

**The Sermons of
William Francis O'Kelley**

I

The Book of Genesis

The Dignity of Man

Minden, LA
1st Presbyterian, Shreveport,
Cotton Valley, LA (Commencement)

December 19, 1920
May 15, 1921
May 14, 1922

“And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”
Genesis 2:7

About the time that the pioneer explorers of Europe were skirting the coasts of America there lived in Florence, Italy a painter, sculptor and poet by the name of Michelangelo. There is perhaps no greater testimony to his great ability and perseverance than the painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at Rome. Among the many Bible scenes depicted there, one is to be found in which the spirit is represented as floating above the body of Adam and touching it with his finger. Then as though by the power of electricity, life flashes into the body of Adam and thus “man became a living soul”.

That is but a painter’s representation of a great event in the history of the world. Just how man became a living soul we do not know, except what we gather from such general declarations as that found in our text. While the details are unknown, we do know that man’s origin is a noble one, his nature superior to any other in creation, and his destiny glorious. Acquaintance with these facts leads us to a full appreciation of The Dignity of Man.

I

The Nobility of Man’s Origin

It isn’t everyone that believes that man has so noble an origin as that which the text represents.

The recent announcement that a new search will be made for the remains of the most primitive type of man has recalled to mind the age-long discussion concerning the origin of the human race. The expedition, which is to be fitted out by the American Museum of Natural History and other institutions is to be the greatest yet attempted, covering a period of five years following the 1st of next February, at which time departure is to be made, and exploring China, Mongolia and various other parts of Asia. The discovery in 1891 of the part of a skull, two molar teeth and a thigh bone of a sort of ape-man in Java has been regarded by some scientists as being a momentous discovery, and it has led many to believe that Asia was the original home of the human race, and that exploration of geological strata in that region will lead to the solution of many problems of science.

Advocates of the theory of evolution are very anxious to find what has been termed "the missing link" -- the type of animal-man that marks the transition from the animal species to the human. So far, this is lacking, and until this gap has been filled, proofs for the establishment of the theory will not be regarded as conclusive by many earnest seekers after the truth. While some who reject the theory of evolution will admit that variation and even development under some circumstances are seen in certain species of life, they claim that there is no such thing as passing from one species to another.

Undaunted by the absence of facts and the presence of great gaps in the scheme, evolutionists have displayed much zeal in the advocacy of their views. The theory in imperfect form reaches back to the day of the Greek philosophers. Following the revival of learning in Europe, there was some discussion of the subject. But it was not until the 19th Century that the theory took shape and received serious attention at the hands of people generally. The discovery that there is close similarity in the structure of the skeletons of animals led some to suppose a common ancestor. Fossils found in the strata of the earth's surface are said to reveal an orderly development in animal structure. From which facts (and others) it has been assumed by some that through the exceedingly long periods -- hundreds of thousands of years in length -- there has been a slow but orderly development in life on the earth, reaching its highest culmination in the human being.

The man whose work gave greatest impetus to the widespread of the doctrine of evolution was Charles Darwin. This eminent biologist of the 19th Century based his conclusions on three principles; namely, the principle of natural selection, the principle of heredity, the principle of variation. He noticed that off-spring have characteristics that are unlike either father or mother -- the principle of variation; that in many points, offspring resemble both father and mother -- the principle of heredity; and that in remating preference was shown to those forms that were most suitable to existing conditions. Through the principle of variation, new species are said to be started, and these accentuated and developed through the principle of heredity, by which characteristics are piled up; while the principle of natural selection was the determining factor in the matter of choosing the forms to be perpetuated.

The view now held by many evolutionists sets forth the idea that all life has developed by natural laws from a protoplasm which leaped into existence spontaneously millions and millions of years ago. There are missing links in the chain of development, and it is for the purpose of finding these that such expeditions as the one already referred to are fitted out.

Over against the intricate theory of the evolutionists stands the clear, simple statement in Genesis concerning the creation, a part of which forms our text. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul.

Many eminent scientists of our day say that this explanation of man's existence is by far more acceptable than that given by evolutionists. They see many faults in the doctrine. They say that the tendency of the scheme is atheistic, for effort is made, seemingly, to eliminate God, while it is very apparent that any theory of evolution needs

God to make it go. Besides, there must be some pre-existent force, or God to confer the power to evolve and establish the laws by which the ends are secured. It is held that the theory is dangerous to morals since it proclaims brute origin and gives pretext for materialism, godlessness, and sensuality. It is further claimed that evolution does not account for the existence of mind. It has to do with physical development, but man's strength lies in his mind, not his body. Where did man get his consciousness, intellect, taste, conscience, religious belief? Whence came his reasoning power? His ability to use tools, make fire, employ language?

The anti-evolutionist believes that the best explanation by far is to be found in the words of our text. Man's soul may be said to be the breath of God.

Can any origin be more noble than that? The psalmist declared that the Creator had made man but a little lower than God. How satisfying it is to know that there is abundant justification for the belief that we are the creation of God rather than the posterity of the beast.

II The Superiority of Man's Nature

There is something striking in the statement that "man became a soul".

A question that calls forth an interesting discussion is: Which is correct to say, "I have soul" or "I am a soul"? The discussion always leads to the further question: "Just what do we refer to when we say 'I'?" "I think," "I believe," "I hope". In such instances as those given, 'I' evidently refers to the inner man, not to the body: Yet, when I say "I cut wood" it is evident that the body is very prominent in the conception. Hence we conclude that we vary in our use of the personal pronoun and that either assertion may be correct: "I have a soul" or "I am a soul".

The text says that "man became a soul" and it is the soul, after all, that contemplates and reasons and inspires. The soul exalts man above every other animal of creation by giving him the capacity to appreciate the divinely beautiful phases of existence and experience. Did you ever stop to think how far superior man is to the brute? True, there are many animals which at times reveal a remarkable degree of intelligence. But how far inferior all of them are to human beings -- even the lowest type of human being. God simply created the animals and gave them life. He created man and birthed into him something of His own. Our natures bear the divine stamp upon them. To us was given the right to govern the creatures of the world. It is only this superior endowment of soul that enables man to be supreme.

At birth the faculties of the soul are in an undeveloped state. Any of them may be lost through lack of development. Wonderful possibilities lie dormant in the inner man until awakened and used. Being originally the breath of God, the inner man does not function properly until it has been trained to look heavenward and adjust its reasoning, feeling, willing to the mind of God.

Of the seasons of the years Spring seems to be the favorite. It will not be long before the South's short winter will pass and Nature will lay aside her coat of russet brown and don her Spring regalia whose splendor surpasses that of the adornments of Solomon in all his glory. Bowers of roses and a coating of green will transform Minden into a city beautiful. From the fields around will float in an atmosphere laden with the fragrance of violets and honeysuckle; and nothing short of absolute inability will keep some from seeking the haunts of the buttercups and brown-eyed Susans, and listening to the paeans of praise offered by the sweet-throated singers of God's out-of-doors. In the presence of the wonders of God's creation, wherein is man superior to the beast? The grass and the flower of the field are to the ox merely something to be eaten. To the Spirit of Man they speak of God.

You have heard a great orchestra play a work that expresses the deepest emotions of a great musical genius, and while under the influence of the succession of magic strains you experienced tender emotions and lofty sentiments which would lead to worthy living and noble effort.

Oh that we could live up to the resolves of our better moments. What a different record would, as a consequence, pass in review before the minds of those who will sit in the presence of the casket that encloses all that is left of our mortal frame. But we thank God that we still have the faculty which lifts us above the brute and which responds to every manifestation of himself in nature, in sound, in sentiment, in character, in hopes for eternity.

One might then expect that everyone conscious of this superiority would live up to the best that is in him. But alas men and women -- people who have in them the very breath of God -- are living on the level with the lower order of creation. The soul that was designed for a noble work in the world is being begrimed with the filth of sinful indulgence. The breath of God in humankind, which was intended to sweeten the atmosphere of the world, has in many cases become so defiled through man's misuse that it is polluting the air with its impurity.

III The Glory of Man's Destiny

This phase of the subject is related to the text only by inference and therefore need not be enlarged upon here. It was immortal life that God imparted to man at the dawn of creation. If God imparted to man a part of Himself, that part can certainly never die.

Professors Tyndal and Huxley are quoted as saying that man is nothing more than a combination of "molecular atoms" held together by certain forces, which they call "organisms". What will become of man when these dissolve?

“If a man die, shall he live again?” is a question which cannot be answered satisfactorily by the evolutionist. Christ said: “He that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”

The greatness of man’s importance in the eyes of God is evident in what Jesus Christ, His son did to save mankind. Jesus said much about the soul of man. He declared that if a man should gain the whole world at the cost of his soul he has gained nothing. But some people sell their souls for practically nothing.

You have read how the Indians gave their ornaments of gold to the discoverers for glass beads and gaudy toys? In a biography of Christopher Columbus we are told that one Indian gave a handful of gold dust in exchange for a worthless toy and ran away hastily into the forest in fear lest the Spaniards would repent of their trade and take the toy from him.

We may excuse these children of the forest for their ignorance of the relative value of things. But how can we excuse ourselves for selling our souls for baubles and our lives for fleeting pleasure?

Jesus is our hope. By his sacrifice our souls are redeemed from the curse of sin. By his example we are enabled to walk as God would have us walk.

We are told that on one occasion Jesus, knowing that he came from God and goeth unto God, took a towel and girded Himself and performed the humble task of a servant.

To a less degree we may have such a high consciousness and by means of it attain to nobility of conduct and worthiness of ideal.

Conditions of Contentment

Rockdale, Texas

July 15, 1956

“And the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden.”

Genesis 2:8

1 Work

Adam was given the responsibility of tilling and keeping the garden of Eden. He was to keep busy. It is work that keeps people happy. Work is in accord with man's natural instinct. It is compatible with the most ideal existence. There is nothing that affords greater joy than the ability to produce something. The fruitage of effort is always a source of pleasure

It is a mistake to say that work was the curse which God placed on Adam and his posterity for the sin which is committed. The curse is in the fatigue and pain of it. But even so it still remains that work is a blessing. Growth and development of man calls forth work.

“I cannot think of Paradise a place
Where men go idly to and fro,
With harps of gold and robes that shame the snow;
With great wide wings that brightly interlace
Whene'er they sing before the Father's face --
Within a realm where neither pain nor woe,
Nor care is found; where tempests never blow;
Where souls with hopes and dreams may run no race.
Such Paradise were but a hell to me;
Devoid of all progression, I should rot,
Or shout for revolution, wide and far. Better some simple task,
A spirit free to act along the line of self forgot --
Or help God make a blossom or a star.

-- Charles G. Blanden

Much is being written today about what to do when one retires. I find that men are beginning early in life to think about retiring. They talk about that date as though it were the crowning event of life. Plenty to live on, nothing to do.

Only yesterday I read a news report of an address given by a Detroit doctor by the name of Charles Sellers at an annual conference on how physicians can help older people

keep their health. Dr. Sellers said: "Retirement is not the blissful state that some hardworking persons envision. It soon becomes a great bore, and depression sets in. Unless some employment can be found to take the place of previous occupation the life span under such conditions will be approximately two years after complete idleness has been initiated" (July 12, 1956). This conference was held at the University of Michigan.

If one wants to enjoy life, experience contentment, to the end of his days, let him keep working at something that is worthwhile. Jesus once said, "My Father is working still and I am working" (John 5:17 RSV). God delighted in the labor of his hands, and called it good. Jesus was a carpenter.

It could be that Adam and Ever were idle. In the words of Watts: "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do".

2 Obedience

Was it a strange thing that God should have placed in that Garden of Pleasantness a certain tree the fruits of which Adam and Eve were not to eat? That tree was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The two were told plainly that they must not eat of the tree and that if they did they would die. But the Devil fed their minds with false ideas. They deliberately disobeyed the command of God.

What was involved in that act? Unbelief, for the Devil had said they would not die; ingratitude, in turning back on the God who had provided so abundantly for their comfort; pride and ambition, in aspiring to be equal with God; collaboration with a subversive factor; rebellion.

Adam learned too late that happiness consists in obedience. But it looks as if every son of Adam has to learn that lesson all over again by experiences of his own. When boys and girls start out to have a "good time" by flouting the law, by a disregard of the moral code, they may not know it but they are headed for grief and failure in life. One may ask, "If you get away with it, what of it?" but you never get away with it. Sin is never finished when it is committed. It is like a termite that eats at the heart and destroys character.

There comes to mind that old adage: "Sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character, sow a character and reap a destiny".

We should ever remember that there is a way by which we can be rid of the sins of the past and make a new start. That is the Christian gospel. We can be restored to a state of happiness by having the old sins forgiven. That is the only way out.

3
Fellowship

Man by nature is a social creature, and his is not happy in a state of isolation. In the words of the Bible, God said after creating Adam, "It is not good that man should be alone". So he made Eve as a companion.

The greatest fellowship which it was the privilege of Adam to have was with his Creator. But he seems to have preferred the fellowship of the Devil, on the assumption that it would be advantageous to him. Too late he found that the reverse was true.

In our Shorter Catechism, there is a question like this: "What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?" The answer is this "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever" (Q. 19). I am thinking particularly now of that statement, "lost communion with God".

We need an awakened consciousness of God. Man needs God to achieve himself. Man needs something to look up to, to give himself to in supreme allegiance. Man has conquered the earth, produced marvels, and yet he has lost assurance of himself. Without God, life seems meaningless.

Life was meant to be lived in daily relationship with God. Jesus said to his disciples: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

I have seen this in a business advertisement: "We are as close to you as your telephone". There is comfort in the thought that your doctor, the police, the fire department, your family are as close to you as your telephone.

What comfort there is in the thought that God is as close to us as our very breath.

I have known men who had that sense of God's presence and fellowship so strong that they took God into partnership with them in business, did their best to run it according to the law of God, and gave God his share of the profits. They testified that the decision to do that added considerably to their peace of mind. They never regretted the course they chose.

The essence of fellowship is service. No self-centered life is a happy life. Adam became self-centered. He was thinking of his own glory.

The church is a great fellowship. We sing --

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love:
The fellowship of kindred minds

Is like to that above.

“We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows,
The sympathizing tear”.

So we can succeed where Adam failed, thanks to the redeeming work of our Lord by which we are able to make a new start. Whether we have much or have little, we can find contentment in this world by having a work to do and doing it; by living in obedience to the laws of God and the state; and by cultivating a close fellowship with the heavenly Father and the members of the family of God.

What Do You Know?
(Previously: Knowing Too Much)

Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX:
Radio Station KMIL

March 3, 1948
May 2, 1957 (rewritten)

“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.”
Genesis 2:17

The incident in connection with which this command of God was issued is too well known to need any further relating. Our first parents had great range in the choice of their activities, but it was required that they abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But it seems that was the very tree that they wanted most to eat of. In this their descendants are very much like them. There is a strong desire on the part of the human race to want to explore the forbidden paths.

It may be that our age is experiencing this to an unusual degree. There is a great premium today attached to knowledge. There is a thirst after knowledge. The demand for education is tremendous. “What do you know?” is the question of the hour.

The fad today, as a sort of aftermath of the crossword puzzle, is the quiz fad. “Ask me another.”

I have never yet seen where much is to be gained by becoming a mere animated encyclopedia. There is nothing much to be gained by acquiring knowledge merely for the sake of having it. If one has no plan for using what knowledge he has, why go to the trouble of getting it?

