department immediately mopped up the spill using special oil-absorbing pads. Some water ran into a neighboring yard. The fire department dug up and took to the station 120 pounds of contaminated dirt in plastic bags. Alustiza agreed to pay the fire department $160 to cover their costs in responding to the incident. He also agreed to take the contaminated dirt to a waste disposal site in Sacramento. This saved him plenty because the tab to have the dirt picked up and disposed of would have been $2,000.[285]

The wineskins of the state have grown very old.

Chapter Seventy-Eight
Laws of Liability and Restitution, Part V
(*Exodus 22:28-31*)

> 28. Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.
> 29. Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.
> 30. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.
> 31. And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs. (Exodus 22:28-31)

These particular laws do not call for restitution as do the previous ones, and they are not specifically related to liability except in the sense that sin always incurs liability with God. All the same, these verses are related to the preceding ones.

The *first* law (v. 28) declares, in both clauses, that judges are not to be reviled, nor rulers cursed. Paul refers to this law in Acts 23:5, when he says, apologizing for his outburst, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." It is important that this law be understood clearly. It does not forbid disagreement, nor, on occasion, civil disobedience for due cause (Matt. 22:21; Acts 5:29). What it does require is that judges and rulers, in church and state, be given the respect due to their office. This distinction is very important. Very often those least active in working for reformation in church and state are most prone to abusing the authorities verbally. Men like Erasmus, who loved to ridicule rather than to reform, are often popular. By expressing contempt, such men set themselves on a supposedly higher plane, and they manipulate words to absolve themselves of the responsibility to act. A fundamental civility and respect is required by God of all men.

Some read the first half of v. 28 as, "Do not blaspheme God," which is a possible meaning. However, in Leviticus 24:15-16, where such blasphemy is dealt with, we have the death penalty, but no penalty is cited here.

The word translated as *gods* in v. 28 is *elohim*, which can mean God, or judges, or pagan gods. In the previous verse (27), the poor are referred to. Here, according to both Josephus and Philo, pagan gods are referred to. The meaning, they held, is this: "Let no one blaspheme those gods which other citizens esteem as such."[286] The law punishes severely as treason all efforts by covenant members to subvert the faith; it did not interfere with the beliefs of those who followed other gods. This last meaning is not as commonly accepted in our time, but there are good reasons favoring it.

The *second* law (v. 29) deals with firstfruits, citing three kinds: (a) the fulness of your harvest; (b) the outflow of your presses; and (c) the firstborn of your sons. The subject of firstfruits is considered at greater length in Leviticus 19, Numbers 15 and 18, and Deuteronomy 26. Briefly, because the firstfruits represent the totality, in giving the firstfruits to God, all was dedicated to Him. The redemption of certain firstfruits was possible at a price, as with sons (Exodus 13:13; 34:20; Num. 3). Robert L. Cate rendered the first clause of v. 29 thus: "From your fulness and from your outflow, you shall never delay.…"[287] We cannot receive God's fulness if we are unwilling to give Him His due.

The *third* law (v. 30) deals with offerings of firstfruits also. It is, however, specified of calves and lambs that they cannot be offered until the eighth day. Until then they must remain with the ewe or cow. We are not told why this is so. There is a striking parallel to circumcision, which is also to be performed on the eighth day, or, at least, not before the eighth day. We know now that the coagulation of blood begins only with the eighth day after birth. What like reason may govern this law, we do not know.

The *fourth* law (v. 31) begins with a summary statement; then it adds a requirement which seems strange and extraneous to the modern mind. To be holy men unto God is understandable. To add, "therefore shall ye not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field," seems strange. This is

because the modern mind sees holiness in alien and Hellenic terms, whereby things spiritual and holy are non-physical. For Biblical faith, holiness involves body and mind alike. It requires a wholeness of life and living. The now sometimes despised proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," expresses this Biblical perspective. Because man is created in the image of God, with knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and dominion as His redeemed being and calling, man's holiness involves all aspects of his being. To eat flesh torn by wild animals in the field means to use food that a bear, wolf, or some other wild animal killed, damaged, and left behind. Man is not created to be a scavenger, but a dominion man. Therefore, all such animal-killed lambs, calves, or other livestock, even if freshly killed, are to be given to the dogs. Holiness is man's calling.

Modern man substitutes pride for holiness, a very different thing. Pride is self-exaltation, whereas holiness exalts God by faithfulness and obedience. Sociologists and anthropologists have identified the idea of the holy with the *numinous*, with a mystical awe and experience. The Bible identifies holiness with faithfulness to God's law by the redeemed covenant man.

Holiness means freedom from the power of sin and conformity to the law of God. Holiness is a communicable attribute of God. It is associated in Scripture with true growth and happiness. Proverbs 4:18 declares, "But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

It is perhaps necessary at this point to consider a word related to *holy*, not because it shares a common root word, which it does not, but because by virtue of its place in the Bible it refers to holiness. That word is *holocaust*. It is made up of two words in the Greek, *holos* and *kaustos*, meaning *whole* and *I consume with fire*. It refers to whole burnt offerings given to God. Holocausts were regarded by the Hebrews, and in the New Testament era, as the most important and the most holy of all the sacrifices.

In this century, the word *holocaust* has been cheaply used, first by the Jews and then by other groups, to refer to genocidal massacres. Massacres are one thing, holocausts are another. *First*, the word *holocaust* refers to total destruction, one in which fire consumes the totality of the

sacrifice. *Second*, it presumes a religious sacrifice to God. While some massacres have taken place, and on a massive scale, even when people have been massacred for their faith, it certainly has not been as a sacrifice to God. To speak of racial, national, or religious holocausts is thus seriously to misuse the language. These massacres have been real; holocausts they are not.

To return to holiness, failure to be holy incurs liability before God. It is not a trifling matter.

Chapter Seventy-Nine

God's Justice

(*Exodus 23:1-8*)

> 1. Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.
> 2. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:
> 3. Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.
> 4. If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.
> 5. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.
> 6. Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.
> 7. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.
> 8. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. (Exodus 23:1-8)

These are laws of justice, and, because justice or righteousness is the expression of God's being in His laws, these laws must take priority over us, over all judges, and over all human considerations. The *first* law (v. 1) can be paraphrased to say, Do not spread false reports, whether deliberately or through idle talk. The second half says, Do not aid the wicked by being a false witness. Thus, injustice in everyday speaking and in courtroom testimony are both forbidden. Many of the laws of Exodus 23 are specific applications of Exodus 20:16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The phrase, "put not thine hand with the wicked," has reference to the very ancient custom of shaking hands to conclude a legally binding agreement. To join with the "wicked to be an unrighteous person" is literally a "witness in charge of violence," because a false testimony in court does violence to justice. All testimony must be partial to justice, not to men.

The *second* law (v. 2) warns against and forbids "following a multitude to do evil," i.e., being socially determined in our actions. The second half of the verse is rendered by the Berkeley Version as, "nor, when witnessing in a lawsuit, lean toward the majority to thwart justice." In the first verse all false testimony and false witness is proscribed. Now that type of false witness is cited which follows the majority, or the prevailing opinion. The implication is that to follow the majority is to defy justice. Since most people prefer to conform to the governing ideas, this law declares that all such conformity, whether active or passive, is evil and is under God's judgment. Truth and justice are not determined by majorities, but by God. Just as monarchies and dictatorships have imposed one man's will, whatever the justness of the case, so democracies often impose their majority will over truth and justice. As James Macgregor commented,

> Do not go with the stream in wrong-doing. *Decline* here means, turn aside, from the straight path, to *turn aside* (same word) justice.[288]

The law applies to the judge and the witness both. The *third* law forbids favoritism to the poor because they are poor. A charitable view of the poor cannot be used to set aside justice. All people are equally prone to sin, and the court, whether it be the judge or the witness, must be governed by justice.

In the 1930s, I heard a missionary describe an episode in old China. A neighboring missionary kept two cows for his family and associates, to provide milk. His son, perhaps aged five, was playing with a Chinese lad of the same age. At one point, they tossed small pebbles at a Chinese neighbor's sickly and dying cow. That night the cow died. The missionary and his son were placed on trial for killing the cow, and the verdict was that one of his cows had to be given to replace the neighbor's dead cow. The missionary was outraged and protested the decision. The court and the people were in turn shocked by his protest. Of course, his son did not kill the cow; but he had two cows, and the neighbor now had none! Justice, the missionary learned in time, did not exist there because many extraneous concerns governed the courts. Partiality to the poor might seem noble, but its result is injustice. Sentimentalism can be as evil as tyranny in its

consequences. We cannot assume that the poor or the rich are necessarily right; sin is no respecter of persons! In Leviticus 19:15, we are told:

> Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Compassion has its place in society, but not as a substitute for justice. Compassion is a personal act; it calls for a personal act of charity and help. Justice requires the application of God's law.

The *fourth* law (v. 4) governs our personal conduct. If we see an enemy's ox or ass going astray, we are to return it to its owner. It is taken for granted that, if you see your friend's animal going astray, you will take action. The law says that such acts cannot be governed by our personal feelings. For community to exist, we must be helpful to one another in spite of our personal animosities. For a modern application of this law, in my days on the farm, it sometimes happened that a man's irrigation water broke out of the ditches to go where it was not wanted. If the man were not there, it was expected that his neighbor who spotted this would repair the break at once. Not to do so was regarded as abhorrent. The "enemy" mentioned in this law may have meant one who is currently engaged in a lawsuit against you. The behavior required is simply this: we cannot govern our lives by our hates; we must be governed by God's law.

The *fifth* law (v. 5) is related to this. An enemy's donkey, or some other animal, is having problems. Its load slips off its back, or, because it is improperly loaded, the animal cannot get up. To re-load him quickly requires the work of two men. The commandment is, "Thou shalt surely help." Involved here is the fact of returning good for evil, and kindness to an animal. Moreover, such an act can have a restorative function.

The *sixth* law (v. 6) calls for justice over favoritism towards the rich: "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause" or case. Cassuto, however, held that the word translated as *poor* should have been a related word from the same stem meaning opponent or adversary.[289] This is not the likely meaning; our enemy has been covered in the preceding laws. In the third

law, favoritism to the poor is forbidden; here, a perversion of justice to deny the poor a fair trial is forbidden. In either case, the fact of justice is not in mind; rather, the status of the person is considered.

The *seventh* law (v. 7) tells us that God will not "justify" or acquit anyone who perverts justice. James Moffatt rendered the verse in these words: "Avoid false charges, never have innocent and guiltless people put to death, nor acquit bad men." This is a paraphrase, but the idea is clear. The court cannot act in terms of a social agenda, but must rather act in terms of the facts of the case.

This is an important point. When it suits them, people want the court to act in terms of a social agenda. One of the most famous cases in American history came to be known as the Dredd Scott case. The decision demanded was in terms of a social agenda; both the North and the South looked for such a conclusion to the case. Whatever the facts of the case from our perspective, the decision was closer to the law than to a social agenda. The fact that the law was bad only meant that Congress should have exercised its power to repeal that which it had made.

The *eighth* law (v. 8) forbids bribery. A bribe blinds the wise and perverts the decision of the court of justice. There is a similar statement in Deuteronomy 16:19:

> Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

There is an interesting aspect to this law which is generally unknown. In ancient Israel, judges were not paid by the civil authorities, or, later, the kings, but out of the funds of the sanctuary, the tabernacle, or the Temple. The administration of justice was seen as a religious task and was thus financed by the Temple, apparently by the use of tithes and gifts. Justice and salvation were closely linked as God's holy purpose for men and society, and hence *bribery* was comparable to a corruption of the Temple.

The secularization of justice has placed it under man's authority and has made law and justice things determined by men, by majorities, minorities, races, or classes. All this has worked to destroy justice.

As against this, God's law sets forth true and ultimate justice.

Chapter Eighty

The Sabbath Rest

(*Exodus 23:9-13*)

> 9. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.
> 10. And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:
> 11. But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.
> 12. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.
> 13. And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth. (Exodus 23:9-13)

Much of what Exodus 23:1-8 deals with comes under the commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16), and so too does Exodus 23:9. Exodus 23:10-13 is related to Exodus 20:8-11, the sabbath law. Verse 9, "thou shalt not oppress a stranger," is a bridge between the two sections, in that the alien must have peace and rest also. To be in the midst of God's covenant people and land must be a sabbath for him in the sense of a rest from oppression. Justice is essential to the true sabbath. A man may be able to retire from work, but, in a land of injustice, true rest does not come from the mere absence of work.

A form of this same law is in Exodus 22:21, and throughout Scripture. It is clearly a matter of importance in God's sight. The phrase, "the heart of a stranger," can be rendered, "the life of a stranger." Israel is again reminded of its own bitter experience in Egypt.

We are not to *oppress* the stranger. The emphasis is not on a humanistic brotherhood but on *justice*. It is certainly not without significance that our present emphasis on world brotherhood and "the family of man" goes hand in hand with a neglect of God's justice. Humanism stresses feelings; God stresses justice.

In vv. 10-13, we have some sabbath laws. *First* of all, in vv. 10-11, the rest requirements of the sabbath year are set forth. *Second*, in v. 12, the weekly sabbath is all-inclusive of men and animals. *Third*, our minds and our speech must observe a continual sabbath or rest from idolatry. There are boundaries to thought and speech as well as to action.

To consider now the *first* of these, vv. 10-11, in Leviticus 25:4, the sabbath year is called "a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD." This first phrase can be rendered, "a sabbath of sabbatism;" it is a culmination of the weekly sabbaths. Debts are not to extend beyond six years, so that the sabbath time is not only a rest from one's normal work but also from debt. It is freedom thus from worry as well. Since debts were to be incurred solely for serious or emergency causes, this meant that provident, debt-free living was the normal way of life. The advantages to men in such a way of life are very, very great. A debt-free society would be dramatically free from many social problems.

While the human advantages are many, Leviticus 25:4 places the central emphasis elsewhere: it is "a sabbath of rest unto the land, *a sabbath for the LORD*." Because the land rests, the environmental benefits are very real, but it is *a sabbath for the LORD*, for His purposes and His Kingdom. God's law establishes an order which greatly blesses man and provides for a just society; all the same, its focus is on God's Kingdom. More than our present peace and prosperity is in view; not only the future but also God's eternal Kingdom is the purpose and goal of this law. This law is based on God's ownership of the earth, of all its resources and all its peoples. "The earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1).

What the land produced in the sabbath year belonged to the poor, and to wild animals. While the owner could pick some of the produce for personal use, it could not be marketed. It belonged to the Lord, not to the man who was His steward over it.

The *second* area of these sabbath laws and their concern is the weekly sabbath (v. 12). Both the owner and his servants or workers, and also his animals, were to rest each Sabbath day. In the Biblical perspective, the sabbath is a blessing from God to man; it places a necessary restraint upon man's work as a gift to him from God. This gift from God to man must be extended by man to all living things under him, both men and animals, and also to the land itself. Man must consecrate himself, all that he governs, and time itself, to God as Creator and Redeemer. The weekly sabbath is that consecration.

Its purpose is not a mindless time. Verse 12 concludes by saying that one purpose of the weekly sabbath is that all "may be refreshed." There are two aspects to this phrase. *First*, it is a way of saying that it is a time when all may "catch their breath." *Second*, the word *refreshed* is related to the word soul.[290] Thus, the Sabbath rest is more than physical; it is a time for the renewal of all our being. Time and earth are alike God's creation, and so too is man. By resting in the Lord and being freshly reminded of God's priority, we catch our breath and are renewed. In Acts 3:19, we have the same idea, as Peter declares:

> Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

As George Bush wrote, "the times of refreshing" can be rendered "the times of *re-souling*."[291] The sabbath is thus presented as the means to the health of the community.

The sabbath rest includes the animals, who have no religious duties to perform, and workers, who may not be believers. There is, all the same, some benefit to them, and the sabbath is to be a blessing to all.

The *third* aspect of the sabbath (v. 13) calls for a continuous rest from all mental and verbal considerations of or concern with other gods, or with false religions. We are not to be impressed with their power or tied up with endless negation or fear. This law is related to Revelation 2:24, which condemns concerns over and absorption in conspiracies and evil powers. The power of God far exceeds all such things, and it is He whom we must serve, understand, and obey.

In Hosea 2:17, God declares, "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." What is in our mouth is what is in our heart, and it is the zeal of the Lord of Hosts which must possess us.

To "mention" the names of other gods means using their names in oaths, curses, prayers, and the like. It means invoking them.[292] David had this law in mind in Psalm 16:4:

> Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

We have a reference to the general concept in Ephesians 5:3. There are things that we must keep our distance from, because not to do so means a growing toleration. The concern of these laws is the sabbath, or rest, resting in the Lord. Isaiah 57:20-21 tells us,

> 20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
> 21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Rest is a religious matter. Isaiah tells us that the wicked cannot truly rest; their minds constantly cast up mire and dirt. Perpetual dissatisfaction marks them, and they resent having to live in a troubled world or evil times, as though heaven should be their rightful place and privilege. The godly are told that rest in a very troubled and evil world is their privilege, if they will have it. If we are fretful, our Lord tells us, it is because we are striving vainly to serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). However evil the times, we are to trust in the Lord; we are not to be consumed by anxiety,

but rather to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness or justice (Matt. 6:25-34). The sabbath rest must be more than a weekly observance; it must be a daily fact.

But how do we rest if we are presently overwhelmed by ugly burdens and problems? These can leave us sleepless and even shattered. The answer is given to us in Romans 8:28. God does make all things work together for good to them that love Him, for them who are called according to His purpose. If we look at God's sovereign purpose and grace rather than to our hurt or pride, we are enabled step by step to rest in Him who is our peace.

Chapter Eighty-One

Festivals of Faith

(*Exodus 23:14-19*)

> 14. Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.
> 15. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)
> 16. And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.
> 17. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.
> 18. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.
> 19. The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. (Exodus 23:14-19)

These verses are concerned with the observances of *festivals*. The Hebrew word for festival means *to celebrate*. Hebrew festivals were marked, *first*, by ceremonial meals; *second*, by a special liturgy or worship; and, *third*, special ceremonies which set a particular festival apart from others, such as the eating of unleavened bread at Passover.

The main festivals or feasts of Exodus are the Passover (also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread), the Harvest Festival, and the Feast of Ingathering. The Harvest Festival was also known as the Day of the Firstfruits. These were pilgrim festivals to Jerusalem.

These festivals were also sabbaths; work was forbidden. They were to be a time of rejoicing in God's covenant mercies.

In the Christian era, the rabbis saw Paul's comments in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16 as opposed to their festivals.[293] Paul insisted on a new content in the festivals, not a repetition of their Jewish meaning. Thus, he wrote, in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8,

> 7. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:
> 8. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul says, *first*, that in Jesus Christ we have the true meaning of the old festivals; hence, we do not return to the old festival for our celebration, but to the new. By our regeneration in Christ, we are now a new creation; we are unleavened bread in Him, whereas old Israel is leavened. Paul here has the Lord's Table, the Christian Passover, in mind. *Second*, Paul's words make it clear that he has in mind not only the new observance of Passover, but also its manifestation in a regenerate life day by day. Our morality must be governed by Christ. Paul has in mind separation from both pagan Corinthian practices and Jewish rites.

Thus, these festivals of Exodus have had their place in the Christian calendar in differing forms. The same motive still governs them. What God has done for us is to be celebrated; it is an occasion for joy and a feast or festival. The older custom of a Sunday dinner, which in farm days was a banquet for the family, retained the festival spirit. *The Protestant Dictionary*, an older Church of England work, wrote that *feasts* are:

> Days of holy and joyful commemoration of persons, doctrines, or events connected with the history of the Christian religion. Some are "movable," *e.g.* Easter Day (on which all the other movable feasts depend). This is always the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after the twenty-first day of March. Other feasts are immovable, or fixed, *e.g.* the Epiphany, which always falls on January 6th. All Sundays in the year are feasts.[294]

In substance, this has been the view of Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches too, as well as of all other Reformed Churches, for the Church of England long was legally called the Reformed Church of England. The restoration of the spirit of the feast or festival to the Christian sabbaths and holy days is thus important.

The festival commandment here is to Israel, and it definitely includes the fact of Israel as a nation. Every nation is, as James Macgregor noted, a moral entity.[295] Its laws are inescapably concerned with good and evil, and therefore with God — or against Him. Thus, while the festival is religious, its focus is national because the benefit is national. According to Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

The three festivals here cited are all farm and food related. *First*, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was at the time when the cereal crop was first harvested; for seven days unleavened bread was eaten (see also Deut. 16:1-8; Ex. 12-13). This festival marked the barley harvest in particular.

The *second* festival was the Harvest Feast, at the end of the corn or wheat harvest. In Deuteronomy 16:9-10 it is called the Feast of Weeks, because it came about seven weeks after the beginning of the harvest. In the New Testament it is called the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff).

The *third* feast is Ingathering, the harvest of fruits, grapes, olives, and the like in late summer and early fall. This is called the Feast of Tabernacles in Deuteronomy 16:13-15; Jesus participated in such a festival according to John 7:2ff.

The commandment to avoid leavened bread (v. 18) applies specifically to Passover, or the first feast. The requirement of v. 15, "and none shall appear before me empty," is an important one. What we receive from the Lord stands for all time and eternity; therefore, gratitude means that we appear before God with gifts. The reference here is not to the mandatory tithe but to gifts above and over the tithe. The premise is plainly stated by our Lord: "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

It is important to see the food-related nature of the festivals. The sabbath itself was in Israel a time of rejoicing and feasting, as it has been in much of church history. As Macgregor observed years ago:

> The *year* (v. 17) … here is simply that of the world's life as resulting in the food of man, at the various stages from the first appearance of the harvest to its final completion. It is remarkable how greatly the simple providing of bread still occupies the life of mankind: if men no longer used food, almost the whole "business" of the world would stop.[296]

As we have seen, these three festivals are food-related. We have them in the church as two: communion and Thanksgiving. Modern man errs in two areas with respect to food. *First*, because in the Western world he has grown accustomed to an abundance of food, he fails to recognize his dependency on things outside his control. He is dependent on the farmers who grow the food, who are in turn dependent on the weather and the soil. Farming is thus precarious work. A change in the weather can destroy a crop, and commonly does. *Second*, because of the importance of food, tyrant states routinely seek to control the food supply and the grower. Food is important to life, and it is a major weapon of warfare. But attempting to control agriculture is a form of playing god, and the results are routinely disastrous.

Modern faith is not food-related, and hence it is abstract and unrealistic. Our Lord commands us to pray, "give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11), as the One who can strip us of food and life. We are not gods; we are creatures, and we had better know it.

Verse 19 has been the subject of much discussion. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." This law has led Jews to avoid eating meat and drinking milk at the same meal. The practice of seething a kid in its mother's milk was apparently a pagan fertility cult rite. It was a violation of the requirements of care for animal life (Exodus 22:30; Leviticus 22:27-28; Deuteronomy 22:6, 25:4; Proverbs 12:10). It is important to remember that this particular law is given here, again in Exodus 34:26, and in Deuteronomy 14:21. It is obviously important. Why,

then, did not God explain its meaning? The answer is that God *commands* our obedience; He gives explanations when it is necessary.

This practice was apparently connected with fertility magic.[297] It was a part of Canaanite Worship.[298] The Ras Shamra (Ugarit) tablets state, "cook a young goat in milk." The Canaanites believed that milk contained the seed of life and at times sprinkled it on the ground. The first part of v. 19 requires that our firstfruits be given to God; to give God the firstfruits and avoid anything hinting of fertility cult practices was thus a way of witnessing to God's sovereign power to feed and sustain us. To depend on alien invocations of fertility was thus forbidden and evil.[299] The comment of a Jewish scholar, Mendelssohn, on this law is good, and it applies to other laws as well: "The benefit arising from the many inexplicable laws of God is in their practice, and not in the understanding of their motives."[300]

The Canaanite practice of boiling young cattle in milk continues to this day among the Bedouins.[301]

These three festivals are food related. The practice of seething a kid in its mother's milk was a way whereby man, through magic, attempted to control the fertility of the earth and its food supply. Modern humanistic statism attempts to do the same thing. In both instances, we have an ungodly belief that man can determine life and fertility apart from God. This law thus has a continuing relevance; what was done then by a single magical act is now the state policy of modern humanistic civil governments.

The sabbaths are festivals of faith celebrating God's governing power in our lives and in our world. But man now seeks his sabbaths through the state. It is the state which will give him true rest and peace, he believes. As a result, his sabbaths, his holidays replacing holy days, are now state-created. These holidays usually celebrate a national hero or a day of military significance, normally a victory. They usually become times of play, and modern man sees his peace in a respite from responsibility, in retirement in due time, not in resting in the Lord.

Chapter Eighty-Two
The Angel of the LORD
(*Exodus 23:20-25*)

> 20. Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.
> 21. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.
> 22. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.
> 23. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.
> 24. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.
> 25. And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. (Exodus 23:20-25)

The Angel of the LORD is the subject of these verses. We are told that the covenant people shall have with them the protecting person of the Angel of the LORD. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4 refers to this fact and speaks of one who followed, or, literally, went with Israel in their journey. That person is referred to as "that spiritual Rock … and that Rock was Christ." The word *rock* is important in Biblical usage: it is an image or representation of God whenever used in a nonliteral sense. We have this meaning in the hymn, "Rock of Ages." Moses in his hymn says of God, "He is the Rock," i.e., the foundation of all things (Deut. 32:4). He declares of Israel, that he "lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:15), and, of the pagans and their gods, Moses said, "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges" (Deut. 32:31). In brief, the supernatural presence of God was with Israel in its wilderness journey.

This supernatural presence was manifested on specific occasions both before and after the wilderness experience. When three men appeared to Abraham, in Genesis 18:2, etc., one is set apart as God Himself. The Angel of the LORD is God, but not God the Father. In Genesis 24:7, 40 a distinction is made between God and the Angel of the LORD. However, in Exodus 13:21, we are told that "the LORD went before" Israel, but in Exodus 14:19, we read that it was "the Angel of the God." Thus, God the Father and the Angel of the LORD are both identified and distinguished. In Joshua 5:14-15 and Joshua 6:2, it is clear that the Angel of the LORD is God. In Zechariah 1:14-15, the Angel of the LORD and the LORD communicate one with another, but in Zechariah 3, they are identified. In Judges 13:19-22, the Angel of the LORD is declared to be God. It is clear that the Angel of the LORD is not a creature but is truly God.[302]

We have in these theophanies, or appearances of God, the pre-incarnation manifestations of God the Son, human in form but not incarnate.

The word *angel* here is a messenger, but He is a *messenger* in the sense of a Presence from the high command, from God. He is there to protect, lead, and chasten. He is the great guardian angel, God with His people. Then as now, men assume that it is God's business to care for His people when needed and to be silent at all other times. As a result, in v. 21, a blunt warning is given: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him." "My name is in him" means God's authority, nature, and power are in Him. As Macgregor observed, "This is the description of a person who is God."[303] Because God's Name or Person is in the Angel of the LORD, rebellion against Him is not forgiven: "he will not pardon your transgression." Such a transgression is a rebellion against salvation. It means that their deliverance from Egypt and the Red Sea threat meant nothing more to them than the freedom to sin at will.

Men find God and faith necessary, because without them life has no meaning, but to assume that we have no requirement of total obedience to God, or to assume that faith does not require obedience, is to manifest presumption, not salvation. There is then no pardon. Hence, the command is, "Provoke him not."

By contrast, v. 22 is a magnificent promise to those who believe and obey, to the faithful. God says, "Then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." God will then identify ourselves with His cause and Kingdom and will deliver and prosper us. These blessings come to us with submission to the Lord and His law-word. We are led by God when we submit to Him. Joseph Parker said of all of us:

> It would seem to be our nature to spoil everything. We take the instrument to pieces to find the music, instead of yielding ourselves to the call of its blast, to the elevation of its inspiring gladness, and to the infinite tenderness of its benediction. We are cursed with the spirit of vain curiosity. We expend ourselves in the asking of little questions instead of plunging into God's great sea of grace, and love, and comfort, and waiting patiently for revelations which may address themselves to the curiosity which is premature, and to the prying which now can get no great answers.[304]

The Angel of the LORD will convoy His people to a prepared place, but if they distrust His leading and break His law, He will judge them. The promises here are very clear. In these verses and those that follow, a series of remarkable promises are made by God. These carry His absolute certainty and power, so that they express, not hopeful forecasts, but certainties. Lange has summarized them thus:

> (1) Protection of angelic guidance, of the religion of revelation; and invincibility founded on religious obedience. (2) Victory over the Canaanites. Possession of the holy land on condition of their purifying the land from idolatry. (3) Abundance of food. (4) Blessing of health. (5) Fertility of man and beast. (6) Long life. (7) The respect and fear of neighboring peoples. (8) Mysterious control of natural forces in favor of Israel, v. 28. (9) The subjected Canaanites themselves made to serve for the protection of the growth of Israel. (10) Wide extent of territory and sure possession of it on condition of not mingling with the Canaanites and their idolatry.[305]

The promises unto us are no less, and we are more often foiled by our sin than by our enemies.

The promise in v. 23 is that the Angel of God's Presence will go before His people to cut off, or, better, to cut down their enemies. Canaanite rule would come to an end, and Israel's enemies would be stateless, their status determined only by residence in Israel.

God's people, however, must have nothing to do with the idolatry of these foreign peoples. While no compulsion was exerted to secure compliance to Israel's faith, and the various peoples of Canaan could believe as they willed, public and state sanction was denied to their pagan religions (v. 24). The community had to be governed in terms of God and His law.

They were required in particular to destroy all the pagan "images" or pillars or obelisks which were found everywhere. They were fertility cult symbols which invoked the fertility of natural forces. These were erected to insure the fertility, potency, and plenitude of men and their crops. As against this, God's people (v. 25) must recognize that God's blessings alone can prosper man in his person and work. Obedience, God says, means health and plenty, whereas disobedience means judgment and death. In Deuteronomy 28, we have a fuller statement of this fact. The promise is very plain: the better the obedience, the better the health, in every sphere of life.

However, for God's people, who receive His grace, mercy, and care, to despise His word means particularly severe judgments. Covenant faith is therefore entrance into a realm of unrivaled benefits and blessings as well as especially severe judgments. We are commanded, "ye shall serve the LORD your God," and, when we do, "He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (v. 25).

This promise of the Presence is not simply a matter of history. Our Lord tells us, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This is the same Presence, with the same power, the same blessings, and the same judgments.

Chapter Eighty-Three

Hornets and Snares

(*Exodus 23:26-33*)

> 26. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.
> 27. I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.
> 28. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.
> 29. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.
> 30. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.
> 31. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.
> 32. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.
> 33. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee. (Exodus 23:26-33)

In v. 27, we have a very important statement: God declares, "I will send my fear (or, my terror) before thee." We are very prone to materialistic concepts of historical determination. Economic factors, military considerations, geopolitical determinants, and a host of like things are regularly weighed and weighted by historians. History is variously defined in humanistic or in scientific terms, and routinely without regard to the triune God. In one church-related college, a fine professor was summarily dismissed in the 1980s for teaching history from a theological perspective. The other men in the history department felt that such an approach would deprive the school of any respect from other scholars. While professing to be Christian these professors insisted on a non-Christian historiography.

Verse 27, however, tells us something basic about history: God's determination. God's terror can overwhelm His enemies and destroy them. They will run when no man pursues them (Lev. 26:17), and this is true whether they are supposedly covenant people or assuredly covenant enemies. To oppose God is to invite His terror. Proverbs 28:1 tells us, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." The next verse, Proverbs 28:2, is also of interest here: "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof," or, in the Berkeley Version, "When a land transgresses, it has many rulers." This well describes our situation today.

Verses 26-33 tell us that, because God determines our history, we had better be obedient to His covenant law. We are not saved to go our way, but to go His way.

Faithfulness means fertility (v. 26): neither man nor beast, nor the land itself, will be sterile.

Faithfulness also means providential care (v. 28). Light was shed on v. 28 by the archeological work of John Garstang. The sovereignty of Egypt's pharaoh was symbolized by a hieroglyph of a hornet.[306] Egypt had devastated the old Canaanite powers and civilization. Its plunder had included not only great amounts of gold, slaves, horses, and chariots, but also some of Canaan's leading nobles and their wives. Thus, when Joshua and the Israelites appeared before the walls of Jericho, they faced shattered powers whose prosperity and morale were not yet restored.[307] Egypt had broken the Canaanites, and Israel had broken Egypt, and, as Rahab was later to tell Joshua's men, God's terror had taken hold of all men (Joshua 2:9-11). "Your terror is fallen upon us, and … all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you" (Josh. 2:9). God declares that He governs the hearts of all men, and He destroys our enemies before us when we are faithful to Him.

The question of covenants is basic here. God by His grace and mercy has entered into a covenant or treaty with man, and His law gives us the terms of that treaty. Hence, there is a very strict ban on any covenant or treaty with any person or people who are not members of God's covenant. A covenant or treaty takes precedence over everything else. The United States Constitution is in line with the meaning of treaties in giving all treaties priority over the Constitution. God declares that a covenant or treaty is a legal and religious fact. A treaty presupposes a common faith, a

common law, and a common cause. Twentieth century treaties to which the United States has been a part make it clear that our nation has abandoned this Biblical premise which Washington affirmed and has made common cause with anti-Christian states. As v. 32 makes clear, to make a covenant with the ungodly is to make a covenant with their gods, their religion. To do so is to invoke the terror of God. There is rightful concern today over international terrorism, but there should be more concern over the terror God puts into men's hearts when they break His covenant and law.

In vv. 28-30, God promises to drive out the pagan powers before Israel, "little by little." Instead of a devastated and empty land, they will take over a functioning one. A devastated land would become desolate: its fields, vineyards, and orchards would revert to wilderness. Contrary to a popular impression, a wilderness presents major problems in subjugating and cultivating. To cite one little example, in California, where farms have been abandoned in this century because of draughts and bankruptcies, restoration has been a costly matter. The proliferation of gophers alone is a problem, as well as the increase of jack-rabbits which devour the young vines and trees. The proliferation of larger wild animals is also cited in v. 29.

The promised potential boundaries of Israel, from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and then to the Euphrates (v. 30), were never reached by Israel because of their disobedience, although these boundaries were approximated under Solomon.

Two statements are made about the Canaanites. *First*, in v. 29, "I will not drive them out from before thee," meaning that the conquest will not be quickly over, lest the land become desolate. Israel and the Canaanites will thus coexist for a time. *Second*, in the long term, "they shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee" (v. 33). This means that, if independent pagan civil orders exist in their midst, i.e., city-states, there will be a tendency to make treaties with them which will lead to paganism. Since this statement, v. 33, comes immediately after v. 32, which forbids covenants or treaties with ungodly nations, the reference is clearly to pagan city-states.

The word *snare* is used in v. 33 and is used several times with reference to ungodly alliances. In Joshua 23:13, Joshua declares that God will no longer drive out the ungodly city-states from before Israel. They will remain to test Israel, and Israel will fail the test; these city-states will "be snares and traps unto you." The Angel of the LORD reminds them of their failure to avoid these *snares* in Judges 2:3. Gideon's compromise with pagan practice is termed a *snare* in Judges 8:27.

The point is that God does not provide us with a trouble-free and temptation free world. Even in the Garden of Eden, man had an option to disobey God. This side of heaven, all life involves testing and has its share of snares.

This text thus assures us of two things. *First*, God sends a "hornet," some providential power, ahead of us, to do much of the work for us. On top of this, He sends terror into the hearts of His enemies and ours. *Second*, we are not handed the victory without battle on our part, nor without snares when we have triumphed.

We are therefore to fear God, not man, and we are not to be arrogant, nor over-confident in our own powers, for the God-ordained snares are there to trip us up in our pride.

Chapter Eighty-Four

The Sealing of the Covenant

(*Exodus 24:1-8*)

1. And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.
2. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.
3. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.
4. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.
5. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.
6. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.
7. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.
8. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. (Exodus 24:1-8)

The sealing of the covenant, or, its ratification, is described in these verses. A covenant is a treaty of law between two parties; where one party is greater than the other, the covenant of law is also an act of grace. The penalty for breaking the covenant and the covenant law is death. Hence, to make or cut a covenant meant and means the invocation of the death penalty on whichever party breaks the covenant law.

It is, of course, impossible for God, whose nature is expressed in the covenant law, to break that law, whereas for man law-breaking is a possibility before the Fall, and again afterward. As a result, when Israel entered into covenant with God, it opened the door to great blessings, and also to certain death.

A covenant is therefore a *blood* covenant. In Leviticus 17:11, we are told, "the life of the flesh is in the blood." Again, in Hebrews 9:22, we have a summation of the Biblical doctrine of the covenant and of atonement: "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins. Because the covenant is a *blood* covenant, life flows from God to His covenant people insofar as they are faithful to the covenant law. Departure from that covenant faith and its law cuts us off from the life-giving blood and leads to our death. The meaning of communion must be understood in terms of this covenant doctrine. Because of our covenant breaking, we are under the sentence of death. However, because God the Son assumes the death penalty for us, we are restored to life and to the privilege of life, to the bread and wine, to the body and blood of Christ, the God-man.

As preparation is made for the ratification of the covenant, Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders are called to the mountain. Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's two eldest sons, and Moses' nephews (Ex. 6:23, 28:1; Lev. 10:1); because of their subsequent pride, arrogance, and presumption, they perished (Lev. 10:1-2). Moses alone went to the place of revelation. To Moses was given the terms of the covenant; this is the whole of the law, of course, but here summarized to mean obedience to *every* law-word God gives to His people (Matt. 4:4). This is apparent from v. 3, when the people declare, "All the words which the LORD hath said will we do." This affirmation came after Moses set forth the blessings as well as the judgments of the covenant.

Moses wrote the words given by God and prepared for the ratification of the covenant. An altar of field stones was then erected with twelve pillars, and also simple piles of rocks to make small pillars to represent each of the twelve tribes. Two kinds of sacrifices were then offered. *First*, there were burnt offerings, or holocaust-offerings entirely consumed upon the altar. Then, *second*, there were peace offerings to signify that by God's atoning work and grace, there was covenant peace between God and His people.

Then followed the key act of the covenant after the people's assent to it. The blood of the burnt offerings had been caught up in basins. Half of this was sprinkled on the altar, and half on the people. This blood signified the sharing of life by God and man, and also the promise of death for disobedience to the covenant. Macgregor wrote:

> The sacrifice on this occasion of *constituting* the covenant relationship is the one sacrifice which under the Old Testament did not require to be repeated. It was the foundation of all. The blood of sacrifice, representing *life* offered for sin, is immediately for the altar, as the offering is unto God. But in this case He, the primary Covenanter, here appears as bringing men into most vitally close relation to Himself, making them one with Himself in the essential transaction (Is. iv. 3). In heathen lands men employed bleeding sacrifices in the sealing of the compacts, with various shades of meaning. There was always in that form the substance of meaning, the highest conceivable degree of sacredness in binding parties to the contract. Here, the living God, as if swearing by Himself in what is most sacred, shows what is the most sacred "mystery" of revealed religion, namely, *propitiation* through bleeding sacrifice. And men, accepting this His Covenant, set their seal to what springs to man from the most sacred fountain of new life, namely, *obligation to obey* the revealed will of God (Ga. iv. 6; 1 Pe. i. 15-21): the expression is literally "*upon* all these words," — on all these words, — on the *footing* of them all. The sprinkling on *the people* is in Heb. (ix. 19) made to reach "*the book* and *all* the people," and there are details given of the process which are not specified in Exodus.[308]

This covenantal act of ratification is similar to the ancient rite of blood brotherhood. In such covenants, two men mingled their bloods; often the wrist was cut, and the two wrists placed together to indicate the new relationship, the covenant in blood. There is a difference between such covenants and God's covenant. The same requirement of death for faithlessness to the covenant is present, but in God's covenant, both here and at Golgotha, the blood comes from an innocent and unblemished animal. All the same, this sacrificial blood does represent both parties.

Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, is God incarnate and thus as very man of very man assumes the death penalty for violation of the covenant for all members of His new humanity as the new Adam (1 Cor. 15:45ff).

In v. 7, we are told that "the book of the covenant" was read to all the people. The law was given to Israel as the terms of the covenant, life for faithfulness, death for unfaithfulness. In Jesus Christ the law is perfectly kept by this last Adam, our federal head, and for us the law is now the way of holiness for the new humanity in Christ. "The book of the covenant" meant the legal terms of the treaty law.