We haven’t yet forgotten, and would not have forgotten had we not been recently reminded of it, the tragedy that was enacted in Chicago when two bright youths killed a fellow student to see how it felt to kill, and to see how one acts when being killed. That is getting knowledge first hand. But it was never intended by the creator that we should get that kind of knowledge. What good does that kind of knowledge do one when it is gotten?

It has been said that, “Knowledge is power”, and so it is when it is properly used. Well, it might also be said that it is power when improperly used. And well do we know that knowledge is being used to bad ends today. Therefore, institutions should be slow about developing so much power without character to rightly use it. In my opinion, a godless institution of learning is one of the greatest menaces that our nation has today. I have no doubt that should this type of institution become too prevalent, it will overthrow the nation. What our nation needs today is character and not merely knowledge.

There is a quest for knowledge -- or a certain kind of knowledge that is not only a blow at character, but is indicative of weakness in character. Trying to find out what it feels like to be drunk. How it feels to be a hold-up man. Breaking away from home restraints to see something of the world.

Some people seem to be proud of knowing what they ought to be ashamed to know. They do not know how much less people think of them for that knowledge. There are sophisticated young girls who wonder why they are not liked. One's feeling toward some of this type is that they have been soiled.

I remember once having mission work to do which took me into the homes of the poor. It was a cotton mill settlement. I would call in homes that were poorly ventilated and very unclean. The result was that a repulsive odor pervaded everything. I would carry it with me in my clothes for days afterwards.

Frequenting places of evil to get knowledge is like that. One seems to carry the stench of it with them afterwards.

Pure-minded young men have been taunted with the charge of being "green" or slow. This has sent many young men on the downward course. They resolve to see that which will make them wise.

Not only do the individuals themselves suffer, but others suffer also. Parents and relatives and friends are brought to grief over waywardness. Think of what the exploration of Adam and Eve in the realm of knowledge cost the human race. We also know that those woes of unoffending descendants are added to each generation by the evils of those who have gone before. Children go through the world in sorrow and pain because the parents wanted to know something of evil life.

In one of the week's metropolitan dailies (Chicago Herald and Examiner) there is a cartoon illustrating the idea that life is a rough and dangerous road. It represents a family standing in the sunlit path leading to honor, duty, country, but which path is beset with wild beasts which are named greed, envy, deceit, hate, temptation, vice, slander, robbery, drink, jazz, with a "get-rich-quick" hand reaching out to clutch the family. As I looked at this I thought how much more difficult we make our paths by stopping along the way to become acquainted with these menacing evils. The pity of it all is that some feel that it is helping them along the way. We are merely opening the way to their attack.

Jesus counseled, "Take heed what ye hear". The off-color story that we afterwards wish we could forget. We often reveal our characters by the thing we delight to hear.

The naturalist Kellogg is said to have been walking with a minister friend in New York, where the noise seemed to be greatest -- the elevated, surface cars, trucks, taxis, horns and breaks of automobiles, policemen's whistles, roar of subway through metal gratings. "What do you hear?" asked the naturalist. The minister was impatient. Who could describe that bedlam? "I hear a cricket," the naturalist said. He proved it by finding it. "Marvelous," said the minister. "I will show you something more marvelous,"

he said. He took a worn dime from his pocket and dropped it on the pavement. The tinkle was faint, but everyone within twenty feet turned around to see where the money was.

Take heed what ye read. The Summer is on with its time for reading. Read the great books. The books that are now being turned out are in large measure enlightening in the matters that we would be better off without knowing. Don't read indiscriminately. Get someone to advise you in your reading.

Take heed what ye see. Some of the motion pictures are good and some are extremely bad. They too make some wise in the things that do not help.

Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is dangerous business. In fact, we see the wisdom of the divine prohibition.

The Way of Cain

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

December 30, 1934
May 16, 1948
May 19, 1957

“And Cain was very wroth...and it came to pass, when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

Genesis 4:5, 8

Such is the record that stands against the first person born by natural generation in our world. What a precedent to establish for other sons coming into the ranks of human society.

Cain was the first born son of Adam and Eve, former occupants of the Garden of Eden. Because of their disobedience, they were excluded from that delightful estate. Probably Eve did not fully appreciate the full significance of solemn declaration made by the Lord when he said, “In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children”. It may not have been very long after the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden that their first baby was born. They called him “Cain”, which means “possession”. Eve was thinking, ‘He is mine.’ “I have gotten him with the help of Jehovah,” she said.

It is not difficult to imagine the thrills, the joys, the hopes that crowded into the mind and heart of that mother. Had not Jehovah said that her “seed” should bruise the head of the serpent? Perhaps this little son would be that man of destiny. She may have entertained the hope that he would not have to go through what she had experienced. He could profit by her mistakes and begin life all over again.

If she thought that, she did not know how sin works. Eve had transmitted to this little son the evil bent of her own and Adam’s sinful nature. What a different world this would be if the dreams of motherhood could all be realized. There came a time, no doubt, when Eve wished that Cain had never been born. That has been the tragic experience of a vast host of parents and will continue to be.

A second son was born to Adam and Eve. They named him “Abel”, which means “vanity”. No reason is given for that name. Do you suppose these parents were passing through trouble of some sort? Was their first born already proving to be a disappointment?

The two boys chose different occupations: Cain became a farmer. Abel chose the life of a shepherd. They were both honorable occupations.

The Offerings and the Outcome

There came a day when both brought offerings to God. It may have been an act of Sabbath worship. We do not know the occasion. Cain placed on his altar the products of the soil. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flocks. God in some way manifested his feeling with reference to these offerings. Some think it was by fire sent to consume the acceptable offering. I recall a picture I once saw as a child: there was a fire on both altars, but the smoke of Abel's ascended upward while the smoke of Cain's hugged the ground.

It is very clear that the trouble was not with the offering but with the offerer. Cain's heart was not right. We now know that the acceptableness of any service we render is determined by the attitude and spirit of the persons rendering.

Cain became angry. He began to sulk. "His countenance fell" (4:5). His character was becoming very evident. His feeling became so strong that Jehovah remonstrates with him: "Why are you angry, and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (4:6,7).

Cain had no desire to overcome his sin. He decided to eliminate the person the sight of whom smote his conscience. He persuaded Abel to go with him into the open country, and killed him. This was the climax of a growing hatred. Such acts are not done without much preceding them. There had been much giving away to ill temper in the past. Abel, being a lovable boy, was perhaps the favorite at home. Cain's long jealousy at last found its fruitage in murder.

Jude (vs. 11) refers to certain persons who "have gone in the way of Cain". He there refers to evildoers who try to subvert Jewish Christians. Some of the worst crimes have been associated with religion. This first murder was the immediate consequence of an act of worship. There have been many since who have gone in the "way of Cain".

A famous criminal lawyer is quoted (Interpreter's Bible: Genesis, p. 518) as saying in a newspaper interview: "Everybody is a potential murderer. I have not killed anyone, but I frequently get satisfaction out of the obituary notices."

People have "murdered" by spreading some poisonous gossip resulting in suicides or divorces, with all their grim consequences.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Matt. 5:22).

The Divine Inquisition

"Where is your brother?" asked Jehovah. Then Cain added another sin to those already committed. He lied. "I do not know." He added, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Jehovah pronounced the sentence: "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:11, 12).

Let me say incidentally here that there is a close connection between true brotherliness and soil productivity. Man is his brother's keeper, and has no right to waste and abuse the land which is to provide sustenance for generations that follow. God shut off the productivity of the ground which Cain had been cultivating. A farmer is absolutely helpless if his soil has ceased to produce.

Cain might have become penitent, acknowledged his guilt and been restored to divine favor. He merely complained at his punishment. He then revealed what he really feared: that he would be killed. Jehovah relieved the mind of Cain on that score: he gave him a mark. Some think this sign was a wild ferocity of aspect that produced terror and caused avoidance. He dwelt in the land of Nod. He and his descendants soon pass out of the picture. God worked out his purpose through another line.

Placing the Blame

While Cain complained at his punishment, it was not as drastic as was later meted out to murderers. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6).

I know the mother of six boys who tells her oldest that she learned how on him. That must have been true to some extent of Eve. Her third boy, Seth, was evidently like Abel.

Eve had no books on how to rear children. There were no precedents to help her. There were no child psychologists, no parent-teacher associations, no Sunday schools, no day schools. She may have spoiled Cain. She learned by experience.

In the October, 1956 issue of the Rotarian, there is an article by J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in which he raises the question as to whether the parents should not be punished for the delinquencies of their children. He feels that much of the criminality of youth is due to the failure of parents to train up a child in the way he should go. "The parent who fails his duty by neglecting to provide moral training and essential consistent discipline in the home should be accountable for the delinquencies which emanate from that neglect", he says. Some states, he says, are moving decidedly in that direction. The modern parent has at his command an abundance of resources and advice, which Adam and Eve never had.

The Two Ways

Cain and Abel represent the two great divisions of the human race -- good and bad people. Jesus said that there are two "ways" that lie before men. Each man must

walk in one or the other of them: the straight way that leads to life and the broad way that leads to death.

Christianity in its earliest days was known as a “Way”. At Ephesus, some “spoke evil of the Way” (Acts 19:9), and there “arose no small stir concerning the Way” (Acts 19:23). Paul said, “I persecuted this Way unto the death” (Acts 22:4). That, we may be sure, was the way dimly followed by Abel at the dawn of human history.

The “way of Cain” was a way of self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, carrying in its path many sins, and terminating in woe and unhappiness. We have religions today which recognize Jehovah but which ignore the existence of sin and hence any need for atonement. They come to worship God, but decide themselves how they should come.

The Sinful Retinue

The story of Cain is typical. Even in these supposedly civilized days, many go the limits. Look at the sins of which Cain was guilty:

Envy: His brother was favored and he was not. He did not stop to ask if there was not something wrong with himself. He became the victim of jealousy. So did King Saul, when the women gave greater glory to David. The elder brother in the parable of Jesus was envious of his brother. But Moses refused to be jealous, so did Jonathan, so did John the Baptist.

Hatred: Evil people have a great hatred of good people. There is usually no reason other than that their works are evil and those of others are not.

Murder: The first victim was a martyr. This method of stamping out the truth has ever been a failure. “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Lying: There are some modern ways of detecting lies. Lie detectors. We have what has been called truth serum.

Denial of Social Responsibility: The man bent on evil invariably declares that he is not responsible for his brother man.

The Unrepentant Spirit: Cain protested his punishment, but he did not reveal a penitent spirit. He went on his way absorbed in the ways of the world.

The Curse of Sin

The sinner becomes the victim of fear. We read frequently of the peace which comes to criminals who have tried to flee from crime. They think that every policeman is looking for them. He is hounded at every hand by fears. He is the victim of conscience.

Thomas Hood, an English poet, wrote of “The Dream of Eugene Aram”. This man, a schoolteacher, murdered a man. After that, he could not look into the faces of innocent children. He buried the body, but he had to dig it up; he plunged it into a stream but the stream ran dry; he covered it with leaves but the wind blew them away.

“I knew my secret was one
The earth refused to keep;
Or land or sea though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.
And lo! The universal air
Seemed lit with ghastly flame;
Ten thousand thousand dreadful eyes
Were looking down in blame.”

Cain evidently became employed in other pursuits. He became interested in the work of his son and grandsons, no doubt. But it can be easily imagined that in the quiet times, the voice of conscience would speak.

The Way of Life

What will keep people right? Not family. Not religious ceremonials. Not religious persecution. Only the love of God through Christ, of which the “blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain” was symbolical.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Is. 1:18).

The Ills of Irreligion

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

October 16, 1927
August 14, 1938 (rewritten)
Oct. 26, 1947

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.”

Genesis 4:6, 7

The two sons of Adam and Eve came before the Lord with offerings. Abel a keeper of sheep, brought of the firstlings of his flock as an offering; while Cain, a tiller of the soil, brought of the fruit of the ground. The Lord approved of Abel and his offering, probably by consuming it with fire; but he did not approve of the offering of Cain. Cain was angry. He showed it in his countenance.

Some difficulty has been encountered in arriving at the reason for the divine preference. But it seems clear that even at this early stage of human history there were at least two offerings employed: the bloody sin offering and the thank offering. Both were later incorporated in the Mosaic law established on Mt. Sinai.

If this be the case, it is evident that Cain deliberately refused to make the sin offering, and substituted the thank offering. Whether this was prompted by the spirit of jealousy or the feeling of self-sufficiency, we may not be able to determine. But it is apparent that his feeling towards his brother as the consequence of his being rejected by Jehovah was anything else but commendable. He was in an ugly mood.

Then the Lord came to Cain and said, “Why are you angry, and why are you downcast? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.”

What the Lord seems to say to Cain is this: “If you were guiltless, your thank offering would be sufficient; but as thou art a sinner, you need to offer the available sin offering, and thereby retain the honors of your birthright” (Jamieson, Fausett, and Brown; also B. H. Carroll).

Jude (vs. 11) speaks of the “way of Cain”, which evidently meant the way of self-righteousness. Those who go this way deny the need of atonement, and propose to manage their own course and destiny. That is a popular way today.

I The Fact of Frustration

1. There was an evident disruption of the poise and peace of the mind and heart of Cain. Discomfiture, discomposure, wretchedness, sulkiness characterized his behavior. He was definitely out of sorts.

Everyone has seen the telltale expression on the face of a child who has not been behaving properly. A mother is quick to see this and asks, "Now, what have you been doing that you ought not to do?"

This is not limited to children. So much is written on the faces of people. You can look at them and tell: much that has not been right lies behind them.

There is anxiety, a sense of failure, a dread of impending disaster. There is unhappiness.

People are cursed with discomforting thoughts, with self-condemnation, with annoyance from an outraged conscience. There can be no lifting up under the circumstances. People talk about Christians being long-faced. I do not know any persons whose faces are longer than those who are conscious that they have been doing wrong.

2. There was evident loss of moral sensitiveness. Cain reached the point where he was willing to take the life of his own brother. He would probably have once thought it unbelievable that he would ever get to that point. Judas came to his nefarious deeds by degrees.

There are people in the world -- some we have known a long time -- who seem to get to the point where they will hesitate at nothing in the way of wrongdoing if they feel that such will bring them temporary advantage. Having known these people in other years, we are amazed at their consciencelessness.

The trouble is that they have been robbed of their ethical sensitiveness. This, in part at least, must be what James meant when he said, "Sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death" (1:15). Paul declares that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23); and he speaks of people being "dead through trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1,5).

There is not only demoralization wrought through sin, but an atrophy of the whole moral nature, its final consequence.

II Sin as the Cause

Jehovah tells Cain that he has not been doing well, and that this is the cause of his non-acceptance and of his present unhappy state.

In recent years there has been a decided tendency, even in religious groups, to be less emphatic in denunciation of sin. There has been a tendency to discriminate between moral turpitude and indiscretions. The former is regarded as sin. But the psychologists are coming to realize that certain courses of action lightly regarded from a moral point of view are disastrous in the course of human life, as for instance fear.

Sin is any want of conformity unto, as well as transgression of, the law of God. When we fail to do what we should do we sin, and that sin will leave its mark upon us. Frequently that neglect, that failure, is small in its beginning. It nevertheless does its devastating work.