In v. 8, we have a reference to "the blood of the covenant." In Matthew 26:28, our Lord cites this phrase, declaring that His blood is the blood of the new or renewed covenant or testament, "which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This was a startling phrase, and the limited or failing comprehension of the disciples tells us how blind we all can be when we do not choose to hear.

In v. 6, we see that half the blood was sprinkled upon the altar. The reason is that the altar is here

> a representative of God, as the first and principal party to the covenant; and the twelve pillars as the representatives of the twelve tribes of the people as the other party. Between these two covenanting parties Moses acted as real and typical mediator.[309]

In Christian terminology, "blood" has become a metaphor for salvation, and this very clearly has Biblical roots. For example, in 1 Peter 1:18-19, we are told:

> 18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
> 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Because the covenant and the blood are separated in modern thought, which is not covenanted, the meaning of salvation is diminished. The covenant being neglected or forgotten, its law is also forgotten, and hence antinomianism. Antinomianism is individualistic, not covenantal.

These verses, and Exodus 24 as a whole, militate against a temper which arose later in Israel, a belief in democracy with God and a rejection of hierarchy. In Numbers 16:1-40, we have an account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their followers. Because all were members of the covenant, these men claimed that all were equally holy and hence rejected all human authority in religious matters (Num. 16:3). Exodus 24, however, gives us various concentric circles in the approach to God. *First*, we have the people as a whole. Of them, it is said, "they shall not come nigh" (v. 2). The fact that they were the covenant people did not give them a release from authority or station. *Second*, another circle was of the seventy elders, Aaron, and his two sons. They were told, "worship ye afar off" (v. 1). *Third*, Joshua, as Moses' "minister" and aide, was able to go further, but not as far as Moses (v. 2, 13). *Fourth*, Moses alone was in the final circle with God.[310] By the grace of God, Israel was a privileged people, but, as Chadwick observed, "in privilege itself there are degrees."[311]

There is a subtle and important point in this ratification of the covenant to which Lange called attention:

> It is quite in accordance with the legal stand-point that Moses at first pours out the blood designed for God at the altar of God; thereby he symbolically effects a general and complete surrender of the people of God. But not till after he has read the book of the covenant, the laws of chs. xx-xxiii., and the people have given their fullest assent, does he sprinkle the people with the other half of the blood of the offering, which till then was kept in the basin, while he calls it the blood of the covenant that has been completed.[312]

The covenant cannot be separated from the law. The covenant establishes fellowship with God, but there is no fellowship apart from the blood of the covenant and the covenant law.

The covenant was and is a legal act; it is also an act of grace on God's part. Israel was thus a privileged people, and its judgment came because it chose to regard its privilege as a natural right to all born of Abraham. Today the churches and the various nations of the Western world see themselves as having a similar natural right and superiority. Unless they repent, they too shall perish.

A final note: covenant-breaking between nations in antiquity was an act of war and normally brought swift and often total vengeance. Modern treaties or covenants are thus pale relics of what their names imply: they are made for strategic purposes and are broken at will. Over the centuries, the decline of the permanence of treaties has gone hand-in-hand with the rise of humanistic premises. Neither man's word nor a nation's word has binding power, nor does a written covenant or contract.

Chapter Eighty-Five

The Covenant Meal

(*Exodus 24:9-18*)

9. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10. And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

11. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

12. And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

13. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14. And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

15. And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gathered him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:9-18)

After the covenant was ratified in blood with all the people (Exodus 24:1-8), a further ceremony took place. A covenant establishes a community of law between the participants, and, to witness to that covenant community, a covenant is followed by a meal together of the two parties. The sacrament of communion is such a covenant meal in ritual form. It testifies to a community in

which the participants are ready to live and to die for one another in terms of the covenant law. The covenant dinner is thus basic to the making of a covenant. In this instance, v. 11 tells us of that meal.

The participants were the seventy elders representing all Israel; Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu represented the priesthood, and Moses and Joshua its civil government. At this time, all present had a vision of God, not of His person, but of His presence. It was then common to throne rooms to be made of some kind of blue stone, perhaps to signify the sky. All that the men now saw was this throne room's sapphire-like blue pavement, signifying the presence of the Great King, Almighty God. They ate and drank of the ceremonial meal.

Moses and Joshua were then summoned to go higher on Mount Sinai in order to receive the Ten Commandments engraved on two tablets of stone. A covenant when written or engraved was in two copies, one for each party. Thus, each tablet carried the entire Ten Commandments. Again, to forestall additions to a covenant, the entire parchment, tablet, or paper was entirely covered by the covenant law to allow no further word to be enscribed as a supplement.

Meals are an aspect of family life, and, in antiquity, to participate in a meal with someone else was to establish thereby a bond of community and mutual obligation. As long as no meal bound two men together, they were actual or potential enemies.

According to Exodus 33:20, God says, "There shall no man see me and live." John 1:18 declares, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The visions of God described here are of His glory rather than His full and open presence. Calvin observed, "For if the mountains melt at the sight of Him, what must needs happen to a mortal man, than whom there is nothing more frail and feeble?"[313] But, as Keil and Delitzsch noted,

> The sight of the God of Israel was a foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity, and the covenant meal upon the mountain before the face of God was a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb, to which the Lord will call, and at

> which He will present His perfected Church in the day of the full revelation of His glory (Rev. xix. 7-9).[314]

The presence of God to sinful man means death; here we are told that God laid not His hand on them (v. 11), in His grace and mercy.

Many have pointed out, such as Matthew Poole, that this appearance of God was of God the Son.[315] The evidence for this is Acts 7:38, where Stephen says of the Christ,

> This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.

At Mount Sinai, He was present in His glory, not vailed as in other appearances.

In v. 10, the vision is described as if "it were the body of heaven in its clearness." A clear sky in Biblical imagery commonly represents God's favor, "as a cloudy sky notes his anger."[316] Clouds can also represent the fact that man in his fallen estate cannot see God and live; the full vision of God is in the world to come.

After the communion meal, Moses was summoned up higher on Mount Sinai; after a point, Joshua was left behind. The period of Moses' stay on the mount was forty days and forty nights (v. 11). We do not know how much time was spent with the seventy elders. All the while, the mountain top was visible to Israel below as cloud and fire, reminding them of the pillar and cloud which accompanied them. According to Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 9:9, Moses fasted those forty days and nights. He was alone six days, and, on the seventh, was called up higher into the mountain to receive the covenant tablets of stone and instructions from the Lord. Parker said of the law,

> When we are most religious we are most inclined to proclaim the law. It is a poor rapture that does not come down upon legislation with a new force, a firmer grip,

> and a deeper conception of its moral solemnity. Know whether you have been with God upon the mount by knowing how much law you have brought back with you; and when you would read the law, read it after you have been long days and nights with the Lawgiver.[317]

Law relates a religion to the world around us.

According to v. 14, Moses gave instructions to the seventy elders and to Aaron and his sons. In telling them to tarry, he apparently meant in the plain below with the people. Moses meanwhile went up into the midst of the cloud where "the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire" (v. 17). Hebrews 12:29 tells us that "our God is a consuming fire." By the grace of God, Moses drew near and was only blessed. The mountain top was comparable to what in the sanctuary was the Holy of Holies. It was cloud-covered for six days, and, on the seventh, when Moses was summoned up, it burst into a "devouring fire" (v. 17).

In Deuteronomy 9:9, Moses refers to his forty days and forty nights on the mountain and says, "I neither did eat bread nor drink water," a fact also stressed in Exodus 34:28. The fact is stressed with good reason: it calls attention to the supernatural character of the experience. To fast forty days can be done, but not to continue so long without water. Moses, as a desert sheepherder, knew this well. God in His grace had taken Moses out of the normal realm and emphasized that change by separating him from food and drink for the entire time. Moses lets us know that the presence of God radically alters life even for a man on a desert mountain.

Exodus 24 begins with a sacrifice of expiation by which the covenant is made. Then there is a peace-offering meal to establish the fellowship of the covenant.

In modern thought, *peace* means the cessation of hostilities, the termination of war. It tends to have a negative connotation. In the Biblical sense, to be at peace with someone means to be loyal to them, to be their friend and ally. This is its meaning in Genesis 34:21. Peace with God is described in 1 Kings 8:61 in these words:

> Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

Peace in the Biblical sense also means *safety*, i.e., a condition of such covenantal law and life that there is nothing to fear because of the happy community among men. Leviticus 26:6 describes such peace:

> And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.

The premise of Biblical peace is God's justice, as Zechariah 8:16 tells us:

> These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.

The reference to *gates* is to courts of law, which had to meet in an open and public place, at the gates of the city. "The judgment of truth and peace" is God's requirement.

The requirement of a peace offering and communion meal as the preface to the formal law-giving and the aftermath of the covenant ratification is important. It tells us that the ground of our peace with God is His covenant grace and law. Moreover, the tablets of stone (v. 12) are also important: the law was not inscribed on parchment or on paper, which can perish, but on stone, to indicate its enduring character.

Chapter Eighty-Six

The Tabernacle

(*Exodus 25:1-9*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.
3. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,
4. And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,
5. And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,
6. Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,
7. Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.
8. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.
9. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. (Exodus 25:1-9)

The subject of the Tabernacle is a difficult one because it is an area cluttered by much nonsense. All kinds of fanciful and mystic symbolism has been attached to the Tabernacle, while others have dismissed the subject as irrelevant. Perhaps in time some intelligent studies will enable us to understand clearly the meaning of the Tabernacle. Until then, we have still a duty to gain as much understanding as possible.

First, the Tabernacle is a temple in a tent. Given the fact that some years were to pass before Israel entered Canaan, of necessity the temple had to be a moveable one. It was still a remarkable and beautiful tent. We must not forget that royal tents in antiquity, and at least to Henry VIII's day, were amazingly ornate and costly; they were moveable palaces.

Second, God's Tabernacle was also a very costly one. A belief, much propagated by the heretical Spiritual Franciscans, was hostile not only to buildings as such but also to anything except poverty. But poverty is not presented in Scripture as a virtue. Moreover, all sacrifices and gifts to

God must be unblemished. Too many churches are very sorry and blemished offerings to God, and some must be called insults.

Third, the construction of God's sanctuary had to be made out of *willing gifts* (v. 2). It was not tithes, but gifts over and above the tithe that went into the construction of the Tabernacle. The materials were costly: gold, silver, and bronze or copper. The words in v. 5 are not common ones; the ram skins could be dugong skins, or seal skins, of a variety found in the Red Sea. "Shittim wood" is acacia wood, which is light and strong. According to Cole, in v. 2, "every man whose heart makes him willing," means literally in the Hebrew 'every man whose heart makes him vow:' he cannot help himself."[318]

Fourth, a temple is the house of a god. Here God calls it His "sanctuary." The word refers to a consecrated place or thing, also a palace, a refuge, or a holy place. The meaning of the word used for the Tabernacle in Exodus 35:21 is "Tent of Meeting"; this term stresses the communion of God with His people. In Exodus 38:21, the term used is the "Tabernacle of Testimony." Since the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments on each are called the "two tables of testimony" in Exodus 31:18, the term refers to the fact that the sanctuary represents a legal bond, a covenant, or a contract, which binds both God and man. Such thinking is not popular in our time, but it is central to an understanding of Scripture. The sanctuary is now seen, in modern religious thought, as a place for inspiration, whereas the term, "Tabernacle of Testimony," describes the holy place as the witness to a legal and binding contract. The terms of the covenant, treaty, or contract are God's law, and the people of God come to know the terms better and to grow in faithfulness to the covenant.

In v. 2, the word *heart* is used. In modern usage, *heart* used in this metaphoric sense has an emotional connotation, whereas in the Bible, as Cate observed,

> The word "heart" referred in the Hebrew not to the seat of the emotions but to the seat of thought, purpose, and will. Thus the offering was to come not merely from those who felt like giving, but from those who knew and were committed to the offering as the right thing to do.[319]

This tells us of the dangerous shift in Christianity towards an emotional view of faith as opposed to a binding legal commitment that does not depend on our feelings.

H. L. Ellison cited 2 Samuel 7:6-7 to maintain that God did not regard the later Temple as a necessity, and he infers that the desire for a solid edifice is something man desires, not God.[320] A reading of all of 2 Samuel 7 makes it clear that the Temple was very much a part of God's purpose. Those who spiritualize the faith usually want to dispose of, or at least downgrade law and buildings. It would make equal sense to dispose of clothing and food. While man cannot live by bread alone, neither can he live without it for very long, nor without clothing, buildings, or law.

In v. 9, the word *pattern* is used. Our modern term would be plan or blueprint. The pattern God gives is specific not only with respect to the size and design, but also with respect to the colors and furnishings. Since the covenant was an act of grace on God's part, He not only provided its law but also all the details of its construction. The covenant meeting place was not to be man's design but God's, because it was a type, among other things, of Jesus Christ, God with us. The Tabernacle's purpose in part was, "that I may dwell among them" (v. 8). Since God's grace gave the covenant, man's devices had no place in it. Man's duty was to hear and obey his covenant Lord.

Since the Tabernacle was a moveable sanctuary, the use of acacia was specified, because of its durability and lighter weight. The moving of the Tabernacle was to be as simple as possible while maintaining its excellence.

In v. 8, there is an important shade of meaning. As Hertz pointed out, God does not command the building of the sanctuary "that I may dwell *in it*," but rather "that I may dwell among them." As Solomon declared at the dedication of the Temple:

> But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1 Kings 8:27)

The Tabernacle gave to Israel its center of holiness.[321]

But it is more than that, as George Bush pointed out. The Tabernacle is not only a *sanctuary* but also a *royal palace* for God the King. As such, it sets forth also "the twofold functions of Christ as Priest and King."[322] As Bush noted, this royal palace was God's, and it was

> where he would keep the state of a court; as supreme civil magistrate and king of Israel; from whence he would issue his laws and commandments as from an oracle, and where he was to receive the homage and tribute of his subjects. The idea of the Tabernacle, as in part that of *a palace for a king*, will seem perfectly clear to every one who carefully notes the terms in which this building and also the Temple are spoken of and referred to throughout the Scriptures; and we doubt not it is a view essential to the right understanding of these structures and the things which belonged to them. It is a view also which is held by the Jews themselves, who carry out the analogy and regard the utensils of the ministers of state and officers.[323]

Because the Tabernacle was a palace, there was only one such place allowed. There was not multiplicity of kings or gods, but one God, one King, over all. Gerhardus Vos pointed out, "The tabernacle is, as it were, a concentrated theocracy."[324] The Tabernacle was a witness to a contract, or covenant, and to the Great King who by His grace made the people His own. Moreover, it attests to the God-centered nature of Biblical faith.

> In the ideal covenant-fellowship, here portrayed, the divine factor is the all-controlling one. Man appears as admitted into, adjusted to, subordinated to, the life of God. Biblical piety is God-centered.[325]

Arminianism and the modern worldview presupposed a democracy with God. The nature of the Tabernacle and its construction witness strongly against this.

This is an important point, because the common error of scholars is to state that other peoples in antiquity had sanctuaries, and therefore the Tabernacle was simply derived from the practices of the time. This is like saying that, because you and I have a nose, ears, and eyes, we have an intellectual and personal derivation from Jack the Ripper. Such thinking, however common, is nonsense. Pagan sanctuaries were designed by men to set forth their ideas of the gods and religion, whereas the Tabernacle has a God-given pattern and differed radically in design and meaning from all pagan temples. U. Z. Rule said of the Tabernacle:

> For the working out of the purpose for which the tabernacle was designed three things would be necessary. (1) The tabernacle itself, made and furnished after the "pattern" shown to Moses; (2) a purposely ordered ritual of the service to be rendered at it; the leading characteristic of this service being that it was based upon the covenant into which the people had just entered with God; and (3) a priesthood purposefully set apart for this service.[326]

Pagan temples were in a sense insurance centers where people went with gifts to buy protection from the gods. The Biblical Tabernacle was the law center and palace, the sanctuary and the center of holiness and justice, dominion and knowledge. Nothing else like it existed in antiquity or since.

Chapter Eighty-Seven

The Ark and the Mercy Seat

(*Exodus 25:10-22*)

10. And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.
11. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.
12. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.
13. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.
14. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.
15. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.
16. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.
17. And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.
18. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.
19. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.
20. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.
21. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.
22. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the

> testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:10-22)

These verses deal with the ark, and the mercy seat. The ark is a chest, and it can be understood as a kind of sacred safety deposit box for the covenant law. The two copies of the law were deposited therein; these were the originals of the contract between God and Israel.

The mercy seat is in the original Hebrew *kâppôreth*, and it could mean *cover*. Some modern versions translate it as *cover*. This is to limit its meaning severely, to the point of altering it. The word is used in the Old Testament in relationship to atonement, propitiation, or a covering to protect man. The law is in the ark or chest, and above it is the place where, according to v. 22, God meets with man. This was in the Holy of Holies, where common men could not enter and where even priestly access was severely limited. This does not refer to a place of meeting in a personal sense, but to the fact that God, who gives His law, is also the One whose grace gave the law and the One who continues to give mercy and salvation in His sovereign grace.

The word "cubit" had a different meaning then than now, so that our knowledge of the precise measurements is now uncertain.

The ark is the ark of testimony or of the covenant. At the heart of the Holy of Holies we thus have the legal documents of the covenant, placed within a chest. This ark was regarded as being equivalent to the very presence of God. When Israel crossed the river Jordan, the ark preceded the people and was carried by the priests (Joshua 3:14-17). In effect, this was a public witness to the presence of God leading the march. When Israel, in the days of Eli, went into battle against the Philistines, they carried the ark with them under the delusion that, despite their apostasies, God would be present to give them victory (1 Samuel 4:1-22). The evil present in Israel then was one common to history, namely, to assume that form and ritual, however important, can supplant faith and knowledge. David, in one of his psalms, sees God's essential requirement, before any ritual, as the obedience of faith:

> 6. Sacrifices and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
> 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.
> 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.
> 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.
> 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. (Psalm 40:6-10)

When David says, "mine ears hast thou opened," the word *opened* is *digged*. God has brought hearing to David the hard way. Men routinely place the rite above that which it celebrates, i.e., communion above Christ's atonement on the cross; the form of baptism above the life it signifies; the presence at worship above worship from within and in all our being and actions; and so on. The result is blasphemy. Thus, when David speaks against the sacrificial system, it is against any stress on ritual as sufficient in itself; he himself was faithful to the sacrificial system because he held to the primacy of righteousness or justice. The centrality in the Holy of Holies of the ark and the law witnesses against formalism.

Moreover, when David says that God's justice or righteousness is central to his being, hidden in his heart, he tells us that, even as the ark and its law is at the center of God's sanctuary, so too God's covenant law is at the center of his own being.

According to Hebrews 9:4, the ark had, besides the tables of the covenant, two other things: a golden vessel with manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. Both were witnesses to the supernatural and providential power of God in the lives of His covenant people.

The cherubim (wrongly given as *cherubims* in the King James version, since cherubim is the plural of cherub) represented heavenly creatures who are near to God (Gen. 3:24; Ps. 18:10; 1 Kings 8:7; Ezek. 10:1ff.). They were here represented in gold and with their faces looking to the mercy seat. In Genesis 3:24, the cherubim, after the Fall, barred the Garden of Eden and the tree

of life from man. Their presence here in winged form, in association with the covenant law in the ark and with the mercy-seat, or propitiation, means that only in covenantal faithfulness to God can man be free from His judgment.

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. According to Leviticus 16:14-16,

> 14. And he shall take the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward: and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.
> 15. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:
> 16. And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

The point of this was to establish a barrier between God and His broken law on the one hand, and the people on the other. According to Ellison, "Traditionally this was in the shape of a cross."[327]

Scripture refers to the ark in various ways. In Jeremiah 3:16-17 it is called the throne of God, whereas David in 1 Chronicles 28:2 calls it God's footstool; David apparently has the same thought in mind in Psalm 99:5 and 132:7.

A cloud of incense filled the Holy of Holies when the priest approached it (Lev. 16:13). In Oehler's words,

> … This expresses the fact that full communion between God and man is not to be realized, even through the medium of the atonement to be attained by the Old

> Testament sacrificial institutions — that, as is said in Heb. ix. 8, as yet the way to the (heavenly) sanctuary was not made manifest.
>
> The kapporeth rests on the ark, in which are the *tables of the law*, the testimony. This means that God sits enthroned in Israel on the ground of the covenant of law which He has made with Israel. The testimony is preserved in the ark as a *treasure*, a jewel. But with this goes a *second* consideration; while the law is certainly in the first place, a testimony *against* the sinful people, — a continual record of accusation, so to speak, against their sins in the sight of the holy God. And now, when the kapporeth is over the tables, it is declared that God's grace, which provides an atonement or covering for the iniquity of the people, stands above His penal justice.[328]

There are here two strong declarations. *First*, the law of God is basic to Biblical faith. If there is no regard for the law, there is no covenant. *Second*, man is in this covenant of God by His grace and by the blood of the atonement. In the atonement we see the grace of God fully revealed in Christ's work on the cross. Atonement, covenant, and law are inseparable. The mercy seat is so important that the Holy of Holies in 1 Chronicles 28:11 is called the house or "place of the mercy seat."

The ark and the mercy seat are very closely tied together in this text and elsewhere. Grace and law are thus inseparably linked in the covenant. Revelation tells us that God's law even now judges the world to destroy those "which destroy [or, corrupt] the earth" (Rev. 11:18). We read in Revelation 11:19,

> And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightenings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

An aspect of Adam's sin, and his will to be his own god and law-maker (Gen. 3:5), was and is the desire to restrict meaning to what man declares it to be. Each man seeks to make the world

his world, and to give it the meaning he ordains. This means that any realm of meaning which transcends man is detested. True enough, philosophers routinely posit some kind of meaning in the natural order, but this represents the mind projecting its own logic onto the world. Modern philosophy is very deeply given to man-made meanings.

Ritualism is no different. The sacraments are routinely given very personal meanings with a disregard for God's ordained meaning. Personal experience is sought without regard to God's covenant law and grace and His work of atonement in Christ. This is why, in the service of Passover, the youngest male child capable of speaking and understanding would ask, "What mean ye by this service?" (Ex. 12:26, 13:8,14; Deut. 6:20, 32:7; cf. Joshua 4:6,21; Ps. 78:3-6). God-centered instruction was clearly stressed. In terms of this, v. 22 tells us that God from His throne commands His people; this is essential to the communion. In this verse, communion is tied to the law and to atonement. This broken link must be restored.

Chapter Eighty-Eight
The Table of the Shewbread
(*Exodus 25:23-30*)

> 23. Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.
> 24. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.
> 25. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.
> 26. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof.
> 27. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.
> 28. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.
> 29. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them.
> 30. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway. (Exodus 25:23-30)

Calvin Coolidge, in an historical essay, wrote, "It is only when men begin to worship that they begin to grow."[329] True worship compels a man to look beyond himself, beyond man, and beyond time. It is opposed to a humanistic self-absorption. True worship will require us, among other things, to be charitable to all men, but for the Lord's sake, not man's.

The fact is important as we come to the table of the shewbread. It was to be overlaid with gold. At this point, many, over the centuries, have been like Judas, ready to condemn any use of wealth simply to glorify God. We are told that all the disciples resented seeing an alabaster

carafe of very precious ointment poured over Jesus (Matt. 26:7-9; Mark 14:3-5). John tells us that Judas Iscariot was the instigator of this protest:

> 1. Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.
> 2. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.
> 3. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.
> 4. Then saith one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,
> 5. Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? (John 12:1-5)

The obvious opinion was that the Lord does not deserve our best, but that men do, especially the poor. This is an opinion very much with us today, and also over the centuries. Many have protested strongly, in the medieval era as now, at the idea that any church should be beautiful or costly. This was not merely a Franciscan idea in the medieval era, and it is certainly popular in many evangelical circles today, and also among "liberation theology" adherents, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike. This view is clearly not Biblical, and its origins are in Marcionite kinds of thinking.

We do not know the exact dimensions of this table, because we are ignorant of the exact length of a cubit in that era. We do have a depiction of this table in the Triumphal Arch of Emperor Titus, erected to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Several other temple items are shown on the arch.[330]

The table of the shewbread refers literally to the "bread of the face," or "Presence-bread." It was located near the Holy of Holies, where the Ark was. The bread was to be perpetually before the Lord; it was called "holy bread" or "hallowed bread," as in 1 Samuel 21:3-6. It was regularly

replaced on the table, and its meaning was akin to the firstfruits. Because the product of the earth is God's gift to man, it should be used by man in God's service.[331]

This ritual is echoed in the Lord's Prayer. In praying, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11), we recognize God as the giver, and we dedicate ourselves and His gifts to us to His service, for immediately before that we pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

There were rings on the feet of the table of the shewbread for carrying it by staves. In v. 15, there are strict rules about transporting the Ark; the staves were to remain in their rings. Because the table of the shewbread represented man's life dedicated to God, it did not have the same "unapproachable sacredness" as the Ark. The bread was changed on every Sabbath, and normally only the priests could eat it. The perpetual presence of the bread before God represented man's perpetual consecration to God.[332]

The shewbread thus, among other things, sets forth the fact that we are always in God's presence, and therefore our dedication and service must be perpetual.

In Leviticus 24:5-9, we have the specific directions for the preparation and presentation of the shewbread. There were to be twelve loaves, one for each tribe.

There were various utensils on the table for the drink offerings and the incense offerings. Offerings of food and drink were here symbolically set forth to signify that man, who depends on God for His life, must be ready in faith to surrender the means of life to the Giver and thereby manifest his trust in the Lord. We have a reference to this in Deuteronomy 8:2-3:

> 2. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.
> 3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee

> know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

In Numbers 4:7, the shewbread is called "the continual bread," or, in Moffatt's version, "the perennial bread." Both terms reflect the same fact: man's dedication is not limited to his appearance in a temple or church, but is instead perpetual. We are always to live in His presence and in His service.

The parallel between the Tabernacle and a palace can be seen also in the table of the shewbread. The subjects of the Great King set forth their continuing allegiance by means of a bread offering. Bread is an ancient type of life, and the term "bread of life" is a familiar one, in the Bible and elsewhere. Since God, the Great King, is the author of life, we acknowledge our total dependence on Him by giving Him bread, the bread of human life. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 10:17: "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Jesus Christ is our bread of life, and in Him we are "one bread," or one life, and one body. According to Edersheim,

> The 'bread' laid before him in the northern or most sacred part of the Holy Place was that of His presence and meant that the Covenant-people owned "His Presence" as their bread and their life.[333]

The shewbread represented a covenant fact, the acceptability of the covenant people and their service to God. U. Z. Rule wrote:

> The SHEW-BREAD (literally, *presence-bread*), was so called from its being set before God — in His presence. It did not signify atonement: that, if needed, had been already made. It was the offering of a people who were in unimpaired covenant with God. It signified free access into His presence, and it was, in that access, a thankful offering by God's people of a gift received from Him. That gift was God's own best of material gifts, *viz.* bread. But further, as bread is not a raw material but the product of human industry, its offering signified the dedication to

> God of human industry, the use of men's powers in His service. And then again, its being eaten every sabbath by the priests, the representatives of the people, signified the people's continued enjoyment of communion with God, by eating His bread. The whole idea expressed was that of a grateful acknowledgment of unimpaired and continuous privilege.[334]

The bread used was unleavened bread.

According to some scholars, the table of shewbread was close to the Ark and in the outer area of the Holy of Holies, beyond the curtain to the right of the golden candlesticks and with the altar of incense between it and the curtain separating the Ark and the holiest area. In the forefront of the Tabernacle was the altar of burnt offerings and the laver. This seems to be the most faithful account.

The table of the shewbread was thus an important part of the sanctuary, one not commonly seen by men. There is an important fact here. Some late medieval cathedral sculptors, in working on stone figures high on a cathedral wall, carved only the front; other men, over the centuries, carved the stone front and back. What men could not see was still visible to God. In humanistic worship, the audience is man, and what man sees is regarded as important. With the Renaissance, men saw life as a stage play before other men. They ceased to live in the ever watchful eye of God and began to perform for men. Castiglione and Machiavelli made a philosophy of this view. Biblical living stresses the glory of God and service to Him. It sees no sin in the beauty of churches and worship, and it does see a contempt for God comparable to that of Judas in all resentment towards the glory of God's House.

Chapter Eighty-Nine

The Candlestick

(*Exodus 25:31-40*)

31. And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.
32. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:
33. Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.
34. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with the knops and their flowers.
35. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.
36. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.
37. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.
38. And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.
39. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.
40. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount. (Exodus 25:31-40).

We again are confronted with the fact that the Tabernacle and its furnishings were extremely costly. The candlestick, its snuff dishes, and the tongs were made of pure gold. These alone represented considerable wealth.

The various "Spirituals" of the medieval era and the Anabaptists and evangelicals who insist on plain and cheap houses of worship are not in harmony with God's law. Those who relegate such an emphasis on architectural and structural beauty and costliness to the Old Testament have a problem. The earliest known churches maintained the same emphasis. For generations, the first churches built were made of stone. Their interiors resembled a palace. In actual fact, the sanctuary was designed as a throne room for Christ the King. The congregation stood for the reading of Scripture because it was the King speaking through His word. In the modern era, congregations have remained seated with Bibles in hand to better follow closely the King's law-word. The central focus was and should be on the word of the Great King, given to His people in His throne room.

As in Israel of old, and in Judaism, God's word means His *presence*. Judaisim used, before and after Christ, the word *memra*, or *utterance*, and would cite, for example, Deuteronomy 1:32, "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God," as "Ye have not believed in the *memra* of the Lord." As Rabbi Israel Abrahams wrote:

> Thus the *memra* connotes the manifestation of God's power in creating the world and in directing history. It acts as His messenger and is generally analogous to the *Shekhinah* ("Divine Presence") and the Divine Wisdom.[335]

What this tells us is simply this: the Presence of God requires and creates the beauty of the sanctuary, and a key aspect of the Presence of God is His word. Hence the requirement of beauty and glory is no less urgent for Christians than it was for ancient Israel.

There is a curious sidelight here out of my own experience. Some occultists are far more ready to believe in God's Presence in His word than are churchmen, and they sometimes use the Bible abusively in their rites as they assault God. One man, who eventually committed suicide, was in a compulsive war against God in the person of the Bible; he had no Christian background in his family and had come to this belief on his own.

The lampstand with its "vessels" was made of a talent of gold, according to v. 39; this is about 108 pounds avoirdupois. It contained about the same amount of gold as in 6,150 English gold sovereigns.[336] At 1989 gold prices for English sovereigns, this would come to well over $600,000 for the lampstand, tongs, and snuff-dish. Even if a talent was no more than about two thirds of this weight, it was still a fortune in gold.

The word "knop" is an old fashioned form of *knob*.

Exodus 27:20-21 seems to indicate that the candlesticks burned continually, and also that they burned from night to morning only, as Leviticus 24:2 seems to imply. The candlestick was actually a lampstand burning oil. The Mishnah and Josephus tell us that all seven lamps burned at night, and one, two, or three by day.[337]

The design of the candlesticks or the lampstand was to resemble in a stylized fashion an almond tree. This perhaps looked ahead to Aaron's almond rod that budded (Num. 17:8; cf. Jer. 1:11-12). The candlestick or lampstand had one main central branch and three side branches on each side. Oil was piped to the seven flower-cups which were the burners and held wicks. The knobs held the flowercups. The tongs were trimmers for the wicks, and the trimmings were dropped into the snuff dishes.

The candlestick, lampstand, or *menorah*, was, as we have noted, a stylized almond tree; it was a tree of light, and, light being universally associated with life, it was thus a representation of the tree of life. In both Israel and Judaism, the *menorah* became a symbol both of the place of worship *and* of the home. In New Testament times, to extinguish the *menorah* was a symbol of disaster.[338] The presence of the *menorah* in both home and synagogue was a witness to the centrality of the family and the house of worship in nourishing life.

Light and lampstands do not lack their place in Biblical terms which represent the realities of God's world. We are told of Jesus Christ that He is "light, and in him is no darkness at all" (John 1:5) because He is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). Christians are to be to those who are in spiritual darkness "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). In Revelation 1:10-13, the church is

compared to the *menorah*, "the seven golden candlesticks." Thus, the church is represented, and also Jesus Christ, who is our tree of life.

U. Z. Rule said:

> Next, there was the burning of the seven lamps in the one golden CANDLESTICK. This, too, was an offering, *i.e.*, of oil. But it was an offering not of oil simply, but of oil burning and so giving light. It cannot be without significance that it was said, "and they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it" (Exodus 25:37). That lighted lamps are intended to give light is so obvious, that this use of them surely need not have been stated unless there had been some *significance* intended in the light-giving. Now, throughout the Old Testament the burning of a light is significant of brightness and joy; and the burning of these lamps signified the gladness with which God's people rendered Him service, and came into His presence. It was their confession of this and reflexively it was a pledge of the gladness which God would continue to shed upon them, nay also of the gladness with which He received their service. Here again this was the gladness of a covenant relationship; and the lamps represented in symbol what was afterwards expressed in such words as — "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy" (Ps. 16:11), "Thou wilt light my lamp; the LORD my God will lighten my darkness" (Ps. 18:28). That gladness is an integral part of covenant duty to God is seen in Is. 11:3 ("his delight," R.V.) and Phil. 4:4.[339]

According to v. 36, the entire *menorah* was to be made of one piece or ingot of gold. According to the Talmud, its height was "three short cubits." Its depiction in the Arch of Titus indicates a rather large lampstand.

Now the *menorah,* a lampstand or candlestick, and *memra,* or "utterance," are two very different things, but they are not unrelated. God's *memra* or utterances are covenant words; the Bible is God's covenant word; it is a law-book testifying to God's legal contract with His people *and* His

presence in their midst. There is thus a direct connection between God's *memra* and the covenant.[340]

The golden lampstand, representing the tree of life, looks back to the Garden of Eden, where God was in full commune with man, and ahead to Jesus Christ, who restores the covenant bond and community. A familiar image of Scripture is that of God's word as a lamp: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). The covenant word is a guiding and protecting light. God gives us His covenant law-word as a mercy to us,[341] and as a light upon our way.

Returning to the objection of some to beauty and glory in God's houses of worship, we must add another objection to all such views. They are clearly unbiblical. They represent an ascetic Stoicism rather than Biblical faith. The Stoics cultivated an indifference to material things, to human feelings of loss and of sorrow for loved ones lost, and, in fact, to life itself. Theirs was a suicidal belief, and its roots were in Eastern philosophies of world and life negation. They were thus in radical opposition to Biblical faith. The Christian affirms the glory of life, even in suffering, because life and all the universe are God-created and have a glorious purpose. The fact of sin is real, but it is not natural to creation: it is, rather, a hostile force within creation which is doomed to perish.

God the Creator made all things "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Because man is created in the image of God, man is created to be an artisan, to give expression to art, to glory, and to beauty, in all his works. The "anti-art" we see today, with its glorification of ugliness and disorder, is part of the expression of an anti-God movement. In Jesus Christ, we are called to make our very lives a work of art; in Him we are a new creation, and we must express the beauty and the glory of His new world in all our being.

Chapter Ninety

The Curtains

(*Exodus 26:1-14*)

1. Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.

2. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure.

3. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.

4. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second.

5. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another.

6. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.

7. And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make.

8. The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure.

9. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle.

10. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second.

11. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one.

> 12. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle.
> 13. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it.
> 14. And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins. (Exodus 26:1-14)

As far as most people are concerned, few Biblical passages can equal this one for dullness. It is a technical account of certain aspects of the tabernacle. These are three in all: *first*, there is the *mishkân* or dwelling place, in vv. 1-6; *second*; there is the *ʾôhel* or tent erected over the dwelling place to protect it, vv. 7-13; and *third*, there is a further covering to protect the tent, v. 14.

The dwelling place was made of the best quality linen. Images of the cherubim were embroidered on it, an interesting fact. What the Ten Commandments forbid is not art work *per se* but the *worship* of anything depicted by painting, sculpture, or any like art (Ex. 20:4-5). If the common misinterpretation were logically held, photography would have to be banned. This dwelling place was divided in two by the curtains to make the Holy of Holies, a perfect cube, and the Holy Place. The tent over the dwelling place was made of goats' hair, and over it was another covering of badgers' skins, although some read the word as sea-cows.[342] The word *taches* means clasps. The ark and the mercy seat were in the Holy of Holies, and the table for the shewbread and the lampstand were in the Holy Place.

These requirements stress again that the tabernacle is a royal tent, a dwellingplace for the King of Creation. Beauty, glory, and privacy are stressed. Because today tents have a limited use, they are made simply and plainly. Thus we forget that once their construction was often very costly, ornate, and made for longterm use. Similarly, because people today move frequently, houses are less often constructed with the generations to come in mind. Our perspectives are shortterm, with sometimes sorry consequences for men and societies.

The Tabernacle has been called "a foreshadowing of the incarnation," God dwelling among men.[343]

The Tabernacle had a framework of wood, five pillars or test-poles, and, apparently, a ridge-pole. According to George Rawlinson, the Holy of Holies was a cube of fifteen feet in every direction, and the Holy Place was an oblong, thirty feet by fifteen. Outside was the Court of the Tabernacle.[344]

"The fine twisted linen" mentioned in v. 1 was, according to the ancient rabbis, linen in which every strand was made up of four threads.

It is important now to examine an aspect of this text which has a curious relevance to our times especially. We live in an age which hates curtains and walls in *some* spheres of life, while insisting on privacy in others. "The right to privacy" has become a problem in law, as many insist on claiming as legal a right never formulated legally in the past. Very often, this "right to privacy" means a freedom from all moral censure for acts previously regarded as illicit and immoral. Thus, homosexuals insist on their "privacy" while at times indulging in public acts; their "right" is thus a claimed immunity from censure. This has been true in various spheres. Thus, the "sexual revolution" was marked by public fornication, not only at Woodstock, together with an insistence on immunity from condemnation.

Films now routinely depict sexual acts, and all areas of life are regarded as non-private and open to scrutiny. The same is true of the media, of biographers, of some historians, and others. A "no curtains" world seems to be the goal of many. A good case could be made for the coincidence of a loss of freedom and a loss of Godly privacy.

At the heart of Biblical faith is the blunt statement that there are things which it is our moral duty to know, and other things which it is presumption for us to seek to know. Moses declares:

> The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29)

This is a very important as well as neglected text. "Those things which are revealed" and "which belong unto us and to our children for ever" are the words of God's law, the Bible. "The secret things" refers to God's predictions and His predestinating power. If God has ordained all things, what then is the point of doing anything? God's revelation, as in Deuteronomy 28, gives what is clearly a bleak look at an apostate future. However, as P. E. Craigie pointed out, the purpose of these glimpses of God's predestination and total control is to motivate us into "the responsibility of obedience."[345]

Man as sinner seeks to be as God (Gen. 3:5); he wants total knowledge of all things, including God. He is at war with curtains if they stand between him and the objects of his curiosity. There are two impediments to man in his ungodly demands for knowledge. *First*, he is a fallen creature, and his total being has been warped by sin, so that his attempts to know are clouded at best and usually perverse. *Second*, man is a finite creature whose capacity to understand and comprehend things infinite is simply lacking. Redeemed man can have true knowledge within the limits of his creaturely being, and no more. "The secret things" of God are eternally beyond man. His knowledge can still be valid though limited, and the more man accepts his limitations, the better is he enabled to know things truly. More importantly, God by His grace enables man to know Him. The incarnation is God's self-revelation; it does not abolish "the secret things," but it brings God closer to us and tells us what we need to know.

The curtains surrounding the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place are thus not only the decorations of a royal tent, but also revelatory of the fact that there are limits to our knowledge and vision.

H. Wheeler Robinson called attention to another aspect of Deuteronomy 29:29, namely, that "these things which are revealed" means not only God's law, but also that "the known past, with its lesson of obedience to the law, is ours."[346] This is a dramatic fact: it tells us that a presumptuous curiosity needs to be replaced by a Godly historical sense and knowledge. The

only curtains on the past are of man's own making. Men too often despise history because they are determined to transcend and abolish it. The grave is their destiny.

Chapter Ninety-One

Boards and Vail

(*Exodus 26:15-37*)

15. And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up.

16. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board.

17. Two tenons [hands] shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle.

18. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward.

19. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons.

20. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards;

21. And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

22. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards.

23. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides.

24. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners.

25. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

26. And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle,

27. And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward.

28. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end.
29. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold.
30. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.
31. And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twisted linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made.
32. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.
33. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.
34. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.
35. And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.
36. And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework.
37. And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them. (Exodus 26:15-37)

We are now told that this royal tent is to be supported by an extensive wooden framework which is overlaid with gold. We are not told what the thickness of the boards was, although some have surmised that they were a cubit thick and were therefore true pillars; it has also been assumed that each pillar may have been made of several boards, put together to make a solid pillar.

The word for *vail*, the Hebrew *pôreketh*, means “that which shuts off.”

The acacia or shittim wood is a member of the mimosa family; it is a light and hardy wood, and, where plentiful, is very useful for building purposes. The boards were joined together by tenons set in silver sockets. The construction was such as to make the Tabernacle easy to dismantle for the purpose of moving, and yet it was also designed for magnificence and glory. The frame construction, however, indicates that the Tabernacle pointed ahead to a temple; it was built in a fashion which suggests a step towards a permanent dwelling.

The vail separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, and the vail had embroidered upon it the depiction of the cherubim. The vail for the door was "embroidered with needlework," but the design is not here stated. There was thus a vail to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

We have a very important statement in v. 30. God tells Moses that the Tabernacle is to be erected according to a pattern given by God on Mount Sinai. This at once gives an added dimension to the tabernacle. According to Hebrews 9:1-12, the Tabernacle is a type of heaven. The cherubim typified the heavenly choir which cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). The vail sets forth the separation between man and God: the Holy of Holies witnesses to the inaccessible nature of God in His Being. The Holy Place, where continual worship was offered to God, represents the Church Militant, a power from the Throne at work in the world. George Rawlinson called attention to the significance of the Tabernacle's inner royal splendor and its plainer exterior:

> … Those who looked on the tabernacle from without saw the goats' hair, and the rams' skins, and seals' skins, and perceived in it no beauty that they should desire it. The beauty was revealed to those only who were within. So now, the Church is despised and vilified by those without, valued as it deserves only by those who dwell in it. Again, the structure seems weak, as does the structure of the Church to worldlings. A few boards, an awning, a curtain or two — what more frail and perishable! But, when all is "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Eph. iv. 16), when by a machinery of rings and bars, and tenons and solid sockets, and pillars and hooks, the whole is wedded into one, under Divine direction and contrivance, the fragility disappears. "God's strength

> is made perfect in weakness." A structure is produced which continues, which withstands decay, which defies assaults from without, which outlasts others seemingly far stronger, and bids fair to remain when all else is shattered and destroyed. "Behold! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The tabernacle, frail as it was, lasted from the exodus until the time when Solomon expanded it into the temple. Our tabernacle, the Church, will endure until it shall please God to merge it in a new and wonderful creation — "the new Jerusalem" (Rev. xxi.2, 10-27; xxii. 1-5).[347]

The Bible does speak of the typical meaning of the Tabernacle. Like so much else, the Tabernacle pointed beyond itself. At the same time, its local and particular meaning must not be forgotten. Of this A. B. Davidson commented:

> The tabernacle, before coming to anything deeper than mere material elements and locality, was the center and seat of the Jewish theocracy. It was of course a thing just as real as the land of Canaan or the nation of Israel. The theocracy was a kingdom, of which God was king, and the tabernacle was his palace or abode. The kingdom was visible, so was the palace, so was at least the presence of the King. There the people had audience with the Monarch, thence he issued commands in a way recognizable by the senses for their guidance. The tabernacle was thus a real thing, of the same quality as the land of Canaan and the Israelitish nation.[348]

The entrance to the Tabernacle was on the east, and there the five pillars overlaid with gold were at the doorway. The sockets of bases at the bottom of each of the boards were of silver. These were used to "plant" the framework into the ground. Each socket or base weighed a talent according to Exodus 38:27, which means about ninety-four pounds.[349]

Not only Exodus but also Ezekiel shows that architecture is very important to God. In the history of Christendom we have seen a conflict between neoplatonism and Biblical faith. This conflict has been waged on a number of fronts, and, at the same time, their fusion has also been commonplace. Platonism and neoplatonism divide reality into two ultimate substances, form (or

ideas, mind, spirit) and matter. The two are in unhappy fusion, and, for the neoplatonist, the spiritual man or the true philosopher separates himself from and even despises matter in favor of spirit. For some Greco-Romans, this meant a low regard for the body, for family life, for buildings, for clothing, or for anything else that stressed the material side of life. Asceticism has deeply neoplatonic and Far Eastern philosophical roots.

Within Christendom, this kind of thinking has led to ascetic flights from the world, a contempt of material practicality, various socialist movements, and an anti-capitalist mentality. A concern for productivity and material advance is seen by such people as materialism and hence bad.

Such a perspective is anti-Christian. Scripture declares that God created all things *very good* (Gen. 1:31), so that things material and things spiritual are equally the good gifts of God. With the Fall, both are fallen. However, God's purpose in Christ is the total redemption of all things. The resurrection of the body forbids us to despise the material realm. God's redemption of all things, every sphere of our lives, is ordained.

Architecture is thus a Christian concern. God Himself saw fit to give Moses a building plan. Buildings are tools for living, working, worshipping, and rejoicing, and they are not to be despised. In ages of vitality, Christians have made major contributions to architecture. Consider, for example, the Enlightenment versus the Puritan view of home construction. The Enlightenment led to palace building, as with Versailles, to furnishings and rooms designed for display and pride, not for comfort. The Puritans in New England eventually designed houses meant for comfortable living. Eric Sloane has shown how detailed their knowledge was of wood, location, air circulation, and more. Christian architects are needed now to design houses for the various climates and for man's maximum utility in living.

It is interesting that Quinlan Terry, a prominent English architect, born into an atheist family, has concluded from his studies that classical architecture represents a borrowing from the Temple design of Scripture.[350]

Architecture is very important in the Bible, as are writing and singing, for that matter. Very clearly, to underrate the importance of buildings in all areas of our lives has no warrant in Scripture. The God who provided Moses with building plans on Mount Sinai clearly requires us to take all aspects of construction seriously.

What we have in these verses is a written form of a building blueprint. It is necessary for us to recognize how much space God gives to His building plans; these are a part of His word, not only to Moses and the Israel of Moses' day, but also to us. They require us to recognize how seriously God takes building plans and the material side of life. To despise architecture and the material aspects of our lives is to despise God. No small amount of Scripture is given to the construction of the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the furnishings thereof. It is a false and ungodly spirituality to assume that the construction and quality of homes and especially churches is a matter of indifference to our God.

Chapter Ninety-Two

The Altar

(*Exodus 27:1-8*)

1. And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.
2. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.
3. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basins, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.
4. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof.
5. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar.
6. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass.
7. And the staves shalt be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it.
8. Hollow with boards shall thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it. (Exodus 27:1-8)

In these verses, the directions are given for the construction of the altar for sacrifice. These directions are restated in Exodus 38:1-7 when we are told of its construction. There was to be a wooden understructure of acacia wood, heavily overlaid with bronze, and with a grating above. There were to be pointed projections at the four corners.

All previous altars in Israel had been temporary ones. Now the altar was to be the abiding center for Israel in its worship. The altar stood between the people and the Holy of Holies, or the Presence of God. Previous altars had been of earth or unhewn stones; man could not be the

builder of an altar until God Himself ordained it and gave the specific directions for its construction.

H. L. Ellison estimated the dimensions of the altar as seven and one-half feet square and four and one-half feet high. The projections or horns of the altar were what a man seeking sanctuary caught hold of (Ex. 21:14; 1 Kings 2:28).[351]

The description of the Tabernacle's interior begins with the Holy of Holies and moves outward to a degree, but this is not entirely so, in that some variation exists in terms of importance, i.e., the altar of sacrifice before the altar of incense.

The blood of sacrificed animals was placed on part of the horns of the altar. Thus, the man seeking sanctuary did so in terms of the atonement and the law of the Atoner.

Some scholars believe that the area between the bronze and the acacia wood was packed with earth to absorb the heat. Verse 5 points out that the altar was hollow, and some rabbis said that, when the altar was not moved, the hollow area was earth-filled. The reference in vv. 4 and 5 to a network and nets means a grill to allow the circulation of air to facilitate burning on the grate.

This altar stood at the entrance of the outer court. Before one could go to the laver, or to the Holy Place, one had to stand before the altar of sacrifice. There is no approach to God without atonement.

In no culture or society has there ever been free and unrestricted access to royalty or to rulers. Such access would destroy all ability to rule, because it would mean that authorities would be deluged with endless details and trivia. In no modern corporation or branch of civil government does such unrestricted access to the persons in authority exist. There is, however, a very strong belief on the part of many that such access should exist. At times, some men have tried briefly to institute such an open door policy. Moses, after the Red Sea crossing, attempted to provide this kind of access. His father-in-law, Jethro, rebuked Moses graciously, saying,

> 17. …The thing that thou doest is not good.
> 18. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. (Exodus 18:17-18)

Jethro urged the adoption of a series of graded courts to cope with Israel's problems, and the system of elders for every ten families, going on up to the seventy elders, was instituted (Ex. 18:13-26); this step was confirmed by God (Deut. 1:11-18). This plan was applied in Israel to the various areas of government, including civil, family, and other spheres. It became the pattern of both synagogue and church government.

The term *elder* is still used within the church, but it is within the church that the pattern is least applied. The elders in a church usually sit in judgment on the pastor and members, a function limited to emergencies and serious moral or theological delinquencies. The normal function of elders is *pastoral*; they are to hear the problems of the families in their care (one elder in every ten families), and, if they cannot resolve the problem, it can be referred on up to the pastor, by the elders or the persons involved. Unrestricted access to the pastor is wearing out many clergymen.

In brief, *mediation* is a fact of life. In every sphere of society, we have persons who mediate between a higher authority and those under them.

The function of the altar is mediation. God, however, being omnipotent and omniscient, knows all things, and mediation in this sense is not necessary. The fact that necessitates mediation between God and man is man's outlaw status. Man is fallen; he is a sinner and is under sentence of death according to God's law. He thus needs urgently and radically a mediator who can have access to the throne of God. George Bush wrote:

> Taking it for granted that the idea of *mediatorship* is fundamental in the typical institution of the Altar, we are naturally led to investigate the points of analogy in this respect between the shadow and the substance. Now it is obvious that one of

> the leading offices of a mediator is *the procurement of peace*, or the recognition of offended and contending parties, and we have the decided evidence of heathen antiquity in favor of connecting the effect with the symbolic uses of altars.[352]

An act of expiation leads to peace and reconciliation. Thus, we have two acts inseparably tied to the altar: *first*, a mediatorship that brings peace and reconciliation, because the altar is the place of expiation. *Second*, because there is this reconciliation, there is a celebration of it by eating, by breaking bread together. This means the Passover and other feasts, and, in the church, communion. There is, however, a *third* aspect to the altar. The horns afford protection to the person who is innocent and is pursued by an avenger. The altar is the defense of the helpless and the weak. Hence the deacon's offering and ministry to the needy is inseparable from the Lord's Table.

Both the altar and the sacrifice clearly point to Jesus Christ, who is our mediator and our sacrifice.

The altar was in the first section of the sanctuary, an outer court, and only the covenant people had access to it. The second section, the Holy Place, only the Priesthood could enter; the third was the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could enter, and that but once a year.

This altar was unlike all other known altars in the horns or projections at its four corners. The access to the altar by the unjustly oppressed meant that the royal palace was a place of mercy, not only because of the sacrifices but also because of the sanctuary or refuge it provided. The altar, at the entrance to the sanctuary, meant that sin must be atoned for in order for one to have access to God. The horns provided sanctuary for the covenant people who were unjustly accused. The altar thus represented the need for atonement to satisfy man's justice and a sanctuary against man's injustice.

George Rawlinson wrote, on the purpose of the altar:

> We have assumed throughout that the purpose of the altar --- its main purpose — was expiation. Its proper title was "the altar of burnt-offering." *All* offerings, except those which the high priest offered at the altar of incense in the holy of holies, were to be made at this brazen altar before the door of the tabernacle. Hither were the Israelites to bring alike their peace or thank-offerings, their burnt offerings, and their sin offerings. Expiation was the sole idea of the last of these, and a main idea of the second; it was absent only from the first. Thus it was the predominant idea of sacrifice. The altar witnessed to the guilt of man in God's sight, and the need of an atonement being made for him before he could be reconciled to "the High and Holy One." It witnessed also to God's eternal purpose, that a way of reconciliation should be devised, and made known to man. The true victim was not indeed as yet offered. Bulls and goats, lambs and rams, could never of themselves, or of their own proper force, sanctify the unclean or take away sin. It was only by virtue of the death which their sacrifice prefigured, that they had any atoning force, or could be accepted by God as expiatory. Each victim represented Christ, — the one and only sacrifice for sin which could propitiate the Father. And the altar therefore represented and typified the cross on which Christ died, offering himself thereon to the Father as both priest and victim. Shape and material were different, and the mode of death was different; but each was the material substance on which the atoning victim died, each was stained with the atoning blood; and each was unspeakably precious to the trembling penitent who felt his need of pardon, and, if possible, even more precious to him who knew that atonement had thereon been made for him, and felt his pardon sealed. No true Israelite would sacrifice on any altar but that of the sanctuary. No true Christian will look for pardon and atonement any where but to the cross of Christ, and to him who on that altar gave his life for man.[353]

It is a fact of interest that the early church took the Bible so seriously that its reproduction of the Tabernacle's furnishings was at times very literal. Portable altars were common in many churches, made very much as Exodus 27:1-8 stipulates, but with some differences. They were

made of wood until late in the eighth century, but of other materials, including stone, in later centuries, and still portable. The portable altar continued in the Ethiopian Church.[354]

Chapter Ninety-Three

The Court and the Oil

(*Exodus 27:9-21*)

9. And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side:

10. And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver.

11. And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty pockets of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver.

12. And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten.

13. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits.

14. The hangings of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.

15. And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.

16. And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four.

17. All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their sockets of brass.

18. The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass.

19. All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.

20. And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.

> 21. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel. (Exodus 27:9-21)

Around the Tabernacle itself was the Tabernacle court, fifty by a hundred cubits in dimensions, with the Tabernacle situated near the side opposite the entrance. The altar and the laver were in this area.

All that anyone outside the court would see of the Tabernacle would be the red ram-skin roof of the tent. Since the court walls of linen would be white, the red ram-skin would be "as if a mountain of flame rose out of a basis of snow."[355]

Cate's comment here is very telling:

> The entire complex was designed to proclaim to Israel the abiding presence of God to demand from them, in response, faithful, obedient service. Its portability indicated that God and they were going to be on the move. They were being led to a land beyond. The wilderness was not their home; nor was it his.[356]

The Tabernacle thus represents a number of closely related things. It is God's palace, a throne room; it also represents heaven, God's dwelling place; it is furthermore the headquarters of an army on the march, God's army. All these associated meanings are related to the significance of the church as Christ's body on earth, and also as a building. The Tabernacle stresses the immanence of God. He who inhabits all eternity and infinity is also the God who is closer to us than ourselves. The psalmist speaks of the ungodly who hold that God does not see their works, saying,

> 5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.
> 6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

> 7. Yet they say, the LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. (Psalm 94:5-7)

The minute particularism of God is routinely denied. Because the philosopher disdains concern over those beneath him in his opinion, he assumes that God is only interested in more important matters. Scripture speaks emphatically of God's particularism, even as many churchmen and others are emphatic in denying it. But God tells Jeremiah:

> 23. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?
> 24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. (Jer. 23:23-24)

The court of the Tabernacle was an enclosure, estimated to be seven and one-half feet high, seventy-five feet wide, and one hundred fifty feet long, although some say seventy-five feet by three hundred feet. There was no roof over this area. All Israelites who were neither ritually unclean nor excommunicated could enter the court.

Josephus tells us that the construction of the Tabernacle was such that it was not affected by the winds but was "quiet and immovable continually." He also said that the Tabernacle was "an imitation of the system of the world," an image of the universe.[357] There is nothing in the text to validate this view.

The court, besides being the altar area, protected the Tabernacle by placing a barrier between it and the world outside.

As we have seen, the Tabernacle represents heaven, God's palace and throne room, and the headquarters of an army on the march. In recent years, this concept has been disconnected from the church. The early church, however, saw itself in the same terms, with the exception of the sacrificial function of the Tabernacle and Temple. The common description of the church as the Church Militant (on earth) and the Church Triumphant in heaven, comes from Tabernacle and Temple imagery. Too often now the church is built as an auditorium, not a palace and throne

room. It is not seen as the center or headquarters of an army on the march. Instead, for many the church is simply a refuge from the world, and faith is seen as a means of hiding or escaping from the pressure of the world. This is a denial of the meaning of the church. Another aspect of the church, clearly apparent in the New Testament and in the synagogue, is that of a teaching center. Preaching now is too often low in its educational function and more oriented to emotional inspiration, psychological self-help, or social commentary. The church must educate to remain a *true* church. It is not an accident that schools and universities were born out of the church to give direction to Christendom.

In vv. 20-21, we have instructions concerning the oil for use in the lampstands. It is to be clear oil of pressed olives. Today, some varieties of olives are grown for eating, others for their oil. Whether this was then the case also, we do not know. The clear, pure olive oil does not smoke when it burns. Scripture does make a difference between the clear oil of pressed olives and "beaten oil." Gispen sees the reference in Exodus 27:20 in the Hebrew as to pressed oil, and in Exodus 29:40 to beaten oil, a distinction not made in the King James Version. The clear oil of pressed olives was made by crushing the olives into a pulpy mass, then placing this into a basket, and so allowing it to drip through. No other part of the olive came through; hence the purity of the oil. To produce the beaten oil, heavy rocks were placed on the pulpy mass in the basket to produce good olive oil, but not of the same purity. The clear oil of pressed olives was used for the lamps and was smokeless, and the beaten oil was used for the meal offering.[358]

According to v. 20, it was the duty of the people to provide the oil for the lamp. It is stated as a commandment that they were to bring their best oil.

We are not told how this commandment was implemented. There is no specified plan for the giving of the oil, nor any penalty for failure to provide it.

The significance of this is a very obvious one. Our Lord tells us that we "are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14). We are, however, a derivative light, not the source of light. Our Lord declares:

> I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Our Lord tells us that He is both light and life.

The light of the Tabernacle depended on the people; if they failed to bring the oil, the light grew dim. The same is true of the church. Where the people fail in their responsibility to provide for the light to shine forth, the church becomes weak and helpless.

This is important to remember in order to understand the Parable of the Ten Virgins. We are told by our Lord that the five foolish virgins took no extra oil. When at midnight the bridegroom arrived, the lamps of the foolish virgins were flickering and going out. There was for them no entrance into the marriage celebration and banquet. They were shut out (Matt. 25:1-13). This parable does not make much sense unless we understand Exodus 27:20. Why should the foolish virgins be excluded from a well-lit banquet hall? Why does the bridegroom say to them, when they cry out, "Lord, Lord, open to us," "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." (Matt. 25:11-12)? The meaning becomes clear when we see that it is the duty of all the Lord's people to provide not only for their own light and sustenance, but also for the Lord's work and Kingdom. God makes it clear that, while He requires sacrifices and gifts from us, He does not need them. He can accomplish everything without us. All the same, He makes vast areas of our lives and history dependent upon what we do. We must provide the oil for light, or face darkness and judgment.

In Psalm 50:10-15, God declares through Asaph:

> 10. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.
> 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.
> 12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.
> 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High:

15. And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God commands us to bring Him our offerings for our own welfare.

Chapter Ninety-Four
"The Spirit of Wisdom"
(*Exodus 28:1-5*)

> 1. And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.
> 2. And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.
> 3. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.
> 4. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.
> 5. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen. (Exodus 28:1-5)

In Biblical thought, the word "heart" has a very different meaning than in Western thought and most cultures. For us, "heart" primarily refers to a physical organ which pumps blood, and the emotions. This is not true of the Biblical word. The Hebrew word *labe* means the center of a man's being; it is inclusive of the intellect and the emotions but cannot be limited to them. We have absorbed something of the Biblical meaning when we speak of "the heart of the matter," i.e., the core of meaning. This is the meaning of Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." This doctrine of the *heart* is a key Biblical concept. Especially since David Hume, Western thought has tended to deny that man is more than fleeting sensory impressions; his being has no core or center, and man is a reacting animal rather than a determining creature.

This is an essential doctrine, this view of the heart, for an understanding of the Bible. In antiquity and in much of the world until recently, physical skills in any area, whether in farming, invention, the arts, architecture, or anything else were the attributes of slaves. To work with one's hands was the mark of a slave or a very poor man. The achievements of Greece prized by modern man were mainly slave products, and often they earned freedom for the slave. Israel left Egypt highly skilled because of its bondage there, and Egypt was left greatly impoverished.

The fact that the church began very early to build magnificent churches, at first small parish churches, and to fill them with art, was due to this heritage. The same was true of the synagogue. Excavation showed some years back that the Nazareth synagogue in Christ's day was a stone edifice beautifully adorned with art.

Because we are heirs of Biblical faith, it is difficult for us to understand the revolutionary character of such verses as Exodus 28:3, which speaks of men who "are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom."

The word "wisdom" is again important (*chokmâh* in the Hebrew). Our modern view tends to be closer to the Greek meaning than the Biblical one. It is associated with intellectual pursuits and an academic orientation. Franklin Delano Roosevelt put together a group of professors as a "Brain Trust" under the assumption that wise counsel would be forthcoming from them. The Biblical meaning of wisdom has both the connotation of common sense *and* skills, artistic, inventive, mechanical, and so on. The wise man is one who relates true faith to the world of thought and action. The *scribe* or writer in Biblical realms was a man of wisdom, not a palace flunky.

There is still another aspect to all this. God tells Moses of these "wise hearted" men of various artistic abilities, men who not only produced the garments, breastplate, and the various aspects of Tabernacle equipment, but also crafted the furnishings, that He had "*filled*" them with "the spirit of wisdom." Artistic skills are described thus as an endowment and gift from God. We are required to see our skills and aptitudes as gifts from God to be used for His Kingdom.

There is still another important aspect to these verses. In v. 2, God commands Moses, "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty." A purely utilitarian approach is thus specifically denied. The garments of a priest were not merely representational of a function under God; they were also "for glory and for beauty." Again we cannot understand what the early church and the medieval church did apart from such statements. The glory of God was celebrated in the architecture of a church, in its furnishings, and in its art. The Zwinglian view of a bare church, devoid of beauty and of music, was not Biblical; it has been a disaster that so many have adopted it. Only by relegating the Old Testament to a status of obsolescence can they do so.

The other *requirement* is "beauty." God who has created so glorious and beautiful a creation commands those who serve Him to add, by His endowment, to the treasure-house of earthly beauty. This is not an option for man; the requirement of beauty is an aspect of God's commandment. We need to work and pray for the day when Christians will again see their moral responsibility in this sphere.

Only a perverse and irresponsible reading of Scripture will neglect this fact. How far such thinking can go is apparent in the commonplace reading of 1 Peter 3:1-4:

> 1. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [or, behavior] of the wives;
> 2. While they should behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.
> 3. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;
> 4. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Much nonsense has been written about these verses. Some generations ago, John Brown of Edinburgh pointed out that the reference to "fear" means the fear of God, not of one's

husband.[359] He also stated bluntly that v. 2 does not forbid attractiveness in hair styles, nor the wearing of gold, but rather a false trust in them. In fact, he wrote, "A sloven is disagreeable, a slattern intolerable."[360] If v. 3 be read as a prohibition, then those who so interpret it must advocate nudism, because Peter seemingly condemns the "putting on of apparel." What the text actually condemns is a trust in appearances rather than character. Such abuses of Scripture are many. The failure to see the God-given requirement of glory and beauty is among them.

We have also in these verses the calling of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Their garments are to be holy because their function is a holy one. It is significant in this context that neither Aaron nor his sons are themselves called holy, although the garments are. The men are called to a holy function wherein they are required to be holy or face God's judgment, as Nadab and Abihu did (Leviticus 10:1-2). Neither the function God gave to Aaron and his sons, nor the skills he gave to the various artisans, made any of them holy, but it did give them a duty to seek holiness. The greater God's gifts, the greater are His requirements of us. Our Lord declares,

> 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)

A radically false premise of modern art is that the greater the gifts, the greater the exemption from moral responsibility.

In v. 4, we have reference to the ephod. This word has two meanings in the Bible. *First*, as here, it refers to a priestly garment, a kind of vest reaching from the shoulders to the waist. Here the ephod refers to a garment which was limited to high priestly use, with other clothing. In 1 Samuel 22:18 we see that it refers to a garment worn by ordinary priests and non-priests, so that its usage was not limited to the high priest, however distinctive his ephod might be. But, *second*, we have reference in Judges 8:26-27 to an ephod made of gold and purple raiment which seems to have been some kind of image or pointing to a god.

The key seems to be the fact that kings, judges, and notable persons wore robes which were mantles of distinction. "The robe of glory" was worn by god-kings. When Jesus was sentenced to

death, the soldiers “stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe,” and then “a crown of thorns” (Matt. 27:28-29). Since He was condemned for His kingship, they mocked Him as a pretended king and beat him savagely.

The ephod worshipped in Judges 8:26-27 (Gideon’s work) was apparently designed to honor God and to represent His presence and power. It became instead a great evil. “The Spirit of wisdom” and power cannot be localized and confined. No more than being a priest or pastor makes one holy, nor being an artist gives one skills, can God’s power and presence be attached to any created thing or place.

A final note: People now do not read as carefully as was the case before the era of films, radio, and television. There is an unconcern for details and an insistence on movement and action. The nuances of meaning and implications are thus lost. Such texts as this were once influential precisely because readers were not racing over the words but pondered their application to their lives and world. We need such intelligent reading again.

Chapter Ninety-Five

The Ephod

(*Exodus 28:6-12*)

> 6. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.
> 7. It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together.
> 8. And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.
> 9. And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel:
> 10. Six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth.
> 11. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold.
> 12. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. (Exodus 28:6-12)

The ephod and the breastplate marked the high priest, and the ephod described in Exodus 28:6-12 is the high priest's particular garb. It was set apart from the kind of ephod worn by Samuel in 1 Samuel 2:18, and by David in 2 Samuel 6:14 (see also 1 Chronicles 15:27); what Samuel and David wore is described as a "*linen* ephod."

The ephod was a kind of coat or vest whose fabrics were the same as those of the curtains and the vail of the tabernacle, with the addition of the gold thread. There was thus an emphasized connection between the high priest and the Sanctuary. The inclusion of gold threads in the

fabric's weave signifies royal power. The high priest was the spiritual ruler of the community and thus represented royal authority. He was in this sense God's ruler on earth. At the same time, because the high priest's breastplate carried the engraved names of all the tribes, he was their representative before God. He was thus the mediator between God and man and was a type of Christ in His incarnation, the union of God and man in one person as the great Mediator.

When the high priest was invested into his position, he was anointed with oil. It was poured over him and also applied to his forehead in the form of an X, one type of cross.

The word "ouches" in v. 11 is an Elizabethan word for a clasp or similar ornamental aspect of a garment.

The high priest was in a strict sense the only true priest in Israel; all other priests were his deputies. On this analogy, Roman Catholicism has seen the pope as the only true priest or presbyter, and all others as his deputies. The Reformation, however, insisted on the high priestly office of Christ and the status of deputies or ministers for all earthly deputies or ministers.

The garb of the high priest had a resemblance to the clothing of kings. This emphasized God as King and the high priest as His deputy. Even more it must be said that neither Israel then, nor the church now, can ever rightly see themselves as other than deputies whose status depends on faithfulness.

The mediatorial status of the high priest was depicted in the engraved stones on the shoulders of the ephod. These stones were to be carefully engraved by skilled craftsmen with the names of the twelve tribes. As the mediator of the covenant people, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies bearing their names as their representative. Thus he represented the whole family of faith; he carried their names over his heart.[361]

Hebrews 7:25-28 says of Jesus Christ,

> 25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.
> 26. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
> 27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up Himself.
> 28. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Our High Priest, *first*, is Jesus Christ. He is the perfect man and God incarnate. Being sinless, He needs no daily sacrifice of atonement for His sins, as did all Hebrew high priests. *Second*, what the old high priests did typified what Christ in His coming would accomplish, atonement for sin. *Third*, we have God's own oath (Heb. 7:21-22) that our High Priest is efficacious in His work for all time and eternity. We have thus not a daily repeated act, but a once and for all atonement. *Fourth*, the consecration of our High Priest is for evermore.

The end of the high priestly function in Israel has a curious history. Its greatest power and the beginning of its corruption came with the Maccabees. The Romans, on taking over Judea, helped further the corruption of the high priest while increasing the nominal powers of the office. The unhappy fact was that more than a few welcomed this corruption, because corruption in high places puts leaders on a level with those beneath them. Many find it easier to relate to someone as evil as themselves than to their betters.

In this respect, it is revealing to view the attitude of the Islamic peoples of Malay towards Jesus. The Islamic form of Jesus is *Isa*. For some of these peoples, a sinless prophet means an effeminate man, and hence the name *Isa* is only given to girls, apparently on the assumption that they are compelled to be good.[362]

This is a reversal of the whole moral order. Strength is associated with sin; we have a parable exalting the ugly over the beautiful, as Dr. David Estrada Herrero has shown. In one sphere after another, values are turned upside down.

I do not regard it as fanciful to say that the stress on plainness and even ugliness in churches is related to this trend. The careful attention to and stress on *beauty* and *glory* in God's requirements concerning worship go unheeded today. The emphasis on plainness and cheapness is entirely non-Biblical. Some people seem to have an apocryphal book in their heads which they use to undermine Scripture.

These verses deal with one article of clothing alone, and they require beautiful and costly workmanship. At every point with respect to worship, we have a similar emphasis.

All this is closely tied to the radical prohibition against all blemished offerings to God. God cannot be given our second best, only our best. Anything else He declares is an act of contempt for Him. But this is not all. What we give must cost us something. For this reason, while deer were classified as clean animals, they were not acceptable as a sacrifice because they were costless to us. No long-term work and effort went into such an offering. Gifts or sacrifices thus came out of the realm of work and production.

The work of engravers is here mandated. More than a few times we see skilled artisans associated with the construction of the Tabernacle. The arts are closely linked to faith and at times to worship.

In v. 8 we see that even the high priest's girdle or belt is a work of art, and of costly materials. God obviously sees no virtue in cheapness in things pertaining to His house and worship.

Too long have men tried to read all kinds of spiritual meanings and allegories into such plain words as those of our text. After the Babylonian Captivity, God told Judea through the prophet Haggai how He felt about their priorities:

3. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands. (Haggai 1:3-11)

Chapter Ninety-Six

The Breastplate

(*Exodus 28:13-21*)

13. And thou shalt make ouches of gold;
14. And two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches.
15. And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it.
16. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof.
17. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row.
18. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.
19. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.
20. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.
21. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. (Exodus 28:13-21)

As we have seen, there is a strong emphasis in our text on excellence in construction, design, furnishings, and in all things connected with worship. This emphasis is missing in most recent church planning. Some men insist that church funds should go where they will do the most good for the most people. This is a humanistic emphasis, and it stresses a false antithesis between the glory of God and the welfare of the people. Liberation "theology" in both Catholic and Protestant circles is very prone to such thinking; it insists that a radically humanistic view alone does honor to Christ. Let us remember that it was Judas who objected when Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with costly spikenard, declaring, "why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and

given to the poor?" (John 12:5). Three hundred pence was then the earnings of a daylaborer for three hundred days. Judas placed caring for the poor in antithesis to honoring the Messiah. Our Lord, however, *requires* that we do both, honor God and help man. In Matthew 15:1-9, we have His sharp condemnation of those who deprived their parents of support in order to give to God's Temple; this nullified God's law. It is a man's basic duty to care for his family and his parents; it is a woman's primary duty to care for her husband and children and to provide good food, a clean and orderly house, and the teaching of the children. Neither men nor women can use *any* excuse, including the Lord's work, to evade their primary duty. We honor God most by doing our work best.

We must recognize that our calling in Christ is to be kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). Our royal calling requires the royal virtue of us, and the royal virtue, now a forgotten thing, means generosity of spirit and giving to God and to man. One of the reasons for the great power and expansion of Christianity has been the practice of the royal virtue, whereas other religions have too often left all men niggardly in giving, playing the role, whether rich or poor, of tight-fisted peasants. Everything in Scripture militates against that.

Our text refers to "ouches of gold" (v. 13); this means settings and fastenings. The breastplate is doubled or folded in two to be square, about nine inches square. The twelve precious stones are also referred to in Revelation 21:19-20 as the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10). The breastplate was a kind of pouch, and it contained the Urim and Thummim. Since the jewels listed have changed their names at times, we cannot with certainty identify them all. Such a breastplate of judgment, setting forth the power of decision, was found in antiquity on great kings; here it is for the high priest to wear as God's representative. It is called in v. 15 "the breastplate of judgment." There were four rows of gems, three on each row. J. Urquhart wrote on the meaning of these gems:

> 1. The names of the tribes were engraved upon and identified with the choicest jewels. Christ not only remembers us; we are loved, honored, treasured by him. 2. The name of each tribe was engraved upon a separate, and different kind of jewel. We are not grasped by our high priest in a mass; we are individually known,

> loved, cared for. 3. The names were borne upon Aaron's heart whenever he went into the holy place (v. 29), for a memorial before the Lord continually. We are held in perpetual remembrance before God.[363]

The breastplate was apparently closed at the bottom and partially open on the other three sides.

The high priest was a type of Christ. As such, his garment represented the beauty and glory of God's mercy to us in the incarnation.

The costliness and the beauty of all things associated with the Tabernacle are important for us to note. We have a seeming paradox in Scripture, in that thrift, good husbandry, judicious actions, and much, much more which, over the centuries, have been productive of monastic virtues and the Puritan outlook, go hand in hand with this strong emphasis on beauty and glory.

This is a sharp contrast to the modern outlook of many who see disappearing resources, over-population, a necessity for abortion and euthanasia, and a variety of like matters. There is in all of this a hatred of life and a love of death (Prov. 8:36). James Bilizikian reported to me of an encounter in a health food store with a woman to whom all such causes were matters of faith and addiction. She was a vegetarian, and she proudly stated that her aversion to killing life was such that she only ate unfertilized eggs because to eat fertilized eggs was to kill life. When James Bilizikian questioned her about her stand for abortion, the killing of human life, she was furious and resentful.

Humanistic man is extravagant in gratifying his taste for amusement while having a meager spirit in the essentials of life. When man faces the magnificence and order of creation and sees no more in it than a mindless accident, he beggars himself and becomes a meager man, and a fool as well. We are told that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). This godly fear and wisdom means recognizing that God's law is the way of life.

> The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. (Prov. 13:14)

> 4. They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.
> 5. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. (Prov. 28:4-5)

The verses of our text are more than directions for the designers and artists whose calling it was to do the work ordained by God. These verses are a part of *revelation*. Revelation comes from God, and it gives law, instruction, knowledge otherwise unknown, and much more. Above all, revelation enables us to understand God Himself.

Thus, the frame of reference in such texts is more than its obvious content: God orders a breastplate for the high priest to be prepared. Now, that God would *order* such a thing rather than merely say to prepare suitable garments for the high priest, or good furnishings for the sanctuary, is not a light matter. His order, made known by revelation, makes God's will particular and specific. No detail in creation is outside His knowledge and concern. The good of the philosophers has little interest in concerns outside the ken of philosophy, but for the God of Scripture, the very hairs of our heads are all numbered (Matt. 10:30; Luke 12:7). The particularity of God manifests itself in His revelation and therefore in His care for us. It is precisely this particularity of Scripture which offends many but which for us is a guarantee of total meaning in our lives and in all creation.

As we shall see, the place of total meaning in our lives appears subsequently in this chapter, Exodus 28.

Two things must be added. *First*, in no area of life does Scripture advocate cheapness, superficiality, or shoddiness. Obedience and faithfulness to God and His law create a society in which none shall be poor (Deut. 15:4). Today, the amount of money spent on entertainment leads in many cases to the impoverishment of a family in its housing and education.

Second, where inheritance and dowries (i.e., Biblical dowries, the young man endowing his bride) prevail, society has a future orientation and invests, not in entertainment, but in the enrichment of its members in terms of their lives, not their time.

There is a reference to the breastplate in Ephesians 6:14; the Christian, as God's king and priest in Christ, is called to exercise dominion. This requires putting on "the breastplate of righteousness" or justice. It is his duty in Christ to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Christians must be the justice people, the justice advocates. Jesus Christ as our great High Priest is creation's great justice advocate, and in Him we are all required to be champions of justice.

Chapter Ninety-Seven

Urim and Thummim

(*Exodus 28:22-30*)

22. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold.
23. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on two the two ends of the breastplate.
24. And thou shalt put the two wreathed chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate.
25. And the other two ends of the wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod before it.
26. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward,
27. And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod.
28. And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.
29. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.
30. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually. (Exodus 28:22-30)

We have now more specific instructions about the breastplate and the ephod. An age which is unwilling to follow directions in any area of life or thought is not likely to be interested in these verses.

The important and central concern here is with the Urim and the Thummim (v. 30). What they were specifically we do not know. They were in some way a means of drawing lots, but not in any way familiar or even known to us. They were, however, obviously important to the work and function of the high priest and are therefore of great concern to us.

The high priest had an important function in sacrifice, but more was involved. Together with the Levites, instruction was basic to his vocation (Deut. 33:10). He was to render judgments before God at the sanctuary (Ex. 22:8-9). The law of God was the necessary means of judgment, yet the Urim and Thummim, for which the breastplate was made, are called the instruments of judgment (Exodus 28:15).

There are references to *both* the Urim and Thummim in Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8, Deuteronomy 33:8, Ezra 2:63, and Nehemiah 7:65. In 1 Samuel 28:6 and Ezra 2:63, we have references to only the Urim. In Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65, we see the importance of the Urim and Thummim to the priesthood. Many have seen the Urim and Thummim as related to the casting of lots; there is some analogy, but we have the fact of 1 Samuel 28:6, which tells us that at times God refused to allow any verdict or word to come by way of the Urim and Thummim.

To gain some knowledge of the matter, let us look at the matter carefully. We know, *first*, that the Urim and Thummim were connected with *judgment*. Clearly, then, their purpose was closely tied to justice. *Second*, there was an element of judgment reserved to God, and there is an analogy to the casting of lots. We see the use of lots to ascertain guilt in the episode of Achan (Joshua 7:13-21). The last Biblical use of lots is in Acts 1:26, when Matthias was chosen by lot to replace Judas as one of the twelve disciples. There is a difference in these two episodes: in the one, a guilty man is located, in the other, a new leader is chosen. The Biblical use of lots ended with Matthias' choice. There was clearly a supernatural government over such usage. *Third*, we definitely cannot say that the Urim and Thummim governed the administration of justice.

Judgment and justice were and are the prerogatives of God and totally so. Towards that end, God gave His law, which, in virtually all cases, governed the administration of justice. In addition to the law and the courts and judges thereof, there were elders and fathers. The major administration of justice is in the hands of parents, the father in particular. The particular father has great power over his children's generation, as Genesis indicates. Thus, in the overwhelming number of cases, the normal channels of justice prevailed throughout Old Testament history. Kings, priests, judges, elders, prophets, fathers, and all God-ordained authorities each and all in their sphere, have the duty to administer justice in terms of God's law.

What, then, was the meaning of the Urim and Thummim? Why were they so necessary to the office of high priest when apparently they were so rarely used?

The meaning of the words can perhaps be of some help. Urim means *lights*, and Thummim *perfections*. Perhaps this pointed to the fact that true and full justice rests with God. These meanings, *lights* and *perfections,* are common knowledge to Christian scholars. However, the Greek text of 1 Samuel 14:41 seems to indicate that Urim might derive from a word meaning *curse*, and Thummim from a word meaning *be whole*.[364] This, however, is more a conjecture than an accepted reading.

Fourth, it is now clear that, while the Urim and Thummim plainly invoked God's judgment, we have no clear instance of their definitive use in any case. What is clear is that, while God provides a variety of spheres wherein justice and judgment are normally to be administered, beyond that all judgment is reserved to the Almighty. The source of justice is the ultimate Judge and the final arbiter over all things.

Thus, the high priest's breastplate was an eloquent witness to two facts. *First,* the stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes, then the twelve apostles, testified to the fact that by God's grace in the atonement, we are the judged, the justified, the redeemed of God, and the freed. *Second,* the Urim and Thummim witness to the fact that we who are judged must allow God to be the Judge of all persons and things. Paul therefore rejects all personal judgments; it is *not* our duty to go around passing judgments on one another. Our personal judgments are sinful;

only God's judgments are absolutely valid, and only the authorities He has established can pass judgment. The Berkeley version of 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 makes this very clear:

> 3. To me it is of least importance to be judged by you or by any human court; nor do I even judge myself,
> 4. for I am not cleared because I am unconscious of wrong on my part. The One who judges me is the Lord.
> 5. So do not you pass premature judgment before the Lord comes, who shall bring to light the things hidden by darkness and shall reveal the inner motives. Then shall each one experience his due approval from God.