Dr. Wilbur Chapman writes that he was once in the offices of the Southern Pacific Railway in San Francisco, when the General Passenger Agent asked him if he had seen the big trees of California. He replied that he had seen them from the car window. The agent then produced a measuring line by which he had measured one of those big trees, and showed that it had measured 105 feet in circumference and 35 feet in diameter. The height was so amazing that he hesitated to suggest the figures. Then the agent said to Dr. Chapman: "How large do you think the seed of a tree like that might be?" The minister suggested that it must be of enormous size. Then the agent produced some, pouring them out into his hand. They were smaller than lettuce seed. What seems to be an inconsequential thing often has tremendous possibilities.

The cause of the hangdog look, the loss of poise and peace, and the absence of moral sensitiveness and other unhappy developments, are traceable to sin. It may be slight in the beginning, but it eventually plays havoc.

III Some False Remedies

Among the methods which we employ to get away from the burden of the consequences which our course has brought upon us, there are two that might be mentioned:

1. Disavowal of Responsibility. Putting the blame on something else. Even when the sin is admitted, the blame for our own sins is placed upon something else. Hard luck, heredity, environment, misunderstanding, the evil designs of others are some of the usual scapegoats. Aaron and the golden calf is a classic example. When Moses remonstrated, Aaron said: "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief...they gave it (the gold) me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (Ex. 32:22-24).

I think I read the other day in a newspaper account of the confession of one of the Minden bank robbers, that although he had been wild in his past days, he was "going straight" until he met up with the other men who overcame his god intentions and persuaded him to join them in the proposed robbery.

This way of escape is of course childish. It is a sign of immaturity. I heard a man tell recently of an incident in which one little girl kicked another in the face. When taken to task for the deed, the naughty little maiden stoutly maintained that she did nothing but hold her foot out to protect herself and that the other girl ran her face into it.

2. Focusing attention on the sins of others. Misery loves company. The man who has a beam in his own eye finds consolation in discovering even a mote in his

brother's eye. Judas could talk about sinful waste on the part of the woman who poured out her ointment, while he himself was taking what was in the treasury of the apostles' band.

Now and then a man or woman who is not living right finds a grim pleasure in hearing that some person trying to live right has made a misstep.

But that is not going to help one's own situation.

3. Self-castigation. The tendency to exact from the tortured self an expiatory penalty. The itch for chastisement seen in children. Sometimes "accidents" are subconsciously designed, deliberate exposure to situations that lead to suffering. A carelessness as to what might happen to one.

IV

The True Remedy

"Sin (offering) lieth at the door." Confession and atonement through Christ. Religion is the true way out of the trouble.

Professor Allen of Hampden Sidney College reminds us in a recent article that William James, a distinguished psychologist of Harvard University, produced his epoch-making book, "Varieties of Religious Experience", in which he made the tragic error of portraying the religious life as largely an abnormal experience. He says the modern Christian psychologists are insisting that the spiritual life is the only normal, natural, healthy life, and that it is irreligion that is abnormal and pathological. Such are the statements of such men as John Rathbone Oliver in his book "Fear", and Dr. Walter R. Miles, leading American psychologist, in his recent book, "Psychology at Work", in which he says: "Recent psychological study... indicates that a religious philosophy of life is apt to offer most people a more favorable basis for personality adjustment and development than any other" (Union Sem. Rev. Oct. '37, p. 36). Then we have the even more emphatic statements of Dr. Henry C. Link in his widely read book, "The Return to Religion".

Another book which Dr. Oliver has produced, "Victim and Victor" is about a minister who was deposed for reasons not given and who was seeking to be restored to his office again. While he was prevented from achieving this end because of the manipulations of others, he did become the victor in his own soul. But in this process, Michael Mann became the source of great help to others, among them a woman, who had loved unwisely and too trustingly. She had come to the doctor in her desperation and asked for immediate deliverance, regardless of its consequences to her. She did not care to live under present circumstances. The doctor instead took her to Michael Mann, who, as they approached, was reading aloud a collect:

"Give unto thy servants that peace which in the world cannot give, that... we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour."

When she heard this she drew back. "I'm going. No religion for mine... I may be fallen, all right, all right, but I'll pick myself up on my own feet and hands."

But he held her, introduced her to Mann, who in a wonderfully tactful and sympathetic way helped her to see things differently.

Her contemplated course was foolish.

It was not so much a matter of what other people might say or think, as a matter of one's personal relationship to God, to the best that is in oneself, and the future.

After she saw that, she was so much at peace that she found satisfaction in religion. The author says she would have gone as a missionary to India or played a cornet in the Salvation Army, if Mann had suggested that either was her duty.

The Blunder at Babel

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

December 4, 1921
December 1, 1929
September 7, 1947 (rewritten)

“And the whole earth was of one language....And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name....And the Lord came...confounded their language....scattered them.”

Genesis 11:1-9

After the flood, there was but one language throughout the known world. The leaders of the people conceived of the idea of a world empire, with a great city and a great tower as its center. Here we have a very early effort at the centralization of power. The divine plan seems to have been diffusion, to occupy and subdue all the earth. Nimrod may have been another who aspired to world domination. It is stated that he was a “mighty one in the earth...and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...in the land of Shinar” in the rich valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris. He and his descendants rebelled against the command of God to replenish the earth. They determined to prevent scattering.

Their course was displeasing to God. He thwarted their unwise plans by the simple device of confusing their language, so that they did not understand one another. The people then became scattered.

It is stated that this is the only historical record we have of the means by which the world came to have many languages spoken in it. This explains what is otherwise an enigma in the realm of philology -- the diversity of language with natural persistency of form. We need not suppose that 70 languages came out of this confusion, but only the few generic forms which gave rise to all subsequent varieties of language. We can now understand the affinity which most known languages seem to have to one common speech.

Understanding Necessary to Unity of Effort

If people are to unite in any undertaking, it is very necessary that they understand one another. Failure to understand begets distrust. This is true even in small circles. When things are done or said which we do not understand, we immediately become suspicious. We do not like to have people converse in a language unfamiliar to us, or in tones that we cannot hear. That basically is the reason why whispering in company is bad manners.

A common language is a great promoter of unity of thought and purpose. Every nation that has striven for unity within its bounds has sought to have the people speak one

language. In this democratic country of ours, we insist that our children, whatever be their ancestral tongue, shall be taught to speak and read English. In totalitarian countries, the use of foreign languages is forbidden.

The nations of the world have been separated by diversity of language. They have been and are still suspicious of one another. Differences arise through failure to understand. Had there been one language in the world, there might have been less understanding. We like to tell how we live in harmony with the people of Canada, without a fort anywhere along the border. Canada and the United States speak the same language. The line separating us from Mexico is dotted with forts. We are on very good terms now, but we have not always been.

The Process of Developing Better Understanding

We develop mutual understanding by improving the means of intercommunication. We are so accustomed to being able to mingle socially and in a business way, with full understanding, that we fail to realize the value of the means of communication. Just imagine how helpless the people of Babel were as they went about their work without having a way to make their thoughts known to one another. How lonely each must have felt even in a great crowd.

Think of the mechanical means by which we express thought: facial lines, attitude, gesture, tones of voice, words, writing, printing, art, telegraph, telephone, music. By means of these, human personality is developed. So also the conscious life of any community is formed. The literature, the art, the music, the institutions of a nation make that country into one great throbbing, living, compact whole.

The history of the growth of communication is interesting. It is all gone over again to some extent in the life of every human being. A little baby, before it ever knows how to speak a word, soon learns how to make its wants and wishes known by expression of face or gesture. Can't you now see a little child holding out his arms for his bottle and restlessly moving his fingers? He soon learns by the tone of your voice how you feel towards him. Then he learns to read your face. What a wealth of information can be found in a human face. Then comes speech. The child starts out making a language of his own, until he finds that one is already made for him. Fond parents and grandparents sometimes adopt the coined "word" of the "smart" baby, and perpetuate them in the household conversations.

It has been said that "a word is a vehicle, a boat floating down from the past, laden with the thought of men we never knew and never saw". The study of words is most interesting. The current sayings of the time are but crystallized public opinion.

Then comes writing. That is necessary to the preservation of history, thought, and the progress of science. Such is also true in regard to religion. The placing of the Scriptures into the hands of the people was one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of the world. Printing has diffused thought. Wonderful advance had been made

when it became possible for Luther's theses in 1517 to be known over Germany in a fortnight, and in a month to be read in every school and convent in Europe.

Later developments: Railroads, telephones, telegraph, phonograph, motion pictures, and last but not least, the radio. These make possible the larger organization of Society on the bases of sympathy and intelligence. Public consciousness is no longer limited to small communities.

The persuasive influence of the newspaper. Each morning father screens himself from the rest of the family by means of the newspaper. But he enjoys a sense of world consciousness, thinking along with the rest of the world over the problems that are common to all. The newspaper is made up chiefly of organized gossip.

Organized public opinion in politics is democracy. Democracy is dependent upon rapid diffusion of knowledge. The 13 original colonies had very imperfect means of communication, as compared with that which we enjoy today. But what they did have enabled them to hold together.

Achieving One World

We have been talking a great deal in the last few years of our "one world". In a sense, it is one world. We have not yet achieved unity in this one world. But we are making progress. We are closer to one another than we have ever been before. When a man can fly around the world in 73 hours, we see how small the world has gotten to be. We hear voices by radio from over the whole world. Rubber companies have programs over radio which they say are being listened to by their representatives in the rubber plantations of the South Pacific, India, and Liberia. Missionaries in the heart of Africa now have radios and keep in close touch with the outside world.

Whatever else may come out of this, it seems to me that there is certain to come a demand for a universal language. The radio has already had a noticeable effect on language and manner of speech. There is certain to be a demand for a single vehicle of expression. We will probably never see the day of its realization. But it is certain to come.

Should that come, we will return to the situation at Babel. There will be one language. But will the nations of the world, and the races, learn the lesson of the blunder at Babel?

What Was Wrong at Babel?

Just learning to speak one language will produce one world. The people at Babel did not speak one language. They realized, however, that they must have a unifying motive. They made the mistake of selecting the wrong unifying factor. They set out to build a great city and a great tower and to make for themselves a name. Evidently the Nimrodites were fired with the idea of racial supremacy. They felt that they were destined to rule the world. It was self-worship. It was a manifestation of self-sufficiency.

It was an “I-am-the-Master-of-my-fate” spirit. It was misdirected ambition. A desire for exaltation of self. God had no place in the undertaking.

Much time could be given over to a recountal of similar instances in the history of the world since. We do not have to go back beyond our own recollection to find instances. Let us call the roll: Japan, Mussolini, Hitler. Now we have another power that hopes to accomplish this unworthy aim: Russia.

The soviet creed is Godless. Religion is condemned. The state is worshipped. Instead of a city or a tower, the Soviet Union would build a great communistic world, with state ownership and control of productive property. There are plans for the greatest army, navy, air force in the world. It is seeking to infiltrate the whole world. We do not believe that God will sanction a program like that.

On the other hand, we are trying to achieve one world through the United Nations. While the charter of the United Nations is founded on moral conceptions of justice and freedom, there is not the recognition of God that we would like to see. So long as we keep our motives true to the divine purpose, we will be sure of ultimate success. But if we simply create a combination of nations merely for the purpose of getting a greater name than Russia, we will fall.

America stands today in a position of peril. Our strength will be a temptation. There is the tendency today to secularism that is alarming. God has blessed us. What are we going to do with that blessing?

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

A Personal Application

Let us bring that down to the individual. What is your aim in life? It may be to make for yourself a name, a reputation. It may be self-glory. “Men’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”

“Unite my heart to fear they name” (Ps. 86:11).

The Lure of Worldliness
(Previously: The Lure of Moral Laxity)

Minden, LA	May 31, 1925
Minden, LA	April 18, 1937
Winnfield, LA	May 28, 1937
Tallulah, LA	Oct. 28, 1937
Cedar Grove Church	July 17, 1942
Belcher Church	Oct. 22, 1942
Colonial, Dallas	Nov. 16, 1947
Streetman, Texas	Oct. 14, 1948

“And Lot...pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

Genesis 13:12

While the exact spot on which Sodom was located is not now known, it is reasonably sure that it is somewhere within the compass of the Dead Sea. But when Lot looked out over the plain from his lofty eminence, it seemed to him to be that “garden of God”. It is probably that Lot was thinking primarily of food for his cattle. And as cattle and sheep probably constitute the medium of exchange, he had visions of becoming even richer than he was.

There were several cities in that plain. Sodom and Gomorrah were the two most prominent. Even in that day, they were wicked. In pitching his tent towards Sodom, Lot was not influenced, I am sure, by the wickedness that he must have known to be there. Lot was a good man. He, with Abraham, had left his father’s house to follow Jehovah. In all probability, it was not his intention to live in Sodom: But it is natural for man to feel that he can successfully resist the temptations and avoid the pitfalls into which others have fallen. Here was a chance to “make some money” -- too good to lose. He saw the value of that rich land. He doubtless felt that there was no reason why he need be contaminated by the evil of the city. He could dwell in the country, or smaller towns, he thought, and carry on his trade in the city when it became necessary to dispose of his cattle and sheep and to buy other supplies. But the idea of living in the city doubtless never crossed his mind.

In all probability he settled in the country or in one of the small towns. And then we can imagine what happened. He was told, no doubt, that if he would but come on into the city, he would get so much more out of life. He was doubtless told that he was needed in directing the affairs of the city. He may have been chairman of the Board of Directors of the First Bank of Sodom, and he may have also been a magistrate in the city. His daughters, too, and his wife prevailed upon him to leave the country and take up

residence in the city. The result was that Lot soon became a resident of the city, and we see that he paid a tremendous price for the choice he made.

We do not need to spiritualize this incident to learn a valuable lesson. There is still the tendency to move towards the large cities of the land. That there is evil there is known to all. The demoralizing influences to which the young are subjected are tremendous. And yet it is natural to want to go there.

Recently two young men, members of the families in northwest Louisiana known for uprightness and affluence, were charged with participation in an escapade that distressed and humiliated their families. In a letter that came to our home, a man who knew both families remarked that “this is what comes of raising boys in town, with plenty of money and nothing to do”. Many a man thinks, perhaps, when he moves into a large city, that he is giving his children advantages, where he may be ruining them. There are modern Sodoms, and a man should be careful before he pitches his tent in their direction.

But let us not stop with this application. The name Sodom has become a byword. It has come to stand for worldliness and sin. In this sense then, we may live in the country and still pitch our tents toward Sodom.

Just as it was probably not in the mind of Lot to reside in Sodom, so it is not the intention of some of us to become immersed in sin and worldliness. But we persuade ourselves that it is for other reasons that we are justified in pitching our tent in that direction. So long as Lot was under the influence of Abram, he was all right. It is a perilous step that we take when we leave the environment that is wholesome and safe for that which is hurtful.

In these modern times, there are people who engage in activities on the Sabbath which have been declared at least questionable from the standpoint of spiritual health. But now and then there is a modern Lot who finds it to his advantage to disregard the warnings of those who have had experience. He will say that it is not his intention to surrender his Sabbath. But he finds that afternoon sports make him physically fit, and more able to enjoy the evening service. Influences are however soon brought to bear upon him, and he finds himself neglecting his church, choosing his sports in preference to the service. He did not intend at first to live in Sodom, but he soon found himself altogether in and a leading citizen thereof.