Many religions condemn gossip, back-biting speech, and slander. Biblical faith is unique in its condemnation, because, among other things, *first* of all, it commands a charitable spirit, pointing out, "in many things we offend all" (James 3:2). But, *second*, judgmental speech is called a sin and a destructive fire (James 3:5-8).

The Urim and Thummim thus tell us that judgment is God's prerogative. We are given limited spheres of judgment as parents, teachers, laborers, workers in such spheres as church and state, and so on. This is of especial importance now when so many act as little gods, sitting in judgment over everyone, including the Lord.

Currently, a work is being prepared for the press entitled *The New Red-Letter Edition of the Five Gospels*. (The so-called fifth gospel is the apocryphal Nag Hammadi manuscript discovered in 1945 in Egypt, a gnostic work.) This work has been produced by 125 scholars, Catholic and Protestant, with a few Jewish scholars. All the words "attributed to Jesus" were subjected to a vote by these men. As Marcus Borg of Oregon State University describes it:

> …The question we vote upon with regard to each saying of Jesus is ultimately very simple: "Do I think Jesus said that?"

> We vote by casting one of four differently colored balls (red, pink, gray, black) into a ballot box.[365]

How thoughtful of these scholars to edit Jesus' words! The red, by the way, means, Jesus said it; pink means, it sounds like Him; gray, well, maybe; black, no. In an age of presumptuous scholars, it is not surprising that some have taken it upon themselves to correct God the Son with their editorial skills!

The Urim and Thummim tell us that there are areas where judgment belongs entirely to God. He has by His law-word given us the means of judging where He has required us to exercise godly rule, but, beyond our legitimate spheres of dominion, work, and rightful authority, God reserves to Himself the power and the right to judge. Moses tells us plainly that certain spheres are reserved by God to Himself, but those given to us *require* our obedience to "all the words" of His law.

> The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29)

Finally, 1 Samuel 28:6 makes it clear that there were at times no answers available from *any* source, the Urim, dreams, or prophets. Neither the fullness of knowledge nor of justice is obtainable in this world. The Urim and Thummim witnessed to this fact of transcendence. Perfect justice comes from God, and only at the end of time. It is a dangerous arrogance to seek *perfect* justice in this world. Justice *must* be brought and upheld, but its fullness and perfection are only in God, and in His eternal Kingdom.

At the heart of all perfect Justice is Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ, God's perfect justice brings upon us the fullness of His justice in judgment, of which the Last Judgment is evidence. In Christ, that perfect justice and judgment is satisfied in His atonement. It is dangerous to cry for perfect justice without recognizing what it would mean for us outside of Christ, and what it means for us in Him.

Chapter Ninety-Eight

The Garment or Robe, and its Pomegranates

(*Exodus 28:31-35*)

> 31. And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue.
> 32. And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent.
> 33. And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about:
> 34. A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.
> 35. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not. (Exodus 28:31-35)

Here we have reference to the robe of the ephod; it is referred to as a habergeon, a kind of corselet normally made of chain mail; in this case, it is not so. Old time Celtic chiefs wore such a garment. There was a hole at the top, with a binding of woven work around it to prevent tearing. The garment was slipped on over the head. The blue cloth as a background would bring out strongly the majesty of the ephod and its breastplate.

Hanging on to the robe were apparently tassels in the shape of pomegranates, and bells of gold. James Macgregor said that the purpose of these bells was to announce the entrance of the high priest into the presence of God. In antiquity and into the modern era, an unannounced appearance into the presence of a king meant death. The privacy of a supervisor could not be casually violated on any level of life. As a result, the high priest's presence, as he moved to enter the Holy of Holies, was announced by the ringing of the golden bells. In the Christian era, the use of bells

has continued; church bells are rung to declare that Christ's resurrection not only summons men to worship their Creator, but also to declare the happy fact of access to God.[366]

The word "blue" in v. 31 is probably our violet. Although pomegranates were ancient symbols of fertility, there is nothing in the text to indicate anything but a decorative purpose. The robe was apparently sleeveless and reached to the ankles; it was a garment indicating high rank.

The bells meant also that the high priest could not stir without the knowledge of the people. While the essential purpose of the bells was to announce his entry into the Holy of Holies, the bells also enabled the people to follow his movements. As the people listened to the bells, they were able to trace the high priest's every step.

We have references to the pomegranates and their place in the Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings 7:20 and 42; they were part of the art work, and they numbered four hundred. At no point are we given a word about their meaning. It is thus without warrant for anyone to read a meaning into the pomegranates other than that specified in Exodus 28:2,40, "for glory and for beauty." There have been attempts to read some other meaning into the pomegranates, but, like much else in the Tabernacle and the priestly garments, such attempts are guilty of borrowing meaning from sources other than Scripture.

One of the tendencies of the modern era has been to deny ultimate meaning, i.e., God, and to reduce all things to a utilitarian level. In architecture, for example, starkly bare lines and a machine-like barrenness of all beauty has been endemic. Any emphasis on beauty as such, or the ability of skilled craftsmen, is outlawed. Some of us knew Richard Earle, an artist, who with his father crafted many fixtures, cabinets, and other things in such interiors as Scotty's Castle in Death Valley, the Doheny Mansion in Los Angeles, and more. At the beginning of the twentieth century, such craftsmanship often went into the construction of middle class homes.

Meaning has now been reduced to man, and restricted to the service of utility, a meager view of life. Such a view of meaning impoverishes life *and art*.

The pomegranate tree is highly regarded in the Bible as a thing of beauty. It is an attractive tree ten to fifteen feet high, with beautiful flowers and appealing fruit. Until recently, and perhaps still, it grew wild in some areas of Palestine and adjacent places. The spies sent into Canaan by Joshua brought back pomegranates to show the wealth of the land (Num. 13:23). When Israel in the wilderness of Zin whined for the "good life" in Egypt, they remembered its pomegranates (Num. 20:5). In the Song of Songs, Solomon described his bride's beauty by reference to the pomegranate (Song of Songs 4:3,13) and what his day prized for its loveliness.

This again is of interest. At one time, Western man saw aspects of feminine beauty in terms of the loveliness of some fruits, such as cherries, plums, apples, and their blossoms. Now the stress is on sexuality.

There is another aspect to the pomegranate that appears in Joel 1:10-12:

> 10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new vine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
> 11. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.
> 12. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

This is a declaration about God's judgment. The three staples of the day, essential for life and for sacrifices, have been destroyed: "corn" or grain, wine, and oil. The barley harvest, the food of the poor, is wiped out together with the wheat. The oil refers to olive trees and olive oil. The grapevine and fig tree also represented basic food items, fresh and dried. The palm tree and its dates, and the apple (or, possibly, the apricot) tree are also withered. The pomegranate provided both fresh fruit and drink. While popular, it was not an essential to everyday life, although it had a double use, for eating as an enjoyable and beautiful addition to the diet, *and* because it was "a powerful anthelmintic, principally against the tape-worm."[367]

Within our modern utilitarian outlook, we see harvests as times of work, culminating in payday for the crops. The older view, as reflected by Scripture, tells us that harvests were times of religious and popular festivals, times of celebration and joy. We have a reference to this, one of many, in Psalm 4:7: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

Thus, what Joel tells us is that not only has God's judgment taken from them the foods essential to their daily life, but also such things as pomegranates, a feast for the eyes and a witness to the happy richness of life.

To limit *meaning* to the utilitarian aspects of life can be called a modern heresy. To limit beauty similarly is to impoverish life.

The Biblical priority is "for glory and for beauty." The emphasis on glory has had a perverted revival in our time. Many young males, with their "macho" emphasis on a perverse manhood, are prone to strutting in a variety of exotic garbs, hair styles, and the like. The emphasis is on self-glorification and is the antithesis to godly glory.

Homer Hailey commented on Joel 1:12, "with grain and all manner of fruit cut off, the joy of fullness vanishes; hopelessness overwhelms all strata of society."[368] The term, "the joy of fullness," is very apt. We cannot understand its Biblical meaning unless we grasp the meaning of "for glory and for beauty." Unless God Himself tells us that something has a meaning beyond the text, we must content ourselves with the fact that this is the purpose God has. Pomegranates represent this.

With a Biblical delight in pomegranates, in 1917 my father planted a whole row of them on the east side of our garden, seven or eight trees. Although he rarely ate a pomegranate (whereas I did readily), he delighted in them as a part of God's beautiful and glorious creation. This is a spirit very much needed in our time, in every area of life.

Chapter Ninety-Nine
The Plate of the Mitre
(*Exodus 28:36-43*)

36. And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.
37. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be.
38. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.
39. And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.
40. And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty.
41. And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.
42. And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach:
43. And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him. (Exodus 28:36-43)

In v. 41, as in v. 3, we have the word "consecrate," and in chapter 29 we have the consecration of the priests. The Hebrew word in v. 41 for *consecrate* means "to fill the hands," to empower and govern. In v. 3, the word used means to make or pronounce clean. In Exodus 29, the former word is used; there is an implication of devotion; if we wear the uniform of a police officer, that uniform sets up certain boundaries for our behavior; it fills our hands, i.e., governs our activities.

It identifies and hence limits us by governing our conduct. A major aspect of the modern desire to be both distinctive, yet anonymous in dress and person, has its roots in a desire to flee from responsibility and identification.

There is today a hostility, for example, to clerical garb in public and to military uniforms. Uniforms of any kind identify and empower, and this is now resented. One suburban city in the early 1970s insisted on abandoning police uniforms and guns as authoritarian symbols; the results were very bad.

A plate of rosette of pure gold was to be made, and it was to be tied to the priestly mitre by a diadem of violet or blue lace. Thus, like a crown, the mitre and the rosette set forth the necessary dedication, "Holiness to the LORD."

The coat or tunic (v. 39) was the usual garment of men of rank, as was the girdle. Both were marks of authority.

The linen breeches (v. 42) were what we would call underwear.

The girdle, made of fine needlework, is of interest because a girdle was normally used to keep in place, during a time of work or battle, the long tunic, for freer movement.

> (1) Girdles were less for beauty than for use. Men girded themselves for battle, for a race, for active exertion of any kind. The high priest was to have his loins continually girded, that he might be ready at all times for God's service. But he was not to make a parade of this readiness. The girdle was to be hidden under the robe of the ephod. (2) Hidden as it was, the girdle was to be costly and beautiful — of many colors, the work of the skilled embroiderer. The Israelites were taught by this, that things devoted to God's service, *whether they be seen or not*, should be of the best. The intention is not to please men's eyes by beauty of color or form, or richness of material, but to do honor to God. Scamped work in places where it is not seen has been thought allowable by many a church-architect; dust

> and untidiness in hidden corners are tolerated by many who have the care of sacred buildings. True piety will make no difference between the seen and the unseen, the hidden and that which is open to sight, but aim at comeliness, fitness and beauty, in *all* that appertains to the worship of God.[369]

In v. 41, we are given three aspects of the investiture of the priests: anointing, consecration, and sanctification. *First*, anointing was of persons and things, to set them apart for God's purposes. It was against the law (Ex. 30:32-33) to manufacture for any other use the holy anointing oil; such an act resulted in excommunication. The anointing of anyone or anything was an act commissioned by God and therefore His act. The word *anoint* was used metaphorically to signify God's blessing, as in Psalm 23:5, "Thou anointest my head with oil." Things or persons anointed were not only set apart for God's purpose, but also sometimes received the Spirit of God in some special way.

Second, consecration, as we have seen, filled the hands or empowered the anointed person for his task and fitted him for it.

Third, sanctification is the making holy of that which has been set apart. God is holiness. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44; 19:2, etc.). Holiness is in both form and content; it is outward and inward, ritual and moral. Both aspects of holiness must be manifested and maintained. There is hypocrisy in maintaining mere outward or formal holiness, and disrespect and questionable holiness at best in despising the forms.

In Isaiah 8:13, we have a statement which sheds light on the meaning of sanctification:

> Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

God is not to be treated casually or lightly: at all times we are to remember that He is God, the Almighty, "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). A casual treatment of God is a form of disbelief. We

are similarly to view all things which God sets apart for His purpose with respect, not with casualness.

There are two directions to this required holiness on the part of the priests, *first*, "that they may be accepted before the LORD" (v. 38). Moral faithfulness was mandatory for the priests, but so too was ritual holiness. Failure here meant contempt for God's simple requirements of ritual dress. *Second*, the priests could not represent the people unless they were first faithful to the Lord.

The inscription on the mitre's gold plate thus set forth the purpose of worship: "Holiness to the LORD." All of man's life and the whole of creation must become holy and set apart for God's service, beginning with man.

As we have seen, "consecrate them" in v. 41 means "fill their hands." Originally and very literally, it meant fill their hands with the work of sacrifice. But sacrificial animals are not cited here, so that the consecration went beyond the immediate sacrifices. It is stated generally. It harkens back to God's command to Adam to obey and serve, to exercise dominion and to subdue the earth under Him (Gen. 1:26-28).

In v. 38, we are told that exact obedience to the ritual and the wearing of the mitre are necessary in order "that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things." "The holy things" refers to the offerings brought by the people and presented by the priests. These had to be unblemished offerings; the reference to their "iniquity" means, that the best sacrifices are imperfect, and that the best of men are not without sin and mixed motives. The high priest's careful attention to holiness was thus a means of purging the offerer and offerings from their impurities. Christ as the perfect High Priest and the representative of the new humanity Himself purges us and our gifts. Here the high priest in his own person stood between God and man to represent the great High Priest who was to come.

The temper of the twentieth century is emphatically hostile to the emphasis on ritual faithfulness which marks these laws. Even in the 1930s, when a different moral atmosphere prevailed, I recall

the contemptuous amusement of a Berkeley professor for his grandparents. They were, he admitted, a loving and faithful couple, but, in public, they always respectfully addressed one another as “Mr. Smith” and “Mrs. Smith.” Formal courtesy and respect towards all, including children, was a law to them. *Perhaps* such formality was a bit extreme, but it did indicate respect and social grace. Children were addressed, if unrelated, as “Master John,” or “Miss Jane,” or, if well known, as “Missy.”

A culture which finds such older traditions amusing is not likely to respect God’s sanctuary, nor likely to stress reverence, if such people know what reverence means.

Formalities and rituals are a form of honor and respect, things not highly regarded in these last years of the twentieth century.

Chapter One Hundred

The Consecration, Part I

(*Exodus 29:1-14*)

1. And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish,

2. And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of wheaten flour shalt thou make them.

3. And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams.

4. And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.

5. And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod.

6. And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

7. Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.

8. And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them.

9. And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

10. And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.

11. And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

12. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar.
13. And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar.
14. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering. (Exodus 29:1-4)

Scripture here speaks of the consecration of the high priest and other priests. The word *consecrate* is used in Exodus 28:3,41 and 29:9,33,35 and 30:30. It also appears in Exodus 32:29. The Hebrew word in Exodus 28:3 means *to make* or *declare holy*; this same word is used in Exodus 30:30. In the other instances it means *to fill the hands, to empower*. What we have here is more understandable in our time if we speak of "inauguration into office." To inaugurate a governor or president in the United States means to empower him in his particular function. At one time, civil authorities were in Christendom commonly consecrated into their offices. In the United States, there still is an oath of office, although the relationship of that oath to God and His law word is now forgotten. We still have a prayer, but the sermon which once marked inaugurations and school graduations is now gone.

The point is that at one time all ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Christendom were consecrated into office. It was believed that empowerment from God and His law was a necessity because an order without godly sanction and authority was in fact disorder and tyranny. It is a curious fact that, with the development of the Victorian era, coronation ceremonies were developed and stressed to an unprecedented degree; the declining monarchies studiously inflated the rites in order to enhance their states. Unhappily, it meant that theater replaced worship, because the rites concentrated on visible glory rather than Christian empowerment and faith.

Macgregor, in a striking sentence, called attention to another aspect of the consecration:

> Here is the first historical appearance of a CHRIST ("anointed"), and that in the central office of mediation, and with a view to the fundamental action of that office (offering sacrifice).[370]

The word *Christ* means *anointed*, and Jesus Christ is the supremely and absolutely God-anointed Person. He is our mediator, our High Priest and our sacrifice. All human authorities have a mediating role, although atonement is not their function. Men in authority within church and state are called to mediate God's law-word and authority to their respective spheres. Parents also mediate God's law and authority to their children, and a slackness in teaching order, discipline, and obedience means culpability and guilt in their calling. The same is true of employees and all others in legitimate authority; they must not dispense a personal doctrine of order, but rather God's.

Consecration in any sphere is not into omnicompetence, but into service unto God, and to man in Him. Verses 12-14 tell us of the sacrifice of a sin-offering. This aspect of the consecration ritual was to remind the priests that all righteousness describes God alone. Men are sinners, and, in the discharge of authority, they must remember their sinful estate and their fallen nature. They share a nature in common with all men; the authority of their calling must therefore come from God and be exercised in terms of His law and Name, not theirs. The washing referred to in v. 4 was to indicate that the priests in themselves were unclean men and needed God's cleansing grace. Their duty required them to rely therefore on God, not themselves. Cate tellingly summarized the meaning of the consecration:

> The ceremonies of washing, cleansing, anointing, and offering the special sacrifices were performed to show that a priest could not lead others further in the service of God than he had gone himself. Further, in order to serve God, one must be both clean and pure, as well as being set apart by God.[371]

As a part of this consecration, a bullock was sacrificed, and the priests laid their hands on his head. This meant that they accepted the death penalty for their sins against God in the person of His appointed substitute.

The service of consecration is a *ritual*. We need to look briefly at the meaning of ritual and its implications for us. There are many ways whereby ritual can be considered, but let us concentrate on three. *First*, ritual can be seen as a *binding act*, the performance of certain things which will cause certain consequences. Magic rituals are the best examples of this. The ritual creates a power. This view has had an influence in the churches. Its rationale is in such verses as Matthew 18:18-20:

> 18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
> 19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any things that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.
> 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

There is also John 14:13:

> And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

These statements have a serious qualification, however: what is done must be in Jesus' Name, in His person, and for His Kingdom. The Christian idea of ritual as a binding power means that the priority is entirely in the hands of the Lord. To deny this means to shift determination from God to man. This, then, makes the ritual performing institution very powerful, in that binding and loosing are conferred upon it irrespective of God's law-word and person. Only if ritual is in the Name of the Lord and in obedience and faithfulness to His word does it have God's blessing. Thus, we cannot from the ritual insist on a human fulfillment irrespective of God's sovereign determination.

Second, ritual is also a form of *service*. Worship is often spoken of as a service of praise and thanksgiving, of petition, and more. It is the collective service of all present serving God by hearing His word, praising His Name, and pledging themselves to His Kingdom. In Protestantism, ritual as service is the most familiar meaning in the twentieth century.

The *third* meaning of ritual that concerns us here is ritual as *preparation*. In a military training camp, there are repeated drills of a set pattern to prepare the new troops for potential military action. In a sound training, all aspects of the drill refer to a context beyond the present. Similarly, ritual is a repetition of certain necessary aspects of the Christian life in order to equip the worshipper for action in the world.

In all three aspects of worship, the reference can be to human action, but the mandate is from God. In Christian terms, ritual refers to an order beyond man. George Rawlinson spoke of this consecration of the priests as "an acted parable."[372]

In paganism, ritual functions to hallow an existing order, a state and its power. The Christian ritual has a different focus, one which a ritual prayer taught by our Lord stresses: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10). Ritual may invoke God, but it at the same time can be man-ordered. Thus, S. H. Hooke wrote of Akkadian ritual:

> We have already seen that the sacred tree enters frequently into the pictorial representations of the ritual. The conception of the plan of life, or herb of life, some plant with magical potency, is also a frequent element in the myths. As we have suggested, the interchange between the god, the king and the sacred tree seems to point to the fact that the tree, which it may not be misleading to call the tree of life, is a symbol of the life-giving functions of the king.[373]

Pagan rituals buttress an existing human order. These can be rites installing officers of state, or pagan rulers in ancient cultures. In any case, the *status quo* is affirmed and protected. Christian ritual stresses God's order and the necessity for men and nations to seek, not their will, but God's

justice and grace. A truly Christian ritual is thus a mandate for renewal in terms of our sovereign God. It is marked by an awareness of our sin, and the sin within our institutions, and it invokes God's grace to restore God's order.

Chapter One Hundred One

The Consecration, Part II

(*Exodus 29:15-28*)

15. Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.
16. And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar.
17. And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him, and his legs, and put them unto [or, upon] his pieces, and unto [or, upon] his head.
18. And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the LORD: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
19. And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.
20. Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.
21. And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.
22. Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of consecration:
23. And one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the LORD:
24. And thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave offering before the LORD.

25. And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn them upon the altar for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour before the LORD: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
26. And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the LORD: and it shall be thy part.
27. And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons:
28. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel; for it is an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the LORD. (Exodus 29:15-28)

The ritual of consecration is now described as requiring a burnt offering to signify man's complete surrender to God. We are all required to be God's servants, and this is especially true of the priest or pastor. The entire consecration service is God-ward, and this must be true of all worship. It is only when worship is God-directed that there can be a true or valid benediction. According to Numbers 6:22-27:

22. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
23. Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,
24. The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
25. The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
26. The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
27. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

To put or impose God's Name on a people is to seal or mark them for a particular purpose and is a mark of ownership. In that sense, it is comparable to branding cattle, although here its purpose is to bless them. A benediction is thus more than a prayer. It applies to God-centered worship and living.

A simple illustration will call attention to the problem. Funeral services are usually very man-centered as well as long. I have heard many Protestant pastors say that it is a good opportunity to preach to the unsaved who are present, and they do so, at length. Roman Catholic services are also unduly long; the presence of many fallen-away Catholics is seen as an opportunity to impress them with their need for the church and its faith. Such man-centered approaches are alien to true worship, but popular. The Bible is a dull book to many because of its God-centered nature. But only a God-centered faith and life can be blessed.

Then, after the burnt offering, "ram of ordination" was sacrificed. The blood of the ram was applied by touch to the right ear, right thumb, and right toe of Aaron and his sons. The ear was thus given to hearing God's word, the hand to performing it, and the foot to following the ways of God's justice. Some of the blood was also sprinkled on the altar to remind them that their standing with God rested on His provided atonement. They are sanctified by the God-provided blood.

Then, in vv. 22-24, there is the wave-offering. This was offered to the Lord and afterwards given to the priests.

This service of consecration is described both in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. In Leviticus 8:12, the oil of anointing is cited. In Psalm 133, the communion of the saints is described as comparable to anointing. To dwell in community, with love, faithfulness, and without critical backbiting is in itself a way to blessings:

> 1. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
> 2. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
> 3. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (Psalm 133:1-3)

In Godly peace and unity there is life.

The consecration began (v. 14) with a sin-offering. Such a sacrifice rested on premises basic to Scripture. *First*, there is *substitution*; a clean and perfect animal is substituted for the worshipper and is slain in his stead. The sacrifice assumes the death penalty and represents Christ who is to come. *Second*, we have *imputation*; the offerer lays his hands on the victim's head and confesses his sin over it and transfers his sin to it. The animal becomes his life. *Third*, the result is *vicarious atonement*. A sinless one assumes the guilt and is given over to death. *Fourth*, there is *propitiation*: the justice of God is satisfied.[374]

These are not arbitrary steps. They are basic to the nature of God's creation, and they function clearly in the world outside the faith. The ungodly use substitution and imputation constantly. All the sins of society are ascribed to a particular group, e.g., capitalists, Marxists, blacks, whites, Christians, or some other hated group. Society will have cleansing and healing, supposedly, when such elements are killed off or somehow eliminated. There is, however, no propitiation in such human sacrifices, only more hatred, guilt, and conflict. Men cannot, by denying Scripture and the triune God, escape from the created and dependent realm of their being: they remain God's creation, and they remain responsible to Him.

The premise of sacrifice is always valid: the best of our lives and possessions belongs to God. This applies to all men, rich or poor.

As we have seen, one of the meanings of ritual is that of an enacted parable, or a preparation for life. Rituals were once common to every school-day: a flag salute, Bible reading, the Lord's Prayer, and certain required salutations in unison by the class, such as, "Good morning, Mrs. Pinckley," or, teacher, in response to "Good morning, class." Common courtesies in greeting one another are also forms of ritual. Most such things are now gone in many cases. A shocked young bride told me that her husband's family members never greeted one another on entering the homes of any member, nor if they met on the streets. This marriage soon had problems.

Rituals are preparations for life. To cite another example, a mother and daughter were pointed out to me in one city; both were attractive women; the mother, perhaps in her late forties, was an

heiress, and her husband was reasonably successful on his own. A maid came in daily to do all the work. The daughter had learned to ride a horse, dance, and look attractive. She had never once made a bed, cleaned her room, washed the dishes, or done anything useful in the house. On marrying a fine young man, she was horrified, insulted, and outraged at being asked to cook and keep house. When the house quickly became filthy, she left the marriage in anger and returned to her mother. The necessary rituals of daily life had never been taught to her.

Many such incidents can be cited. Education is a ritual of preparation, as is home-making. Children are now routinely deprived of such things, with deadly results to family life in later years.

The ritual of worship prepares us for life during the week by empowering us with the faith. True worship is God-centered, and hence it does not try to appeal to man's tastes and interests.

In my university days, I knew a few students who attended a "church" whose services were seen as innovative and interesting. These might be one morning a film review; another, interpretive dancing; another, an ACLU speaker; still another, a book review of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, and so on. The students were entertained, not changed.

The modern view is that ritual is meaningless. Children supposedly do not need the daily drills and disciplines that order life, and adults are mature enough, we are told, to do without them. We should not be surprised that the results are empty lives.

Chapter One Hundred Two

The Consecration, Part III

(*Exodus 29:29-37*)

29. And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.

30. And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place.

31. And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place.

32. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

33. And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy.

34. And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

35. And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them.

36. And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.

37. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy. (Exodus 29:29-37)

In these verses, provision is made for the succession of future high priests; we are also given more details covering all consecrations. The ritual took seven days, not because any part of it was long, because it was essentially not so, but because it was repeated daily for a week. It was

one act of consecration, so that the daily repetition for a week stressed not reconsecration but the purification of the altar as well as the priest. This is emphasized in vv. 35-37. Because the priest and the altar came alike out of a fallen world, out of a profane realm, they needed to be set apart and sanctified for the Lord's service.

In terms of this requirement, in the Christian era, churches which have been desecrated by invaders who perform a black mass in the night, or such invaders and disrupters of worship such as homosexuals and feminists, are commonly cleansed and reconsecrated.

The premise is that sin is contagious, and the line of demarcation between good and evil must be maintained both morally and ritually. Annually, on the Day of Atonement, there was a ritual of atonement for the altar, the priest, and the people (Lev. 16:17-18).

There was also, as a part of the ritual of consecration, a holy meal, comparable to a peace offering (v. 33). None save the priests could partake of this meal. The premise for this is very carefully explained to the Corinthians, many of them Gentiles, by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:12-14:

> 12. If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.
> 13. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live off the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?
> 14. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

The priests, Paul says, lived off certain gifts to the Lord, as well as their portion of the tithe. Being partakers of the altar also gave them authority and power. These same powers and privileges belong to those who preach the gospel. Moreover, St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:28, declares that, after apostles and prophets, teachers are basic to the church and its ministries. *Teachers* is here in the Greek *didaskalous*; *didaskalos* can be translated also as "master" and "rabbi." It thus has reference to scholars of the faith. Thus, men such as our Chalcedon staff

members are, in the Biblical sense, emphatically teachers and are so to be supported by the faithful. An important aspect of the Christian ministry is lost when scholars are not seen as essential to it.

In v. 37, we come to a central meaning of the word *holy*: because the altar is "most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy." This means that all things or persons who touch the altar are God's property. The altar signifies atonement, and to touch the altar meant either redemption or death. In either case, a dedication to God was involved.

According to George Rawlinson, the reference in v. 36 should read, "Thou shalt cleanse the altar by making an atonement for it."[375]

This original act of consecration was done by Moses (v. 24), acting as God's prophet and mediator. This occasion alone saw the use of the high priestly garments, except on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4, 23-24). Otherwise, these robes remained for use at the next high priest's consecration. Because this was a *God-ordained* rite, the true consecration was also from God, not from the rite itself. True ritual points beyond man and time and derives its validity and power from God, not man.

In v. 36, the reference to cleansing the altar means to free the altar from sin. This concept is a difficult one for modern man, who tends to believe that he is in himself good unless he robs or murders someone. Sin is seen simply as an *act*, whereas Scripture makes it clear that it is much more. Before sin becomes an act, it is a *condition*; it is the nature of man and his world. In a fallen world, sin is inherent in the moral condition of all things. Not only is sin the condition of man and his world, but also death. The evidence and precursor of death is sickness, endemic to our world and affecting us all.

The altar is freed from sin by consecration, even as we are. It is equally wrong to limit sin to our environment as it is to limit it to man alone. Man cannot, however, blame his sin on the environment, because the world is under a curse because of man's sin (Gen. 4:11-12; Rom. 8:19-22).

The altar, of course, was an inanimate object, but it was made of materials belonging to a fallen world. Like man and all the rest of creation, the altar must be transferred to a realm of freedom under God, a realm signifying the fulness of the Kingdom of God.

Any food from the rite of consecration which remained uneaten was to be destroyed (v. 34). It could not be given to strangers, i.e., to non-priests, but neither could it be eaten on the second day by the priests themselves. As John Gill pointed out, the priests "were to live upon the daily provision for them."[376] In other words, God's servants are to be provided for. A very telling and blunt example of this is in 1 Kings 17:8-16. Elijah, in a time of famine, is commanded by God to go and stay with a widow of Zarephath. He finds her on the brink of starvation, with only enough for herself and her son to eat before they die. Elijah commands that she prepare it for him, which she does, giving priority to God's prophet over herself and her son. As a result, one of Scripture's great miracles followed.

Such an incident is alien to a culture which is not God-centered but man-centered. But God makes it clear that His servants are to be daily provided for by His people. In Paul's words, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

The question is one of focus. The focus of life in the modern age is upon man and the state, and the result has been the steady enslavement of man. Man gains neither wisdom nor courage by serving the state; he gains them only by serving God. Humanistic statism gives a false focus to man's life and accordingly warps his being.

In times of faithlessness, the priests and Levites (the teachers of Israel) were very poor, since men neither tithed nor sacrificed. In times of faith, the priests and Levites flourished, as did justice and instruction.

There is an aspect to this rite of consecration which commentators ignore. During the seven days of consecration, the priests were to eat their communal meal "by the door of the tabernacle of the

congregation" (v. 32). This was to be done whether it was a time of plenty or of scarcity. In our time, this would be considered offensive by many. God, however, requires that this excellent meal be where all who were near the Tabernacle could see it. This was God-ordained, and in defiance and contempt for man's sin of envy. There had to be an open celebration of God's required bounty for His servants. In terms of 1 Corinthians 9:12-14, this means that Christian teachers or scholars, ministers, missionaries, Christian school teachers, musicians, and others must be well provided for, if God's blessing is to be with His people.

This was an actual mean and also an enacted parable whose purpose was to compel people to see life in terms of God's purposes.

Chapter One Hundred Three

The Consecration, Part IV

(*Exodus 29:38-46*)

38. Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar, two lambs of the first year day by day continually.
39. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:
40. And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering.
41. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
42. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.
43. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.
44. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.
45. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.
46. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God. (Exodus 29:38-46)

In vv. 38-46, we begin what is called an "appendix to the consecration directory." It is, however, related to the consecration, even though it speaks of Israel's *daily* sacrifice, by vv. 43-46. These latter verses clearly refer to the consecration. The consecration requires a faithful adherence to the correct form of ritual, but a formal correctness, however essential, does not ensure the validity of the consecration before God. It is faithfulness in the daily duties which is here

stressed (vv. 38-42); men must believe and obey; the priest must be both consecrated and faithful. As James 2:14-26 tells us, "faith without works is dead." But more is involved here than faith and works, or a true consecration and a faithful service. God sets forth His priority: it is He who will sanctify the altar, the Tabernacle, and the priests. The ritual correctness is *required*, but the *validation* is God's sovereign act. The church has a duty to require Biblically valid rites and ordinances, but it cannot reduce validation to the institutional act without denying God's sovereignty.

The daily sacrifices were to be two firstling lambs, one in the morning and one in the evening (vv. 38-39). A meal-offering and a drink-offering were to accompany each sacrifice (vv. 40-41). In v. 40, there are references to Hebrew measures. The Berkeley Version renders it thus:

> With the first lamb you shall offer an ample six pints of fine flour mixed with 2½ pints of pressed olive oil; and a libation of 2½ pints of wine.

The purpose of the consecration and the daily sacrifice was to make the people always mindful of the relationship between sin, and death as its judgment, and the need for atonement. Clements very ably said of v. 45,

> *I shall dwell in the midst*: the whole purpose of Israel's sacrificial worship is thereby summed up. God would be with his people by means of the glory which was to remain in the sanctuary. The divine presence was to be a source of life and blessing for the whole nation, and from it the priest would be able to obtain further divine instructions.[377]

God says that His meeting place with His people is *at the door* of the sanctuary. Important as the Holy of Holies is, the meeting place is at the door, a public site. The emphasis is thus not on a hidden or mystical experience or meeting with God, but on a public one, in a place of openness. True religious experience has a public and demonstrable character. Because God alone is all-holy and the source of all holiness, He alone can sanctify, and He does it in His appointed place and way.

The law of daily sacrifice is also given to us in Numbers 28:3-8. Daily life was to be daily sanctified by the continuing reminder of Who God is, and what man is. All life and meaning originate from Him and His sovereign decree. Like the priests, our hands are to be filled with His work. The old commentator, Thomas Scott, wrote:

> Do we maintain daily communion with him, presenting our morning and evening sacrifice of secret and family-worship, acceptable through the atonement of "the lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world?" And are our hands filled with his work, and our time and talents offered to the Lord as a wave-offering, and improved to His glory? Is this the sincere intention and desire of our hearts, all the day long?[378]

God in His omnipotence, majesty, and glory declares that He is wherever the true offering is, to bless His people. We have in vv. 43-46, His royal promise. It is an emphatic royal declaration and affirmation. Cassuto commented:

> Finally, as befits a king, who signs his name at the end of the declaration that he has issued, in order to validate it and accept full responsibility for its implementation, comes the solemn formula, *I am the Lord their God*, which concludes the main part of the Divine communication concerning the tabernacle of God's glory, wherein He would cause His presence to dwell among the children of Israel.[379]

The covenant form of the books of the law (and all of Scripture) stresses their royal character. The Bible and its law is given as the decree of the King of creation.

We have seen that ritual is, among other things, an enacted parable and a preparation for the responsibilities and duties of life. It is also a *declaration of meaning*. To understand what this means, we need to look briefly at any view of the universe which strips it of God. It ceases, at the least, to be then a universe and becomes a multiverse. Even more, all things become a vast realm

of meaningless and chance facts, all unrelated one to the other. The term popularized by Cornelius Van Til is *brute factuality*. Instead of a universe of God-created facts, all of which derive their meaning from the triune God and from His purpose, we then have an infinite number of meaningless and unrelated facts, brute factuality. Law, order, and meaning are only possible in terms of God and His creating purpose and decree. As Van Til has stressed, modern science denies God while covertly assuming His existence, because without God as our basic premise or presupposition, we have only brute factuality, meaningless facts which cannot be related one to another, and which cannot provide any knowledge because no coherence or relationship can by definition exist in a chance universe.

Ritual is an assertion of a relationship, a God-ordained one. At the heart of Christian rituals, baptism, communion, worship, weddings, funerals, and more, is *the spoken word*. Speech is the expression of meaning and of relationships, of community and communion. The validity of speech rests on the fact that words are forms of propositional truth: they represent realities, forms, meanings, ideas, and more. They are not meaningless grunts.

In a world of brute factuality, words begin to lose their meaning, and communication breaks down. All too many court decisions now manifest this breakdown of meaning. A case decided on by the United States Supreme Court dealt with child pornography. The Ohio man convicted in Ohio of possessing sexually explicit photographs of children being subjected to obscene acts was, according to Justices Brennan, Marshall, and Stevens, the victim of an ostensibly vague law which could convict parents of photographing a baby in the bathtub. As George F. Will observed:

> Gracious. If the meaning of words like "lewd" are as slippery and fuzzy as Brennan says, how can there be reasonable, predictable enforcement of laws against, say, "fraudulent" advertising or "negligent" behavior? If Americans are, as Brennan evidently thinks, weirdly given to confusing family snapshots with pornography, if Americans are that nonsensical, what hope is there for democracy —the point of the First Amendment — anyways?

> Such liberals are saved from absurdity by the virtue (in this case) of insincerity. They find the English language perfectly serviceable for complex legislation when it serves their ends.[380]

Granted that George F. Will is correct about the insincerity of these judges, we must add that there is also evidence of a fundamental contempt for the meaning of words because there is no belief in the God who made man and gave him the power of speech as a means of understanding God and His universal purpose.

Whenever faith in the God of Scripture has waned, meaning has waned, and law has become a tool for injustice. From the days of some rabbinical commentators who adroitly and cleverly made laws mean the reverse of what was clearly understood through the Christian centuries, ungodly men have twisted laws and words to justify evil and to destroy meaning.

Howard Phillips has written:

> According to *The New York Times* (4-19-90), the New Jersey Supreme Court has "reversed a death penalty ruling because the prosecution did not prove the defendant intended to kill his victim, though he stabbed her 53 times.
>
> "It was the 16th time the state court has reversed a death sentence.
>
> "The justices, as they had in two previous rulings, held that a defendant can be sentenced to death only if there is evidence of a deliberate attempt to kill.
>
> "In 1986 the defendant, Kevin Jackson, 27 years old, pleaded guilty to the 1985 killing of a woman who lived in the apartment complex where he was staying in Lakewood. The next year he was sentenced to death by lethal injection...

> "In their appeal to the state's highest court, Mr. Jackson's lawyers said that while he admitted he stabbed the woman, he never acknowledged that he intended to do more than inflict serious injury."
>
> Radical reform of our criminal justice is required. Citizens of the community in which a crime is committed should have the right to determine the guilt or innocence of the parties involved, to assess penalties, and to see that those penalties are carried out without external interference. If a resident of your community is murdered, your community must have the power to execute the murderer.[381]

We see this same evil in the churches, where scholars and pastors re-interpret the Bible to make it say things radically alien to the text. In recent years, feminists have done this at times, and especially homosexuals, who have tried to give the texts condemning homosexuality new meanings. The root of this evil begins within those churches who seek to warp Scripture to suit their ends. If the churches do this, why not the courts, why not everyone? The result is the breakdown of meaning and of communication.

True ritual is an enacted parable, a preparation for life, and a declaration of relationships between our covenant God and His creation and people. It is *a mandate for meaning* in our lives. Thus, in baptism we declare that the child given to us by God, or our own lives, belongs to God and must be surrendered to Him.

We promise to rear the child as God's possession, or live ourselves as His property. This is the starting point of the meaning of the rite of baptism. If the meaning of a ritual is neglected or perishes, the rite is dead and pointless.

Daily, by the rituals of courtesy, we acknowledge that a meaning beyond ourselves governs life. Recently, an incident occurred when a prominent actor appeared at an important gathering in clothes more suited for the beach; he was contemptuous and disgusted that any criticism was leveled against him, because, he said, he lived his own life as a free man. His denial of social

courtesies of dress and speech was an affirmation of brute factuality. For him there could be no binding community of meaning, formalities, and courtesies because for him there is no ultimate realm of meaning that compels all men to submit to the sovereign God. He has scrapped the last relics of ritual courtesies because he alone is good in his thinking, and logically so: no God, no ritual, no community of faith, no responsibility, and no meaning.

Chapter One Hundred Four

The Altar of Incense

(*Exodus 30:1-10*)

1. And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it.
2. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same:
3. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.
4. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.
5. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.
6. And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.
7. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.
8. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.
9. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.
10. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD. (Exodus 30:1-10)

The altar of incense, located in the Holy Place, does not function as an altar typically does. An altar is normally a place where sacrifices are offered. Here, however, sacrifices are specifically forbidden (v. 9). All the same, it is called "most holy unto the LORD" (v. 10), which reads literally, "Holy of Holies to Jehovah this."[382] The blood of the sin offering of atonement was to be applied once a year to the horns of the altar of incense. These horns or projections gave to the altar of incense a likeness to the altar of burnt sacrifice. It was a somewhat smaller version of it. It was also made to be portable, made of acacia wood with the staves also of the same wood. The atonement of the altar of incense probably occurred on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; 23:26-32).