The Sodomitic characteristics of modern times are described by one writer as follows: “Sunday picnics with Sunday pleasure seekers; near to the heart of nature, but far from the heart of God. Neurotic nights, with jazz music, jazz company, jazz environment. Suicidal days of multitudinous receptions, parties, joyrides. Plays and pictures that seek to glorify the madness of a mad world and to make heroes and heroines out of blotched and botched lives. Saturated with false ideals and with the atmosphere of a superficial world” (Rev. A.G. Reynolds, Chr. Herald, 1/24/25, p.8).

Young people and even older people at first look upon this frenzied life with no intention of entering it. But soon they begin to feel the pull of it and then the collapse. It has been said that the mental steps in a fall are: sensation, association, fascination, ruination. A wave of drinking and immorality has been sweeping over us, and so great is it that observers declare that there is no change for the average boy or girl that gets caught in the modern social whirl.

Common sins of the day are swearing, drinking, gossiping, vulgar talking, and irreverence. There are likeable people who do these things. In pitching our tent towards the Sodom of their companionship, we have no intention of doing these things. But constant association with those who do these things will tend to make these evils seem less abhorrent. It is a human tendency to imitate weaknesses rather than virtues.

I have heard of bathers in the surf who, because they kept looking seaward, drifted farther and farther from land. It was not their intention to get out in the deep. But soon they found themselves being pulled out by the undertow. Then only outside help could save them.

It has been suggested that Judas never intended to go as far as he did when he first began to trifle with the money entrusted to him. Finally the Lord himself was not too sacred to him to pawn for gold. The young man who pitches his tent towards the Sodom of misappropriated trust funds will find himself sooner or later in the swirl of frenzied financing facing the certainty of his own ruin.

A newspaper man, writing in a New York paper (Times, 4/5/25) concerning Gerald Chapman, called "super-bandit", "master mind of the underworld", recently convicted of murder (April 4, 1925) and sentenced to hang at sunrise June 25, says that this man pitched his tent toward Sodom at an early age. He deliberately adopted a materialistic philosophy of life at an early age, without thought of God or conscience. He decided that he would have the good things in life at any cost. "To him a few great moments of excitement and pleasure were better than long life and peaceful happiness. He has had his 'great moments', and now he is condemned, as an enemy of society to pay for them". He was 19 when first convicted of being a petty thief, but perhaps his criminal record begins earlier. A small burglary, grand larceny, robberies, swindles, bootlegging, mail robbery and murder make up the long list of crimes. And though he is credited with having a master mind, he was not wise enough to see that he is playing a losing game.

In the magazine section of the New York Times (May 24, 1925) a writer presents the results of a questionnaire sent out to five famous historians, in which the general inquiry was made as to whether our civilization will survive. The wish was to know the opinion of close students of the past regarding the probability that the present order faces downfall similar to that which overtook Greece and Rome.

Among those whose opinion was asked for was Professor J. Holland Rose of Cambridge, the great historian of Napoleonic times. While this eminent authority does not think that destruction of our civilization is conceivable in the sense referred to, he does see hurtful influences at work. He says,

“Among the dangers menacing our civilizations I would name the crass materialism of large sections of the population, which induces a selfishness and recklessness destructive of all the best qualities in politics and industry. Western culture has been built up by slow, patient endeavor; and the virtues of self-denial, thrift, and perseverance now seem at a discount. I attribute these defects mainly to the decline of religious faith and to the prevalence of a desire for pleasure, often of a sensational kind....It is necessary to go back to the ideals of religion, home life, and individual culture which made the greatness of our forefathers.”

(Introductory)

In response to inquiry on the part of one of his readers, that “perennially buoyant globe trotter” Richard Halliburton names the city which he thinks the wickedest in the world. Before doing so, he admits that there are several which call for special mention as wicked cities. He names, for instance, Buenos Aires, the reputed center of white slave traffic; Rio de Janeiro, center of commercialized vice; Paris and Berlin; Marseilles, with its large criminal population; and Shanghai.

But Cairo, Egypt, according to Halliburton, is the wickedest city of the world. It is the “capital of sin”. He gives us a picture of the city as it is today -- rowdy, lecherous, shameless, debauched, depraved. The pathetic fact is that tourists, well supplied with money, are pouring into this city of profligacy and debauchery, first as sightseers and then as participants. For it is a rare person, says Halliburton, who “on first encountering these Cairo vice-merchants, does not fall for one of their propositions.” So, evidently, it is a perilous thing today for one to pitch his tent towards Cairo.

But there are a number of righteous people in Cairo. There are Christian churches there.

There was no church in Sodom.

The Cost of Compromise

Last December, Channing Pollock, American author and dramatist, wrote an article in the North American Review in which he says that the only heaven that interests him is the one that could be made right here. There are others to whom “hell” is merely a verbal safety valve for high-pressure tempers. But we may be sure that there is more to both than that.

Sodom may have looked like heaven to Lot when he pitched his tent in that direction. But he found that it was anything else.

Hollywood is a name to charm with today. To some young ambitious souls it means all that heaven has meant to others. Fascinated by the performance and glory of screen stars, young and old find themselves drawn toward that Mecca of limelight seekers. But there is tragedy there -- tragedy for those who fail to make a place for

themselves, and who instead accept a compromising mode of existence. There is tragedy for those even whose names appear as headliners, for not infrequently their lives are lurid affairs, filled with whimsical and extravagant indulgences, and eventually with utter disgust. But still there is a great stream of aspirants who today are pitching their tents towards -- Hollywood.

But Lot did succeed for a time at Sodom. He was rich when he went there. He probably became richer. He was probably the richest man in the plain. But he came out with -- nothing.

Study, if you will, the histories of our most prominent American families. Each generation drifts a little further away from the path of rectitude. Peril comes with prosperity. The current press bears witness to the fact that one of our greatest national problems is the rich but worldly descendant of sturdy, high-principled, upright parents and grandparents.

The extent to which Lot is lost by his sojourn in Sodom becomes apparent as we read on in the record.

His wife, who had come out of Ur with him, no doubt a good woman after a fashion, had fallen in love with Sodom. She moved into Sodom and then Sodom moved into her. She lingered too long, in obedience to the tug of her heart. She was scorched and encrusted by the burning flood, and remained on the spot.

His married daughters could not be moved. They stayed with their husbands in the city.

The unmarried daughters did live, but they carried with them the depraved standards of morality that had prevailed in the social life of their city.

They became mothers of Moab and Ammon, two heads of races, which wandered away from Jehovah, became idolaters and worshippers of Chemosh and Baal-peer. They became enemies of the children of Abraham.

The Place of Refuge

Flee to the heights. The hill country is better. There is where Abraham remained faithful. We find Lot selfish even in his hour of distress. He pleaded that he might go to Zoar, instead of the mountains. But he soon lost faith in Zoar.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.”

It is high time we thought of the consequences that will come of any departure from the paths of godliness and right living. We pay the price ourselves, but our children pay a great price.

There is perhaps no more potent force in our day than the moving picture. They are affecting the lives of our young people more than anything else in America. Children are lined up at the ticket windows of our Dallas theatres long before the hour of opening. Look, if you will, at the pictures they go to see. They are pictures that flout the old ideals

of modesty, chastity, and chivalry. Low ideals and evil imaginings are brought home. A child looks out upon his real world with the distorted mind that movies have created.

The Roman Catholic National Legion of Decency is doing something about this matter. We as Protestants are derelict. It is high time that the voice of Christian people were raised in condemnation of the crime portrayal, intense love making, and drinking with which most of the pictures produced reek.

Books which indulge in the obscene and indecent, and which use the name of God in the most blasphemous kind of profanity, become best sellers. The patrons are in large numbers Christian people. In fact, I saw one of the bookstores of Dallas, purportedly a church sponsored institution, with a window full of a book of this kind.

One says, "I do not approve of such things". But he reads the book and goes to the picture show that reproduces it. The movie people are led to think that such things are what the people want and they have figures to show that the theatres are crowded with people who want to see the picture.

So long as we countenance this kind of thing, which moves on steadily towards the worse and worse and the people get accustomed to the evil, we are pitching our tents toward Sodom -- in fact we are in Sodom and becoming a part of its thought and life.

There is the matter of alcohol. Alcohol's grip on the nation is alarming. Its use is becoming more and more prevalent. Advertising campaigns are stimulating appetites. Clever propaganda about "men of distinction" is having its sway in the shallow minds of people everywhere. More and more people see no harm in drink. The drinking scenes in the movies are accustoming people to such attitudes as that of feeling that drinking is a harmless way of escape from tension.

The Yale studies reveal the fact that in a recent year, 90 million gallons of wine, at a cost of \$325,000,000; 2,400 million gallons of beer at a cost of \$2,915,000,000; and 165 million gallons of distilled spirits costing \$4,000,000,000. The greatest havoc is done the moral and religious qualities of life. This report states that not less than one-half of the people of this country over 15 years of age now use alcohol.

The nation is in Sodom, and the person who joins the consumers, or who countenances the use of alcohol as a beverage, is pitching his tent toward Sodom.

We should support the efforts to rehabilitate the alcoholic victim. We should support such fine organizations as Allied Youth, Inc. We should use every opportunity to call attention to the pernicious effects of liquor advertisements, and we should be careful that our example is what it should be.

That family that lives apart from the church is pitching its tent towards Sodom. Some satisfy their consciences by sending the children to Sunday school, while they stay away themselves. But the church cannot do much in the brief opportunity of an hour once a week. The parents should come and get the inspiration that will assist them in the home discharge of their responsibilities.

We can do nothing better than persuade families to come to the church and rear their children in the atmosphere of religion.

God's Challenge to His Own

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

July 31, 1927
November 16, 1947

“And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look.”

Genesis 13:14

It was James Russell Lowell who said, “Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide”. Probably it would be more correct to say that at least once such a moment comes to everyone. It was true that Abraham had many such moments. He was constantly making decisions.

There came the moment when he must decide what he would do about a condition that had developed in his own company. There was contention in his own camp. It seemed that a separation must be effected. Even though it involved the loss of his nephew and companion of many years, he must let Lot go in one direction, while he went another. From the traits of character revealed in that moment of separation, we can easily guess who was most responsible for the dissension that had been existing in the company up to this point

The story of Lot's choice is too familiar to require repetition here. It is said that Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom, which was the only fertile plain. It was a choice prompted by self-interest. The character of Lot is far from attractive in this incident. The magnanimity of Abram is wonderful and inspiring. There was no one who was so prompt to recognize and commend this as God himself. In fact, the commendation came immediately. Of this, our text is witness.

I

God Has a Message to Confide to His Own

There are few stories that have thrilled us like the accounts of God's messages to his servants. There was Moses, keeper of the flocks of his father-in-law, being summoned to a great task by the voice in the burning bush. And this reminds us that every man comes sooner or later to stand before his burning bush. The tragedies of the failures enacted before the burning bushes of life are legion.

Another story that has claimed our interest unceasingly is that of the old prophet Elijah who, though he was in the seclusion of Morab, found that God was there. He was in the still small voice that called him again to the tasks that he ran away from. “What doest thou here, Elijah?” And so to us comes the still small voice of conscience, often reminding us that we are evading a responsibility, dodging an issue, running away from a hard job.

There too was Jacob, running away from an angry brother whom he had wronged. In lonely Bethel, he lay down to sleep. There he had a vision of God, and he arose saying that God surely was in that place and he knew it not. This truth we too have learned.

It was to a child that God once appeared in the nighttime, calling “Samuel, Samuel”. You will remember that the response of the lad, eventually, was “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth”. It was a response like that of Saul of Tarsus, who asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

There are great challenges, attended by great promises, which God throws out to his own. The question is: Is the man big enough to meet the challenge? It was Jeremiah, was it not, who was commanded to “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see...if ye can find a man”. God is constantly in search of a man. Not that a man is essential to his plans for God can get along without us. But he has chosen to use us, and he is in search of the man who will fill the gaps that exist. He has a great revelation to make to the right man.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

II

God’s Greatest Blessings Come to Those Separated from Selfish Affiliations

Lot has come to be symbolical of selfishness. It was after the departure of Lot that the Lord gave this challenge to Abram.

We must recognize the necessity of being separated from those who would keep our eyes turned to the material aspects of life. These separations are hard to accomplish, for they sometimes mean the severance of the tender ties of life. But that is just what Jesus meant when he required that his followers should be willing to turn their backs on their fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers, and even wives, if necessary, to be wholehearted followers of His.

In the case of the rich young man, Jesus commanded that he go and sell what he had and give to the poor. When that separation had been accomplished, he would then be in a position to hear the revelation of God’s plan.

There are young people who would gladly enter into the service of God, were it not that they are reminded constantly by close friends of the sacrifice of material things which such a course will involve.

One of the hindrances that the church has is that it has in it so many who are thinking of the material side of things. Their eyes are trained on the visible features of the institution. They are thinking of size, building, wealth, formalities.

An essential requisite for successful communion with God is to shut out the material world. “When thou hast shut the door.”

III God Places Emphasis on Spiritual Values

What are the measurements of the "Ideal Man"? What kind of man was Jeremiah to look for? Not the ideally tailored man of the clothing advertisements. Men who conform to the best measurements are to be found in our penitentiaries. The Bertillon measurements for the identification of criminals do not show that there are different statures for criminals and good citizens. I know a man in Shreveport, crippled and stooped, probably the despair of tailors, who is president of a bank, and who has done more to influence young men than probably any other man in that city (J. C. Foster).

A self-styled physiognomist, Lavater, who claimed to be able to read character from shapes of heads, etc., was once shown two photographs, one the likeness of a man who was a noted highwayman, hung for his crimes. The other a great man. He made his choice with assurance, but found that he had selected the picture of Immanuel Kant, founder of critical philosophy, as the criminal.

As the author of the Hebrews tells us, Abram was a man of faith, sojourning in a land of promise, as in a strange country, looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". Lot's vision was more restricted. He could not see beyond the fertile valley.

This contrast still survives in their spiritual descendants. There are those who are able to look beyond present circumstances. They see that

"our life is scarce the twinkling of a star
in God's eternal day".

They have faith in the power of a God who has taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". They look for a transformation, a new New York, a new London, a new Paris. They look for a purification of politics. They see business purged of selfishness and brotherhood exalted.

On the other hand there are those who sneer at such a faith. They see nothing beyond the present scheme of things. God is dismissed as a product of superstitious fancy. But even though others do not go as far as that, they concentrate on a purely material program.

God is calling for men to meet His needs. Are we able? Shall we let the temporal blind us to real service? The men who feel that they ought to be paid for their genius, skill, talent.

The young man called to teach a Coptic school (Tarbell, 1913, p. 93)
F. B. Meyer on making the harbor. Idem. P. 92 (Holyhead Harbor)

Aaron Burr once had the call to Christian service, and he hesitated. He was not equal to it.

"The call of Christ rings out today.
Who will make reply?"

Melchizedek and the Divine Income Tax

February 17, 1943

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Genesis 14:18-20

Here we have the first reference to that mysterious Biblical character by the name of Melchizedek. There are other references: one in Psalm 110:4 “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”. There are other references in the Book of Hebrews, where a comparison or parallel is made of Melchizedek and Christ (See Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:1f).

Melchizedek made his strange appearance in the Valley of Shaveh (later call “The King’s Dale”), not far from Hebron, just as Abram was returning from his rescue of Lot and other prisoners and much spoils from the hands of the four kings that had invaded the valley from the far East. Abram had gotten together probably about 1,000 soldiers, with the help of Amorite chiefs, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, and gone in pursuit of the plunderers. By surprise attack, he routed the enemy in the region 30 miles North of the Sea of Galilee and pursued them to the region of Damascus.