While the altar of incense was in the Holy Place, it was closely associated with the Holy of Holies, and Hebrews 9:4 is evidence of this. It was outside the curtains leading to the Holy of Holies, but was there as a prelude to the inner sanctum.

Twice a day, incense was burned upon this altar. In vv. 34-38, we have a description of how this incense was to be made. All other incenses were strictly forbidden (v. 9). Apparently, men could burn incense to the Lord *apart* from this altar (Num. 16:17). The laws here govern the Tabernacle use of incense. "Strange incense" (v. 9) refers to incenses not prepared according to the formula given in vv. 34-38, and also to incenses made for use in pagan cults.

It is important for us to remember that incense is a form of perfume, and its use is here required in worship. Thus, the furnishings of the Tabernacle, and, later, the Temple, were ordained for beauty and for glory, with an abundant use of gold, and the very air of the sanctuary was perfume laden.

The incense is offered on what is called an altar, because the incense was a form of sacrifice. It was representative of prayer, and it was an offering also of perfume.

The altar of incense was always closely associated with prayer. David echoes this in Psalm 141:1-2:

> 1. LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear to my voice, when I cry unto thee.
> 2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

David sees prayer as an incense to God, and also as a form of sacrifice, because, while prayer pleads with God, it also says, "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10; 26:39). In Revelation 5:8, the perfume-laden vials are described as "the prayers of the saints," and we see this again in Revelation 8:3-4. The relationship of incense to prayer is very clearly seen in Luke 1:9-10: as Zachariah entered into the Holy Place, we are told that "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." Of course, Exodus 30:36 makes it clear that the altar of incense represented communion with God in prayer and in worship. Because the altar of sacrifice was there also, the incense set forth the relationship of prayer to atonement and intercession by the Atoner, Jesus Christ.

The altar of incense had four horns, like the altar of sacrifice. The horns of the altar of sacrifice were a refuge to men fleeing from avengers and seeking asylum and a hearing. The horns on the altar of incense have a like meaning: they mean that through prayer we have a refuge with God from the evils and oppressions of this world, a place of asylum from the malice and devices of men.

Horns represent power throughout the Bible, and no less so here. The horns on the altar of incense stand for the power of God which manifests itself in answer to the prayers of His people.

There is an important aspect of this altar, a question raised by v. 10, and a matter usually neglected by commentators. U. Z. Rule, however, asked the right question:

> One question yet remains — Why, of all the instruments of worship within the holy place, was that by which incense was offered the one chosen to receive the blood of atonement, rather than the table of shew-bread or the golden candlestick; giving to it, rather than to either of them, the significant name *mizbeach* (altar)?

> It was probably because of what incense symbolized, *viz*. the rising up of the heart's desire to God in prayer, was what really lay at the root of the acceptability of the service symbolized by the shew-bread and burning light. It is indeed remarkable, as bearing out this view, that incense was always to be added to the offering of shew-bread (Lev. 24:5-9); and also was always to accompany the dressing and the lighting of the lamps (Ex. 30:7-8). Hence the application of the atoning blood to the altar of incense was equivalent, indirectly, to its application also to the table of shew-bread and the golden candlestick.[383]

Perhaps the solution lies elsewhere. What is most obvious in the sacrificial system is that man needs atonement. It is man's sin that has brought death into the world. Redeemed man, although now given to the service of His covenant God, is still not perfectly sanctified. While sin may not govern him continually any longer, it can still color and taint his actions and thinking. This is no less true of his prayers. We are commanded to pray, and we are taught in the Lord's Prayer to pray for our daily needs, but we are also required to remember first God's Kingdom, and our relationship to one another (Matt. 6:9-16,33). Prayer is an act of faith; in prayer, we reach out to God for His mercy and blessing. Prayer is a godly act, but it is we who pray, and we are not without sin, selfishness, and blindness even as we pray. Hence, the altar of incense had to be atoned for once a year; our prayers receive God's mercy despite our faulty spirit in prayer.

The reason is clearly stated. The altar of incense, or prayer, "is most holy unto the LORD," or, is the Holy of Holies to Jehovah. A more exalting reference to prayer is difficult to imagine.

There is another aspect to all of this. In antiquity, incense and perfume were very costly and "extremely precious commodities." They were royal gifts. Offering incense to other gods was seen by Scripture as evil (1 Kings 11:8, 2 Kings 22:17, 23:5; 2 Chron. 34:25; Jer. 1:16; 7:9, etc.).[384] This costliness of incense tells us how pricelessly prayer is viewed by Scripture. Prayer is as fragrant as incense to God.

Incense moreover penetrates in its fragrance; it clings to and remains in a room for some time. It is a slight and fragile thing, the barest hint of a rising cloud of smoke, but it has a quality that lingers in the air. It is thus clear that Scripture tells us that our prayers, however fragile and insubstantial they may appear, are like a perfumed aroma in God's Holy of Holies.

In the early church, not much is said about incense. The Greco-Roman fathers, much given to spiritualizing everything, were against it. In his *Apologetics*, Tertullian said, "We certainly buy no frankincense."[385] But the Canons of *The Apostolic Constitutions* did include the use of incense as lawful:

> 3. If any bishop or presbyter, otherwise than our Lord has ordained concerning the sacrifice, offer other things at the altar (of God), as honey, milk, or strong beer instead of wine, any necessaries, or bird, or animals, or pulse, otherwise than is ordained, let him be deprived; excepting grains of new corn, or ears of wheat, or bunches of grapes in their season.
> 4. For it is not lawful to offer anything besides these at the altar, and oil for the holy lamp, and incense in the time of the divine oblation.[386]

Many churchmen saw the continuity of the Old and New Testaments and maintained the various rites, such as first fruit offerings, and this concern for continuity led to the use of incense. At various times, the use of incense has been strongly opposed as well as strongly favored. The Church of England in the last century saw a bitter struggle over the issue. At times more has been said for or against the use of incense than about its meaning.

In Leviticus 10:1-2, we see God's judgment on Nadab and Abihu, who put "strange fire" into their censers; they died. In 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, we see King Uzziah smitten with leprosy because he sought to burn incense on the altar of incense, although not a priest. Obviously, both incense and prayer were priestly privileges in some sense. Uzziah as king held that the crown, or the state, should govern access to God, a blasphemous belief. Nadab and Abihu believed that access to God was available on any premise, so that God was open to all men of all kinds of beliefs.

Because Christians have been made by the atonement and the regenerating power of Jesus Christ "kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6), they have ready access to the throne of grace. This is a privilege not to be treated casually or lightly; it is still a restricted access, in that the ungodly normally do not have it. Ellison, in struggling with this question of ritual and incense and access to God, wrote, in his commentary, that, while "there is a danger" in holding that God "must be approached in a special, sacred language," perhaps it is "even more dangerous to think that the everyday language of street, market, or workshop is adequate." Still, "the cry of utter need" will arise "in the most natural words."[387] This is certainly true enough of private prayer, but in formal worship formalities are necessary. The formalities of life help keep mind and actions in their appointed channels.

The church no longer has an altar of incense. Prayers are "in Jesus' Name" and through Him as our Mediator. He is our altar of incense, and His Name is our incense. If to the use of His name some churches add the use of incense, we need not object as long as His Name and His role as Mediator are held as central, and the priesthood of all believers in Him is clearly recognized.

An interesting sidelight, called to my attention by Otto Scott, is the depreciation historically of the meaning and use of perfume. Once religious in meaning, and common to temple and palace, perfume descended in time to the brothel level. From a high level of respect, it has also fallen to a point where some religiously condemn it!

Chapter One Hundred Five

The Ransom of Souls, or, the Poll Tax

(*Exodus 30:11-16*)

> 11. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
> 12. When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.
> 13. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.
> 14. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD.
> 15. The rich shall not give [or, multiply] more, and the poor shall not give [or, diminish] less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.
> 16. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. (Exodus 30:11-16)

This text deals with the poll tax, which has a long history from Moses to the present, to Margaret Thatcher and England. This is a prescribed tax, the same amount for all. It was strictly forbidden to tax the rich more heavily, or the poor more lightly (v. 15). All males twenty years and older had to pay. There are differences of opinion as to how much a half shekel was worth, but it is clear that it was not an unreasonable amount. According to v. 13, this half shekel had to be in terms of the sanctuary weight, not in terms of any varying civil standard.

The word “ransom” is used to describe the tax in v. 12, and in v. 6 it is called “the atonement money.” The word “ransom” is *kôpher*, to atone or cover.

The poll tax is described in Numbers 1, a census of Israel for taxing. According to Exodus 13:13, every firstborn son belonged to God and had to be redeemed. But all Israel, all covenant men, are God's firstborn according to Exodus 4:22, so here a head or poll tax is laid upon all males.

This tax was apparently often neglected, and other more oppressive taxes were imposed by the kings. King Josiah returned to the poll tax, according to 2 Chronicles 24:6, 9. When v. 16 speaks of "the atonement money" the literal reading is "atonement silver." The reference is not to a coin but a weight in silver.

This was obviously a religious tax, but then everything from a Biblical perspective is religious, so that a tax by a civil government in this view is no less religious than a tithe. Thus, a religious tax *can* be a godless one.

The reasons for the tax are twofold. *First*, the tax is to prevent any "plague" among God's people, "that there be no plague among you" (v. 12). Plague here is the Hebrew *negeph*, which Christian scholars render as a plague, or a stumbling. However, Dr. J. H. Hertz, once chief rabbi of the British Empire, pointed out some years ago that the word comes from the same root as the Hebrew word for "slaughter in battle." He called attention to the fact that a noted Karaite commentator translated this phrase, "that they suffer not defeat in battle."[388] This suggests a very different meaning for the tax. It was indeed a Temple tax, but we must remember that the Tabernacle and then the Temple were God's House or Palace, and the Holy of Holies God's Throne Room. This representation continued in the church, and the chancel was Christ's Throne Room, and the congregation stood for the reading of Scripture, the word of the King. The true governmental center was thus, in the civil as well as the ecclesiastical sense, the Holy of Holies. To describe this poll tax in modern terms as a church tax, or an ecclesiastical tax, is to warp its meaning. The Temple, to the fall of Jerusalem, was always in some sense the civil as well as the ecclesiastical religious center, whatever usurpations occurred. Rome recognized this and therefore controlled very strictly the high priesthood and other offices.

Second, the atonement or ransom term, *kôpher*, is used to describe the tax. Again, however, the term has a civil reference. Restitution for sins which we now call criminal offenses is called in Scripture a form of atonement and is a means of civil forgiveness. God sees all offenses as requiring atonement, restitution, and forgiveness, and this atonement is sometimes man-ward where the offense involves men. If a man steals $100, he must make restitution or atonement by paying $200 to the man robbed, this apart from the theological aspect of his status. Thus, a tax for civil atonement means that we recognize that this is a fallen world, and, in Adam, we are all members of a fallen humanity. Our ransom or covering against the evils of that world requires a civil tax to provide for officers of state who will be a terror to evil-doers (Rom. 13:1ff.). Other countries are not lacking in evil, and so a civil tax also helps protect us from enemies without, from the plague which is "slaughter in battle."

There is an interesting aspect to the history of the poll tax among Jews. Most rabbis, like Christian commentators, have seen the tax as ecclesiastical, related to worship.

In the history of this tax after the fall of Jerusalem, however, we see that it was not collected by the synagogues but by the *Nasi* or prince, a patriarch, and the qualification was descent from David, i.e., membership in the royal line. Jerome reported that the Roman emperor executed an important Roman for violating the private papers of one such Patriarch Prince named Gamaliel (V?).[389] The belief of Roman as well as Christian rulers after the fall of Rome was stated thus by Pope Gregory I: "Since they are permitted to live in accordance with Roman law, it is but just that they [the Jews] should manage their own affairs as they think best, and let no man hinder them."[390] In time, a Davidic prince or *Nasi* came to rule in Narbonne and adjacent areas. The poll tax, in terms of Exodus 30:11-16, was paid to him by Jews throughout Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa. Carolingian kings intermarried with the Jewish royal family in order to establish their dynasty as the successor to the Biblical Kings of Israel.[391] In time, through intermarriage, various royal houses, including the English, saw themselves as successors of the Kings of Israel. The Stone of Scone is also related to such beliefs.

This Jewish princedom helped also to make the poll tax a part of the life of Europe. Centuries later, it became a part of American civil life, although abolished in the twentieth century. In

American life, it lingered longest in the South. It was originally a tax on males, and was later used to access for voting. It was in this aspect that it was used to bar blacks from voting.

In Scripture, all power comes from God; no *legitimate* power exists other than what He ordains in His law. The poll tax thus provides for civil government.

The implications of this are very important. God ordains one-tenth of our income as the tithe for worship, i.e., for the priests, although musicians are also provided for by the tithe, as are teachers, i.e., scholars and Levites, or instructors generally. Power thus is not allowed to concentrate in the church.

At the same time, with the civil sphere limited to the poll tax, power is not allowed to concentrate in the state. Neither the church nor the state are allowed to be power centers. If there is a power center in God's view of this world, it is the family, and then all the freely functioning spheres of society. Georges Duby has observed,

> ...the role of marriage is fundamental to every social formation.... It is through the institution of matrimony, through the rules governing marriage and the way those rules are applied, that human societies control their future — even those societies that claim and even believe themselves to be the freest.[392]

When church and state become power centers, it is because families and persons have diminished in their self-government under God.

We see today a very marked hostility to Biblical law in both church and state, and most emphatically by humanistic statists. It should be apparent by now why this is so. Plato's dream of rule by philosopher-kings has always appealed to elitists who see themselves as little gods whose wisdom and abilities make them fit to rule over all others. God's order severely limits man's power. God's laws number some six hundred regulations, most of which are not enforceable by church or state but only by God, by His providence in time, or in eternity. Men are restless with such freedom for all. Only the elite philosopher-kings should have freedom! As a result,

everything is done to make God's law-word sound ridiculous, and every attempt is made to show contempt for God's laws in the realm of taxation. Jewish, Christian, and humanistic scholars and observers have all joined in this. The last word, however, always belongs to God.

Chapter One Hundred Six

The Laver

(*Exodus 30:17-21*)

> 17. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
> 18. Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.
> 19. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:
> 20. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:
> 21. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations. (Exodus 30:17-21)

One notable fact about this brief paragraph is that the threat or promise of death for non-compliance is twice repeated. This is of particular interest because this is a ritual washing. It can be assumed that the priests came to the Tabernacle or Temple already bathed. It is a modern illusion that everyone prior to our time or outside the modern era has been unbathed, whereas, in reality, it was after the Black Death that Europeans began to depart from faithful bathing. In general, the premise of this text is that both spiritual and physical cleanliness are required in approaching God. The proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," comes out of this Biblical insistence on moral and physical cleanliness.

The laver or large basin was of bronze. It was made of the bronze mirrors donated by a number of women (Ex. 38:8). Bronze mirrors were highly polished to give an excellent reflection; they could be made to reflect one's image almost as well as glass, but they could be scratched.

There are varying opinions as to the size of the laver. We have no definite indication. After offering various sacrifices, the priests obviously needed to wash their hands. The laver was located in the courtyard, just before entrance into the Tabernacle (v. 18). Some synagogues still have lavers at the entrance for a ceremonial hand-washing by worshippers.[393]

Priests in Israel were forbidden to touch any sacred object until after washing. The laver was apparently filled with water by machinery, and, at the time of our Lord, the laver was large enough so that twelve priests could wash at the same time.[394] We have an interesting confirmation of the fact that the priests bathed *before* coming to the sanctuary, and that this requirement of the laver was a ritual cleansing, in our Lord's words to Peter in John 13:10-11:

> 10. ... He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.
> 11. For he knew who should betray him; therefore he said, Ye are not all clean.

The laver means that God requires that we be cleansed. It represents sanctification, or holiness. This meaning is clearly indicated in various texts.

Thus, David says,

> 6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
> 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. (Psalm 26:6-7)

David not only sets forth the requirement of sanctification, but a purpose thereof, the glorification of God and His works. As Moorehead noted, "Water is nature's great purifier. All the world wash with water as well as quench their thirst."[395]

> The laver prefigures regeneration. In Titus 3:5 we read, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The phrase, "washing

> of regeneration," literally rendered, is, *laver of regeneration*. The Greek term is the same as that used by the Septuagint in Exodus 30:18. The reference seems to be to the laver of the tabernacle. The renewing of the Spirit is a creative act, and is identical with being born again, or born anew. This regeneration is described as being by the laver, or washing by the Spirit. But what is the laver? Baptism? We think not. In Ephesians 5:25-26 Paul tells us that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing (laver…) of water by the word." The word is here represented as achieving the results of the bath — cleansing, sanctifying. Is this the office of baptism? We certainly think not. The means the Holy Spirit employs to effect this radical and profound change in a sinner, which is called regeneration, is *the word, the truth of God*. James writes, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (Jas. 1:18). Peter writes, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). This testimony is unmistakable and conclusive. The agent of regeneration is the Spirit; the instrument he employs in effecting it is the word of God; no ordinance, however important, — no rite, however precious, can ever effect it.[396]

Ephesians 5:26 speaks of sanctification and cleansing "with the washing of water by the word." This can be rendered "the laver of water." The stress is on *the word*. John 15:3 tells us that our Lord says to His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." We are told that God's word acts as a pruning-knife (John 15:1-15); as a sword (Heb. 4:12); as a fire (Jer. 23:29); and as water (1 Peter 1:22).[397]

The laver is thus of great importance. We can understand now why there is a twice repeated promise of death for non-compliance. The laver is a witness against formalism in religion.

St. Paul in Romans 2:29 declares, "But he is a Jew [i.e. a covenant man] who is one inwardly," in all his being. This was in direct contrast to all paganism. Mohammed attacked Paul at this point, declaring, "He is a Muslim who is one outwardly."[398] In some forms of paganism, the gods or spirits can only discern man's intentions by his actions: they cannot penetrate man's mind. A

classic objection to the God of Scripture which I have heard expressed with a triumphant belief in their wit by some ostensible intellectuals is that the all-knowing God of Scripture is a snoopy God, a kind of exalted peeping-tom. Such attitudes should not surprise us. The God of Scripture negates the autonomy and privacy of man. There is no hiding place from Him. Moreover, we can only stand before Him on His terms and by His cleansing and regenerating power.

There is a grim irony here. As men have sought privacy in relationship to God, they have cultivated a nakedness before men, often a physical as well as mental nakedness. The extent of soul-baring autobiographies is startling, and often too unpleasant to read. When Louis XIV became the Sun King, a kind of god on earth, it became a great honor to be present when he defecated and to handle the royal chamberpot.

The point is this: if the Lord is our God, we know that we are "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Because He is our God, our Redeemer, and our sustainer, we know His grace and mercy. He knows our needs before we are aware of them, and we can turn to Him for strength and help. We are private persons towards other people because they are neither our God nor Saviour.

If, however, man, or man's humanistic state, is our god and saviour, we will seek a saving openness in that direction. Christian confession is private before men; at the least, it is normally restricted to a priest or pastor, unless others are the ones we sinned against, in which case we must make confession and restitution to them. The humanistic baring of body and soul is a form of public confession, a means of washing and regeneration. The laver tells us that our cleansing, our sanctification, comes from God by way of His altar, the atonement.

As we have seen, the proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," comes out of the Biblical insistence on moral and physical cleanliness. We can amend it to say also that full cleanliness comes out of godliness.

As we approach God, we are of ourselves fallen creatures. Paul says that he knows that in his human nature as such there is *no good thing* (Rom. 7:18). He cannot stand before God in self-

righteousness, only by God’s grace. Hence we can only approach God by His appointed way, by His cleansing, and by His grace.

Chapter One Hundred Seven

The Holy Anointing Oil, and the Perfume

(*Exodus 30:22-38*)

22. Moreover the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

23. Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon, half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels.

24. And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin:

25. And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil.

26. And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony,

27. And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense,

28. And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot.

29. And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.

30. And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.

31. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.

32. Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you.

33. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.

34. And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincese: of each shall there be a like weight:

> 35. And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy.
> 36. And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.
> 37. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD.
> 38. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people. (Exodus 30:22-38)

We are very far from the presuppositions of these verses. In v. 25 and 32, the anointing oil is called "holy;" in v. 29, it sanctifies things and persons to whom, by God's command, it is applied. They are then set apart for God's service. Again, the perfume or incense is also called "holy" in vv. 35-36, and 38. To make the identical oil as well as the perfume or incense for any other use than the worship of God is forbidden, and the offender must be excommunicated (vv. 33, 38). Obviously, modern thought feels uneasy about such statements.

There is a related verse in Leviticus 2:13:

> And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

Modern churchmen usually think of our Lord's emphasis as "purely spiritual." We must remember therefore our Lord's words, in Mark 9:49.

> For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

Salt was added to offerings other than wine, blood, and the wood; it was, according to Maimonides, added to the incense. This is what "tempering" in v. 35 refers to, salting.[399] There is a reference to this in Ezekiel 43:24, i.e., to salting sacrifices. The term "covenant of salt" appears not only in Leviticus 2:13, but also in Numbers 18:19 and 2 Chronicles 13:5. A covenant of salt means communion; partaking of a man's table and salt is an ancient sign of community and a bond of peace. Pure incense, together with the anointing oil, represents not only prayer as a fragrance arising to God, but also communion with Him.

Another function of the cloud of incense, according to Leviticus 16:12-13, was to cover the mercy seat, God's throne, with a thick cloud. Man was forbidden to assume that he could ever attain to a total vision of God in any sense. To presume that man can have a total knowledge of God, that the creature, small and comprehensible, can ever fully comprehend God, is an unpardonable arrogance.

The ingredients of the anointing oil were myrrh, sweet-smelling cinnamon, sweet cane, cassia, and olive oil. Given the formula of vv. 23-25, a large quantity could be made; estimates run from thirty-seven to one hundred pounds of oil. The incense was made of stacte (the origin of which is still unknown), onycha (from a marine animal of the Red Sea), galbanum (a resin from a plant of the carrot or fennel family), and frankincense (made from several species of shrubs and trees).[400]

Whereas the anointing oil is called "holy," the incense is described as "most holy" (v. 36). The oil and incense were set apart for sanctuary use, but the oil was also used to mark a place as holy. Thus, in Genesis 28:18, Jacob anoints the rock where he had seen the vision of angels. God refers to this in Genesis 31:13.

The ban against adulterating the oil and the incense forbids alterations of any kind, either to cheapen or to improve either item. Men are prone to imagine that God will settle for less, and also to believe that they can improve on God's requirements. Whoever touched the anointing oil or altered any of God's conditions without authorization became at once holy or dedicated to God, which, as in the case of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:7), could mean death.

The references in v. 23-24 to the *shekel* are to a particular weight, not a coin. Some see this shekel of the sanctuary as being a third of an ounce, and a hin as less than a gallon.

The oil and the incense are holy because their function is a holy one. Incense is said to possess antiseptic properties; it does have an emotional impact on worshippers.[401]

The anointing oil represents the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul refers to this when he speaks of us being anointed by the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22). There is a reference to this also in 1 John 2:20. Annually, there had to be the sacrifice of atonement for the altar and its anointing. U. Z. Rule very ably explained the reason for this:

> By a comparison of Exod. 30:10 with Exod. 39:36-37 and Lev. 16:16-20, it would appear that the people's uncleanness and their transgressions not only brought guilt upon themselves, but clave as uncleanness even to the holy things, so that they could not be accepted as vehicles by which service might be rendered to Almighty God. The holy things themselves became (if we may coin a word) de-consecrated; and therefore atonement would be needed to restore their impaired sanctity, so jealously was the holiness of the covenant worship guarded.
>
> Now, the atonement would have to be by the blood of a sin-offering, and the mode of its application would have to be as indicated in Exod. 30:10, *i.e.* to the horns of the altar of incense once in the year. This being so, this yearly recurring atonement at the alter of incense was a very important part of the continuous national worship, being necessary for its continued acceptance.[402]

In the modern churches, it is too often assumed that, with salvation, the problem of holiness is settled. Both church buildings and persons are now seen as consecrated, and, certainly, this is true. Nothing here contradicts that fact. What the annual Day of Atonement did was to stress an annual purging of all things that de-consecrate us and our churches. In the Christian calendar, at one time Lent partly served this same purpose. Anointing required a looking to God and the determination of one's being by the Holy Spirit. It is our empowerment. Peter said of Jesus,

> God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

The churches, Catholic and Protestant, believe that they began with God's empowerment and that their credentials are impeccable. The credentials of our ancestors may be very remarkable, and our own standing some years back, but the need for reconsecration, and the counteracting of the de-consecration of our lives by our false priorities, requires us to renew our dedication and our priorities regularly.

This, however, barely touches the meaning of oil in the Bible. In a prophetic psalm which hails the coming Messiah as the Great King, we are told:

> 6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.
> 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
> 8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. (Psalm 45:6-8)

The anointing of persons and things set them apart for God's use. The term used by the Reformers for this in the lives of all of us is *vocation*. While serving God in any and every line of work has penalties in a fallen world, it also means that God's vocation for us is also our "oil of gladness." It is our way of holiness.

In the modern era, two rival doctrines of holiness are at war. One, with origins in Rousseau, Chilbain, Blake, and some of the Romantics, has held to the holiness of the natural man and environment. Allen Ginsberg, in his writings, has insisted on this natural holiness, specifically of homosexuals, the insane, the lawless, and so on. The world of Christian law and faith is at war against this natural holiness. The environmentalists see all nature as holy in itself and thus to be

protected against exploitive men. As against the supernatural man and God-incarnate, Jesus Christ, this school of holiness wants to return to natural man, uninhibited and free to do as he pleases, and to a restored natural world freed from man's exploitation. Not surprisingly, the writings of the Marquis de Sade have been much used by many practitioners of this school of thought.

As against this, Christianity declares that this natural man is a fallen and totally depraved creature, and that the natural realm is also fallen and needs to be restored and placed under the dominion of man in Christ. Fallen human societies as well as the world around us tend, together with our own imperfectly sanctified nature, to de-consecrate us. Reconsecration is thus an ongoing part of sanctification.

This text is not a popular one in our time, and for some generations, because abstractionism and spiritualization have become so prevalent. Meaning is sought in reason or in spirit as abstracted from matter. That God would regard things so material or sensual as perfume and oil as religiously important is alien to the modern mind. We are living in an era infected by the dogma of evolution, so that men look from primitive matter to the realm of pure spirit after Hegel. This result is at best a very warped perspective. While environmentalism professes a love of Nature, it is more motivated by a hatred of one's fellow men, of technology, and of progress.

The great guru of many environmentalists is Henry David Thoreau. This is of no small significance. Thoreau was a parasite: he lived off his family's manufacturing income; he ate at his mother's table as a grown man. He despised his fellow New Englanders, and he regarded the Irish and other immigrants as "river rats." He saw Nature as a reflection of himself, as autonomous being. He professed non-violence but idolized John Brown and his murderous ways. Thoreau was an apostle of love who was full of hatred and contempt. He and a companion accidently started a fire in the Concord woods which burned over a hundred acres and angered the people of Concord. Thoreau "laughed off the anger" they felt towards him, "the town nut."[403]

For Thoreau, reconsecration meant the abandonment of Christianity, civil order, and socially productive work. He believed in parasitism as redemption, and the fallen natural man as the free

man, free of God and His law. Thoreau regarded it as a virtue that he truly loved only himself. He was a true son of the fallen Adam.

Chapter One Hundred Eight

The Spirit-Filled Men

(*Exodus 31:1-11*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:
3. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,
4. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,
5. And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.
6. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;
7. The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle.
8. And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense.
9. And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,
10. And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,
11. And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do. (Exodus 31:1-11)

Let us begin by glancing at some of the incidental facts of this text. The name Bezaleel means "in the shadow of God," meaning under God's protection. He was apparently a young man, and a great-grandson of Caleb (1 Chronicles 2:18- 20). He was a descendant of Judah. Aholiab was a name meaning "the father is my tent;" he was a Danite. His name implies clearly that God the Father is his protection and covering.

H. L. Ellison said of v. 2, "'I have called by name' is reminiscent of 33:12 and Isa. 45:4, which shows that the term virtually implies predestination."[404] This is a fact which cannot be over-stressed. The enemies of Christianity have too often determined the agenda for discussion, and the subject of predestination has been restricted to election to salvation or reprobation, and to free will versus predestination. We are here told that predestination also has to do with our abilities, here, very specifically, skills in the arts. They are God-ordained and an aspect of our calling, so that God is more involved in our skills than we are. To restrict the doctrine of calling to an ecclesiastical vocation is thus clearly not Biblical.

According to v. 6, a number of artisans were called, although only two are named. Bezaleel is chosen to be in charge of all the work, and Aholiab is the foreman under him. According to Exodus 35:10, 25-26, a large number of men and women were called to do the work. It is of particular interest that their skills are called "wisdom." According to Scripture, God is the source and author of all wisdom. In Proverbs, the references to wisdom identify it with the Spirit of God (cf. Prov. 8). All skills represent a form of wisdom, and all skills come into their own in the service of God.

Joseph Parker called attention to some important implications of this text. "God builds everything built beautifully." Furthermore, "Not only will God build everything beautifully; his purpose is to have everything built for religious uses," which is not the same thing as ecclesiastical use. Also, and very important,

> God will not have the building put up as an expression of mere sentiment; otherwise, he would be assisting the cause of idolatry.[405]

Finally, this text tells us that "Labour is churched and glorified."[406]

In verses 7-11, we have a summary of the things committed to these men for construction. Each of these items is very specifically described previously. Thus, the *conception* was from God, and

the *execution* was by men. In modern doctrines of art, conception is exclusively seen as the artist's prerogative, as well as the execution thereof. According to John Larner,

> Until the later medieval period virtually all work produced by painters, stonemasons, goldsmiths, and woodworkers was undertaken under contract, in response to the specific demand of a patron. Whether as an individual, a cathedral chapter, or a commune, the patron generally stipulated in detail the character of the work required from the artist. Paintings and sculpture were not made by men hoping, at some future time, to find a purchaser for their wares but were created for one particular occasion and place.[407]

There was thus far more than the individual will of the artist involved. There was the faith of the community, the wisdom of skill of the artisans, and the purposes of those who commissioned the work. In the modern perspective, the will of the individual artist is sometimes all that matters. Not surprisingly, precisely as the artist in the modern era began to see himself as the priest and prophet of a new age, he also began to lose relevance to the world around him. Those who are still governed by the greatest determinant, Christian faith, are still the most relevant artists. There is a difference between entering a medieval church, for example, and a Frank Lloyd Wright building; the church has a universal meaning, a Wright structure a personal, limited, and sometimes quirky significance.

One of our problems with this text is that the Spirit of God is here plainly associated with the artistic skills which are called wisdom. The common belief associates the Holy Spirit with ecstatic utterances; this is not the common aspect of the Spirit's work through men. Oehler's comments on the Holy Spirit are thus especially important:

> God reveals Himself in the heart of man by His *Spirit*, which, as the spirit of revelation, corresponds to the cosmical, in the same way as the word of revelation corresponds to the word of creation. As the *principle of cosmical life*, as the mighty divine force of all things, the Spirit is the principle of the life of man's soul, and every natural intellectual gift in man is traced back to it: Joseph's

> wisdom, Gen. xli. 38; Bezaleel's skill in art, Ex. xxxi. 3, xxxv. 31....In the Old Testament, the Spirit's work in the divine kingdom is rather that of *endowing the organs of the theocracy with the gifts required for their calling*, and those gifts of office in the Old Testament are similar to the gifts of grace in the New Testament, I Cor. xii. ff. In the *Pentateuch* its working appears exclusively in this connection. The Spirit bestows on Moses and the seventy elders skill to guide the people (Num. xi. 17ff.), also to Joshua (Numbers xxvii. 18; Deut. xxxiv. 9), and works at a later period in the judges, arousing and strengthening them (Judg. vi. 34, xi. 29, xiii.25), and comes on the kings, who were called of God, at their anointing (I Sam. x.6, xvi.13). As the Spirit of revelation, He produces in particular the gift of prophesy, Num. xi. 25ff; and even…imparts the ability to prophesy to the heathen revealing God against his will (xxii. 38). On the contrary, the Spirit does not appear in the Pentateuch as *the principle of sanctification in the pious*; this is first spoken of in the Psalms, Ps. li. 13, comp. vers. 12 and 14, cxliii.10.[408]

The Holy Spirit thus has a more general as well as a more specific place in our lives and world than is generally recognized. The doctrine of vocation or calling must be seen as essentially related to the Holy Spirit. We are therefore not alone; whatever our gifts or vocation, however great or small, we are the instruments of the Holy Spirit. To limit the Spirit's manifestations in our lives to dramatic or ecstatic experiences is to limit severely our relationship to Him. He is very much present in all our daily tasks, and we have the duty to recognize His presence and power.

Just as the modern artist works out of himself, in a totally personal frame of reference, so too the modern Christian too often works in a radically subjective context and tries to limit the Spirit's operation to that subjective sphere. Thomas Scott's comment on this text reads in part thus:

> The Lord confers his *unmerited favors* on whom he pleases: but the honor, which cometh from him, is always attended with a work to be done: and to be employed by him is indeed the highest honor, and the noblest privilege.[409]

"A work to be done," this tells us the purpose of the Spirit's gifts. The gifts of the Spirit can also be called an "empowerment." In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul warns the churchmen of Corinth against "being puffed up for one against another." Then, in the next verse, 1 Corinthians 4:7, we have Paul's comment, a devastating one, which both the Authorized Version and James Moffatt's help us to understand:

> For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (AV)
>
> Who singles you out, my brother? What do you possess that has not been given you? And if it was given you, why do you boast as if it had been gained, not given? (Moffatt)

In the modern view, each man is a little god and creator, whereas our text tells us that the Holy Spirit is the source of our gifts, and neither we nor our gifts are an end in themselves. We are God's creation, for His Kingdom purposes, and there is "a work to be done."

His gifts include a variety of skills, from sculpture to making incense or perfume. All His gifts are in terms of His kingdom, and "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2, etc).

Albert Camus wrote, "Since God claims all that is good in man, it is necessary to deride what is good and choose what is evil."[410] As a concomitant to this, the modern artist has led the way in despising the beautiful and exalting the ugly. Having denied the Lord of Glory, his choice is a logical one. Restoration in the arts requires a return to a truly Biblical Christian faith.

At the beginning of the modern era, there was a gradual separation under way of the arts and artists from Christianity. Then "The Romantic movement began that severance of the innovative artist from the masses which has gone on ever since."[411] But this is not all. "Like society as a whole, artists have indulged in an orgy of destruction."[412] God's world must be denied together with God, and a new world created. Picasso very clearly expressed his mindset when he wrote on

a printing, *yo el rey*, I am the King.[413] Such a philosophy of art is in savage revolt against God's order, and the artwork it produces reflects this temper. One aspect of this revolt is a militant hostility to all that Scripture declares and requires.

Chapter One Hundred Nine

Sabbath-Keeping

(*Exodus 31:12-18*)

12. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
13. Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.
14. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among the people.
15. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.
16. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.
17. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.
18. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. (Exodus 31:12-18)

In Genesis 17:11, God, in establishing His covenant with Abraham, required circumcision as the sign of the covenant. In the renewed covenant in Christ, baptism replaced circumcision as the covenant sign. Here, however, sabbath keeping is spoken of as the covenant sign in vv. 13, 16, and 17. Circumcision is a recognition, as is baptism, of the sovereignty of God in salvation. No infant of eight days can save himself. The parents, in circumcising or in baptizing a child, look to God's sovereign grace for the child's salvation, and they give the child to God in baptism and promise to rear him as the Lord's possession. Baptism and circumcision bind the child to

obedience to God and to the recognition that he is not his own, but the Lord's. The meaning thus is linked to the family and the person.

The sabbath has a different meaning. It is linked both to creation (v. 17, Ex. 20:8-11) and to redemption (Deut. 5:12-15). It is also tied to God's image in man (Gen. 1:26-28). God created all things in six days and rested on the seventh to set the pattern for us. Human life must reflect the character of God's life. The sabbath is very closely tied to the life of the covenant nation. Circumcision and baptism make the covenant personal. The sabbath is the sign of the national covenant. Tacitus, despite his absurd beliefs concerning the Jews, recognized that the sabbath began with Israel's break with, and departure from, Egypt. It represents a civil aspect of God's covenant which also requires personal obedience.[414]

Neither circumcision nor baptism constitute abiding public affirmations; we cannot look at passers-by and identify them as circumcised or baptized. These are family covenantal facts, whatever public consequences may follow our entrance into the covenant. On the other hand, while sabbath-keeping has an inescapably personal and family aspect, its primary sphere is public. Anyone who has lived in a sabbath-keeping society knows the difference it makes. It is highly visible and is a very public manifestation of the civil covenant. While sabbath-keeping is *not* a sacrament, it is a sacramental observance, and grace is given to the nation which observes it. Thus, circumcision and baptism stress the personal and family aspects of the covenant, and the sabbath the civil and, of course, the ecclesiastical aspects.

In Exodus 13:9, the passover bread is spoken of as a *sign*; here the sabbath is called a *sign*. It is evidence that the nation has separated itself to God. By resting on the seventh day, the covenant country acknowledges that its essential hope is not in itself, its own efforts, nor its own planning, but in God's grace and mercy. By resting on the seventh day, the nation asks God to bless the preceding week's labor. The sabbath rest asks for God to sanctify the work we have done and will do.

In vv. 14 and 15, the death penalty is cited. In Numbers 15:32-36, we have the only instance of its enforcement. In John 5:16-18, we see an attempt to charge Jesus for sabbath-breaking. Christ

declares more than once that works of necessity and works of mercy are permissible on the sabbath day. The sabbath, He made clear, was made for man, not man for the sabbath (Mark 2:27), and He Himself was Lord of the sabbath. The purpose of the sabbath is therefore, *first*, to know the LORD (v. 13), *second*, to remember and rejoice in God's covenant with us, and, *third*, to rest. The emphasis is strongly on rest. Then, *fourth*, "that ye may know" may be translated "that men may know." Therefore, as Davies noted, "the sabbath has also an international significance as showing to mankind the relationship between God and Israel," or, between God and our country.[415] In this sense, the observance of the sabbath is a public witness of a nation's stand irrespective of the agreement or dissent of the people. Because of this civil and public aspect of the sabbath, there is a public penalty, death. The modern state, whether or not it observes the sabbath in some form, has ceased to be a convenanted state, and hence there is no penalty for sabbath-breaking, unless it is an occasional fine.

In v. 13, God identifies the day as "my sabbath." In a particular sense, the day is His and is to be governed by His word and will. Since He gives so much grace and blessings to His covenant people, He requires a simple response: faithfulness to Himself and His law, and resting on His sabbaths. He regards the act of despising an opportunity to rest as an act of perversity and of contempt for His covenant. The words of v. 13 are emphatic: "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep," or, "Surely my sabbaths ye shall keep." Men should logically enjoy a sabbath rest, not despise or profane it.

J. Philip Hyatt ably summarized the Old Testament meaning of *sign*:

> Sometimes it is an omen of a future event (3:12; 1 Sam. 10:7); sometimes it is a miracle (4:8-9); sometimes it is a memorial, as of the stones taken from the Jordan (Jos. 4:6)....The rainbow is a sign of the covenant with Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:12ff.), and circumcision is a sign of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:11). In Ezek. 20:12, 20, as well as here, the Sabbath is a sign. Here it is specifically a pledge that Yahweh sanctifies Israel, setting it apart as a nation in covenant with himself.[416]

The *sign* of the sabbath is thus a covenant mark of national as well as personal blessing. To despise a gift and the mark of care and providence is to betray the fundamental relationship. The sentence is death, national and personal.

Because work was to begin on the Tabernacle and its furnishings, this sabbath law is given here to make it clear that not even the work on God's sanctuary could take priority over the sabbath.

The sabbath was thus a day of rest for man *and* also a way of confessing the priority of God over ourselves and our work. In Hebraic practice, any person desecrating the sabbath in the presence of two witnesses had to be warned by them of the consequences of his act.[417]

At one time, it was the custom for civil officers and legislators not only to have a chaplain open and close convocations, but also for all these men to worship together on the Lord's day. The purpose was that, instead of continuing to concentrate on their differences, they united in worshipping the covenant God on whom all must depend.