The news of Abram’s victory had evidently preceded him. For as he returned, he was met by the King of Sodom -- the new king, for the invaders had killed the former king. The king of Sodom tried to get Abram to keep the spoils, saying that the return of the prisoners would be all that he wanted. But Abram refused to take even so much as a thread or a shoestring from the King of Sodom.

However, there came also to meet him the King of Salem, Melchizedek, who was also Priest of the Most High God. He steps out of the shadows, as it were, to bless Abram. The appearance was dramatic, mysterious, and even startling. He (Melchizedek) placed before Abram bread and wine, staple elements of refreshment. It is interesting to note that these have become sacramental elements -- made so by the Person of whom Melchizedek was a type -- Jesus Christ. Abram received these from the King of Salem, but would receive nothing from the King of Sodom.

Then Abram, in turn, gave to the King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God a tenth of the spoil that he had taken in the battle with the kings.

Who Was Melchizedek

This is a question that scholars and commentators have wrestled with a long time. There is little light on the matter in the Bible. He is described in Hebrews as having been without father, without mother, without genealogy (which may mean that no one knew anything about his pedigree). He is said to have been without beginning or ending of days, which may mean that he came from the unknown and suddenly disappeared into the unknown. He was both king and priest.

Various suggestions have been made as to Melchizedek's identity. Some have said he was Shem, son of Noah; others, Hap; others, an angel or a pre-manifestation of the Son of God, or the Holy Spirit, or simply a Canaanitish king.

Was He Shem?

The Targums are Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament which reach back to the early centuries of the Christian era. The view is set forth in the Targum of Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum that Melchizedek was Shem, the son of Noah. This can be said in support of that view:

1. Shem was alive then. He was 100 years old at the time of the flood, and lived 500 years afterwards. He was therefore a contemporary of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. This was the middle of the territory assigned to Shem, and Melchizedek was ruling there.
3. Shem was a priest of the Most High God, as was true of the head of the family in patriarchal times.
4. Shem was therefore greater than Abram according to family precedence and therefore entitled to tithes.
5. It was appropriate that an aged and venerable patriarch should go forth to bless the returning victor.
6. Abram's instant recognition of the superiority could be easily understood were this person Shem. Were this mysterious person some stranger, how would Abram know that he was worthy of such honor as he gave him?

Over against this argument it needs to be said: (1) Nowhere is this king of Salem called Shem, which is strange. (2) Shem's pedigree is carefully given. So this would not fit into statements about Melchizedek.

Was He a Pre-Manifestation of the Son of God

There were seemingly such manifestations in Old Testament history. See Gen. 18:22; Joshua 5:13-15.

The following reasons for such a view are given:

1. The name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness", and Salem means peace. So the designations "King of Righteousness and King of Peace" are fitting.

2. Jesus is a priest as well as king.
3. Without earthly parentage or genealogy.
4. Had neither beginning nor ending of days.
5. Is “priest forever”.
6. Is great. “The less is blessed of the better.”

Over against these arguments it might be urged that it would seem incongruous for Christ to be a type of himself.

A Cannanitish King and Type of Christ

It seems more probable that Melchizedek was an eminent Canaanitish prince in the line of Ham, who had maintained the pure worship of God.

1. The account is simple and natural history. The king of Sodom and the king of Salem were mentioned in a natural way, as if both were kings.
2. It was natural that the king of Salem should be host, since the meeting place was in his domain.
3. He was greater than Abram by virtue of the superiority of his office.

It has been thought that Melchizedek may have been an orphan, who won his way to the throne, and who by his piety came to be singled out by the almighty to be His priest. Adonizedek, king of Salem, who lived in the time of Joshua, had none of these qualities.

Melchizedek was then a real person of unknown parentage, who without aid of family teaching came to know the true God and was made priest. There was no record of his beginning or of his ending.

The author of Hebrews shows that Melchizedek was a type of Christ.

1. He was a royal priest. Aaron’s house had no royal state or function.
 2. His genealogy is mysterious. “Who shall declare his generation?” asked Isaiah.
 3. He was perpetually a priest.
 4. He was a universal priest.
 5. He was a priest of the highest type.
 6. His priesthood had the highest confirmation. Priest of the Most High God.
- There has been a suggestion that Melchizedek’s conception may have been limited, in that he regarded himself as a priest of the Most High God, and not of the only God. However, Abram recognized him as the priest of the One True God and testified to this by sharing his possessions.

Where Was Salem?

The usual view is that Salem was identical with Jerusalem. Salem is a name used of Jerusalem in Psalm 76:2. Jerusalem was on the route from Damascus to Hebron. The name Jerusalem means “foundation of peace”. The city is known to have been in existence and borne the name Jerusalem before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.

However, there has been a contention that Salem was not Jerusalem, but was a smaller town not far from the “King’s Dale”. The precise location is not of particular importance.

The Law of the Tithe

It was a custom of long standing to offer a tenth (10th), even among the pagans: Babylon, Egypt, among the Phoenicians, Persians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Samothracians, Chinese, Sicilians, Gauls, Britons, etcetera.

Furthermore, it was a patriarchal custom. In addition to the act of Abram, we are told that Jacob, convicted of sin, erected an altar and became a tither (Gen. 28:29-22; 31:13; 32:9,10; 33:20; 35:3,7,14).

The law of the tithe is as old as the human race. While found in the Mosaic law, it was much older.

The Hebrew was asked for three tithes:

1. The Jehovah Tithe: Lev. 27:30-34. Num. 18:21,24,26-28. This was paid to the Levites.
2. The Festival Tithe: Deut. 14:22-26. To be eaten by the family with great rejoicing at the annual feasts. It was provided for the observance of the feasts. A temporary requirement for the Jews only.
3. The Charity Tithe: Deut. 14:28,29. Observed every third year. It was for the needy.

The Jehovah tithe was founded on universal principle.

The tithe should be followed by offerings.

When mention is made of Abram’s tithe, nothing is made of it, as though it were something unusual. It does not seem from the record that this act was an unprecedented thing. He was performing a plain duty. The spoil was not his, but he regarded a tenth of it as God’s, regardless of who held it.

Greatness Glows in Crises

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX (A.M.)

February 14, 1943
April 25, 1948

“I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.”
Genesis 14:23

James Russell Lowell once said in connection with our 20th president, James A. Garfield: “A great man is made up of qualities that meet or make great occasions” (My Study Windows).

When two of the disciples, James and John, manifested ambitious desires through their mother, Jesus took occasion to set forth the Christian conception of greatness. He declared that among the Gentiles (heathen), greatness is measured by the extent of authority one exercises over men; but that in the Kingdom of God greatness is measured by the extent of one’s usefulness.

Even in these supposedly enlightened times, when Christianity has wide currency among the nations of the world, we have not come altogether to the conception of Christ. We still have the inclination to consider those the greatest who can dictate the policies of a nation or of a number of nations.

The Greatness of Abraham

One would not think that a man who lived over 4,000 years ago would be in a position to disturb the consciences of people who live in the light of all the accumulated teaching of the Christian centuries. But we find tucked away in the Book of Genesis a story, the record of an incident in the life of Abraham, that ought to be kept ever fresh in the minds of people in this day.

It is the story of the Battle of the Kings. Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldees, lived for a time in Haran, and had settled in Hebron in Canaan, when there was an invasion of his section of the country by four great kings from the region of the Euphrates and the Tigris (the country from which Abraham had come).

At the time when this invasion took place, Abraham was living in the hill country, with his vast flocks and servants. Lot had chosen the valley of the Jordan, which was fertile, and where there were cities that were prosperous. However, these cities some twelve or more years before had been subdued by the great Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, and they were paying tribute. These valley cities became tired of paying that tribute and revolted.

Such defiance could not be tolerated. So Chedorlaomer, King of Elam and his allies: Amraphal, King of Shinar (Babylon); Arioch, king of Ellasar; and Tidal, king of the Semitic tribes of northern Mesopotamia; all joined forces and conducted a conquest of the west.

Being able military men they realized that they must first overcome the peoples friendly to the revolting kings; among which were three tribes of giants: the Rephaim, the Zuzim, and the Emim. They inhabited the region east of the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Having overcome these, the four invading kings next attacked the Horites, who were cave dwellers, in Mount Seir. Then they advanced on the Amalekites, a people of unknown origin, nomadic, who later became implacable foes of the Israelites. The grandson of Esau took their name, a fact that has resulted in confusion regarding the origin of the Amalekites. Finally the Amorites were overcome.

Having overcome the tribes and nations that might have become allies of the revolting kings of the Jordan valley, Chedorlaomer and his three allies led their forces north on the west side of the Jordan.

Against these four kings, there came five from the cities of the plain: Bera, king of Sodom; Birsha, king of Gomorrah; Shinab, king of Admah; Shemeber, king of Zeboim; and the king of Bela (Zoar). They joined battle in the vale of Siddim. But the kings of the cities of the plain were no match for the kings of the East. Their forces were overcome, the people fled to the hills, the cities were sacked and plundered. The conquerors, loaded with spoils and captives, started home in triumph. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were killed in battle.

Doubtless the kings of the East thought that every force worthy of any consideration had been subdued. There was no need to maintain an alert on the homeward journey. And there was where they made their fatal mistake.

Among the prisoners taken by the kings of the East was Lot, the nephew of Abraham. One man, who probably knew of the relationship, escaped and came to Hebron to tell Abraham that this invading army had come and taken captive his nephew Lot. The ties of blood are always strong, even when there is difference of opinion. Abraham was the kind of man who forgets the faults of friends and kindred in the hour of their distress. He did not think of Lot's ingratitude, but of his need.

It took no little courage to get a man, not equipped for war, a man of peace, to go up against an invading army of experienced fighters who had shown by their series of victories that they knew the tactics of war. He prayed God to help him. He also got together 318 of his servants and equipped them for battle. He called for assistance from three Amorite chiefs by the name of Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner. They were brothers. There could hardly have been more than 1,000 men in the combined force under Abraham.

By the time this force could be gotten together, the returning army of the four kings of the East was well on its way. However, they finally overtook the invaders some 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Abraham decided on a night attack, a surprise, trusting to the carelessness of the eastern army. The men lay asleep or drunk. Abraham divided his forces and made attacks from different points. They rushed in, caused a

panic, and a complete rout. They chased the fleeing hordes for two days, and got as far as Damascus.

They recovered the captives and the plunder. As the force under Abraham was returning, the kings of the Vale, conspicuously the new king of Sodom, met Abraham. He manifested his gratitude by coming out to meet the returning victors and saying to Abraham that while he would like to have back the people whom the invaders had taken away captive, Abraham could take the spoil of which the invaders had deprived them (and other tribes whom they had overcome) as his pay. This would probably have been the lawful right of Abraham. There was probably a great deal of booty.

But Abraham declined. He gave as his reason that he had made a pledge to God that if he would give him assistance in this undertaking, he would take nothing for himself. So he said, "I will not take so much as a thread or the thong of a sandal, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich". Abraham did not want anything that Sodom had to offer.

However, he said, he would like for the chiefs who fought with him: Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner to have their portions.

Lincoln at Richmond

It was Longfellow who said:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time."

There has been an ever-growing appreciation of an American whose birthday anniversary came last Friday -- Abraham Lincoln. He bore the name of the old Hebrew patriarch, and in many ways had his characteristics.

One incident that has owned him a place in the esteem of southern people was the Richmond incident. Lee had surrendered and some of the lesser lights of the nation thought there should be a triumphal procession into Richmond with Lincoln at the head. Lincoln demurred. "Will it not hurt the feeling of the Southern people to have such a procession?" he asked. "We must not think of that; we must think of the victory," they answered. "But," said Mr. Lincoln, "I do not think of that, and if I go to Richmond I will go in a quiet way: I will go with no banners." He did go to Richmond, and walked up the streets alone. When he spoke to the people, he said "I am not here to see what you can do for me; but I am here to see what we can do for you" (M. J. McLeod in the Revival of Wonder).

The Spoils System

We think a great deal of Andrew Jackson in this section of the country. Only the other day, I saw the noble statue of him that stands in the French Quarter of New Orleans, where he immortalized himself in the famous battle of New Orleans.

But it was Jackson, during his term of office as President, who employed an unprecedented degree of what came to be known as “the spoils system”. The principle is: “To the victory belong the spoils,” meaning, as applied to politics that the emoluments of public office are looked upon as so much plunder to be distributed among the active partisans by those chosen to the responsible office of administration. The fact that supporters of a candidate insist on such returns has been the embarrassment of our democratic system, and a reproach. The Civil Service Commission has been able to eliminate much of this, but by no means all.

Something very close to this, in fact identical with it in principle, is the insistence that we get some of the spoils out of our efforts in the present war. The three warlords, Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo have swooped down on helpless peoples and subdued them. They are (or have been) bearing off the booty. America finds herself in the struggle. We have joined others who are determined to overthrow the oppressors.

That has meant that all of the people of the nation have a part in the struggle. There are essential activities and essential materials. But there are people who are so insistent that they have great hunks of booty -- big contracts, increased pay, location of war projects. Congressmen are desperately trying to get a proper proportion of the spoil for their districts. It would seem that some people are more concerned about what they are going to get out of it all than winning the war. Their patriotism is governed by the ring of the cash register.

The Atlantic Charter

Just how the war will be settled is yet uncertain. The problems involved are intricate, and it is easy for one to be superficial and sentimental in advocacy of a policy. It will be recalled, however, that while we were still watching the war from the sidelines, President Roosevelt met Prime Minister Churchill in the Atlantic, secretly, in August, 1941, and together they worked out the now famous Atlantic charter of eight (8) cardinal points. The first of these principles is that there shall be no territorial or other aggrandizement.

If this proves to be the policy, it will be quite different from the avowed aims of the Axis powers.

Personal Application

Jesus taught that the spirit of service should be the dominant motive in human action. So long as we can serve and keep out the mercenary motive, we dignify and glorify our actions.

Abraham refused to adopt the worldly conceptions of greatness. When a man forgets his Christianity and employs procedures that are purely worldly, he has denied his religion and renounced his God. Abraham would not acknowledge his dependence upon worldly agencies for his progress in life. His dependence was upon God.

This was the temptation that confronted Jesus. “Thou shalt not live by bread alone,” he told the Devil. He would not bow down to the devil and worship him to gain a world. The Lord would accomplish the desired end in his own way and his own time.

Fathers, Faith and Fidelity

Colonial Church, Dallas

June 17, 1945

“He will command his children and his household after him.”

Genesis 18:19

The home takes precedence of all existing social institutions. It is prior in time, sacredness and regency. It is the original social unit. It is a miniature social order. “The welfare of the family underlies the welfare of society.”

The family is the original source of altruistic ideals. Love. Habits of service and sacrifice. It is the chief agency in socializing the child. The family is the cradle of civilization.

The family is the most Christian institution in the world -- Rauschenbusch.

It is a well known fact that family life in America is under trial at this time. Automobiles, airplanes, telephones, radios, picture shows draw the interests into the outer surge of affairs. Crowded apartments are detrimental. Entrance of women in commercial life, industry, politics. Loose conception of the relation of the sexes. Modern revolt of youth.

Breakdown of family ties. Family life cannot be built on principle of self-interest and personal happiness.

What the Christian can do for his home.