In Deuteronomy 5:14-15, we are told that the sabbath rest must be extended to the poor, to our dependants, and to farm animals, that they "may rest as well as those." The sabbath thus has a societal function among other things.

The covenant signs most plainly set forth in the Old Testament are the rainbow, circumcision, and the sabbath, and in the New, baptism and communion. All are God's grace and favor to us.

Our text concludes in v. 18 with an account of the two engraved stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. Each table contained all Ten Commandments in terms of treaty or covenant law, one copy for each partner to the contract.

The word "defileth," used in v. 14 for sabbath-breaking, can mean also to dissolve or to break, i.e., to dissolve or to break a contract. It means that being in covenant with God is not important, whereas pleasing ourselves is.

Christopher Hill has called attention to the significance of the Puritan Sabbath for the working classes of England. It was their liberation from unending labor that made the Puritan cause popular.

In the mid-1920s, in Detroit, Michigan, I saw an echo of this. A burly auto worker at the Ford plant was enraged to see laundry on the line on Sundays, and attempts to open stores on that day. He never mentioned the Bible in his angry comments: he saw these things as anti-worker, as aimed against the welfare of the working class. It would be interesting, if materials are still available, to see how the workers of Europe reacted to the Bolshevik abolition of the Sabbath.

God gave the Sabbath to man as a sign of His providential care, as a witness to the fact of His government for their welfare. The decline of sabbath observances is a witness to man's belief in his self-sufficiency. As against the aseity of God, the modern humanistic state asserts its own self-being or aseity.

Chapter One Hundred Ten

The Golden Calf, Part I

(*Exodus 32:1-14*)

1. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
2. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.
3. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.
4. And he received them at their hands, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
5. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.
6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.
7. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:
8. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
9. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:
10. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

> 11. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?
> 12. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.
> 13. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.
> 14. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:1-14)

This is one of the best known episodes in the Bible. It has provided men over the centuries with apt images for describing the evils of their times.

The golden calf is a fertility cult object, and it is worshipped with sexual rites. We see this in v. 6, where we are told that the people, after eating and drinking, "rose up to play." The word translated from the Hebrew as *play* can have an innocent meaning, being a word for laughter, but it is also used sexually, as in Genesis 26:8: "Isaac was *sporting* with Rebekah his wife." In Exodus 32:1-14 it clearly means the sexual rites of a fertility cult.

In times of stress, men have commonly turned to sex as an escape from the feeling of impotence. When on April 18, 1906, a devastating earthquake struck San Francisco, aftershocks terrified the entire Bay Area. In Oakland, people expected a like disaster. According to Walter J. Peterson, Oakland chief of police, he was ordered to open up the houses of prostitution, and, he said, "All day long and at night men were lined up for blocks waiting in front of the houses."[418] Fertility rites are man's way of asserting that, as against the powers of God and His universe, man has links to and controls over the potencies of nature.

On this occasion, Moses was gone for some time. The mountains quaked and lightning and thunder were all around the camp. The people's response was a recourse to a kind of practice they knew in Egypt.

Aaron, as next in authority to Moses, was confronted by a people who rejected Moses contemptuously and said, "make us gods, which shall go before us" (v. 1). Give us a religion which will serve us and better agree with our needs and experiences. If indeed Adam's premise in Genesis 3:6 is correct, and man is his own god, his own source of law and morality, and of all definition, then religion is indeed a human product.

In terms of this, they would see their deliverance from Egypt, the plagues, the Red Sea crossing, and more as a confluence of natural forces which favored them. I vividly recall a soldier on leave during World War II describe a time when he and others faced certain death. He screamed out an intense prayer and promises to God; he alone was spared of all those around. When asked if he were now a Christian, he laughed, saying, he had been lucky, and it was nothing more.

In all of this, Aaron is a submissive accomplice. Nothing is said at all about any protest on his part. Not only is Aaron cooperative, but he apparently tries to blend the fertility cult worship of the bull calf with Jehovah worship as well. He calls the golden bull calf their delivering god and, in v. 5, refers to him as Jehovah. His assumption is that blending something of God into this evil will make is somewhat good.

In v. 2, Aaron commands the men to bring him the earrings of gold used by their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For us, the inclusion of "sons" comes as a surprise; however, in many cultures this was commonplace, because an earring was a mark of being under authority, and boys were under the authority of their fathers. Christian cultures have normally avoided this practice, because the boy is not a slave but a future man of authority.

In v. 6, we are told that, as the people celebrated their new god, the golden calf, they brought peace offerings. Reference is also made to burnt offerings, but it is reasonably certain that these were not of the Biblical variety. God's requirement is that a burnt offering be accompanied by a

confession of sin. In pagan practice, no such requirement existed, and certainly the people, in preparing for their fertility cult practices, were not about to confess their sins. Two things are notable here. *First*, the people show no desire to identify the Lord with the golden calf; that was Aaron's effort. *Second*, they brought peace offerings. The conviction of sin basic to Biblical faith is dropped; in its place is a sense of peace with natural forces. The sexual rites which followed stressed man's continuity of being with the powers of the universe, whereas Biblical faith stresses discontinuity:

> I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. (Eccles. 3:14)

Basic to the fertility cult is the insistence that the key to power is in man's hands.

God tells Moses what is happening in the camp. The Israelites had earlier worshipped at alien shrines in Egypt (Josh. 24:14). They had not been delivered because of their faithfulness, but because of God's covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God describes Israel as "a stiffnecked people" (v. 9). The two words in the Hebrew for "stiffnecked" means obstinate or impudent of neck.

Moses as mediator does not deny God's charges. He was himself all too familiar with Israel's evil ways. Although God offers to make Moses a great nation in Israel's place, Moses in his answer does not concern himself either with Israel's welfare or his own posterity. Instead, Moses' concern is with God's covenant, and the covenant witness to an ungodly world. (vv. 9-13).

In v. 14, the word "repented" conveys to us an erroneous meaning. In Huey's words,

> The Hebrew word for "repentance" (*nacham*) as used of God in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 6:6) does not imply that God makes mistakes and later

> acknowledges His error; the word conveys only the idea of grief or sorrow that leads to a different course of action.[419]

It is of interest that, not only did Aaron make an excuse for what he had done (vv. 22-24), but scholars make excuses for him also. Cassuto held that, because images are forbidden in worship by the Ten Commandments, Aaron made a vacant throne for God, and "He made the calf in order to satisfy the need of the multitude to see at least a tangible symbol of the Deity's presence."[420] According to Hertz, Aaron was a lover of peace; he decided resistance was futile and so complied with the people's demand. Hertz added, however, that this was "no excuse."[421] In this episode, both the people and Moses are tested, and only Moses comes through as faithful. What was demanded by the people was some visible manifestation to provide them with a very present evidence of religion. The golden calf is a spectacular instance of such a demand. We have a like demand in every age and every sphere. There are not a few who have made a golden calf of their church in order to have a visible evidence of power. The state is usually the most common golden calf.

According to Deuteronomy 9:20, it was only the intercession of Moses that saved Aaron from God's death sentence.

Moses Aberbach has called attention to the fact that this episode has been an embarrassment to Jews, and some rabbis have blamed this apostasy on "the mixed multitude," i.e., the foreigners in their midst (Ex. 12:38). Supposedly, they numbered about 40,000 people. However, those were a small number as against the two million plus Hebrews. Josephus omitted this account from his history for fear the Romans would use it against the Jews. The Christians very early made use of it, as witness Stephen in Acts 7:41-52. Some churchmen held that this golden calf episode invalidated the covenant with Israel, an invalid claim. There were rabbis who used this story to summon Israel to repentance; Israel, they said, began like "a shameless bride who plays the harlot within her bridal canopy."[422]

The relevance of this story to our time is very clear.

Chapter One Hundred Eleven

The Golden Calf, Part II

(*Exodus 32:15-29*)

15. And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.
16. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.
17. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.
18. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.
19. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.
20. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.
21. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?
22. And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.
23. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
24. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

> 25. And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)
> 26. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.
> 27. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.
> 28. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.
> 29. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. (Exodus 32:15-29)

In v. 29, Moses summons the tribe of Levi to consecrate themselves to God by standing against friends, neighbors, and even brothers and sons, who had taken part in the fertility cult orgy. Their consecration meant a stand in battle against these people. It was their confirmation into a sacerdotal calling. George Bush noted, "This act of obedience was a kind of inauguration, though a fearful one, of the tribe into their holy office."[423] The Levites were to show no pity: faithfulness to God must take priority over all things else.

Moses, as he started down the mountain, knew from God what was happening. Joshua, who was waiting some distance below, knew nothing. As they descended, Joshua, hearing the shouting, assumed that the camp was under attack. Moses corrected this misapprehension.

As they came upon the camp, they saw the sexual acts and the people naked. Moses threw down the two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments, and they shattered on the rocks. This was not an act of anger but of law. The tables were each an identical copy of the legal covenant or treaty between God and Israel, one copy of the contract for each, one for Israel and one for God, to be kept in the Holy of Holies. The tables were God's work (v. 16) because He was the

superior covenant partner who had decreed the law. Israel's open apostasy had rendered the covenant null and void, and so Moses destroyed the now invalid contract. He had no other choice.

At this point, the moral force and authority of Moses is remarkable. He had only Joshua at his side, but he seized the golden calf, powdered the gold, and then made the people drink all the gold dust mingled with water. At any time, the people could have killed Moses and Joshua, but they did nothing. Perhaps it was too difficult for them to muster up much resistance as they stood there naked and ashamed.

No doubt, various merchants of other nations came and went during the orgy. Moses refers to this in v. 25: they were now a source of mockery among their enemies. A people who had left Egypt with so great a display of supernatural power were now rolling on the ground in sexual rites like the very peoples they despised.

Moses then confronted his brother Aaron. Aaron's account is in part true: he describes accurately the demand of the people. He falsifies, however, the creation of the golden calf: it was, he says, a miracle. He threw the gold into the fire, and out came a calf!

Moses then summoned the Levites to join him, which they did. They were given the order to go through the camp and kill the guilty, apparently the leaders, for about 3,000 were killed (v. 28).

According to 1 Corinthians 10:8, some 23,000 died. This number is confused by some with the golden calf episode. It has reference rather to the Baal-peor fertility cult episode, in which between 23,000 and 24,000 died in the plague (Numbers 25:1-9). Clearly, the paganism many had practiced in Egypt remained with them at Sinai and in the Baal-peor event.

In v. 26, we have one of the great challenges of history: "Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me." To stand with God is equated with doing battle when necessary. No simply verbal affirmation can be a substitute for faith on the firing line. "All the sons of Levi" (v. 26) who had been faithful joined Moses. This did not include Aaron. There is a grim irony in the fact

that God had passed over Moses' family and chosen Aaron for the high priesthood. While Moses temporarily had precedence, there was no line of authority created by this fact. Other families provided tribal headship, and later one provided the royal line, while Aaron's family provided the high priests. Moses shows no concern over this fact; he is fully dedicated to God's purpose, not a line of power.

There may be a legal reason why the 3,000 were killed. An ancient penalty for mutiny was decimation, killing every tenth person.

Aaron's act must be classified as idolatry. He feared the power of the people more than the power of God. He acted pragmatically rather than religiously. In our time, the cowardly pragmatic stand is very much in evidence in church and state, capital and labor, in every sphere. Men want deliverance, but at the risk of other men's lives, not their own. Pragmatism can be as much an idol as anything else. Nothing perhaps does more injury to a society than cowardice and weak moral character. The forces of evil are always there. What makes the difference in any society is the presence of men of faith, courage, and character. A good society is not born out of cowardice. Where there is no courage, there is no faith.

Leaders bear a particular responsibility. Although the initiative in this apostasy had come from the people, we are told bluntly in v. 25 that "Aaron had made them naked," or, "Aaron had uncovered them." According to Deuteronomy 9:20, only the intercession of Moses saved Aaron from death.

According to a Jewish tradition, Hur had resisted the demand for an idol and had been killed.[424] This reads more like an excuse for apostasy.

This incident was a testing of both Aaron and Moses. Moses clearly evidenced courage and faith, and Aaron cowardice and fear of the people rather than God. Moses, who was strictly faithful to God, also showed more love for the people than Aaron. In v. 32, he intercedes for Israel and is ready to sacrifice his own salvation for them — Aaron sacrificed for no one.

It is interesting that, according to vv. 17 and 18, Moses did not tell Joshua what to expect on reaching the camp. He allowed Joshua to see for himself and make up his own mind.

The demand of the people, “make us a god,” or, “make us gods” (v. 23), is still very much with us. If we do not take God on His own terms, and in all His enscriptured law-word, we are using pieces of the Bible to build our own little god in our image. A selective acceptance of God’s revelation is idol-making out of God’s own words. Idolatry is thus very prevalent within the church in limited and selective stresses on the Bible.

The golden calf episode is thus a seminal one. It tells us much about man’s desire to govern the terms of his faith, and also the church’s readiness, age after age, to provide men with golden calves.

Chapter One Hundred Twelve

The Golden Calf, Part III

(*Exodus 32:30-35*)

> 30. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.
> 31. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.
> 32. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin---; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.
> 33. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.
> 34. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.
> 35. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. (Exodus 32:30-35)

The golden calf made by Aaron at the people's demand was formed from the earrings of the women. John Urquhart calculated the amount of gold involved if only one million women each contributed two earrings at one-eighth of an ounce avoirdupois. This would have meant 7,812 pounds, or nearly three and a half tons of gold.[425] This is why some of the earlier painters depict the golden calf as a towering and imposing image.

Israel was no doubt abashed by its sin, but, because they did not take God too seriously, they did not take their sin seriously either. Despite the daily manna, they had arrogantly chosen to revel in fertility cult practices. It is Moses who takes their sin seriously and fearfully. Will God set them aside? Will He deal with Israel as He dealt with Egypt? On the next day, as Moses prepared again to ascend the mountain, he reminds the people that "Ye have sinned a great sin" (v. 20).

Will God be ready to forgive them? Moses recognizes that death is the penalty for sin, and he wants to cover Israel's sin, to make atonement for them. Moses is ready to die in Israel's place if God will accept him.

If God will not forgive Israel, then, says Moses, take my life, because all I have done is in vain (v. 32). The reference to God's "book" is to "the book of the living" (Psalm 69:28), or, to "the book of life" (Isa. 4:3). This is a metaphor for "the world of living men."[426]

God does not answer Moses directly. He says simply, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (v. 33). This is the same premise as in God's statement to Ezekiel centuries later: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). Sooner or later, all will pay for their sins, those who participated, and those who stood silently by. By the time of the crossing of the Jordan, only two men remained of those who left Egypt forty years earlier, Joshua and Caleb. The rest had proven faithless and had died (Deut. 1:34-39).

The people had not changed. They had been taken out of Egypt as slaves, but slavery had not been taken out of their nature. Again and again, given the least opportunity, they showed their ingratitude and rebellion. Therefore, only 3,000 had been put to death, but, step by step, one judgment after another would take its toll. The people were not told that this would be the case. As Joseph Parker observed, "The thing nearest life is death."[427] In the minds of men, death may be very far, but it is always only a breath away.

Although God spares Israel from immediate judgment, He begins to separate Himself from that generation. His Angel of the Presence, God the Son, will go with Israel. God the Father will visit them only to judge them (v. 34). In v. 35, we are told that "the LORD plagued the people," and this was one of a number of judgments to follow.

The book of the living referred to in vv. 32-33 has an important meaning which we must now turn to. Samuel Clark stated:

> The figure is taken from the enrolment of the names of citizens. This is its first occurrence in the Scriptures. (See Ps. lxix. 28; Isa. iv. 3; Dan. xii. 1; Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5 & c.[428])

Citizenship meant recognition as a person. It meant that one was a free man, not a slave. To be a citizen meant the protection of the law in most countries of antiquity; the foreigner had no such assurance.

In Israel, citizenship meant membership in God's covenant of grace and law. It depended on faith in the covenant God and obedience to the covenant law. To break the law meant destroying one's covenant membership or citizenship. American law still retains this concept, in that conviction of a crime can nullify one's citizenship. Here it means being blotted out of God's book. To be out of the book means to be God's enemy and to be punished accordingly. Circumcision was then entrance into citizenship, and now it is baptism. Entrance into the covenant, registry on the rolls of the living, or, the book of life, requires the duty of law-keeping, and the duty of law-protection. In antiquity, as, for example, as far back as Ur of the Chaldees, defending one's country was the privilege only of freemen, because it was their realm and their freedom which was at stake.

Violation of one's citizenship, or, in this case God's covenant, meant the forfeiture of one's share in the land, or his life, or both. This makes understandable the times of Israel's bondage to foreign powers, the Babylonian Captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem and Judea by the Romans in A.D. 66-70. It also makes it clear why the nations of the world are now facing a time of judgment and possible dispossession and death.

Citizenship in the Biblical sense was not and never is a right. It is rather a gift of grace, maintained by law-keeping, and to abuse it is to invite God's judgment.

Philippians 3:20 in the Authorized Version reads, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." "Our citizenship" is a better translation of

hemon to politeuma, or, "Our commonwealth is in heaven." It has reference to a kingdom and a realm, and therefore to a king and a body of law.

To be a Christian meant to the early church to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God, a member of His covenant, and to have one's name written in the book of life. Again, this helps us to understand the architecture of the Tabernacle and the Temple, and of the early church. We have seen that the early church saw the sanctuary as a throne room for Christ the King, and hence, from the earliest days, it had to be glorious and beautiful. The church building celebrated the glory of the Great King and the joyful privilege of citizenship. Christians were citizens of no human city.

Moses, in saying, blot me out of the book if you will not forgive Israel's sins, was saying that he had failed if Israel failed; he had provided poor leadership. It is, however, fallacious for leaders to assume that the failures of their people are their failures also. Parents also are prone to this error: their children *can* be a disappointment despite the finest upbringing. Self-condemnation is then wrong.

God answers this by declaring the responsibility of each person for himself: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (v. 33). This personal responsibility is basic to the covenant and its law. As men and nations depart from God's law, they also deny true responsibility. Strange concepts of liability then prevail, and environmental causes are seen as the reasons for crime. At the same time, citizenship becomes more and more empty of meaning, and church membership becomes a trifling matter. Then the blotting time comes.

Chapter One Hundred Thirteen

The Altered Plan

(*Exodus 33:1-11*)

1. And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:
2. And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.
3. Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.
4. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.
5. For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.
6. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.
7. And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.
8. And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.
9. And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

> 10. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door.
> 11. And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. (Exodus 33:1-11)

An important series of books could be written on the influence of various texts on our civilization. This text would certainly deserve an important place in such a study. We will come back to this later.

We have in these verses God's humiliation of Israel. They had broken His covenant, and very flagrantly so. God would now renew that covenant by His grace and mercy, but without the same favor to Israel. The people were ordered by God to go into mourning for their sin, which they did (v. 4). They stripped themselves of all ornamentation; v. 5 makes it clear that this was at God's command. The custom was to wear no ornaments when mourning to indicate that some loss, the cause of their sorrow, had in effect left their lives poorer.

The Tabernacle was apparently still under construction. The temporary Tabernacle was now removed from the center of the camp, at God's orders, to an area outside the camp. It meant that, thereafter, anyone going to worship at the sanctuary had to leave the encampment. It meant a symbolic separation from Israel unto the Lord. Thus the renewal of the covenant meant a changed relationship. Israel was still God's people, but the relationship was now stronger on the personal level. In fact, this temporary sanctuary is identified more with Moses than with Israel. Verse 7, "And Moses took the tabernacle," is more literally, "Moses took his tent and pitched it without the camp."[429]

What Moses did was once called "The Original Secession." Moses, on God's behalf, secedes from Israel. The generation of older Israelites who left Egypt are in effect excommunicated (vv. 1-3); they will die in the wilderness, and only Caleb and Joshua will enter the Promised Land. According to v. 11, Joshua remained in the sanctuary; it became his dwelling-place, and he was

its guard against profanation. Although Aaron and his sons were alive, not they but a non-priest, a man of war, was God's guardian for the sanctuary.

God's partial separation of Himself from Israel was both a judgment on them for their sin and an act of mercy. Had He remained in their midst, He would have destroyed them, according to v. 3. The Angel of the Presence would still go before them on their march, but God was no longer at the center of Israel. In due time, Israel was replaced by a new chosen people, Christ's congregation.

God underscores His disassociation from Israel by openly declaring His closeness to Moses. The cloudy pillar of God's Presence came to the sanctuary door as Moses entered. The favor given to Israel was now given to Moses, and God spoke to him and instructed Moses as His covenant man, as himself the Israel God was still defending. All the people were witnesses to their changed status.

To return now to the impact of this text on Christendom, we must first call attention to the changed location of the sanctuary. From the center of the camp, it was moved outside of it. This is referred to in Hebrews 13:10-14:

> 10. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.
> 11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.
> 12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.
> 13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.
> 14. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

The "no continuing city" is Jerusalem and Jewish worship. Paul and the apostolic company urge a separation by their Jewish brethren from that community to the new city, the City of God, which is to come through Christianization. To say that "continuing city" refers *exclusively* to

heaven is to warp its meaning. The crucifixion was outside "the camp," outside of Jerusalem and the Temple; it was not only a crucifixion, but also an excommunication of Jesus. What our Lord was cast out of, Paul says, we must separate ourselves from, "bearing his reproach." Those which "serve the tabernacle" cannot legitimately partake of the Lord's Table; similarly, the Christian cannot remain within the camp which excommunicates Christ.

To return to the location of the sanctuary. What God did here was retained in later history. The Temple of Solomon was built on the edge of Jerusalem, "outside the camp." This was true also of the rebuilt Temple of Ezra-Nehemiah, and of Herod's Temple, which stood in our Lord's day. The original centrality of the sanctuary was set aside by God's instructions to David and Solomon concerning the Temple's location.

The Christian countries have been very much abused for seeing themselves as facets of God's new Israel. While at times very false opinions, such as British Israelism, which holds to a blood inheritance, have developed, the usual premise has been to understand the life of a nation as the medium with which to manifest God's Kingdom as He requires.

The impact on architecture and city planning was very great. The church was located at the very center of the city or town, and it was made the finest building thereof. Very commonly, community meetings were held there, plans made to repair roads and bridges, and so on and on. The church was both the center of worship and of government.

This plan was developed also in colonial America. Town meetings were held at the church, which was located in the town square.

All this was done in terms of the original plan of Israel's encampment and the location of the sanctuary. The Christian community, as the true Israel of God, looked to the Bible for guidance here as in all other things. New England called itself God's new Israel or Zion because it sought to make central in all things the triune God and His word. The medieval church had done this, and so too did Protestantism.

In time, alien faiths worked against this, and a number of false centers supplanted the church. Among these were banks, and, in direct contrast to the church, banks for generations, and until World War II, were built in the style of Grecian temples. These still exist in many cities.

Political buildings, city halls, courthouse buildings, and bureaucratic centers also vied for centrality. So, too, did newspapers; in some cities, they built on a public square, or created one, to mark their eminence. Colleges were no longer built around a chapel.

All these variations in the designs of cities have an apt description in a line from William Butler Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming." "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." The modern city has no true center because it has no true faith: it is polytheistic, and it is therefore losing all sense of law. This is very apparent today in current views of capital punishment, abortion, homosexuality, and similar issues. Many gods means many laws, and continual warfare and oppression because of these conflicting laws. As a result, "things fall apart."

But this is not all. There is a design in the development of cities which, while it has ancient roots in continental Europe and England, came into its own on the American frontier, and especially the West. Instead of a town square with the church at the central location, towns came to be built on either side of the road, so that a small village or town might stretch out for some distance with only a handful of buildings. In some instances, a bar or two, and the town pool hall, would be at the congregating center, but, basically, such towns had no center and no focus. They were economic points for people passing through. At best, such places, even when growing into cities, aroused superficial loyalties.

Meanwhile, the major urban centers became places of refuge for people seeking escape from family controls, so that the appeal of the city was its provision of anonymity for sinning. Beginning in the 1920s, a number of American writers gained prominence because of their contempt for small town and church-oriented living.

The present degradation and lawlessness of urban life thus has not been an accident. It is a product of a desire to expel the church and Christianity from centrality in the life of a people.

Some churches still maintain an existence at the heart of a city. In some instances, lawlessness is making their continued existence difficult. Then, too many city planners are trying to force out these churches on the grounds that the property is “too valuable” for religious use and should become commercial property.

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, First Presbyterian Church, located at the city’s center, used to have a major daily ministry under Clarence Edward Macartney. Noon lunches and study sessions attracted hundreds. A stone pulpit, facing the street, stands at the front. Once a week, before World War I, the street was closed to automobiles at noon, and Dr. Macartney preached a brief sermon there, relating the faith to life, sometimes to a thousand or more men. Many like evidences of the centrality of the faith once existed. The city today is hostile to them.

Chapter One Hundred Fourteen

The Glory of God

(*Exodus 33:12-23*)

12. And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.
13. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in they sight, and consider that this nation is thy people.
14. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.
15. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.
16. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.
17. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.
18. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.
19. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.
20. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.
21. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:
22. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:
23. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen. (Exodus 33:12-23)

The plan of the encampment, with the sanctuary at the center, has profoundly influenced urban planning in Christendom because it sets forth the need for a focus in society, and that focus must be the triune God; otherwise a new focus appears, and it comes from below, from lawless men. Instead of all areas of life having a function in terms of God and His Kingdom, the center shifts downward. In time, the "problem" for the social order becomes more and more Christ's people, because they are at odds with the anti-Christian culture around them, and less and less the lawless element, now dominating the entire scene. Popular culture now exalts things that are base and evil, because the focus has shifted.

The vision of God described in this text is related to this fact. Moses is allowed to see God to a degree. He is in a cleft of the rock (v. 22), a reference which is familiar to us from Toplady's great hymn, "Rock of Ages." A. H. McNeile described the vision, which translation cannot convey, in these words:

> The vision of Yahweh's glory — His full Personality — was impossible for Moses; but he might catch a glimpse of the 'afterglow' — a partial suggestion of what the whole radiance must be.[430]

This vision is to Moses, not to Israel. God had left the camp. While He remained Israel's covenant Lord up to the crucifixion of Christ, His sanctuary from that time on was "outside the camp," and also in a sense outside the city.

Moses did not fully comprehend the meaning of God's sanctuary leaving the center of the camp. In v. 12, he expresses his bewilderment: what will God do with Israel? In v. 13, he says, Now "shew me thy way." The Lord promises that He will indeed accompany Israel into Canaan (v. 14), but Moses says that he cannot lead Israel unless God goes with them (v. 15). God tells Moses that He will do all that Moses hopes for, because "I know thee by name," i.e., I know you as My own man, my covenant man (v. 17). Moses then asks, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (v. 18). James Moffatt rendered it, "let me see thy majesty." The term is not easily explained. Moses had asked to know God's plans for Israel. His concerns are intensely practical: he does not question God's right to judge Israel; Moses himself had already done that in the name of the

Lord. God's grace and purposes were what Moses wanted to comprehend. H. L. Ellison points out that God's "passing by" is metaphorical. "He was to see God's 'back,' i.e, understand him in retrospect, in the light of what he had done."[431] Moses received a revelation of God's purpose to enable him to understand the past and the immediate future.

Moses had asked, "Shew me thy way" or ways (v. 13). God answers, *first*, "My Presence shall go with thee." He has partially separated Himself from Israel, but He has not abandoned them. *Second*, "I will give thee rest" (v. 14). This meant a successful entry into and the conquest of Canaan. *Third*, Moses asks, "Shew me thy glory" (v. 18). God's answer is, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (v. 19). By means of the revelation of His goodness and grace, God makes clear to Moses the source of His mercy. "I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee" means that God will reveal to Moses the full nature of His grace. *Fourth*, God then makes it clear that men *cannot* view God's grace independently of God's sovereignty, because "(I) will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (v. 19). God's mercy and judgment are beyond man's control; they are exercises of His sovereign power.

In other words, God as the center must be in the *midst* of the camp, i.e, the center of life for man and society, but He is never *of* the camp. He and His purposes transcend man and society.

In all of this, God has agreed to the renewal of the covenant, which is described in Exodus 34:1-35. The covenant is renewed, and the tables of law are renewed, but the past is not wiped out.

Moses' vision of God is important for us because it is an intensely relevant vision. *First*, as we have seen, God must be central to society or society comes under His judgment. In addition, God's centrality is transcendent. While the focus of man and his institutions must be on God, He Himself far transcends man and his world. *Second*, at the same time, we cannot turn "the vision of God" into something relating to heaven. The idea of attaining to a vision of God has had a very powerful effect on medieval mystics and saints as well as on Protestant pietists. The vision of God, however, is intensely relevant to man's world and man's duties therein. The whole of Scripture gives us a vision of God but says little about heaven and much about earth and our

duties here. Such "spiritual" concerns as some stress are not Biblical; as long as we are on earth, our duties must be governed by our obligations here and in terms of God's law. To attempt to act like angels when our calling is to be men and women in Christ is both evil and silly.

Third, the structures of a Christian society must reflect the centrality of the sanctuary. God's law must govern man's law, and man's priorities must be in terms of God's requirements. This is set forth in many ways in the law: the first fruits must be exactly that; God receives His portion before we take ours, and the tithe comes off the top, not at the last. All our priorities must be ordered by God's law-word.

God tells Moses, "I know thee by name" (v. 12). *Name* in the Bible means one's nature; names changed as men changed in their character. God knows our nature better than we do ourselves. God made it clear to Moses that He Himself was beyond naming, i.e., beyond definition and limitation (the story of the Burning Bush, Exodus 3:13-15). On the other hand, all men have names, because all men have a local and limited being. All proselytes were renamed in terms of their new life; within the church, this took the form of giving a saint's name to a child in baptism. The name in ancient Israel was designed to express the personality and nature of the one named. This in itself was a restraint on behavior in a godly society because an evil name could be given to a man whatever else he called himself.

One practice, which occurred in at least German Lutheran churches for a few centuries, was called *Naming*. Its origins are not known. After the consistory investigated and proved charges of open and notorious sin on the part of a member, he would be publicly named after the sermon. This could be followed, if repentance did not ensue, with excommunication. Apart from especially serious circumstances, church rules forbad Naming.

When God calls a man by His Name, as in Exodus 31:2 and 33:12, and also Isaiah 45:3-4, it means that God honors that man for his clearly defined character and nature. This raises a very interesting point: God cannot be named because He is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient, beyond our capacity to comprehend. On the other hand, when a man is named, or called by his

name, by God, it means that a clear and steadfast nature exists: we are clearly defined in terms of our lives and priorities.

The same is true of cultures and societies. When the centrality of God is gone, when He is no longer in the midst of the camp, then "the center does not hold," and all the warring groups have their own wayward definitions. It is, as Cornelius Van Til pointed out, then an "integration downward into the void." Quite logically now, in our cities, gangs of lawless young men define themselves by gang names; for them, this is a definition of the only valid society. The world around them is a wilderness to be raped and exploited.

With the breakdown of the West, we see everywhere minority groups redefining society in terms of their at best limited goals.

When God is not at the center, anarchy rules.

Chapter One Hundred Fifteen

The Covenant Renewed, Part I

(*Exodus 34:1-17*)

1. And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.
2. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.
3. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount: neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.
4. And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.
5. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.
6. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.
7. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.
8. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.
9. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin; and take us for thine inheritance.
10. And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

11. Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.
12. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:
13. But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:
14. For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God:
15. Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after other gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;
16. And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.
17. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. (Exodus 34:1-17)

Moses is again summoned to the mountain for the renewal of the covenant. Two new tablets of stone are taken to be reinscribed with the Ten Commandments, the summation of the covenant law. In addition to this, other laws shall be given. The Ten Commandments are not repeated in this text, but ten other laws are given which deal with Israel's false priorities. These ten are:

1. Only God is to be worshipped (v. 14).
2. No molten images are to be made of any god, whether the true God or false gods (v. 17). These two commandments certainly echo the ten, although they are more sharply pointed.
3. The feast of unleavened bread is to be observed annually for seven days (v. 18).
4. The firstlings of animals belong to God, but the firstlings of man and of asses are to be redeemed. (v. 19f).
5. The Sabbath shall be observed. This again echoes the ten. (v. 21).
6. Vintage and harvest feasts are to be observed. (v. 22).
7. All men must appear at the sanctuary before God three times a year. (v. 23).

8. Only unleavened bread could be offered with sacrifices (v. 25).
9. Firstfruits must be offered to God at the sanctuary (v. 26).
10. A kid is not to be boiled in its mother's milk (v. 26).

In all of these, God's priority is brought into the routine of man's life. These laws will be dealt with later. The conquest of Canaan is promised in v. 11.

In v. 9, God is asked by Moses to return to the camp. Moses confesses Israel's sin and begs for restoration. God's only answer is to declare, *first*, that He will perform great marvels for Israel. He will leave them without excuse. *Second*, in v. 11, God promises that Canaan will be given to Israel. Nothing is said about a return to the camp.

Prior to this, in vv. 5-7, we have a theophany. God appears and reveals His Name or nature to Moses. Moses gives us that revelation in words: "The LORD, the LORD God," or Yahweh, Yahweh God, He who Is, the eternal and self-existent one. He begins by stressing His grace: He is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (v. 6). His mercy extends to thousands. However, God is not only grace: He is also law and justice. His punishment not only falls upon those who break His laws, but also has historical consequences from generation to generation. What one generation does affects the next. Modern man rebels against consequences: he wants instant forgiveness and a clean slate. This, God does not permit. The sins of the fathers, even when forgiven, do have consequences. The response of Moses to this was to worship God. He is still not sure that Israel will be reinstated in the covenant, and he confesses Israel's sin (v. 9).

God then declares that the covenant will be reestablished. God, however, is a jealous God: He will not share His glory with false gods nor permit any other covenant than His to stand approved. Any covenants or treaties with ungodly nations must be avoided. Their evil cults must not be permitted within the covenant land. Their cultic objects can have no public standing.

There must be no covenants or treaties with ungodly nations or persons. A covenant or treaty means that both parties are bound by a common law, and no unbeliever can have a law in

common with God's people. This law has an important place in American history. With the French Revolution, European deism, and the general hostility to Christianity in much of Europe, the United States stood apart in George Washington's day as a Christian republic. In his Farewell Address, Washington invoked this well-known Biblical law against ungodly treaties or covenants. The importance of Washington's position is now forgotten, but it held a religious power for some generations because American Christians believed in its Biblical premises.

A covenant is compared here, in v. 15, to marriage, and treaties with ungodly peoples are called "whoring." Marriage is to this day described as a covenant in most services. Mixed marriages are banned in v. 16 as violations of God's covenant. Every relationship must be made a part of God's covenant and subject to God's covenant law. Because of the covenant, Israel is told, "thou shalt worship no other God" (v. 14). This law is a part of the law concerning the covenant: total faithfulness is required.

In v. 17, we have a second law, "Thou shalt make thee no molten gods." The reference to the golden calf is obvious, but why this special mention? The Ten Commandments forbid the *worship* of graven images (Exodus 20:4). The mind of man always seeks loopholes in laws, and some have assumed, given the temper of later Pharisaism, that the same stress on technical details of the law prevailed before Sinai. In other words, because it was *graven* or sculptured images which were forbidden as objects of worship, therefore a molten or cast image was legal. This may well have been a factor, but the comment of Sforno is more to the point. Molten gods were made as talismen, and they were cast at a particular hour when there was a conjunction of certain stars. They were made molten to make it possible for the various elemental symbols to be combined at a given moment. When so made, these talismen had power, it was believed, to provide for certain needs of their owners.[432] Such molten talismen supposedly linked man to the powers of the universe and gave him a measure of control over them. The use of talismen in many cultures rests on a like belief in the continuity between God and man and hence man's power to control God. This is in particular an important aspect of false religions; they very often posit a continuity between the divine and the human whereby man can exert pressure and control over the divine. This is a particularly evil form of idolatry. The discontinuity of being between

God and man is basic to Scripture. Man is a creature who, although made in God's image, is composed of the dust of the earth, not some part of God's being.

One final point: in v. 3, when God descends to Sinai to meet with Moses, the mountain is off limits to all other men and to all animals (cf. Ex. 19:12-13). God's presence makes the mountain sacred. Sacredness, or holiness, is a concept alien to modern culture. There are varying degrees of holiness, and varying holy things. The people of God are *called* to be holy, although there are varying degrees of sanctification among them — there are holy places, sanctuaries for example, and holy things within a sanctuary. The older term, the "Holy Bible," is less used now. There are holy times and days, and so on. Nothing, however, is holy in and of itself. Holiness comes from being subject to and used by God and His purposes. Men and things are holy to the degree that they make themselves God's property.

Chapter One Hundred Sixteen

The Covenant Renewed, Part II

(*Exodus 34:18-28*)

18. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.

19. All that openeth the matrix is mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male.

20. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then thou shalt break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

21. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

22. And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

23. Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

24. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

25. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.

26. The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

27. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

28. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. (Exodus 34:18-28)

In v. 28, we are told that again Moses was on Mount Sinai forty days and nights; the conditions of the first covenant are reproduced. God's supernatural sustenance kept Moses from both hunger and thirst.

In v. 18, the commandment calls for the annual observance of the feast of unleavened bread. The golden calf had been celebrated with a feast (Ex. 32:6). The people had needed no requirement to indulge themselves. God's feast has to be mandatory, because man is determined that his own will must be done, not God's. Perhaps, if God had required that all men over thirty years of age must eat food, men would go on a hunger strike! The festival is God's commandment. We must rejoice before the Lord. Men, however, prefer to rejoice apart from God and in defiance of Him. The people had given themselves to false worship. Now, as the covenant is renewed, these laws stress true worship. The covenant in its essence means obedience to God's laws, and God gives man His law as an act of grace. To obey God is basic to true worship.

In vv. 19-20, God declares that all the firstborn are His property. The firstling male of cattle and sheep belong to God; the firstborn male asses and men are to be redeemed, purchased back. This is a very clear reminder of the death of Egypt's firstborn. Israel had been called God's firstborn (Ex. 4:22), and the Lord made provision for Israel's redemption. Israel is not allowed to forget this. In seeking independence from God, they are seeking death.

Then, in v. 21, the observance of the Sabbath is required. Even in planting and harvest times they are to rest. It must be made clear again that the central aspect of the Sabbath is *rest*; *worship* cannot be made central, however important it is. When we rest in the Lord, we trust in His government of our world and our lives. We glorify God in worship and open ourselves to His royal word, but rest precedes worship.

In v. 22, we are told that vintage and harvest feasts are to be observed (cf. Ex. 23:14-17). The feast of weeks is also called Pentecost. The firstfruits of the wheat harvest and the feast of ingathering are also cited here. Pentecost came fifty days after the commencement of the feast of

unleavened bread. It was a celebration of peace with God, and a time of thanksgiving, as in a sense all the festivals were.

The three festivals when all males had to appear at the sanctuary were the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, when firstfruits were presented, and the feast of ingathering at the end of the year. If Israel would be faithful, God would give them peace at such times and protect their families and possessions in their absence. Scripture makes it clear that peace, prosperity, and security are closely tied to faithfulness.

Except for sacrifices of thanksgiving, only unleavened bread could be offered (v. 25).

The firstfruits had to be offered at the sanctuary (v. 26). Although these gifts were eventually enjoyed by the priests and Levites, they *normally* had to go through the sanctuary to stress the centrality of God and His covenant law.

Finally, a kid could not be boiled in its mother's milk. There are various implications here, but, in this context, the stress is on faithfulness to God's covenant as against the man-centered practices of their time. God's order had to be maintained. Whereas paganism had no compunction about killing a bird and its young, God's law worked against this kind of obliterating insensitivity. In every area of life, God's order must be maintained.

The Ten Commandments were again written on the tables of stone (v. 28). The laws that were emphasized in the renewal of the covenant spoke to Israel's recent apostasy. They also made it clear that God's law was proclaimed to the people. In antiquity as now, all non-Biblical laws are arbitrary and man-made. They represent the will of a ruler, an oligarchy, a majority, or a minority, imposed upon all. Because they have no roots in man's being and in the nature of God's order, they are easily disobeyed.