1. He will be as good a provider as his ability and opportunity permits of. A Christian is no better Christian because he is a ne'er-do-well. Neglect of one's plain duty to his family in a material way is not justified even when the time is given to help others.

“If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

2. He will put the spiritual above the material. Some have been so busy making money that they have neglected the finer things.

It is better to cultivate character in children than to leave them a vast fortune. It takes character to handle a fortune.

Thought should be given to the establishment of the right atmosphere. Happiness, good fellowship, congeniality, fellowship. Having good times together.

Why not establish the family altar afresh. Enthroned holy literature as the light of the home.

3. He will give attention to the best methods of child development. Some just grow up.

An offense against the child is the worst of sins.

Knowing the interests of various periods of child life. Helping with the problems of life.

Worthy example. The community life of the family.

4. He will seek protection of his home by opposition to any hurtful influence. Motion pictures.

We have been greatly impressed by the testimony that has come from the South Sea Islands as to the wisdom of the missionary enterprises, since we became involved in the war with Japan. One of the great factors in that region was John G. Paton, born 1824 in Scotland. When he was leaving home to go out to this far distant field, he had to walk about 40 miles. His father walked with him six of those miles. The parting was one of sorrow deepened by sweet affection. "God bless you, my son." After going some distance, John climbed a high piece of ground to see if his father was still watching him, and at the same moment his father climbed a dyke to see his boy. John watched him climb down. "I watched," he said, "through blinding tears, till his form faded from my gaze; and then hastened on my way, vowing deeply and oft, by the help of God, to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as He had given me."

Dr. R. A. Torrey relates that a man in Iowa had been storming at his poor wife one day until he had spoiled everything in the home for that day at least. Then he went out, slamming the door behind him. His little boy stood at one side, listening to all. He looked into his mother's tearful eyes, and coming across the room, took her hands in his own and exclaimed: "Mother, we made an awful mistake when we married father, didn't we?"

Dr. Torrey adds, "There is no place where a man's religion is so valuable as in his own home".

A Family Pattern for the Life of Today
(Previously: Happy Homes Do Not Just Happen)

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas
Rockdale Presbyterian
Rockdale, Texas

February 11, 1934
May 6, 1945
May 2, 1954
May 4, 1958 (rewritten)

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah and she became his wife; and he loved her.”

Genesis 24:67

The Episcopal marriage ceremony has long been regarded by some as a classic. I am under the impression that it has undergone some revision in recent years. In the form with which I am familiar, there is a prayer which follows the repetition of the vows and which contains the request “that as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made”. It is not intended that the marital life of Isaac and Rebekah should be regarded as ideal in every respect. They did at least live faithfully together. The Bible gives us an insight into the family affairs of this household, that we may profit thereby.

Let us refresh our minds by a very sketchy recountal of that story. Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, was the hope for the fulfillment of the divine promise that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of the heaven (Gen. 22:17). His father took matters in his own hand, sent Eliezer, his servant, employing ten camels to carry provisions, presents and personnel, to Haran, in Mesopotamia, to find a wife for his son, Isaac, among the kinpeople whom Abraham had left there many years before. This was quite a responsible undertaking for Eliezer. He was not to take Isaac with him. He invoked the help of divine providence. When he arrived at the well outside the city, he encountered a very attractive, affable, obliging, energetic young woman, just the person he had pictured in his imagination as a suitable wife for his master. She drew water for his ten camels -- what a feat! He bestowed on her his purpose. After some consultation, and further bestowal of gifts of silver, gold and raiment to the members of the family, it was decided that Rebekah should make the trip, if she were willing. She was willing. When they arrived in Hebron, Isaac saw his wife for the first time. He loved her.

Did they live happily ever afterwards? Well, after a fashion. They lived together a great many years. They had two sons: Esau and Jacob.

Wholesome Aspects

There were some things about this marital arrangement that merit approval.

(1) There was congeniality due to similarity of background. For Isaac to have married in Canaan would have been unwise. The traditions, the customs, the religion of the people were different. If there was to be congeniality in the family Isaac's wife should have a background similar to his. There have been some notable instances of adjustment, but that was when the person making the adjustment moved out of their native setting. Few men would be willing for a servant to go off and find wives for them, although I have known some would-be matchmakers say that they could have done better than the young men did themselves. But this procedure was not uncommon, and still is not in some parts of the world.

Happy homes do not as a rule just happen.

(2) The simplicity of the proceedings is commendable. Lavish expenditures of time and money and nervous energy in the consummation of a marriage tie are no guarantee of its permanence. The real significance of the occasion is lost sight of in the glamour of the proceedings. I have seen the statement that the mother who saved her wedding dress for her daughter now has a daughter who saves her own wedding dress for her next marriage.

(3) The invocation of divine guidance. Eliezer, as he stood by the well at Nahor, offered a prayer to the God of his master Abraham that he would guide him in the choice he was to make. Such a procedure would not by any means be amiss when the young people themselves make their choices. There are weddings in which a prayer seems almost a travesty.

Features that Mar

We move on down through the subsequent years of the married life of Isaac and Rebekah and note from the Biblical records that certain unhappy developments marred the relationship:

(1) Division in the family. Isaac and Rebekah drifted apart. It never came to the point of separation. One evidence was the fact that one parent took sides with a child against the other parent. There must be unity, and differences of opinion should be ironed out in private.

(2) Parental partiality. There were two sons, twins: Esau and Jacob. Isaac favored Esau; Rebekah favored Jacob. This is always a source of domestic unhappiness.

(3) Lack of uprightness in parent. Jacob was a schemer. He tricked Esau out of his birthright. When Isaac, blind in his later years, wanted to bestow a blessing on Esau, Rebekah planned a method of deception whereby Jacob could steal the blessing. She did Jacob a gross injustice by that proceeding. We will never have an honest generation until we have honest parents. Parents cannot shift that responsibility. Loss of children's respect is the result of the failure of parents.

(4) Decline in religious faith. Rebekah had been told by the Lord that Jacob would be given priority over Esau. But she seems not to have been willing to trust the Lord to carry out this promise. While we are expected to cooperate with the Lord in the accomplishment of his purposes, we are not to use unrighteous means of accomplishment. We are not to do evil that good may come.

Let me make two or three general observations:

1

A Happy Home is a Vital Factor in Human Life

It has been observed that the three greatest, most influential factors in one's life are the school, the church and the home. The greatest of these is the home. The reason is that a child's life is largely shaped before the church or the school has contact with it.

Scattered throughout the South are many old stately massive houses, which were once the homes of large families. They are now to a large extent mere tourist attractions. They were erected in a day when the life of the family was largely and preferably in the home. These great structures were the scenes of a constant round of social events. Some member of the family would always be living in each estate, and other members would go out and establish other similar homes.

That type of life has radically changed. Formal education has been taken from the home. The public school system has supplanted the tutors and governesses who came and lived in the home to train the children.

Recreation has been taken from the home. The average American home is not equipped to provide the recreation needed. Watching TV programs has counteracted the appeal of movie houses, many of the programs have questionable value.

Group loyalties tend to pull away from home. Scouts, fraternal orders, service clubs, business organizations.

Health protection. Immunization is done in the schools. In some localities, one cannot be sick at home anymore.

Religious education is done outside. The church, Sunday School, Vacation Church School, the Bible courses in school.

Hospitality has been in a measure lost from the home. Our houses are not equipped for entertainment. I can remember when churches would vie with one another for the privilege of entertaining Presbytery. We have difficulty now getting churches to consent to entertain presbytery, except on a self-entertaining basis. I recall that when Red River Presbytery met in old Union Church over in the Mississippi Valley of Louisiana, half o the representatives were entertained in one of the large homes. The servant problem makes any such venture as that impossible now. But the great blessing of having a guest in the house has been lost.

The home is a battered institution. But it is still the closest tie one has. As one woman wrote: "Be it ever so torn-up, there's no place like home".

It Calls for Foresight in Its Creation

As I have said, happy homes do not just happen. We cannot expect much to come of a hit-or-miss plan of getting married. Two people meeting each other for the first time on an airplane trip across the Atlantic and becoming engaged before the plane lands at its destination may furnish an unusual plot for a story, but it is a very foolish procedure in actual life.

Tennyson said, "Marriages are made in Heaven" ("Aylmer's Field, 1. 188). Abraham did not sit down idly and let matters take their course. He believed there was something that man had to do. He recognized the hand of God in the matter, and so did the servant. And so should we all. But that does not make it unnecessary that we use what intelligence we have in creating a home.

There can be no home without congeniality of interest. The old prophet Amos asked: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" That does not mean that there should be agreement in everything. But on the basic principles of life, they should always be agreed. There should be a common purpose, a common ideal, a mutual aim.

A part of the wise planning is a dignified beginning. It is not a matter for jesting. By way of contrast to the elaborate, spectacular wedding is the freaky type of wedding. I have been asked to marry couples under conditions which show little respect for the occasion. I have been asked to marry couples sitting in automobiles, on the stage in a cheap play. I have heard of couples being married in a balloon. How can a home thus started be a sacred institution?

The same foresight should be devoted to the matter of bringing up children into the world and rearing them.

It Calls for Consecration in its Maintenance

There is need for a true sense of values. To let outside interests cause neglect of children at home is deplorable.

Dorothy Thompson, writing in the Ladies Home Journal (January, 1954) under the title "I Remember Me", observed that modern books on children idealize them. Children are regarded as innocent, pure as snow, and the parent is blamed for any wayward tendency exhibited by children. That is a mistake, says Miss Thompson. Children have to be "tamed". Civilization is not natural to a child. The absence of disciplinary procedure in the home is unfair to the child, she says.

Solomon said something like that long ago: "Foolishness (folly) is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction (discipline) shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15).

But this calls for dedication of life, a concentration of effort, the exercise of infinite patience, the manifestation of sincere affection, the exemplification of Christian virtues.

Dr. A. W. Beaven (The Fine Art of Living Together) feels that there is some significance in the Scripture statement that “Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah” (Gen. 5:22). “We do not know what Enoch had been prior to that time in his relationship to God,” he says. Well, it is true that having a child entrusted to a young couple has caused them to turn back to the God they had been neglecting. They are anxious to bring the child to the church and there promise to rear him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The example of the parent in matters religious is very important. We cannot expect a child to continue to have interest in Sunday school and church when the parents themselves do not manifest that interest.

This I quote from the Expositor (April, 1954): “If our nation is to return to decency, it will not be the result of new laws; not the result of the teachings of universities; not be the outcome of a multitude of ashrams, conventions, conferences, and retreats. It will depend upon the improved character of our homes”.

The Vision of a Vagabond

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

August 4, 1935
July 7, 1946

“And Jacob...said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. ...This is the gate of heaven.’”

Genesis 28:16, 17

In these words, Jacob expressed his amazement at a wonderful discovery he made in his sleep in a lonely spot, which he then and there named Bethel, house of God. It is not easy to fully conceive the experiences in mind and heart that Jacob was undergoing at that time. But we will be able, I am sure, to get enough to be of some profit to us.

How He Came to Be a Wanderer

It will be recalled that Jacob was the son of Isaac, and twin brother of Esau. Even before they were born, it was prophesied concerning them that the elder should serve the younger, which prophecy referred not so much to the boys themselves as to their descendants. Esau was the first born, and favorite of his father, Isaac. Jacob was the favorite of his mother, Rebekah. The mother remembered the words of prophecy concerning the younger, and began to devise plans whereby that might be accomplished.

I do not believe it is said that Rebekah was behind the pottage incident and the trade for the birthright. In all probability she was. Esau came in hungry and Jacob was ready with the red pottage. Esau was a man who thought that a present gratification was more desirable than some future blessing. “He despised his birth right.” This birthright involved at least three things: rule in family or tribe, a double portion of the inheritance, and the priesthood of the family and high priesthood of the tribe. As Esau came to see what he had lost, he did not feel kindly towards Jacob. It was the divine purpose that this should be Jacob’s lot anyway. The fault was in hurrying up God’s purposes. This involved presumption on the part of Jacob towards God, unkindness toward Esau, and impatience.

After Isaac became blind, he depended greatly on his son Esau. He proposed to give Esau a blessing. He sent him into the fields to get venison. The story of the deception perpetrated by Jacob, under the guidance of his mother, is too familiar to need recountal here. At any rate, Jacob stole the blessing that was of Esau to the descendants of Jacob -- the purpose of God expressed even before the sons were born. Again the fault was in employing evil to accomplish ends which God would have accomplished in his own way in his own time. When Esau saw what was done in this Jacob’s second offense against him, he made up his mind to kill Jacob as soon as his father had passed away. So

Rebekah found a good excuse for Jacob to leave home. She thought it would be for only a few days. It was for many years. She never saw her favorite son again.

It was then as a fugitive from justice, a wanderer, away from home and his mother for the first time. He was 50 miles from home and going on much farther. He was lonely, weary, without shelter, without sympathetic support. He must have been conscious of the fact that he was a dishonest man, trying to obtain ends by unholy methods. He had practiced deception, was a trickster. He had been faithless to his father, and unfraternal to his brother. Darkness came on and he had not a pillar on which to lay his head. He used a stone for that purpose.

The Vision that Changed his Life

The vision was of a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. God, who stood above the ladder, spoke to Jacob, promising to his seed the land on which he lay, a host of descendants, the power to bless the world, and his presence in Jacob's wanderings.

Jacob awoke. He was awed by the realization that God was there -- even in this lonely place.

Why Was Jacob Filled with Awe?

1. Because God became there a reality. Jacob had heard of God all of his life, and he had accepted Him as a matter of fact, but without any vital realization that God was a living personality.
2. Because God was found to be in an unexpected quarter. We hear of places being "God-forsaken". Probably Jacob never dreamed before that God could be found in such a lonely spot.
3. Because the gap between man and God can be bridged. There is not an impassable gulf between. God's love reaches across the chasm. Jacob, homesick and lonely and sinful, found to his consternation that his interests were busying all heaven. If he had thought of God at all, he probably thought of him as being far away. But now God came to be very near.

The Need for Special Revelation

You remember Job. While in his misery, his friends came to him and argued about the meaning of all his trouble. Eliphaz, in his last speech, said "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace" (22:21). Then Job replies: "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat" (23:3). That is the cry of the race. There is the inner feeling that God deals with man, and that there is no escape from Him. Somehow in Him we live and move and have our being. Man can talk of the Creator, the

Judge, the Supreme Architect. But that is not enough. Life becomes complete only when man has direct and conscious dealings with God.

Some claim that they see God in nature. They maintain that for them there is no need of the worship of the sanctuary. They say they come closer to God in his great out-of-doors. But God is not seen in nature in his fullness. Those qualities and attributes that mean most to man are revealed in a special way. There is need for a special revelation of God. That was given to Jacob at Bethel. It must be given to every man.

In the last talks which Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion Philip said, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us". It was a great and important answer which Jesus made to that request. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

It is through the special revelation of Christ that we are to come to know God. No mere intellectual interest will ever find God. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Mental search for God is always a failure.

Christ the Means of Access to God

In words addressed to Nathaniel (John 1:51) Jesus made a reference to himself that very evidently had relationship to this vision of Jacob's. "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of God." Nathaniel would soon see that Jesus was the real ladder of intercourse between heaven and earth.

Isaiah said (59:1) "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear". The reason for the gap that exists between man and God is not due to God's failure or inability. For the prophet continues (vs. 2) "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear".

Despite that alienating sin, God has opened heaven and let down the ladder. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," said Jesus.