God's law is basic to all of creation because "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). It is the inescapable law of man's being. Fallen man, seeking to be his own god (Gen. 3:5), is in total revolt against God's law. His revolt,

however, is a futile one, because it places him at war with God and himself; having been created by God, every atom of his being witnesses against man in his revolt. Men may suppress this knowledge in their evil and injustice, as Paul says in Romans 1:18, but this knowledge is inescapable and cannot be hidden:

> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Harold J. Brokke observed, "We cannot understand salvation without understanding the law of God." Because men have the obligation to be righteous or just, they are never released from the obligation to obey God's law.[433] Of necessity, "Where there is government, there is law."[434] The question is, whose government, and whose law, God's or man's? In the law, "*God* has revealed His will; *man* must decide who shall be God."[435]

We must remember that the golden calf was given God's Name. Man always tries to mask his idolatries and apostasies with noble terms and purposes. We see the absurdity of this in the golden calf episode, but less readily in our time and our lives.

This is a central reason for the unpopularity of the Bible with many. Most religions and philosophies present us with seemingly noble sentiments and premises, all of which are often pretentious. The Bible is very personal and direct, and this men do not like. A titled Englishman of the last century asked a rector about heaven, stating that he assumed that appropriate recognition of rank and station would be maintained. What the rector answered, we are not told, but the Bible is very clear. Our Lord says, more than once, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30).

Chapter One Hundred Seventeen

The Face of Moses

(*Exodus 34:29-35*)

> 29. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.
> 30. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.
> 31. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.
> 32. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.
> 33. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.
> 34. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.
> 35. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him. (Exodus 34:29-35)

This is a sad account. We will return to this fact later. Moses, after his long stay on Mount Sinai, receiving God's revelation, came down from the mountain transfigured. We are told that "the skin of his face shone." It reads literally "shot forth beams." Moses was radiating light in a powerful way. The Vulgate mistranslated this to indicate that he had horns, and medieval works of art, and Renaissance works also, show him horned. Michelangelo's statue reflects this error.[436]

Again, we have a contrast here with the golden calf episode. There, Israel shamed and degraded itself. Now God glorifies Moses: he comes down from Mount Sinai transfigured. St. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, tells us that there was a "dazzling glory" about Moses, to use James

Moffatt's translation. Paul also tells us that a vail still covers the hearts of all Israel, but, whenever they turn to Christ, "the vail is removed" and the eyes of their understanding are opened (2 Cor. 3:15-16).

Until the reaction of the people made obvious what had happened, Moses was not aware of what had happened to him (v. 29). We are told that the people were afraid to come near him, and this included Aaron: in his fear, he was one with the people (v. 30). Until Moses' overpowering reflection of God's glory faded with time, Moses covered his face before the people but uncovered it within the sanctuary before God. The people had wanted *to see*, have a visible God or a visible image of God, but they were now afraid of God's reflected glory. All drew back from Moses, and, in v. 31, we are told that he had to call them to come near. According to Rabbi Hertz, "The People were the more deeply impressed by his message when they beheld the radiance of his countenance."[437] All that the text tells us is that they were afraid.

Moses' reflection of God's glory did not occur after his first stay on Mount Sinai but after his second. In the interval, Israel had been tested and had failed; it had plunged enthusiastically into depravity. Moses, too, had been tested and had triumphed. He was now blessed and favored, and the difference between Israel and Moses was underscored. The glory was shrouded from Israel. Not only had God withdrawn His sanctuary from the center of the encampment, He had also revealed physically the separation and the line of division between Moses and Israel. In the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud actually wrote that Moses was not a Hebrew!

It is interesting to note that v. 29 says in the Authorized Version, "the skin of his face shone *while* he was talking with him." Rawlinson pointed out that this should read, "*through* his talking with him."[438] The reflection of the glory was not limited to the times when Moses spoke with God, in the sanctuary as on the mountain, but was reflected through Moses. It therefore became Moses' practice to wear the vail or covering when this occurred.

Now we need to consider why this is a sad account, why this tells us something about Israel as well as ourselves.

We are told by our Lord that the devil is a liar: "there is no truth in him," and he is the father of lies (John 8:44). In Revelation 22:15, those outside Christ's Kingdom are described:

> For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

There is a God-ordained line of discrimination, and this is not an arbitrary line. The old proverb stands true: "Birds of a feather flock together." All attempts to force an equality of good and evil upon men in due time fail. Murderers and pimps, for example, have no love of Bible study or prayer meetings. Egalitarian demands are very often a demand for surrender by one group to another; for us as Christians, it is a certainty that heaven is not about to integrate with or surrender to hell.

Although we are not on the level of Moses, as we grow in grace, that grace in us repels the ungodly. Moses, we are told, "shot forth beams." We each in our own limited way communicate to the world around us what we are.

The men of Israel could not face Moses. The men of our age, as those of the past, cannot tolerate the man of grace and justice. I recall a homosexual professor saying in a lecture, incidental to his subject, "Nothing is more intolerable than virtue." Some laughed. Certainly this was true in his case: virtue was offensive to him.

Moses and Israel were moving on divergent paths. Israel's apostasy would increase, and the older generation would die in the wilderness, whereas Moses at his death had the archangel Michael present to care for his body, according to Jude 9.

The glory of God reflected in Moses reveals God's grace and law, His covenant. Moses reflects that glory by his faithfulness, his obedience.

In contrast to this stands the Greco-Roman ideal of Minerva, or Athena (Minerva being the Roman name, Athena the Greek). She was a virgin goddess who sprang forth fully grown when

her father, Zeus, had his head split with an axe. She represented abstract reason; hence, she was totally against war as being irrational. In her world of abstract reason, there was no original sin, only erroneous choices. There were no Vestal Virgins, because there was for her no merit or non-merit in virginity, only in right reasoning. There was no doctrine of sin, and all sex was, in terms of Athena's wisdom, irrational. Athens was named after Athena, and its philosophers exalted abstract reasoning. Another aspect of Athena's "being" was the fact that, having sprung from the head of Zeus, she had no mother and was abstracted from the processes of life and of womanhood.

Wisdom in Scripture is never abstract; it is practical, always identical with God's justice, law, and covenant, and it is open to men on all levels of life. According to Proverbs 8, wisdom cries out in the streets, with few takers. Wisdom is inseparable from true life (Prov. 8:35), whereas to sin against wisdom is a love of death (Prov. 8:36).

Moses is transfigured as he submits himself to God and God's covenant law. The fact of his transfiguration cannot be abstracted from its context. In the transfiguration of our Lord, He is accompanied by Moses and Elijah, both inseparable from God's covenant, and the covenant of law and grace. The transfiguration of Moses indicates the first stage of the transference of God's covenant and its glory from Israel to God's New Israel, the church. With the passing of Elijah, Israel, the northern kingdom, entered its final phase of apostasy before judgment, just as Judah's rejection of our Lord completed the separation of the southern kingdom from God's covenant. Faithless churches and nations had better take notice.

Chapter One Hundred Eighteen

The Sabbath

(*Exodus 35:1-3*)

> 1. And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them.
> 2. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.
> 3. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day. (Exodus 35:1-3)

There is a long history of controversy over these verses, and much conflict over their interpretation. A. H. McNeile observed, "This is the most stringent form of Sabbath law in the O.T."[439] Our Lord, as the giver and interpreter of the word, says of the sabbath, according to Mark 2:23-28,

> 23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.
> 24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?
> 25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?
> 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?
> 27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:
> 28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Churchmen have sometimes seen our Lord's words as nullifying Exodus 35:1-3; this is a false interpretation. Rather, we must insist on a common meaning.

The disciples were plucking the grain as they passed by on a sabbath day. Being hungry, they were separating the grain from the stalk and chaff by rubbing their palms together on the grain and chewing it. The Pharisees saw this as a violation of the sabbath. Our Lord reminds them of the incident wherein Abiathar gave the holy bread to David and his hungry men, despite the law limiting its consumption to the priests. The purpose of the sabbath, our Lord says, is to serve man under God, not to place man under subjection to time. He, the Son of man, is Lord over the sabbath, and therefore the sabbath serves the purposes of His Kingdom for His followers.

In Exodus 35:1-3, we have the covenant renewed, and work is to be resumed on the Tabernacle. These verses continue the warnings of Exodus 34:1-28, which had especial reference to the sins of Israel as they culminated in the golden calf episode. The sabbath laws had been given in detail previously; why then this renewed stress, plus the rule concerning fires on the sabbath? The reference is to Exodus 16:23; manna gathered on the day before the sabbath was to be prepared then for two days, and thus no preparation was to take place on the sabbath. There shall be no work on the sabbath: "whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death" (Ex. 35:2). The word translated as *work*, here as in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:9-10, (*melâʾkâh*) means in Hebrew the duty of a highly placed person, a deputy, a prophet, priest, or teacher, an angel, king, messenger, or an ambassador. It does not refer to servile work. It has reference to gainful, profitable work which advances a cause or a realm. It refers to what men like to think of as a good work, something advancing a noble cause.

This gives us an important perspective on the sabbath. It is precisely when we think we are most noble in our sabbath work that we most violate it. Works of necessity are legitimate on the sabbath, our Lord says, things such as the rescue of an ass or ox fallen into a pit (Luke 14:4). Such activity cannot be classified as *work* in the sense of Exodus 20:9-10 and Exodus 35:2. The noble works, whether physical work or planning, trespass on God's providential government. We are not gods; the government of things is not on our shoulders (Isa. 9:6), and it is a sin for us to

assume that the world and its advancement needs our extra efforts on the sabbath. It is a sin of *presumption*, a particularly serious offense. In our time, presumption has become the common attribute of old and young of all races and classes. The law is plain: "Six days shall work be done" (v. 2); such work is legitimate and is the exercise of godly responsibility. To extend it to the seventh is to assume that God can neither care for us, nor for the world, without our assistance. Psalm 127:2 refers to this; in James Moffatt's rendering, it reads:

> Vain it is to rise up early for your work,
> and keep at work so late,
> gaining your bread with anxious toil!
> God's gifts come to his loved ones, as they sleep.

With respect to Exodus 35:3, we have seen that the reference is to Exodus 16:23; manna was provided by God's grace. Israel was to prepare their sabbath manna on the previous day. These words were addressed to peoples recently delivered from bondage and slave labor. They were irresponsible and also distrustful of God. The sabbath law concluded that section of Exodus which ended at Exodus 31:12-17. Since the sabbath is a sign of the covenant and a celebration of it, as the covenant is renewed this law is restated.

But why the mention of no fire, found nowhere else in the Bible? There is not even an indirect reference to it elsewhere. Work on the Tabernacle was about to be resumed. This would at once involve goldsmiths and other metal workers. Such work would be noble work, precisely the kind of labor banned on the sabbath by the law. The good cause could not validate such fires on the sabbath. The people had sinned greatly in the golden calf episode. As Ellison observed, "There would have been a real danger of the ignoring of the Sabbath law as the people showed their zeal in trying to undo the sin they had committed."[440] Whether we build a tabernacle or a cathedral, we must do it in God's way and in terms of His law. Our thinking and planning cannot take priority over God's work.

James Macgregor's comment on Exodus 35:1-3 is important:

> The priests in their office afterwards profaned the Sabbath and were blameless; for the common work of their office was necessary for the due observance of the day. But there is no such plea of necessity or mercy for doing common work at the building of the Tabernacle. Wherefore, let not men be carried away by the enthusiasm of the work into violation of God's law of holy resting; as if "the better day, the better deed." Instead of thus robbing God, men are to give what is in a sense their own. And so the process of preparation for the building resolves itself into *contribution of the means of building*, — which often cools enthusiasm remarkably.[441]

The "work" God requires of men on the sabbath is *giving*.

The words concerning the sabbath in v. 2 are very literally, "on the seventh day there shall be to you an holiness." In order to sanctify all their days, on this day the covenant believer enters into God's holiness; he steps outside of himself to rest in the Lord. He takes hands off his own being to commit it to God, and he submits his mind to the correction and guidance of God's word. Thus, apart from the ministry of worship, no work is permitted on the sabbath.

According to Rylaarsdam, the provision, "six days shall work be done," seems to concentrate on the construction or work on the Tabernacle. He cites Galling, who emends the Hebrew text to stress this, seeing it as saying, "For all the work you have planned you shall kindle no fire … on the sabbath day," the fires having reference to metal work.[442]

There is another aspect of this verse to which Cassuto called attention. Metal work in antiquity was a very important vocation, and it was surrounded by religious premises and rules. In Baal-worship, for example, a fire was kindled for six days for metal work on the seventh, when the silver and gold plating for the walls of Baal's palace or temple was done. But this was not all. Fire was regarded by pagans as sacred; on pagan festival days, a fire was lit in homes honoring the day.

> In Mesopotamia a special festival was dedicated to fire, and in one of the texts referring to this festival it is stated: The people of the place shall make a fire in their dwelling places.[443]

The implications of v. 3 are enormous. Accommodation to pagan practices for any reason whatsoever is clearly forbidden. Such accommodation has been practiced by all churches. Various names are given to it in our time. One term is "bridge building." When John Lofton criticized this recently in the Chalcedon Report, the response was anonymous hate mail. Another term is "contextualization." Again, this was dealt with in the Chalcedon Report, by Timothy Vaughan, who reported on the "translation" of the Biblical term, "Lamb of God," as the "pig of God." Instead of raising the thinking and language of pagans to the level of Scripture, such people insistently lower the Bible by mistranslation to the level of pagans. This same kind of accommodation to paganism exists with reference to practices. The end result is to oppose converting pagans to Christ in favor of a fraternal coexistence.

Thus, v. 3 forbids us to do anything which brings about a significant coincidence between Biblical and pagan practices. In v. 2, the literal reading is that the seventh day shall be to us *holiness*. It is a day and a time that separates us from a fallen world and strengthens us by resting in the Lord to live all week in terms of that rest and holiness. The sabbath is a day against accommodationism, bridge-building, contextualization, or any other doctrine of compromise.

Chapter One Hundred Nineteen

The Gifts for the Tabernacle

(*Exodus 35:4-19*)

4. And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying,
5. Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,
6. And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair.
7. And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,
8. And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense,
9. And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate.
10. And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded;
11. The tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets,
12. The ark, and the staves thereof, with the mercy seat, and the vail of the covering,
13. The table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread,
14. The candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps, with the oil for the light,
15. And the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the tabernacle,
16. The altar of burnt offering, with his brasen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot,
17. The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the door of the court,
18. The pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords,

> 19. The cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. (Exodus 35:4-19)

These verses are, viewed superficially, a repetitive survey of what was written before. For the modern mind, it is an undue attention to details of lesser importance. A modernist professor explained this and other laws that follow as evidence of the fact that, in the "primitive" stages of a religion, there is an undue stress on forms. Such a position is false on many counts. Biblical attention to the sanctuary is unique. This attention deserves our close study.

Until now, a temporary Tabernacle was being used. Now the finished work, with all the furnishings, is commanded. It is evidence of superficial reading and a serious error to see no advance in the account in these verses. There is here a very important factor which the church has neglected too often to its own peril.

In v. 4, we are told that this is a *command*. Then, in v. 5, it is plainly stated that the construction of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings is not to be done with tithes but by means of *gifts* from all who are of a willing heart. In other words, God's command requires us to view the advancement of His Kingdom by such a thing as a sanctuary built not upon our tithe, but upon our gifts above and over the tithe. The progress of God's Kingdom depends on all who have a willing heart and who do not limit their giving to the tithe. God requires the tithe; it is His tax; it does bring blessings, as Malachi 3:8-12 makes clear. But because of God's gifts to us, He expects more from us than the tithe alone. According to Malachi 3:8,

> Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes *and offerings*.

If a child dutifully pays his parents what is due them, but never shows any affection, nor makes any gift above and over a required amount, his coldness tells us far more than anything else about his life.

For this reason, we are told that "the willing heart" (v. 5) is basic to our relationship to God. A variety of needs for the sanctuary are cited: gold, silver, brass, dyes and linen, goats' hair, rams' and badgers' skins, oil, spices, incense, precious and semi-precious stones, wood, furnishings, and more. Basic to all this is "a willing heart" (v. 5). The artisans who are to make these things, both the men and the women, are described in v. 10 as "wise hearted." All work in terms of an ordained pattern. Not their will but God's will is to be done. They bring their *skills* to God's requirements.

In modern art, the old apprentice system is virtually gone. Training in the arts is now less a matter of the disciplined acquisition of ancient skills and more a matter of self-expression. This is a reversal of the historic pattern.

There is more, however, to this text. Israel was a covenant people, and the Holy of Holies was the throne room of God the King. Israel knew that God could not be circumscribed or contained in any building made by man (2 Chron. 6:18). All the same, God had made it clear that His Glory would in part inhabit the sanctuary.

Given this fact, one would expect a tax to build the sanctuary, God's Palace. This was routine and normal in antiquity and in all of history. Thus, in the United States, the White House is not built by any president, nor repaired and maintained by any. It is state property and state maintained.

What God does here is unique in history and a radical break with all past sanctuaries. While Israel is *required* by God to be governed by Him, the sanctuary is *separated* from the state and made the work of all who have "a willing heart" (v. 5). Too often the church has sought state support and establishment, in violation of God's law, whereas God requires *the faith* to be established, and *the law* of the faith, not the institution.

The centuries-old battle of the church for freedom from the state has its roots in all of Scripture, and certainly in texts such as this. Whether it be the church or the Christian School, the

dependency must be on those of "a willing heart" (v. 5). If not, the government of the church passes into the hands of the state.

For this reason, both tithes and offerings in Scripture do not depend on statist enforcement. They rest on men of willing hearts who create by their tithes and offerings a kingdom and a realm apart from the institutions of this world.

According to George Rawlinson, there are two aspects to the appeal made in these verses. The *first* appeal is to everyone. Every covenant member is summoned to reveal his faith by making a gift beyond the tithe for the construction of the sanctuary. The *second* appeal is a limited one; it is to the "wise hearted." The Biblical term "heart" has reference to the core of man's being; it refers to knowledge and ability in this instance because of the prefix "wise." We make the heart, speaking metaphorically, the seat of knowledge.[444]

The precondition for the wise-hearted is that they have a willing heart. However, the prerequisite for God's work is not only a willing heart, but also *skill*. No more than a blemished offering is acceptable to God, is unskilled service acceptable. For this reason, the church early began to require some kind of aptitude and training for the service of the Kingdom. Paul in 1 Timothy 3:10 calls for a testing of all candidates for positions in the church. In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul, after listing various requirements, adds,

> Not a novice [or, one newly come to the faith], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Again, in 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul warns the church against ordaining a man too quickly.

In our time, the democratic temper in both church and state favors electing a man simply on the basis of his popular support. The standards thus are derived from man, not from God. This is a reversal of the Biblical requirement, whereby God establishes the standards, not men, and it is our duty to approximate His norms.

In sum, this text is important because of its God-centered character. The qualifications even for *giving* to God's Kingdom are God-ordained. They are not the result of ecclesiastical nagging. We give, according to God's ordination, when we have a "willing heart" and are "wise hearted." It is in terms of this that His Kingdom grows and is free. Those who seek state-funding for what God declares to be His are seeking to rewrite God's law.

In these verses we see also the nature of Biblical language. Instead of abstractions, we have very concrete statements, both particular and specific in nature.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty
The Wise Hearted and the Willing Hearted
(*Exodus 35:20-35*)

20. And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

21. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

22. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, an offering of gold unto the LORD.

23. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them.

24. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the LORD'S offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it.

25. And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.

26. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair.

27. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;

28. And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

30. And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

31. And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.
32. And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass.
33. And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work.
34. And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.
35. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work. (Exodus 35:20-35)

These verses continue the emphasis made in vv. 4-19. Those called by God are the willing hearted and the wise hearted. The wise hearted are the skilled. The willing hearted are those who give freely above and over the tithe. The Kingdom of God can only be advanced by the willing, those to whom God's work is important not only in terms of words, but also in terms of giving.

There is, however, another very important fact here which is conveniently passed over in our time. The work on the sanctuary did not begin when God gave Moses the pattern and the instructions, but only when the people had donated all the materials, including gold, which were needed for the work. The God who limits debt to six years does not allow for debt where His sanctuary is concerned. Short term debt for our private concerns is permitted. For God's work, no debt is considered as tenable. In brief, God's work must be done in God's way.

Heavy indebtedness marks the modern church and is routinely defended on religious grounds. Need supposedly creates and poses an emergency which justifies debt. However, if God required that His sanctuary be built with everything in hand, we cannot do otherwise. Moses made an appeal for contributions of various kinds. We do not know what the "tablets" mentioned in v. 22 were, but the context indicates something of value.

In Deuteronomy 15:10, we are told that God honors and blesses the liberal giver, i.e., one who gives well beyond the tithe. Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, says,

> 6. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.
> 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

The reference to sowing seed should not be taken lightly. Only meager results follow a sparse sowing of seed, whereas bountiful seeding leads to a bountiful harvest. God deals with us in the same way. Poor giving to Him leads to poor results.

God is mindful of the differences in our estates. Hence, the gifts of precious stones and spices are specifically urged unto the rulers of the tribes (vv. 27-28). The calling of Bezaleel and Aholiab goes beyond the statement of Exodus 31:1-6; earlier, they had been appointed to their work; now, in vv. 30-35, God also appoints them to *teach* as well as to *work*, and He inspires them in both these areas.

Those who are called include a variety of artisans, including women skilled in needlework. We have here a curious fact. No scholar regards needlework as a serious art. At the same time, some art galleries are ready to pay large sums of money for not only the needlework of earlier generations but also for current work. Art is limited by some pretentious persons to a few areas.

Another area is that of *teaching*. In vv. 30-35, teaching is associated with the best artisanship. In earlier years, it was the great artists who did the teaching by taking on apprentices. Verse 26 is better read that the women "spun with wisdom," that is, with skill and art.

In the Old Testament culture, the artisan had an honored place. Sirach, in *Ecclesiasticus*, an apocryphal work, gave a series of meditations on God's law. He classified the physician, the druggist, the scholar, the farmer, the craftsman, the builder, the metalworker, the potter, and the artisan generally as a unit in society and observed:

> All these rely on their hands;
> And each one is skilful in his own work;
> Without them, no city can be inhabited,
> And men will not live in one or go about in it.
> But they are not sought for to advise the people,
> And in the public assembly they do not excel.
> They do not sit on the judge's seat,
> And they do not think about the decision of lawsuits;
> They do not utter instruction or judgment,
> And they are not found using proverbs.
> Yet they support the fabric of the world,
> And their prayer is in the practice of their trade. (38:31-34)

While Sirach gave a higher place to the scholars in God's law, his classification here is very important. He saw the artisan as one of the necessary people whose work supports "the fabric of the world." The vocations he cited have in common the health and development of society under God.

Verses 21-24 make it clear that not everyone gave to make possible the construction of the sanctuary. They gave "as many as were willing hearted" (v. 22; cf. 21). God wasted nothing from those not willing to give. "The fabric of the world" is not upheld or developed by those willing to bless themselves, but not to further God's Kingdom.

Lange, in his commentary, called attention to the direction of all the law:

> The one root of the law is the covenant of circumcision, which from the first pointed to the circumcision, the regeneration, of the heart, Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6. The law, accordingly, is not stationary, but is everywhere a movement in and with the legal man towards regeneration; and the method of this movement is sacrifice, the fundamental type of which appears in the feast of the Passover-lamb. This festival

> looks, in its character of sin-offering, peace-offering and burnt-offering, towards a process of spiritualizing the law, and forms a contrast to the curse-offering.[445]

Lange's last sentence is regrettable, because the direction of the law is not to spiritualize but to make concrete and specific in our lives and in society God's law and Kingdom. He was right in seeing the law as a movement, i.e., as a means of creating a direction and structure in society. In our text, this direction becomes apparent again. God's purpose is to make us willing hearted and wise hearted.

Lange said also:

> First of all, the law's requirement of deeds must not be toned down. Deeds are a check upon that which is evil, a definition, a picture, a practice of that which is good. But the law as a mirror is the training-master to bring to Christ; it leads to a deepening of the inner life, till one comes to the hell of self-knowledge (Rom. vii.): and here only is brought to perfection that entire receptivity for the Gospel of grace, through which the law is transformed into a fountain of spiritual life.
>
> The mistaken view respecting acts, that the mere act is all that is needed, is the root of Judaism, of Pharisaic self-righteousness, though even the mere doing or not doing has its value and reward in the outward world, especially in the regulations of social life.
>
> The mistaken view respecting the mirroring of one's self in the law, that the recognition of sin is an end in itself, leads to the deadening of the inner life in self-depreciation, quietism and pietistic self-torture.[446]

This enables us to see the direction which is basic to Exodus. Israel is delivered from bondage to Egypt. It is given God's law, the straight and narrow way of justice. As against man's will, God's law must prevail. Man's will is no better in Israel than it is in Egypt. Israel is forced to recognize its own depravity. The goal is regeneration. The regenerate man is willing hearted and

potentially wise hearted. He is a necessity for the development of “the fabric of the world.” “The fabric of the world” is badly damaged in our time. It cannot be mended or developed without willing hearted and wise hearted men and women.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-One

The Restraint

(*Exodus 36:1-7*)

> 1. Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.
> 2. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.
> 3. And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.
> 4. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;
> 5. And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make.
> 6. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.
> 7. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much. (Exodus 36:1-7)

We have again a text which is not very often the subject of preaching or teaching but which is very important. Before considering the important but neglected aspect of this text, let us turn to some interesting sidelights. In v. 2, the statement is made that the man "whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work" came to do it. G. Henton Davies stated that "to come" is literally to "draw near to God," and he observed that "work was also worship."[447] This was an aspect of medieval life also, work as worship.

Since the sanctuary's construction did not depend on mandatory gifts but on free-will offerings, we cannot assume that everyone gave a gift. There were no doubt many who were still silently hostile to Moses. The superabundant giving marked those who were willing hearted. All the same, there was an "embarrassment of riches." God's work depends not on majorities, but on the willing-hearted. God had already made it clear that His work "depended" on those who wanted to give. It was to be done without debt and with the gifts and labors of those who wanted to be a part of the work. Paul has this in mind in Romans 12:1:

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Men are too prone to introduce coercion, or, at the least, pressure, where God simply uses none. Those who took their covenant relationship to God seriously gave, and gave generously. Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, refers to the Macedonian churches; despite their severe ordeal of trouble and ensuing poverty, they "poured out a flood of rich generosity" (James Moffatt's rendering) to help fellow Christians in distress. In fact, says Paul, they begged him, of their own accord, to accept their gifts and saw Paul's willingness as a favor to them.

The key to this text is v. 6: were the gifts brought by the people limited to materials, such as needlework, or did they include gifts such as gold and silver? What does "make any more work" mean? According to Sforno, the reference is to such things as the women made, i.e., spinning and the like.[448] There is a somewhat different emphasis in Robert Young's *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*:

> And Moses commandeth, and they caused a voice to pass over through the camp, saying, 'Let not man or woman make any more work for the heaveoffering of the sanctuary;' and the people are restrained from bringing. (Exodus 36:6)

The heave offering, or *terûmâh*, was a gift to the sanctuary for the priests. It is referred to in Leviticus 22:10-14; Numbers 18:8, 11-12, 26,30; and Deuteronomy 18:4. There are two kinds of

heave offerings referred to in these verses; one is part of the tithe, and the other is not. Unlike these heave offerings, what Exodus 36 refers to is not a gift of food (although Deuteronomy 18:4 is inclusive of more than food). This is an offering for the sanctuary. The emphasis is on the free-will aspect.

This is not all. Although deer are classified as clean animals, they cannot be used as a sacrifice or a heave offering, because man's work did not go into their growth and maturity. All offerings had to represent work. Gold and silver represented work in that their acquisition required more than a little labor. In Deuteronomy 26, the believer is given instructions concerning his tithes and offerings. As he brings his gifts, he says in part:

> 13. … I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to the commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them:
> 14. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. (Deuteronomy 26:13-14)

Urquhart said of this reference to giving food to the dead, and eating some of it in that context, that it had reference to Egyptian practice. The worship of the dead, and the religious importance of their tombs, is clearly in mind. Israel was not long out of Egypt, nor entirely weaned from it.[449]

All gifts were separated either to men under God or to God, whether charitable gifts or gifts directly to the Lord. The gifts represented a labor of love and faith.

To limit the gifts which were brought in superabundance to a few things on which men's or women's hands had labored, such as spinning or cut boards, places an unnatural strain on the text. It then reads, in effect, bring in no more needlework, but bring on the gold!

The statement of the workmen, the artisans, is not restrictive. They say, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make" (v. 5). As such, it has a very important and obvious meaning.

I once heard a remarkable scientist, a medical researcher, comment on his difficulties, and the impoverished status of his laboratory, as well as the very primitive quarters in which he worked. Having accomplished his basic work under these circumstances, he was then endowed with a magnificent building and a large staff, although all his basic work had already been done. All too often, men give to impressive groups, and they pour money into churches and ministries which sometimes have no need of them. The result sometimes is empire-building, not constructive development.

Here the artisans, as godly men, stopped their work to come to Moses with a remarkable statement. This has been called the first recorded work stoppage in history, and an unusual one. They say simply that more things are being donated than they need.

This account is not idly included in the Bible. It establishes guidelines for giving. As we have already seen, *first*, God's sanctuary must be built by free-will offerings or gifts. The tithe goes for the *maintenance* of God's work; the gifts and offerings above and over the tithe are for *advancement*. *Second*, this means that God's people get the future they pay for. They cannot maintain Kingdom causes without tithing, nor advance God's work without gifts beyond the tithe.

We see today the infrastructure of cities decaying; power lines, water lines, sewer pipes, bridges, subways, and more are nearing collapse. Not only is there no restoration, but even maintenance is not always in evidence. Something similar is at times apparent in the churches. Advancement in many areas is lacking, and maintenance in other spheres is waning. Christian reconstruction is clearly a necessity.

Third, as our text makes clear, where there is a desire to maintain and advance, there are also limits to giving. If a cause is not advancing the Kingdom of God but is simply accumulating funds, it should not solicit funds or be an object of our giving. The Lord God places a restraint on the greediness of men. As George Bush commented, the workmen, by their statement, cut themselves off from the temptation to greed and excess.[450] This was a rare act, and a godly one.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Two

"The Fabric of the World"

(*Exodus 36:8-38*)

8. And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them.

9. The length of one curtain was twenty and eight cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: the curtains were all of one size.

10. And he coupled the five curtains one unto another: and the other five curtains he coupled one unto another.

11. And he made loops of blue on the edge of one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the uttermost side of another curtain, in the coupling of the second.

12. Fifty loops made he in one curtain, and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain which was in the coupling of the second: the loops held one curtain to another.

13. And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches: so it became one tabernacle.

14. And he made curtains of goats' hair for the tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains he made them.

15. The length of one curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits was the breadth of one curtain: the eleven curtains were of one size.

16. And he coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves.

17. And he made fifty loops upon the uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second.

18. And he made fifty taches of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one.

19. And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of badgers' skins above that.

20. And he made bars for the tabernacle of shittim wood, standing up.

21. The length of a board was ten cubits, and the breadth of a board one cubit and a half.

22. One board had two tenons, equally distant one from another: thus did he make for all the boards of the tabernacle.

23. And he made boards for the tabernacle; twenty boards for the south side southward:

24. And forty sockets of silver he made under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons.

25. And for the other side of the tabernacle, which is toward the north corner, he made twenty boards.

26. And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

27. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward he made six boards.

28. And two boards made he for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides.

29. And they were coupled beneath, and coupled together at the head thereof, to one ring: thus he did to both of them in both the corners.

30. And there were eight boards; and their sockets were sixteen sockets of silver, under every board two sockets.

31. And he made boards of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle,

32. And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the sides westward.

33. And he made the middle bar to shoot through the boards from the one end to the other.

34. And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold to be places for the bars, and overlaid the boards with gold.

> 35. And he made a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cherubims made he it of cunning work.
> 36. And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver.
> 37. And he made an hanging for the tabernacle door of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of needlework;
> 38. And the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their chapiters and their fillets with gold: but their five sockets were of brass. (Exodus 36:8-38)

As we saw earlier, Sirach said of scribes, artisans, and others,

> They kept stable the fabric of the world,
> And their prayer is in the practice of their trade.

This is the Biblical attitude. For ancient Greek thought, ultimacy rested in ideas, in abstractions; as a result, its philosophy turned everything into an abstraction. Its practical scientists were often foreign slaves who were usually given Greek names and freedom for their work, but the focus in Greek thought was on "pure" reason, on ideas or abstractions. In Biblical thought, all things are concretized, because the triune God is not an abstraction, but the supreme and total Person. God's goal in creation and history is not an abstraction but the incarnation of God the Son. All history must concretize and particularize God's law, His justice, and bring all things under the reign of Christ as King.

The practical application of these two contrasting views is apparent in the fact that Greek culture gave status to ideas, whereas Biblical culture gave status and dignity to work. Sirach's statement has as its counterpart the Hebraic insistence that if a father did not teach his son the law of God, and a trade with his hands, he taught him to be a thief. St. Paul represents this kind of perspective: to keep his independence, he worked on the side as a leather worker, making tents and saddles.

Many cultures have discovered various promising things, but it has remained for Christendom to make them into practical and commercial assets and inventions for all men. Basic to this is the stress on *the particular* which this chapter, among others, represents. The influence of Greek philosophy runs deep in our educational system, and our concern for the particular and the specific is thereby diminished. Over the centuries, however, many Christians have actually relished such texts. God's great attention to the particulars has given confidence to workers in the specific and concrete aspects of our world. Whether mechanics or scientists, they have seen the particular as very important.

In verses 8-38, we have a virtual repetition of Exodus 26:1-37, with a few verses omitted, vv. 12-13, 30, and 33-35. Exodus 37:1ff gives data similar to Exodus 25:10-39, and 30:1-5; from Exodus 25, a few verses are omitted in Exodus 37, namely, vv.16f, 21f., and 30. All this stress and repetition serves to remind us of God's requirement of good workmanship and precision. This goes counter to the modern temper which stresses instead "a good heart," a fuzzy conception, over good workmanship. Not only Christian causes, but also various worthy activities are usually overwhelmed with bumblers who believe their inept work is sanctified by their willingness. God here makes it very clear that skills are necessary for godly service.

In this text, there are several references to "he" (in vv. 14, 20, 31, 35). This person is Bezaleel, the superintendent in charge of all construction. In a sense, all the work is his because he is in charge, and his approval is necessary for acceptance. Thus, not only are skills required, but also even skilled workmanship must pass a test.

The construction of the Tabernacle was important for what it represented. According to Moorehead, it set forth four things. *First*, it meant that God was present with His chosen people. The church now serves the same purpose. The presence of faithful churches in a community is a witness to God's grace, law, mercy, and judgment. The church gives notice to men that there is a transcendent, a supernatural, frame of reference. *Second*, the sanctuary showed that God identified Himself with His chosen people. In Isaiah 63:7-9, we read:

> 7. I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to according to his mercies and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.
> 8. For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.
> 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

God's patience is such, says Isaiah, that He carries us as a father does his child.

Third, the sanctuary witnessed to salvation, to "God's method of bringing sinners to himself." It confronts us with the need for atonement, and the only valid means for it. *Fourth*, the sanctuary pointed to the incarnation, God's tabernacling presence with us. Our Lord calls Himself the *temple* (John 2:19).[451] This is why in Israel there could be only one sanctuary, because there is one incarnation. In later years, there were many synagogues; the church is the Christian synagogue (James 2:2), and thus there can be a multiplicity of churches representing the one true Temple of God, Jesus Christ.

In the construction, the work mainly proceeded from the center to the circumference. The Sanctuary itself is built, and then the tent which covered it.

The "taches" of v. 13, etc., are golden clasps; "tenons" (v. 22) refers to pegs; the "sockets" are pedestals (v. 24); "shittim wood" is acacia; "fillets" (v. 36) are connecting rods, although some render it "sockets."

We have here not only a careful account of the construction but also an ordered sequence. Here the work is recorded; in Exodus 40:18-33, the setting up of the sanctuary is described.

While some workmen prepared the sanctuary, others were engaged at the same time in the construction of all the furnishings and utensils which were to go therein.

The Tabernacle was a moveable temple. This is a very important fact to remember, for otherwise we will not understand the very great attention given to its design and construction, both here, in Solomon's time, and again, after the Captivity, with Zerubbabel. In a study of temples in the ancient world, Richard J. Clifford wrote:

> The temple in the ancient Near East is not merely a building which archeology can excavate. Inseparably woven into the fabric of public and private life of antiquity, it performed functions in society which modern students would analyze as economic, cultural, religious, and political. It was at once a municipal or national vault, a seat of learning and repository of sacred traditions, a place of worship and theophany, a platform where the king and his role in the divine governance of the world might be displayed and given legitimacy.[452]

There can be a separation of church and state, but not of religion and life. As Clifford further commented, the temple was "an instrument in divine-human governance."[453] This is why the sanctuary is so important in Exodus and elsewhere. God is the source of all authority and government, and the supreme and only lawgiver. It is a rejection of the whole of Biblical revelation to receive law from any other source. The lawgiver is the sovereign: He is the God of that society.

Clifford cited Ugaritic texts which state that Baal lacked political power before his victory over Yam and Mot and did not have a temple/palace. With victory, he was able to rule, and a temple was built.[454]

John, in Revelation repeatedly refers to God's temple (Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 11:1-2,19; 14:15,17; 15:5-6,8; 16:1,17; 21:22). When he wrote, Jerusalem was still standing, but it was soon to be destroyed. He therefore tells us that the true Temple is now in heaven (11:19). The true Temple, not made with hands, is "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (21:22). The cosmic rule by the

triune God is revealed, and we are a people with access to the very throne of creation and of all eternity.

The concept of a temple is the concept of a center out of which the order of life and being emerges. The Kremlin was the temple, the center of life, for the Soviet regime, and Washington, D.C., is the center of life for the United States. A temple means the core or nucleus of a social order; every society has its temple, a core group, a power-center, or something similar. In each instance, this religious center, whatever it calls itself, governs all of life. Only Biblical faith prevents a humanistic concentration of all power into a temple of man, a new Tower of Babel. As the Biblical doctrine wanes, the humanistic tyrannies and totalitarian regimes arise.

This is why these chapters on the sanctuary are so important. Churches now see their place as on the edges, the peripheries, of society, because they do not see God as the Lawgiver and Sovereign. Their thinking has become polytheistic, and the sovereign state for them is too often the main god.

In Hebrews 9:11-12, we are told that Christ is now the great High Priest in the eternal sanctuary:

> But when Christ arrived as the high priest of the bliss that was to be, he passed through the greater and more perfect tent which no hands had made (no part, that is to say, of the present order), not taking the blood of goats and oxen but his own blood, and so entered once for all into the Holy place, securing a redemption that is eternal. (James Moffatt trans.)

This text is meaningless to us unless we understand what *being* the Temple Himself, and reigning in the Temple, mean, namely, that He "is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). He is the *only* Temple, and the *only* Potentate.

"The fabric of the world" is maintained by those who are the artisans and workers for God's true sanctuary.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Three

The Worship Center, Part I

(*Exodus 37:1-29*)

1. And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it:
2. And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about.
3. And he cast for it four rings of gold, to be set by the four corners of it; even two rings upon the one side of it, and two rings upon the other side of it.
4. And he made staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold.
5. And he put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, to bear the ark.
6. And he made the mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half was the length thereof, and one cubit and a half the breadth thereof.
7. And he made two cherubims of gold, beaten out of one piece made he them, on the two ends of the mercy seat;
8. One cherub on the end on this side, and another cherub on the other end on that side: out of the mercy seat made he the cherubims on the two ends thereof.
9. And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubims.
10. And he made the table of shittim wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof:
11. And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereunto a crown of gold round about.
12. Also he made thereunto a border of an handbreadth round about; and made a crown of gold for the border thereof round about.
13. And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings upon the four corners that were in the four feet thereof.

14. Over against the border were the rings, the places for the staves to bear the table.
15. And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold, to bear the table.
16. And he made the vessels which were upon the table, his dishes, and his spoons, and his bowls, and his covers to cover withal, of pure gold.
17. And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, were of the same:
18. And six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof:
19. Three bowls made after the fashion of almonds in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three bowls made like almonds in another branch, a knop and a flower: so throughout the six branches going out of the candlestick.
20. And in the candlestick were four bowls made like almonds, his knops, and his flowers:
21. And a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches going out of it.
22. Their knops and their branches were of the same: all of it was one beaten work of pure gold.
23. And he made his seven lamps, and his snuffers, and his snuffdishes, of pure gold.
24. Of a talent of pure gold made he it, and all the vessels thereof.
25. And he made the incense altar of shittim wood: the length of it was a cubit, and the breadth of it a cubit; it was foursquare; and two cubits was the height of it; the horns thereof were of the same.
26. And he overlaid it with pure gold, both the top of it, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: also he made unto it a crown of gold round about.

> 27. And he made two rings of gold for it under the crown thereof, by the two corners of it, upon the two sides thereof, to be places for the staves to bear it withal.
> 28. And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold.
> 29. And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary. (Exodus 37:1-29)

As previously noted, Richard J. Clifford called attention to the nature of the temple in the ancient Near East. It was the center of learning and worship, the governmental source for all affairs, both public and private, as well as economic, cultural, religious, and political. There were differences from one country to another, but, in all, the focus of life and all authority was religious. Biblical faith centers on the living God. It is true religion as against the false faiths Clifford cited in his study. At one point, however, these false faiths were clearly ahead of modern cultures: in most cases, they recognized the necessity of a religious foundation for all things. Apart from that foundation, authority would quickly erode.

Since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, we have seen a radical shift in the doctrine of the necessary foundation of social order. Baalism was a naturalistic faith, but it held that its concept of order was grounded in the nature of being.

With Darwinism in science and pragmatism in philosophy, religion, education, and politics, there has been a rapid erosion of the infrastructures of life and society. The religious center and source of law, government, authority, and society has been denied. As a result, the modern world has seen a radical shift into instability. It is symptomatic that a major new school of literary criticism calls itself *deconstructionism*.

In Exodus 37, *first*, in vv. 1-9, Bezaleel makes the ark, under the direction of Moses (Deut. 10:3). *Second*, then we are told, in vv. 10-24, that the table and lampstand were made. *Third*, in vv. 25-28, we are given a report on the construction of the altar of incense and other important furnishings and items.

These detailed reports are not of interest to modern man because for him the center of life is himself. This was implicit in ancient pagan religions; it has now become explicit in everyday life for men today. The center has been shifted into man's inner self.

Because the ark was the most important single thing in the sanctuary, its construction was the work of the master artisan, Bezaleel (vv. 1-5). The most important task was not delegated. Because he was in charge of all the work, every item is described as in some sense his work. Moreover, because it was God's House, all things had to be built faultlessly.

This chapter corresponds to Exodus 25:10-39. In Exodus 38:23, we are told what Aholiab's work was: he was "a cunning worker," i.e., a *deviser*, "an engraver, and an embroiderer."

One scholar, Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., has calculated the weight of the metals used. According to him, the talent weighed about 75.6 pounds, and the shekel .403 ounce; there were 3000 shekels to the talent. His conclusion was that 2,206.88 pounds of gold, 7,604.7 pounds of silver, and 5,352.45 pounds of bronze were used. The total metallic weight was thus 15,164.03 pounds, or a little more than 7.5 tons of metal.[455]

This makes clear why the Tabernacle was moved as little as possible. When it was moved, it was a major operation for the Levites, who transported it piece by piece.

All this makes clear, too, why very early Christian Churches, after the example of the Tabernacle and the Temple, made the church a magnificent building from the earliest days, and why church furnishings were so rich in gold and silver, designed and crafted with remarkable skill. It was regarded as dishonoring to God to do otherwise. God's own words were available to vindicate splendor in the church. Thus, in Haggai 1:2-11, we read:

> 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.
> 3. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways.

8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Some of the people had returned from the Babylonian Captivity and begun the difficult task of restoration. More attention had been given to their homes, some of which had beamed ceilings, than to God's Temple, which remained in ruins. God therefore indicts them and tells them that He has sent drought to punish them for robbing Him of His due. He has plagued them also with discontent, so that nothing satisfies them. Not until they recognize God's centrality in all things will God bless and prosper them. The great and beautiful churches of the past were heavily influenced by the requirements of Exodus. The church was not only at the center of the community geographically, but it was also the finest and most beautiful building thereof.

The common objection to such costly and magnificent churches has been that the money spent in their construction could be better spent caring for the poor. This has been an often used argument. There are two things wrong with it. *First*, there is a very clear assumption that the care

of people is more important than the glory of God. This is implicit humanism. From beginning to end, wherever the Bible speaks of God's House, the emphasis is clearly on the *necessity* for only the finest construction. Like the furnishings, the buildings are to be "for glory and for beauty."

Second, the poor have been best cared for when major stress has been placed on the finest kind of church construction. There is an obvious reason for this: God commands both that He be glorified in His House and in its construction, and also that we care for widows and orphans, for the needy and the sick. Today, the church is derelict in both spheres, towards God and man alike. If we do not render to God His due honor, we will hardly obey Him when He commands charity towards men.

Baron von Hugel said that the essential character of Christianity is that it is "*irreducibly incarnational*." Just as God became flesh in Jesus Christ, so our faith embodies itself in action, in charity, in buildings and institutions, and in every area of life and thought. In the words of S. H. Hooke,

> Those who live by the Spirit, as Paul says, produce the fruits of the Spirit. A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ.[456]

Man has made himself the center of life in modern thought. As a result, in every sphere of life, including too often the church, a man-centered emphasis prevails.

The physical structure of God's sanctuary is a witness on the one hand to the necessary center of all life and thought, and, on the other, the necessity to incarnate faith in action, in wood and stone, in construction and constructive activity in every sphere.

One question more needs to be answered. Some say, why, when God is Creator of all things by His first word, is it necessary to give God such great wealth for the construction of His House?

Why, when He needs nothing? This question betrays false thinking. If a man is rich, does that acquit us of the obligation to pay him what we owe him? Does our need absolve us of our duties? Implicit in all such thinking is an absence of morality. In our time, *need* and *equality* have replaced *morality* and *justice*, because we have abandoned God in favor of ourselves as *the center*.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Four

The Worship Center, Part II

(*Exodus 38:1-31*)

1. And he made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof; it was foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof.
2. And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of the same: and he overlaid it with brass.
3. And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basons, and the fleshhooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made he of brass.
4. And he made for the altar a brazen grate of network under the compass thereof beneath unto the midst of it.
5. And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, to be places for the staves.
6. And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with brass.
7. And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal; he made the altar hollow with boards.
8. And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
9. And he made the court: on the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, an hundred cubits:
10. Their pillars were twenty, and their brasen sockets twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver.
11. And for the north side the hangings were an hundred cubits, their pillars were twenty, and their sockets of brass twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver.

12. And for the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver.
13. And for the east side eastward fifty cubits.
14. The hangings of the one side of the gate were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three.
15. And for the other side of the court gate, on this hand and that hand, were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three.
16. All the hangings of the court round about were of fine twined linen.
17. And the sockets for the pillars were of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver; and the overlaying of their chapiters of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver.
18. And the hanging for the gate of the court was needlework, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: and twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, answerable to the hangings of the court.
19. And their pillars were four, and their sockets of brass four; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their chapiters and their fillets of silver.
20. And all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about, were of brass.
21. This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest.
22. And Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD commanded Moses.
23. And with him was Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen.
24. All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the holy place, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.
25. And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary:

26. A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men.
27. And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.
28. And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their chapiters, and filleted them.
29. And the brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand and four hundred shekels.
30. And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the brasen altar, and the brasen grate for it, and all the vessels of the altar,
31. And the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the court gate, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about. (Exodus 38:1-31)

Sometimes commentators on this chapter limit themselves to statements about the materials used. J. P. Hyatt estimated that 1,900 pounds of gold, 6,437 pounds of silver, and 4,522 pounds of bronze were used. H. L. Ellison wondered if "the immense value in church plate, etc., could not be put to better use, as did the Communists, when they came to power in Russia." (To call the Bolshevik seizures of wealth "better use" is an amazing statement.) Ellison saw the use of those things in the Tabernacle as valid simply because, in the wilderness, "the riches involved...had no other use or value," an incredible comment.[457] Some scholars give higher estimates of the amount of metals used; the differences are due to the variations in the reckoning of the weights at that time, i.e., the talent and the shekel.

The gold used, according to the statement of v. 24, was "the gold of the offering," i.e., the free-will offering. According to v. 26, the silver used came in the main from the half shekel paid by all males aged twenty and older as their temple or governmental tax. This was the only required giving that went into the construction.

In v. 8, we have a reference to ministering women who assembled by groups at the door of the sanctuary. The only other reference to this apparently organized body of women is much later, in 1 Samuel 2:22, where we are told of the sexual abuse of these women by Eli's sons. There seems to be a reference also to these women in the New Testament; in Luke 2:36-38, we are told of Anna, a prophetess. Anna was a widow of about sixty-four years of age "which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."

The text in Exodus 38:8 indicates an organized body of women who assisted the priests and Levites. Anna seems to have been one such woman. In Acts 9:36, we are told of a woman at Joppa named Tabitha or Dorcas (meaning Doe), a woman "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Her death was a great loss to the community of Christians, and especially "all the widows," who were weeping; Dorcas had been a great help to them, providing them with clothing (v. 39). Peter raised Dorcas from the dead and then presented her "to the saints and widows" (v. 41). It is possible that we have here an order of widows whose work for the church and for needy people was a continuation of what appears in Exodus 38:8. In 1 Timothy 5:3-16, Paul discusses the place of widows. His discussions are especially interesting because he lays down rules for an already established and functioning group. Not any widow could qualify; she had to be aged sixty, of good character, not a busybody or a gossip, and also needy. There is every reason to believe that we have an order well known in Israel which was continued by the Christian church or synagogue. Later, the Christian order of widows developed into the nuns' convents, but the age restriction was dropped in the process.

With this in mind, we can see something more in the Old Testament texts. Widows were entitled to receive a portion of the third-year poor tithe according to Deuteronomy 14:29; 26:12-13. In Deuteronomy 27:19, there is an especial curse on all who prevent justice for aliens, orphans, and widows. From both Biblical and non-Biblical Hebraic sources, we see that widows had a legal claim on society. To be mindful of the helpless was a strict moral law. The widows were thus women needing help, who were also used in serving the church.

In Romans 16:1-2, Phoebe is referred to as a *deacon*, although some insist on reading it merely as a reference to her service to the church. However, the text does indicate that some status and authority is given to Phoebe; in v. 12, two other women are also mentioned as laboring in the Lord. We do see in Pliny's letter to Trajan, c. A.D. 110, a reference to young women who are called *deaconesses*. Later, the needy widows and the deaconesses are cited as two separate groups in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. In 533, the Council of Orleans referred to the "widows who are called deaconesses."

What we thus see is important because, *first* of all, at the same time that we see a vast outlay of gold and silver for the sanctuary's construction, we see evidence of care for the needy. Instead of conflict between a wealthy sanctuary and the care of the needy, we see harmony. *Second*, some have questioned the validity of Exodus 38:8 on the grounds that an order of ministering women could not have existed before the sanctuary was built. We find, however, that ancient cultures pre-dating Moses did make provision for the care of widows and their social function. Wherever societies were family-oriented, such care was not unusual. Modern man regards himself as advanced and superior; he finds it hard to believe that people in the past could be superior to himself.

In vv. 1-7, the construction of the altar of burnt offering is described, and the vessels and instruments used with it. This altar is described in Leviticus 4:7 as the altar "at the door." There was no approach to God except by way of atonement. The claim of the altar had to be met first. The offering required had to be given totally to God. The ancient term for it, much used in earlier centuries, is *holocaust*. It is an offering wholly given to God and setting forth total devotedness. The only true *holocaust* is the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Any other usage of the word is sacrilegious. Paul, in Ephesians 5:1-2, refers to Jesus Christ as a wholly given offering on our behalf:

> 1. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
> 2. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

Paul's Greek phrase is the same as that of the Septuagint for Leviticus 1:9.

In v. 8, the construction of the laver of brass is cited. This laver stood between the altar and the door, and the priests had to wash themselves as they entered. It is referred to in Psalm 26:6: "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." The ceremony symbolized innocence. In Deuteronomy 21:6, the elders of the city, when failing to locate a murderer, made restitution and atonement for the murder and washed their hands to indicate their fulfilment of God's requirement whereby their innocence was accomplished. Pilate made wrongful use of this ceremony of innocence in Matthew 27:24. The ceremony also meant that one had cleansed himself of all persons and activities which were false and polluting.

In Exodus 37:1-9, the construction of the ark is described; then in 37:10-24, the table and the lampstand, and in 37:25-28, the altar of incense. In Exodus 38, we have the construction of the forecourt. In v. 21, we see that Ithamar, one of Aaron's sons, had an important part in the work.

As we have seen, Exodus gives us the government and justice of God as the center of social order and of all law. As against this, the modern world has a shift from God to the state as the center. One result is a major instability among men and societies.

While Justinian's *Institutes* represented some dependence on Roman law, it also had a Christian emphasis. One definition tells us of this perspective: "Jurisprudence is the knowledge of things divine and human, the science of the first and the injust." Since World War II especially, Western law has been steadily purged of God's law. One whose views were very powerful in Scotland and America, and whose influence is now being denied and expunged, was John Knox. Of him James K. Cameron wrote:

> Knox made clear the policy which he would wish to have effected in Scotland. To live according to the Word of God entailed by the upholding of the validity for Christians of the Old Testament law and the responsibility of seeking from those who exercised the civil sword their full co-operation and compliance. Knox, of course, was aware that some claimed that Christians lived under a new

> dispensation, for whom the rigour of the Levitical law had passed away. His answer to them is characteristically blunt. "If ye claim any privilege by the coming of the Lord Jesus, himself will answer 'that he is not come to break or destroy the law of his heavenly Father.'"[458]

Where God's law is not at the center of a society, the result is a struggle by men to establish their particular versions of human sovereignties and man-made laws. We are at present in the vast conflict created by this shift of center from God's word and law to man.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Five

The Worship Center, Part III

(*Exodus 39:1-43*)

1. And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the LORD commanded Moses.
2. And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.
3. And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work.
4. They made shoulderpieces for it, to couple it together: by the two edges was it coupled together.
5. And the curious girdle of his ephod, that was upon it, was of the same, according to the work thereof; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as the LORD commanded Moses.
6. And they wrought onyx stones enclosed in ouches of gold, graven, as signets are graven, with the names of the children of Israel.
7. And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses.
8. And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.
9. It was foursquare; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being doubled.
10. And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row.
11. And the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.
12. And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.

13. And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were enclosed in ouches of gold in their enclosings.
14. And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes.
15. And they made upon the breastplate chains at the ends, of wreathen work of pure gold.
16. And they made two ouches of gold, and two gold rings; and put the two rings in the two ends of the breastplate.
17. And they put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastplate.
18. And the two ends of the two wreathen chains they fastened in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod, before it.
19. And they made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, upon the border of it, which was on the side of the ephod inward.
20. And they made two other golden rings, and put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart of it, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod.
21. And they did bind the breastplate by his rings unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the ephod; as the LORD commanded Moses.
22. And he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue.
23. And there was an hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of an habergeon, with a band round about the hole, that it should not rend.
24. And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen.
25. And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates;
26. A bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe to minister in; as the LORD commanded Moses.
27. And they made coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons,

28. And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen, and linen breeches of fine twined linen,
29. And a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, of needlework; as the LORD commanded Moses.
30. And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.
31. And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses.
32. Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.
33. And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the tent, and all his furniture, his taches, his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets,
34. And the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of badgers' skins, and the vail of the covering,
35. The ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy seat,
36. The table, and all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread,
37. The pure candlestick, with the lamps thereof, even with the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for light,
38. And the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the tabernacle door,
39. The brasen altar, and his grate of brass, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot,
40. The hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the hanging for the court gate, his cords, and his pins, and all the vessels of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of the congregation,
41. The cloths of service to do service in the holy place, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments, to minister in the priest's office.
42. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work.

> 43. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them. (Exodus 39:1-43)

Exodus 39:1-32 describes the making of the priestly vestments. This chapter has a sevenfold refrain: "as the LORD commanded Moses" (vv. 1, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31-32); this is followed by the summary statements of vv. 42 and 43, where essentially the same statement appears. Again, in Exodus 40, we have also this sevenfold refrain (vv. 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32), with the same general statement as a prefix in v. 16. The stress on strict obedience is thus very apparent.

In v. 43, we are told that, at the conclusion of the work, "Moses blessed them." A *blessing* and a *benediction* are basically the same thing. A benediction is a form of prayer which invokes God's blessing upon persons, things, or ventures. At one time, both in Israel and Christendom, a blessing or benediction was a central part of every marriage, birth, baptism, and other like events. Whereas now wedding guests congratulate the bride and groom, it was once customary for the heads of households, the husband and the wife, to bless the young couple. The reception line was a blessing line. In Luke 1:21f., we have a congregation waiting for Zacharias' blessing. Among men, or adults, the blessing came from a superior to an inferior and was very important. It meant that the father, pastor, mother, employer, or leader had to see himself or herself as a channel of grace to all under his or her authority. The blessing was the climax of a life of grace to all those within one's jurisdiction. The husband was to be a blessing to his wife and children, the mother to her family, and so on. Esau, normally heedless of most things, was greatly upset that Jacob had gained Isaac's blessing, and, with an "exceeding bitter cry,...said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father" (Genesis 27:34). Blessing and inheritance were cognate.

Things blessed were thereby separated for a holy purpose. The blessing of food is to separate the food to a holy use, namely, to feed and strengthen us as members of Christ's body and Kingdom.

A blessing is received with bowed head as a reverential acceptance of God's presence in and through the benediction. Usually a hand or both hands are raised in a blessing, or, in certain instances, placed on the head of the recipient.

Here we have *a blessing of good workmanship*. The artisans give their best abilities to God's service, and God sanctifies them for doing so: He blesses them. At one time, sculptors, painters, musicians, and others prayed for a blessing as they began their work. Benedictions were once routine for new enterprises; we now have a pale relic of this in ground-breaking ceremonies. Blessings on travelers were also once commonplace. Now all this is very closely related to the concept of the center. When the Biblical faith is central to a society, then blessings go out from the center into all society. At one time, the blessing of boats, of lawyers, doctors, teachers, and others, of new vineyards, orchards, and houses, and more, was routine. All this was related to the premise set forth in Psalm 127:1:

> Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

The triune God must be at the center of all things, and men must look to Him for their blessings, and, in return, bless God by serving Him, by their gifts, and by their faithfulness.

The modern state is now at the center of society, and its forms of blessings are subsidies, grants, and entitlements. Thus, the new temple is the legislature, congress, or parliament, and the blessing is a form of purchase.

In the United States, the shift from the Christian center to a humanistic and statist one was completed in the administration of President John F. Kennedy, who closely followed the anti-Christian premises of Daniel Bell. In particular, two of Bell's premises were clearly stressed by Kennedy. *First*, society's problems were now ostensibly no longer moral ones, but rather technological in nature. A trained bureaucracy of experts would henceforth solve all social problems. No doubt, Bell meant men like himself. *Second*, Bell removed Christianity not only from the center of society, but also from society altogether. It was now apparently peripheral and a matter of taste, comparable to a taste for jazz, or for a particular school of art. The non-Christian state was now the center.

Since then, since Kennedy especially, society has been taught to look to the state as its center, and statist grants or blessings to most sectors of society have proliferated. This has meant a shift from responsibility under God to irresponsibility and a dependence on the state.

In Exodus 39:1-31, the making of Aaron's robes is narrated. The human agency of the transmission of God's blessings to society was the high priest. Hence, his sins were the most serious in God's sight, together with those of any other priest (Lev. 4:3-12). This is restated by Peter: "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). Every detail of the priestly garments, the sanctuary's construction, and the life of the priest is *strictly* governed because *he is required to keep holy the line of blessings to the people*. In Leviticus 10:1-2, we see God's death penalty against two of Aaron's sons for their corrupt practices. To corrupt the center is to contaminate all of society. This makes clear how great God's judgment is and will be on all false centers such as the modern humanistic state.

We have some interesting details given to us. In v. 3, we read that the gold leaf was hammered out and cut into fine thread. In v. 30, the plate of the holy crown for the high priest reads, "Holiness to the LORD." The center is required to be especially holy.

Umberto Cassuto called attention to the deliberate parallels here and in Genesis. Genesis 1:31 is echoed in Exodus 39:43:

> And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

> And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it.... (Exodus 39:43)

This is not the only parallel. Thus,

> And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the fowl multiply in the earth. (Genesis 1:22)

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)
>
> And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it. (Genesis 2:3)
>
> And Moses blessed them. (Exodus 39:43)

As Cassuto made clear, these are deliberate parallels.[459]

God created heaven and earth "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Now this fallen world must be reclaimed and restored by covenant man, dominion man, to God's law and government. The first and key step towards that restoration is to build the sanctuary, the center of God's government, justice, and law. The sanctuary must be kept holy so that the blessing, God's grace and providential care, may go forth to the whole of society. Where the center is false, instead of a blessing, a curse goes out, whether it be church or state which claims to be central. Because this is totally God's world, both curses and blessings are inescapably a part of it.

These chapters on the sanctuary are not popular with the church because they contain no comforting verses or promises, and men want things to speak to the heart. Their test is, does it interest me, and is it relevant to my concerns? This makes man the criterion, not God, and Scripture must, then, for these people, please man rather than declare God's holy purposes. This attitude marked Jews of old, and also churchmen. As Alexander Carson (c. 1776-1844) once observed:

> Baxter says that the Jews were in the habit of casting the book of Esther to the ground before reading it, to express their sense of its deficiency in wanting the name of God; and the thought is quite in the style of Jewish piety, and of the human wisdom of Christians.[460]

God does not speak to interest us, but to command us. We cannot limit our interest to a few favorite passages or books of the Bible. We then hear only what we want to hear and no more.

Note: *Blessings* are so important in Scripture and in life that a further word is of necessity to be noted. *First*, the primary and essential source of all blessing is by God and from God. It expresses His favor, grace, and ministration to men and things. It is the direct and particular act of God, an expression of His especial benediction and care. *Second*, man, the recipient of God's grace and blessings, must pass on that benediction to those around and under him. Because the source of all blessings is God, the validity of a blessing by man rests entirely on faithfulness to God's law word. We cannot bless those whom God curses without becoming ourselves accursed. Our function in blessing is ministerial, not legislative. We cannot create the conditions for a blessing nor violate God's terms. We cannot legislate, because reality is not our creation, and neither law nor benediction can legitimately be our creation. We can minister on God's terms, and we can bless according to His word. *Third*, because blessings are in terms of God's providential government and care, we can, by faithfully living in terms of God's grace and law-word, bless God by serving Him and being His ministers in our respective vocations. Psalm 103 calls for us to bless God with all our being in gratitude and joy. The offertory hymn, "We give Thee but Thine own, whatever gifts we bring," sums up the essence of man blessing God by his grateful spirit and acts.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Six

The Worship Center, Part IV

(*Exodus 40:1-38*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.
3. And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail.
4. And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof.
5. And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle.
6. And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.
7. And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein.
8. And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.
9. And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.
10. And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy.
11. And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it.
12. And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.
13. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.
14. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats:

15. And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.
16. Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he.
17. And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.
18. And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars.
19. And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the LORD commanded Moses.
20. And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:
21. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the LORD commanded Moses.
22. And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail.
23. And he set the bread in order upon it before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.
24. And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward.
25. And he lighted the lamps before the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses.
26. And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail:
27. And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the LORD commanded Moses.
28. And he set up the hanging at the door of the tabernacle.
29. And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the LORD commanded Moses.
30. And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal.
31. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat:

32. When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the LORD commanded Moses.
33. And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.
34. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
35. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
36. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:
37. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.
38. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:1-38)

Within two weeks of two years after the first passover, the sanctuary was completely constructed. It took perhaps six months to complete, according to some scholars. In vv. 9-16, we are told that, when all things were in place, certain things were anointed, and not only things, but also Aaron and his sons. The Greek word for *anointed* is our word *Christ*, the anointed one. The priesthood so anointed is declared to be "an everlasting priesthood" (v. 15); although it ended in its temporary form with the fall of Jerusalem, the everlasting priesthood continues in God's great anointed one, His incarnated Son.

In vv. 1-16, we have the instructions for the erection and the anointing of the sanctuary. Then v. 17 gives us the date of this event. In vv. 18-33, we are given an account of the actual erection, plus the fact (vv. 23, 29) that Moses had the privilege of conducting the first acts of worship. This was commanded by God. Moses was assisted by Aaron (vv. 31-32); in this instance, Moses had priority over Aaron in the sanctuary, as he did also after the golden calf episode, when the temporary Tabernacle was removed from the center of the camp.

Then the pillar and the cloud of God's presence and glory filled the sanctuary (vv. 34-38). In vv. 36-38, Israel is ordered to move and to halt only as guided to do so by God. Man cannot move ahead of, or in contradiction to God, without judgment.

As Ellison observed, it was once axiomatic in antiquity and in Christendom that the temple, which was also a palace, should be central to and dominant in any city or town. (To deny this centrality was to be an atheist.) It was common also in the English city and town that the town was dominated by the church, and the city by its cathedral. The importance of a city depended often less on its size and more on the fact of a cathedral.[461]

The temple or sanctuary is a witness to the fact that communion with God depends upon atonement. If there is no atonement, there is no communion. Because a covenant is a legal treaty, a broken law means a broken covenant and the penalty of death. There can be no restoration of communion and community without the death penalty, without atonement, and the temple system tells us that God provides the sacrifice of atonement. Only by atonement can wrongdoing or sin be covered and blotted out. And since sin is against God, only God can stipulate the form of atonement.

The dedication of things was the first step in sanctifying the sanctuary: they were anointed and declared holy unto God. Then the sanctifying of the priests followed. The essential and great sanctifying is described in the concluding verses: God's presence makes the sanctuary holy.

Lange said of the law in relation to the sanctuary:

> The law of Moses, in its inmost essence, is the objectified conscience of man, or the subjectified, humanized will of God...
>
> The one root of the law is the covenant of circumcision, which from the first pointed to the circumcision, the regeneration, of the heart, Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6. The law, accordingly, is not stationary, but is everywhere a movement in and with the legal man towards regeneration (vic. Rom. vii.); and the method of this movement

> is sacrifice, the fundamental type of which appears in the feast of the Passover-lamb. This festival looks, in its character of sin-offering, peace-offering, and burnt-offering, toward a process of spiritualizing the law, and forms a contrast to the curse offering...[462]

The reference in v. 20 to "the testimony" is to the tables of stone with the engraved Ten Commandments. There is a reference to the testimony again in v. 3, and also in vv. 20 and 21, and in each case to the ark as well. The word has as its root a word meaning *witness*, also a *recorder*, or a *prince*. It means God's personal evidence, His binding law, His personal presence in a covenant statement to His people. The law thus is not an impersonal or abstract code, but the personal witness and covenant presence of God to set forth the premise of His covenant and peace. Central to God's sanctuary and palace is the ark, and, within it, God's law. Thus, we find in the Holy of Holies two things which clearly set forth the meaning of the covenant: the ark with its mercy seat, and, within the ark, God's covenant law. Grace and law are thus inseparable. God's covenant with man is a treaty of law; at the same time, for God to covenant Himself with man is an act of sovereign grace. Any attempt to separate grace and law is destructive of both and a destruction of covenantalism.

God's required center for society is thus the sanctuary, and the sanctuary sets forth the necessity for both grace and law. Man can live without neither; to attempt the construction or development of any social order without either grace or law is suicidal. This is why the Christian state and the Christian church, working together but separate, are essential to society. Neither communism nor community is possible without God's grace and God's law at the center.

Antinomianism thus is hostile to true covenantalism and is erosive of all social order. While proclaiming grace, antinomianism in time erodes it, because, like law, grace is inseparable from God's covenant and His atonement. Grace through Christ's atonement is a witness to the necessity for and the importance of God's law for his Kingdom.

When the sanctuary was sanctified and the tables of the law were placed within the ark, then "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (v. 34). Prior to that, when the erection of the sanctuary

and its sanctification were completed, we are told, "So Moses finished the work" (v. 33). Having done his part, Moses stood back as God with His glory filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter because God's glory filled and covered the sanctuary (vv. 34-35). For the rest of their wilderness stay, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud rested on the Tabernacle, or else guided their journeying (vv. 36-38).

The fire and the cloud did not remain with Israel after their entry into the Promised Land, although a like phenomenon occurred at the dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). Once in the land, God's glory was to be made manifest in their exercise of dominion over the land and their development of Godly order. In the wilderness, the fire and the cloud were a guiding and protecting force, against Egypt and all enemies. Once in the land and no longer on alien ground, the covenant people had a duty to reveal the glory of God in their faithfulness to the covenant law-word. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 tells us how practical, remarkable, and far-reaching that manifest glory will be. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 tells us that God's presence and glory will, with disobedience, be replaced by His judgements and curse. The manifestation in blessings of God's presence and glory requires faithfulness to the covenant law; it requires obedience. There is no neutral ground between God's blessings and His curses. All attempts to deny God's centrality in a culture are efforts to escape from the inevitable alternatives of inescapable blessings and inescapable curses. There is no escape. No center holds other than the triune God. All things else fall apart. The God-ordained center must be reestablished.

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Seven
The Goal of History

In Ezekiel chapters 40-48 the temple reopens in a vision which tells us the meaning of *the center*. Out of the sanctuary there flows a river of life to all the world. Instead of diminishing as it left the altar, the river of life became wider and deeper, and its waters carried healing everywhere.

There is a related vision prophecy in Zechariah 14:20-21; all things everywhere shall be sanctified so that not only men and nations but also very ordinary things shall be "Holiness unto the LORD." We are reminded of Isaiah's declaration concerning the future:

> They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9)

The same prediction appears in Habakkuk 2:14. It is in fact the emphasis of Scripture as a whole.

The goal of history is that the world shall become the sanctuary of God. Even as the eternal, infinite, and omnipotent God inhabits heaven and all eternity without being comprehended thereby, so too He shall inhabit the earth, even as He did the Holy of Holies. The world must become and shall be the sanctuary of God.

We are summoned to be wise-hearted and willing-hearted in the preparation of God's ordained sanctuary, this earth. The center cannot be limited to a place made with hands. It must comprehend the whole earth.

In a sense, the goal of history is a global jubilee, a total restoration: all things under God the King, the end of oppression, the redemption of the land and all things else, the time of freedom and joy for the poor, for widows and orphans. Leviticus 25 gives us the requirements for every half century and sets a pattern for history's goal.

The center must govern our lives and our world, and this means bringing all things into captivity to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). David in Psalm 86:9 declares:

> All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

If a church does not see itself as an embassy of the great center, God in His glory, it is a false church. It is the duty of the true church to seek the preeminence and rule of the triune God in every area of life and thought. To work for less is to deny Jesus Christ.

We began our study of Exodus with Luke 9:28-31, and the reference there to our Lord's "*decease* which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (v. 31). We saw that the Greek word translated as *decease* is *exhoden*, or *ex-hodos*. The word *ex-hodus* means *way*. In John 14:6, we see our Lord identify Himself as the *way*, the truth, and the life. Jeremiah calls God's law "the way of the LORD" (Jer. 5:4). Jesus Christ is God incarnate, which means that He is the Second Person of the Trinity made flesh, and, in that incarnation, the Person, law, grace, mercy, judgment, and, in brief, the fulness of God's King is incarnate.

In our Lord's exodus in Jerusalem, the false center and way are destroyed. Matthew 27:51 tells us that "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" by God's supernatural judgment. The old Temple was a false center; it had profaned itself, and so God profaned it. 1 Peter 4:17 tells us that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Those churches which have made themselves into false and evil centers which point to the wrong *way* shall be profaned by God.

For God's covenant people, our Lord's exodus means going from captivity to freedom, and from the realm of death to that of resurrection. The shortest chapter in the Bible is a celebration of this fact, which in time will be a victory for all men and nations. Psalm 117, in its entirety, says simply:

> 1. O praise the LORD, all ye nations: Praise him, all ye people.

> 2. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

This is the next to the last of the Hallel Psalms, psalms of exultant praise. According to J. A. Alexander, this was a doxology which was used at any point in the service to conclude or accent some great aspect of the ritual.[463] The psalm is addressed to the nations or Gentiles, and to all people, or, all nationalities. The psalmist looks forward to the entrance of all nations and peoples into God's Kingdom and their joyful participation in His praise. The last sentence, "Praise ye the LORD," is our *Alleluia*.

This psalm celebrates the world-wide membership of all peoples in God's covenant. In Romans 15:8-13, Paul refers to this psalm and declares:

> 8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:
> 9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.
> 10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles; with His people.
> 11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles! Laud him all ye people.
> 12. An again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.
> 13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that he may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The great error of Israel was to limit the Messiah to a nationalistic goal. The great error of the church has been to limit Christ to a purely personal salvation, to a concern for individual souls. Premillennialists have combined the two errors; the individualistic emphasis of fundamentalism is united with a belief that the Jewish national hope is valid and that the goal of prophecy is the restoration of Israel and the triumph of the Jewish hope. Both the premillennial and the amillennial views, and the view of Judaism, are man-centered. God's goal is not the enthronement of either individual man or collective man, but of His Kingdom.

Psalm 117 therefore stresses God's "merciful kindness," not man's hope or desire. The psalm is God-centered, not man or society centered.

The center is not man or man's political state, nor man's institutions: it is the triune God and His Kingdom. We are to praise God for "His merciful kindness;" our salvation is all of grace. However, as the construction requirement of the sanctuary makes clear, we cannot have the center and its transforming power in our society or the world at large without free-will offerings.

There has been a long and ongoing debate in the church on free-will versus predestination. In the sense that these advocates of free-will use the term, the idea is a myth. No creature has free-will: one does not choose the day of one's birth, one's disposition and talents, race, sex, or anything else. Free-will is an absolute concept; it is impossible for man; we have responsibility and accountability, a very different thing than free-will. There is a grim irony in the fact that the only references in the Bible to free-will have to do with offerings to God. These references are, other than Exodus: Leviticus 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Numbers 15:3, 29:39; Deuteronomy 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23; 2 Chronicles 31:14; Ezra 1:4, 3:5, 7:13,16; 8:28; Psalm 119:108 (a reference to "the freewill offerings of my mouth").

Let men who insist on their free will demonstrate it in God's appointed way, by giving freely and generously, above and over the tithe, to God's Kingdom work. The Kingdom of God cometh not by disputation! It rests, humanly speaking, on God's appointed way, on the willing hearted and the wise hearted.

When men have their lives governed by the only true center, then their giving will also be so governed. Then the power and effect of the center will radiate to all the world.

Conclusion

Our Lord's Exodus at Jerusalem, Part II

We began our study of Exodus with Luke 9:28-31, and we saw that the word translated as *decease* in v. 31 is in the Greek text *exodos*, the root of which is *hodos*, or way. *Ex* is a preposition, a prefix to *hodos*, so that, very literally, the word *exodus* means *the way out*. Thus, the exodus of Israel is out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Our Lord's exodus is premised on this earlier way out, in that it signifies a mighty deliverance, *the* way out for Christ's new humanity.

According to St. Paul, Jesus Christ is the last Adam, the head of the new humanity recreated by Him. We are made anew in His image to become God's new human race (1 Cor. 15:45-56). We are told that God the Son became man (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11), was totally obedient to God's law, paid the penalty of death for which we were all liable, dying in our stead, and rose again from the dead to become the victorious God-man, King over all creation.

His victory on the cross was over the power of sin and death, both of which mark all men born of Adam. The fact of sin is a very important theological, anti-sociological one, and yet very much neglected in modern thought. The problem more commonly discussed is *crime*. But *sin* and *crime* are two very different things. Crimes are violations of statist law. In some cases, crime and sin can be identical acts which are very different in meaning. Thus, murder and theft at present are crimes because state law prohibits them. As violations of God's law, they are also sins, but they are prosecuted as crimes. Crimes commonly include the failure to meet a variety of statist, bureaucratic regulations which have no relationship to morality in any Biblical sense.

According to Wilhelm Pauck, sin "is an act or attitude by which the reality of God is denied or violated."[464] This at least points us in the right direction, because sin does deny or violate the reality of God; it assumes God's nonexistence and then establishes a man-centered or state-centered moral code and law without any regard for God's law. Such a humanistic perspective

leads to tyranny, because it makes man or the state the source of all definition and the determiner of what constitutes good and evil.

As against this, we are told by 1 John 3:4-5:

> 4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.
> 5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins: and in him is no sin.

This means, *first*, that sin is any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God. God defines good and evil, and God determines law, not man. Because all the sons of Adam are sinners who seek to determine good and evil for themselves (Gen. 3:5), they are all under sentence of death. *Second*, John tells us, Jesus Christ, the sinless One, paid the death penalty for us and took away our sins, so that we are now justified or made legally innocent before God by Christ's atonement.

Next, Christ's victory on the cross was not only over sin, but also over death by His resurrection. Death entered the world as the consequence of sin.

> Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Because God is life, and the source of all life (John 14:6), to depart from Him is to move from life to death. Hence, sin brings in death. Sin is therefore an *exodus* into death. Recently, a homosexual wrote on his hope that science would soon provide a vaccine for AIDS and enable man to continue his march into a full liberation from moral consequences. His idea of an exodus was from morality into a safe amoralism, into a freedom for perpetual sinning. A. Eustace Haydon wrote:

> Man has always been a protestant against death. Even high cultures have refused to recognize its universal rule and projected the hope of an immortal life free from all future assaults of death.[465]

Certainly the subject of death has been a constant concern of men. James Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1911) gave 101 pages to a survey of the subject by a number of scholars. In a thirty-three page introduction to the subject, E. Sidney Hartland began thus:

> The horror of death is universal among mankind. It depends not so much on the pain that often accompanies dissolution as upon the mystery of it and the results to the subject and to the survivors -- the cessation of the old familiar relations between them, and the decomposition of the body. This horror has given rise to an obstinate disbelief in the necessity of death, and to attempts, continually repeated in spite of invariably disastrous experiences of failure, to escape it. Even the most natural and inevitable decease is persistently ascribed to causes not beyond human control; and, on the other hand, legends of the origin of death are familiar and widespread. The picture thus presented of the desperate refusal of mankind to accept a cardinal condition of existence is one of the most pathetic in the history of the race.[466]

In recent years, the scientific attempt to destroy death has been pronounced, and some people have had their bodies frozen at death to await a hoped-for scientific resurrection in the future.

Humanistic thinking separates death from sin to make it a natural and evolutionary fact, whereas for Scripture death is abnormal. It is an aspect of a fallen world order, and, even as the natural order has been made unnatural by sin, warped and defective, so, too, life has been deformed and abbreviated by sin.

When sin and death are separated, as they are in humanistic thinking, the results are very serious. God makes it clear that death is the consequence of and the penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-5). In terms of this, God's law requires immediate death for some sins, as well as death for all habitual

offenders (Deut. 18-21). The penalty of death for sin is set forth for personal sins, and for national sins (Deut. 28), unless there be repentance and reformation. Humanism, however, *separates* sin and death; it opposes the death penalty as itself a crime. Sin is not the cause of crime; instead, environmental factors are blamed for criminality.

As a result, without Christ's atonement and resurrection, a people have no solution for the problems of sin and death. Society's humanistic policies end up as subsidies to sin, and death for justice and moral order.

As a society ceases to understand and honor the meaning of our Lord's death and resurrection, that society begins an exodus from life unto death. The exodus of modern men and nations in the twentieth century has been a grim and ugly march into oblivion.

For the Christian, however, life is an exodus into a new creation, of which we are told

> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Rev. 21:4)

All men are on an exodus, but the directions differ. Apart from Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, the exodus of a fallen humanity is from sin into death. In Christ, the exodus is into justice and life. He is the model for all creation.

Arthur S. Way, in 1901, rendered Hebrews 2:5-10 in these words:

> For it is not to angels that God has subjected the New Humanity of the future, which is the theme of my argument. Witness was borne to this in the prophetic passage, '*What is man, that thou dost remember him? — What is the son of man, that thou dost stoop to him? Thou didst make him but little inferior to angels, with glory and honour didst thou crown him, and didst appoint him ruler over the works of thine hands: all things didst thou set beneath his feet.'* — (Ps. 8:4, 6).

> Now the expression, ‘Set all things beneath him’ must mean that God exempted nothing from this destiny of subjection to him. But, as a matter of fact, we do not as yet see all things subjected to man. But we do see the archetype of the New Humanity, Jesus — Him who has been lowered to the level of humanity, and so made a little inferior to angels — already, because of His suffering of the death penalty of our sin, crowned with glory and honour. This has been done, that his tasting of death might, by God’s grace to us, prove to have been for the sake of all humanity. For it was an act worthy of God, for whose ends all things exist, and by whose power are all upheld, to draw onward to the glory of His presence these myriads, all His sons, and so to make the Captain who leads their march salvation-ward perfect through those very sufferings that He endured for them.[467]

All life is an exodus. Our exodus in Christ is a glorious one.

The Author

Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. He resided in Vallecito, California until his death, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

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