How the Vision Came to Jacob

It was not a mere coincidence, not an accident. It was not because God was showing favoritism. The blessings of God are for those who have the capacity to receive them.

Jacob had like the prodigal "Come to himself". His wretched state was a suitable circumstance under which the special vision of God might break through.

No vision of God comes to those who are self-satisfied, who feel that they are sufficient in themselves for the task of life.

The Difference it Made to Jacob

We cannot say that Jacob was for a while after this altogether the man he ought to have been. But he was started on the road. That after all is true of any man. People still stumble after conversion. It was 20 years before Jacob became a real prince of God.

1. He made the Lord his God in a very vital way. It was Job who said at the close of his memorable experiences:

“I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eyes seeth Thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself and repent
In dust and ashes.” (43:5,6)

2. The experience made him have a new attitude towards his property. A tither. The 2nd mention of the tithes before the giving of the law on Sinai. Proper vision of God changes our conception of ownership.

3. It inaugurated in Jacob a life of power born of a vital faith in God. We may follow him all the way and note the changes that come to him. Jacob, as well as Job, could have said:

“He knoweth the way I take.
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (Job 23:10).

The very experience, unwelcome and dreary though it may be, through which we are passing, may prove to be the occasion of the opening of the gate of heaven, and letting the Son of God through to the sin possessed soul of some one dear to you and me.

Jacob at Jabbok: Pathways to God

Rockdale, Texas

November 9, 1958

“And he (Jacob) said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he (the angel) said, ‘...thou hast prevailed’.”

Genesis 32:26,27

There was a time in this country when newspapers reflected the personalities and views of individual journalists: James Gordon Bennett, Horace Greeley, Henry J. Raymond, and others. Among the last of these was Henry Watterson, known far and wide in the latter half of the 19th Century as editor of the Louisville Courier Journal. He spent much of his later life in Europe. In an address which he made in Louisville in 1906, Watterson told the people of his hometown:

“I have stood upon the margin of a distant sea and watched the ships go by, envious that their prows were westward bent. I have marked the lad waves dancing to the setting sun, heartsick with thoughts of home. Words of the vagabond poet have come to me and sung to me and cheered me, even as a mother’s lullaby:

“In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs -- and God has given my share --
I still had hopes of my latest hours to crown,
Amid these rural scenes to lay me down,
To husband out life’s taper at the close
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.

.....
I still had hopes my long vexations past,
Here to return and die at home at last.”

-- Southern Literature XIII:5718

Sentiments such as these must have surged through the bosom of the exile Jacob, for 20 years a sojourner in Paddan-aram up in Syria, and far removed from his homeland in the region west of the Dead Sea.

How did Jacob come to be in Paddan-aram as an exile? His mother had sent him there to escape the wrath of Esau, his twin brother, who had sworn to kill him as soon as his father died, because Jacob had tricked him twice: induced him to surrender his birthright for a tasty meal, and stolen from him a blessing which Isaac, now blind, wished to confer upon Esau.

In Paddan-Aram, Jacob resided with Laban, a near relative, whose two daughters he married. Laban was a trickster, exacting and faithless where he was able so to be. But Jacob was also resourceful and during the 20 years of his residence with his father-in-law

he prospered. At what seemed to him to be an opportune time, he set out for his old home country, while his father-in-law was away from home. Upon hearing of the unexpected departure, the irate father-in-law went in pursuit of the fugitives and overtook them. After some altercation, they came to terms, and Jacob was allowed to go on his way.

The Crisis at Jabbok

The cortege came to the border of the land now occupied by his brother Esau. By the prevailing standards of the day, Jacob was a rich man. Unlike Naomi (of the story of Ruth) who, as she said, “went out full” and returned empty, Jacob had gone out empty in hasty flight and was now returning full, rich, the head of a large family. He had prospered by the use of his wits. Would his wits be equal to the new challenge that confronted him? He sent messengers to the land of Seir with overtures of good will to Esau. Those messengers brought back the word that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Fear gripped the heart of Jacob. He divided his possessions. He prayed to God for deliverance. He prepared a present of 550 animals -- goats, sheep, camels, cattle, asses -- to be given Esau as a peace offering. He sent his whole retinue across the stream at midnight. He “was left alone”.

Then there came a man (called by Hosea (12:4) an angel, and later in this chapter (vs. 28,30) God) who wrestled with Jacob until the dawn. Jacob was a determined and persevering man. The angel touched Jacob’s thigh -- the seat of the wrestler’s strength -- and it was thrown out of joint. But Jacob wrestled on. “Let me go,” said the angel. Jacob was merely hanging on. “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” “What is your name?” asked the angel. “Jacob.” The angel replied “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince has thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed”.

This was the supreme crisis in the life of Jacob, that confident, daring genius who had never been defeated. Here he was facing utter defeat. How ineffectual were human wits and material resources! How unnerved was this shrewd, double-dealing, self-sufficient trader! His hope now was in the God whom he had contacted (at Bethel) in that general area 20 years before on his way to Paddan-aram. Jacob had come to the end of relying upon himself. His own strength had gone. What strength he had left he used in clinging. God does not resist clinging.

Crises Come to All

You have seen reproductions of a painting called “The Crisis”, which pictures an anxious husband with haggard face sitting at the bedside of his unconscious wife, whose wan face is turned away from him. Life is hanging in the balance. The issue may be decided either way at any moment.

Dr. Boreham, in one of his books (A Tuft of Comet’s Hair), refers to this and observes that life is full of crises. There is, he says, the Crisis of the Summit, when one at the peak of life’s achievement seems about to lose everything. There is also the Crisis

of the Valley, when one having lost everything can go no further but only ascend, as when the prodigal came to himself. Then, says Dr. Boreham, there is the Crisis of the Cape, based on Professor Huxley's statement that "There is always a Cape Horn in everyone's life". This Dr. Boreham, a minister in the South Pacific, could well appreciate. Coming from Australia, say, to England, there is that interminably long journey by boat across the Southern Ocean, until one comes to Cape Horn and rounds that southernmost point for the journey up the Atlantic. From that point on, life is different. It is a great moment when after tossing upon turbulent waters, one turns his prow towards the sunshine.

That this was a Cape Horn experience in Jacob's life is shown by the fact that the angel recognized the change, and indicated that the name "Jacob" (supplanter) was no longer appropriate. Instead, the name "Israel" (God rules) was given him.

Religious Primitiveness

One does not need to be reminded that paganism is rampant in the world today. By paganism we mean the exaltation of material things and tangible factors above the claims of religion. According to Georgia Harkness (Resources of Religion), there are several types of paganism.

We have economic paganism which places material resources in the place of God. People are sure they can satisfy their cravings by acquisition of things. The joy of possession is quite exciting at first. But the ego god has a way of going bankrupt just at the wrong time. Just when you are "fixed", the world goes to pieces. A minister I know has written about a vacation he took cruising through some of the 200 miles of canals that make Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the Venice of America. As they passed one impressive mansion, the guide said: "Mr. Blank, of Chicago, lives here a few weeks of the year. He has a swimming pool in the patio, a yacht in the back yard, a Cadillac in the front yard, and ulcers in his stomach".

We have nationalistic paganism, which makes the state supreme. That is the position avowedly taken by Communism. In practical ways, it is the position taken by our own nation.

We have scientific paganism, which reduces everything to a mechanistic determinism.

We have a cultural paganism, which elevates that which is popular on the one hand, or gentile on the other. Mr. Walter Lippman, who still writes feature articles for the papers, has written on religious matters. His book "Preface to Morals" is perhaps the best statement we have from the humanist point of view. He maintains that God is no more than a projection, a child of the mind, without reality.

You would hardly classify Jacob, before the Jabbok experience, as being pagan, although the material did seem to have priority. Fresh from deceiving his father and defrauding his brother, Jacob came, 20 years before the Jabbok experience, to a place called Bethel, where he had a vision of God. He made a proposition to God, that if he would save his skin and make him prosperous, he would give back to God a tenth of what

God might give him. The Lord made him prosperous, but we have no record that Jacob kept his end of his own bargain.

A lot of us who claim to be religious have never gotten beyond the Bethel experience. Our loyalties are conditional. It depends on how our own interests are affected. Dr. John Vander Muelen, in his book "The Faith of Christendom", relates that he had a classmate in the theological seminary who later became an unbelieving professor of philosophy in a prominent college. What caused the change in him was the fact that his wife died of cancer. He had always known that other people died of cancer. It was only when his own wife died of it that he renounced his religious faith (p. 25).

We may not be bold enough to make our trades with the Lord, but we do with his church. We can be counted on if the programs are attractive, if proper recognition is given us, if the building is comfortable. To some of us, the purr of an outboard motor has more music in it than a church organ on Sunday morning. Some are more interested in keeping in the fairway on the golf course than in the narrow way that the church points out. Sunday is a holiday, not a holy day. The Bible is never opened. We never pray unless we are scared. Our religion concepts are so superficial.

Fruits of a Resolute Quest

The great words of the Christian faith are meaningless until we experience them: penitence, forgiveness, renewal, redemption. Honor, sacrifice, loyalty, love and courage are hollow words until we pour life into them.

We may be sure that so long as self is supreme, we will not come to realization of God's supremacy. There can be no Israel (God rules) until Jacob (supplanter) has been dethroned.

It is not unlikely that each of us, sooner or later, will find ourselves in a situation that will try our very souls. Each of us may ask "Why has this come to me?" It may be that God has brought us to Jabbok.

Men and women prepare themselves for such crises by constant reflection on the great truths of religion, through a participation in corporate worship that is more than a mere formality, through private worship engaged in without hurry and without the intrusion of self or circumstance, through a better acquaintance with the Bible which is the revelation of God to man, through the performance of the neighborly deeds inherent in a Christ-like spirit, and through the cross in human experience.

Princes of God

As we turn the pages of the Scriptures, we see how gloriously the face of God has come through the clouds that had obscured him. Job came to the crisis of his career. Perhaps God was not as real to him as he later became. His suffering brought him to a position of firm reliance, so that he could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him".

David, hunted by his enemies and forsaken by those whom he depended upon, saw the Lord. In the 27th psalm, he sounded the note of triumph. "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

The Apostle Paul was placed more than once, yea many times, in the crucible of a Jabbok experience. He came forth declaring that he rather gloried in his infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: "for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

There is our Lord, entering Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal. The same battle is on (if it be not sacrilege to say that) between self and God. Jesus prayed that the cup might pass from him. "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Jesus went forth in all the power of heaven.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
 Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
 In deeper reverence praise.

Breathe through the hearts of our desire
 Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire:
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
 O still small voice of calm.

The Goodness of Bad People

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

September 6, 1942
June 22, 1947

“And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him: and they wept.”

Genesis 33:4

Isaac was a great soul, but his two boys -- twins, Esau and Jacob, were not in their early days very commendable. Jacob was tricky and unbrotherly. Esau was governed by his appetite, lived to eat. He cared nothing for the position he had in the family, and allowed dissent and unhappiness to come into his family as the result of his carelessness. He seemed powerless to resist temptation. He preferred the present to the future, the sensual to the spiritual. He was a man of unbelief, of carnal mind. When he got married, he disregarded the traditions of his family, and married a heathen. He thus violated his duty to his parents. He threatened to kill Jacob for his trick. So Jacob fled to his people in Haran and in the course of him, he came back with fear and uneasiness to where his brother lived.

But we find that will all his faults, Esau was generous and forgiving. In the meeting, we see traces of the old subtlety of Jacob. He is afraid of too close association. Esau at first refuses Jacob's gift, later he accepts it since to refuse is a token of enmity among the orientals.

This instance is one of many such in the records of the Scriptures. We think of Rahab the Harlot, Baláam, King Saul.

Our Lord was a master in the art of finding good in people -- the outcasts, the despised, the sinners.

The instance of the woman of Samaria.

Zaccheus the publican.

Mary Magdalene.

The pages of history are filled with instances of the good deeds of men who are accounted bad. There are the outlaws in this country, such as Jesse James.

I have been interested in the past week in reading of Jean and Pierre Lafitte and their association with the history of Louisiana. You have seen places in New Orleans which are said to have been associated with the Lafittes, who are said to have been smugglers of goods which they seized on the high seas from English and Spanish vessels. They were known as pirates, privateers, even bandits. This was during the days following the Louisiana Purchase. These men were leaders of the Baratarians, who had a

settlement on Grande Terre Island on the southern coast of Louisiana. Governor Claiborne sought to break up the smuggling business and went so far as to offer a reward for the arrest of Jean Lafitte. Attacks were even made on the settlement by United States soldiers.

One would naturally have concluded, as the British did, that Lafitte would be open to an alliance. So they came to him with offer of a captaincy in the British Navy, and a reward of \$30,000 for his aid in the plans of the British. On the other hand there was a threat to destroy the stronghold of the Baratarians. It was even while Lafitte was pretending to be considering this offer that the U.S. Government made an attack on the Grande Terre settlement and wiped it out.

While Jackson and Claiborne were at first rather wary of accepting the offer of Lafitte to assist in the defense of New Orleans in 1814, they were rather desperate. So impressed as Jackson with the sincerity and ability of Lafitte that he became almost enthusiastic over the idea: He said, "I believe we can save New Orleans, and if we do, by the Eternal, a good share of the credit will belong to the men whom I called 'pirates and robbers'."

The part that Lafitte and the Baratarians took in the Battle of New Orleans is now history. Louisiana's history is full of romance, and the story of the Lafittes is part of it.

Tradition has it that Jean Lafitte was of noble birth, and that he was a special friend of Napoleon's.

Mary Devereux, in her book "Lafitte of Louisiana", closes with these lines:

"Things that make and things that mar
Shape the man for perfect praise;
Shock and strain and ruin are
Friendlier than the smiling days."

1. There is good in the bad as well as bad in the good.

Somebody said, no one seems to know who, that --
"There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it ill behooves any of us
To find fault with the rest of us."

There is the tendency to catalog people, separate the sheep from the goats. For some people there are no halfway characters, people are either all good or all bad.

There are few characters that are unified. We have dual and triple personalities. This adds to the complexity of human nature. We are so often mystified concerning people.

2. God judges by intent and motive.

The question is, Why do people do good or evil? Some people have a better background than others, better training.

Criticism of church members by people outside the church. Some who have been reared in Christian homes may have the advantage of training. But they may be far from good at heart. Others with poor background may have much to learn, but their hearts may be right. You cannot judge by outward act.

3. Good deeds do not atone for evil hearts.

You can't make money by crooked process and donate a part to charity and make proper amends.

Zacchaeus was willing to restore fourfold, and then give to the poor.

The big question is, Is your heart right with God?

God's Incurable Dreamers
(Concurrent with sermon of 2 Pet. 3:13)

Minden, LA
Haughton High School
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

May 25, 1941
May 25, 1941
January 6, 1946

“And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.”

Genesis 37:19

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

2 Peter 3:13

There is a degree of gloom, if not despair, in the land today. The armies of the dictatorial powers seem invincible. The spread of totalitarian power becomes greater day by day. Nations bow to the terms of the Axis powers with hardly a show of resistance. In our own country, committed as we are to assist the cause of liberty and democracy, we find unhappy developments. There is politically motivated opposition to the policies of the administration. Isolationists, pacifists, peace-at-any-price advocates, America First committees. We find certain labor organizations using a time of acute crisis to fatten their payrolls, and a number of organizations using the privileges provided by a free government to advocate a form of government that would deprive them of the privilege of free expression. The usual expression we hear is, “The situation doesn't look good”.

What has happened? For one thing, we find that some of the ideas we have been entertaining are being shattered. There is for instance the idea that humanity was progressing. One of the magic words of certain scientific circles has been “evolution”. Let him be anathema who dared to maintain the inevitable course of man naturally is not upward. If this should at any moment not be so apparent, or if the processes should for the moment lag, all one needed to do was to take a deep breath at an open window and say the Coue formula, “Every day in every way I am getting better and better”.

We are finding that development has not necessarily been progress. The elimination of slums, public health clinics, sanitation, radio, electric lights, and automobiles do not necessarily constitute progress. We find that unless the proper use is made of advantages which these developments offer, there is no real progress. Rather, indeed, are the forces of destruction more strongly armed for the furtherance of their evil intentions. The airplane has been called a sign of progress. Its use today would rather establish the fact that it is a calamity, since it is used extensively to blast the treasured handiwork of man's genius to bits.

Leslie D. Weatherhead quotes Dr. Fosdick as saying, "If Ruth came back, we should put her sickle in a museum, for we have vast machines which storm across the prairie and do the work of a thousand men; but Ruth in her loyalty to her mother-in-law would put us to shame. We have improved on Ruth's sickle, but have we improved on Ruth?" (This is the Victory, p. 38).

To Dream or Not to Dream

Some have become frankly pessimistic and declare that all hope for a better world is futile. They say that to hope for a world of justice, purity, and peace is merely wishful thinking.

But to abandon all expectancy of a better world is unworthy of Christian people. That is apparent for many reasons.

1. Dreamers are leaders in all accomplishments.

By "dreamer" I mean one who visualizes in advance some happy and possible reality, one who has a mental conception of the unseen, or the unrealized. Some dreamers are impractical, are visionary. But behind every great accomplishment there has been a dream, whether in the field of literature, or philosophy, or science, or art, or drama.

Columbus was a dreamer, and so was Luther.

There were others in Michelangelo's day who manipulated hog-bristle brushes, greasy pigment, and stucco. It was the concept in the mind of Michelangelo that made the difference in the product.

Millions of men have sat under apple trees and watched apples fall. But the difference between the rest and Sir Isaac Newton was the vision that illuminated his meditative mind.

Milton is said to have spent 34 years in solitary and unceasing study in accumulating material for Paradise Lost. Man builds today out of the noble thoughts and purposes of yesterday.

When we turn to the Bible, we find there a vast company of men and women who, because they saw far in advance of their day, were the molders of thought and guides of action of men in all ages.

Of Abraham, it is said that when he heard the call to go out from his native land, he went, not knowing whither; but "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God".

When Joseph's brethren saw him coming towards them at Dothan, they said to one another, "Behold, this dreamer (lit. Master of dreams) cometh". They spoke more wisely than they knew. While in an Egyptian prison, he was known as an interpreter of dreams. He enlightened the chief butler, the chief baker, and even Pharaoh himself. When made ruler of the realm, he looked ahead and laid up stores for the lean years to come.

Moses, because of what he saw ahead, chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”. He thus became the great emancipator, law-giver, leader, and judge of the people of Israel. While out on the peninsular of Sinai, Moses reflected, and there came to know God as a reality, and learned that sentiment and bravado are not safe principles of action. He learnt to be master of himself, and thereby to be leader of others.

Isaiah, meditating in the temple, in the year that King Uzziah died, saw the Lord high and lifted up. There he heard the call to service. There he offered himself, saying, “Here am I, Lord, send me”.

Who can know the proportions of the vision that illumined the mind of the great Apostle Paul as he came forth from his retirement to guide the little band of Christians in a conquest of the Roman Empire. No wonder he upset the world.

Dreams Must Have Foundations

Some have spoken of the great housing problem in Japan. It is largely because that area is subject to earthquakes. In the city of New York, they erect buildings 60 stories in height, because the city is resting on a rock.

The trouble with our expectations is that they have not adequate foundation. We hear much condemnation of atheistic philosophies because of their having brought upon the world this great tragedy. Dr. Weatherhead believes that we who believe in God have made some grievous mistakes. He says there are two ways of believing in God, a right way and a wrong way. The right way is to seek to know God’s will and then attempt to carry out that will. The wrong way is to outline our own program of human endeavor and then ask God to bless it. We spend much time in prayer that God would get us out of the mess in which we have gotten ourselves. It is evidently foolish in us to say that we will lose faith in God if he does not bless a program of action which is not his will at all.

We must remember that faith in God takes us far beyond any present emergency. The thought comes to us that all will be lost if the side we favor is not victorious in this war. I believe the democracies will win. But as Dr. Weatherhead says, “God might be able to do more with a defeated nation that was penitent than with a victorious nation that was aggressive”. Let us consider the likelihood that the time may not be far distant when our own proud nation will suffer humiliation. God leads ultimately back to himself.

The prophet Joel spoke of the day when God would pour out his spirit on all flesh and when “your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions”. Joel has been called the Prophet of Pentecost, because Peter quoted this passage in his Pentecost sermon, and declared it then fulfilled. But Pentecost was an example of what takes place when the Spirit of God comes upon people. The young men see visions, and the old men dream dreams. But these are based on faith in God, and are the expressions of the will of God.

Dr. Fosdick relates that while he was riding in a New York bus he saw a girl with a brand-new diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand. Altogether unconscious of

anybody or anything else, she sat quietly looking at it. Now a diamond is a prosaic thing when described in scientific terms -- a form of crystallized carbon, and so forth. But the young girl was not thinking of the scientific formula or material composition of the stone. She saw something that the scientists could never discover -- the invisible, of which the diamond was a sacrament or symbol.

Unless we see the God behind, we dream in vain.

I read recently a criticism of Calvin, to the effect that though he lived constantly in sight of Mount Blanc, he nowhere in any of his writings gives evidence that he ever saw it. But Calvin saw infinitely more than many who saw Mount Blanc and talked about seeing it. He saw a Great God, in whose hands mountains are but anthills.

It is our faith in God that keeps us steady, regardless of what may come to the established order of things.

“We are watching, we are waiting,
For the bright prophetic day;
When the shadows, weary shadows
From the world shall roll away.”

“We according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”.

Addenda

In a recent sermon, Dr. George W. Phillips, an Oakland, CA minister (Current Religious Thought, December, 1945, page 1f), reminds us that the old world is passing, just as has been true many times before. The age of the Sphinx and the Pyramids, the age of Rameses, the old castles on the Rhine, the aristocratic mansions of the old South.

Wendell Wilkie wrote of “One World”, and we have since come to see very forcibly the weight of his words.

The atomic blasts over Japan last year were felt around the world. They blasted away all national boundaries. There is no way to stop the use of atomic energy. It is easily conceivable that when fire was discovered, it was thought to be hazardous. All nations must have the control of atomic energy. They tore away economic patterns. Freedom of slaves disrupted the social structure in the South. We have come to have wind power, waterpower, steam power, electric power, now atomic power. Marconi, the inventor of the wireless, said at a press conference shortly before he died, as he held up his lead pencil before his reporters, “Gentlemen, there is enough power locked up in that pencil to drive a liner like the Lusitan from Europe to New York and back again” -- or words to that effect.

What are to be the qualities of the righteousness of this new world. According to Dr. Phillips, they are three:

Interracial righteousness: There are only four solutions of this question: Segregation, which is impossible in this modern world. Subjugation, which has never been carried out successfully, and certainly would be impossible today. Extermination, a method which Hitler tried, and others have tried. Cooperation.

Industrial righteousness: Dr. Phillips relates that a friend of his in the Sierras made an installation for feeding the wild humming birds of his region. He had some brightly colored tubes filled with honey. The little birds came down in great numbers. On the day he was observing this experiment, there was one little bird which, after sipping his fill, perched himself in an oak nearby and for half the forenoon he beat off every comer. When he became hungry, he filled up and went away to his perch again. That was his world. That may be the picture of nations. When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," who do we mean by "us"?

Personal righteousness:

Blessing in Forgetting

Minden, LA
Minden prayer meeting

August 2, 1925
June 10, 1936

“And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh (making to forget): For, said he, God hath made me for get all my toil, and all my father’s house.”

Genesis 41:51

Not infrequently we blame ourselves for our forgetfulness, and we have good reason for doing so. It is possible to be so forgetful that we become unfitted to carry responsibility. The confidence reposed in us becomes shaken. Our absentmindedness becomes an annoyance to those with whom we have to do, and a source of anxiety to our friends.

But here we find a man so happy over the realization that he has forgotten something that he names his firstborn “Making to Forget”. There must, therefore, be circumstances under which it is a blessing to forget. And on reflection, we recall that at times it is a blessing to forget. There are many things that we remember that we would like to forget.

As we scan the pages of past impressions, many things stand out in bold relief. Many of the things that stand out seemed rather unimportant and unimpressive at the time; thus reminding us of the freakish turns which Memory takes in making up her record. When so much has passed through our minds, and so large a portion forgotten, it seems strange that some trivial matter should persist in taking a prominent place in the limelight of memory.

But it is the blessing in forgetting that we want to think of this morning. Think of the many books that you have read, even the titles of authors of which you cannot recall. Thousands upon thousands of thoughts have passed through your minds which you cannot recall. Think of the many words spoken, actions performed, people met -- all lost to memory.

Let us not be too sure that these are lost entirely to memory. Our forgetting is of only short duration. Our forgetfulness serves only a temporary purpose. Well do we know that there are times when much that we have known and experienced comes flashing back out of oblivion into vivid recollection. The testimony of those who have come back from a watery grave, so to speak, is that in the tragic moment of death’s imminence there passes in rapid but vivid review an array of long forgotten experiences. There will come a time in the Great Beyond when the faded tablet of memory will be

treated as are the faded parchments, and the indistinct record will be made vivid and readable again.

The purpose of life is the writing of the record, and we need to remember just enough to enable us to keep the right perspective. This is one of the benefits of forgetting. Oil paintings can be properly judged only after much detail has been excluded. While we are close to the picture, we see too much detail. Moving away from it, we cease to see the unattractive detail.

Experiences are like that. It helps us to understand them if we look at them from the distance. The detail is then forgotten, and we see the event in its larger aspects. Sorrows, hardships, disasters are softened by time. It is because we forget much, and we see the general aspects of the occurrences.

It is a blessing that we remember people in this way. There are faults and trivial defects in the disposition of people whom we know. They are often very annoying. So irritating are they at times that for the present we may be blind to the superior qualities that outweigh all defects. Now, in the course of time, these smaller defects will be forgotten. In the hour of another's death we forget much that was unimportant. Then in the course of years, more will pass into oblivion. Really, no just biography can be written when so close to the life as to see the detail.

The beneficence of the Heavenly Father is seen in the fact that our forgetfulness of much in the past contributes to our happiness.

It is never difficult to provoke discussion on the subject of the World's getting better. Particularly is that true, if one is bold enough to claim that these are better days than the good old days of the past. But when we reflect, does it not seem strange that those good old days did not seem so good at the time we were passing through them? As one reviews his past life, he may be able to designate a certain period as the happiest period of his life; but in all probability that period seems happier than it really was because he has forgotten much that took place then.

But Providence is kind in making it so. We sooner or later reach the point when our happiness lies in the contemplation of the past. It is regarded as a sign of old age when we find pleasure in the contemplation of the past rather than the future. But we sooner or later come to the point. We think of the thrills, the mountaintop events, the triumphs. We forget the aches and the disappointments. We forget the clouds that hovered at times over our lives.

A soldier just back from the battlefield declares that he hopes he will never see that place again. Soldiers said they hoped they would never see France again. But already the stream is turning back to the region of No-Man's Land, with the same thrill with which the old Confederate visits Vicksburg, Chickamauga, or Gettysburg.

There is joy in visiting old scenes. The memories that cluster about them have to a great degree been purged of such as might annoy, and we like to bask in the kindly beams of that hallowed cluster of delightful memories.

Robinson Crusoe, while in a storm at sea, made many vows and resolutions, that if God would but spare his life this one voyage he would go directly home to his father and never sail on vessel again so long as he lived. "These wise and sober thoughts continued," he said, "all the while the storm continued", but when the sea was calm again, he forgot the vows and promises he had made in his distress (quoted in Tarbell, 1913, p. 295).

There is inspiration in memory. The recollection of past triumphs heartens us for other attempts. David remembered God's help on former occasions as he stood before Goliath. We could never do anything if we were always haunted by failures and our mistakes. The Lord has so arranged it that these are easily forgotten. "Forgetting the things which are behind...I press towards the mark".

Since the Lord has dealt so kindly with us, it is our part to improve the powers of memory as they relate to the leanings of Providence. Pharaoh forgot too soon. The terror of the plagues were forgotten before the people of Israel had reached the Red Sea.

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the South Pole explorer, made this observation: "It was during these periods that we learnt that some Power beyond our own guided our footsteps. No one who has seen and experienced what we have can take credit to himself for our escape from what appeared to be overwhelming difficulties. If we acknowledge this -- as we did -- down among the ice, it is only fitting that we should remember it now when the same power has brought us safely home through all these troubles and dangers" (Tarbell, 1913, p. 295).

Man's Relentless Accuser

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

December 16, 1934
June 10, 1943
January 16, 1944

“We thy servants are twelve brethren...and one is not”.

Genesis 42:13

Those words constitute in part the reply which 10 brothers, sons of Jacob, made to the governor of Egypt. Joseph, their brother, whom they had failed to recognize and who was making them very uncomfortable by accusing them of being spies, when they went to Egypt to secure grain for the full garnerers there during a great famine.

The statement is arresting. For, as you read, you ask why should these men under such circumstances, say “We are twelve brethren,” when only ten of them were present, only eleven alive, so far as they knew? Twenty years had passed since these men disposed of Joseph. Why should there be any reference to him at all now?

We see that it is all a study of the work of human conscience and its relentlessness in pursuit until man deals with it in a proper manner.

To get the full story, we need to consider three scenes in the record of Joseph and his brethren.

1 The Deed

Let us turn back the pages of history for a score of years. Jacob had returned but a very few years before from Paddam-aram, where on the estate of his father-in-law he had become the possessor of wealth and a large family. When he came, he had eleven sons, and another was born at Ephrath (Bethlehem) -- Benjamin -- while he was on his way back to the valley of Hebron to live. But with the coming of Benjamin, the soul of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, took its flight. This left the two youngest of Jacob's sons, Joseph and Benjamin, motherless. Being the sons of his favorite wife, the heart of Jacob was drawn strongly to them.

Consider the situation ten years after Jacob came back to Mamre. In his family, there were four sets of sons: Six sons of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun. Two sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and Naphtali. Two sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher. Two sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. There must have been no little wrangling among them. But at the time we are considering, the ten were agreed on one thing at least -- their hatred of Joseph. There were several reasons for this:

He was seventeen years of age. What a difficult age! No longer a boy, and yet not a man. Full of the zest of life, self-assertive, energetic, full of dash and go, independent in spirit, daring. I believe Booth Tarkington wrote a book which he named "Seventeen". The fact that Joseph was passing through his difficult period would not have been so bad were it not for some other factors which entered in.

He was his father's favorite son. Parental favoritism is always bad. Here it was tragic. The firstborn of Rachel. Jacob must have been at least 100 years old. The old gentleman indulged his favoritism to the extent of giving Joseph a coat. Was it one of many colors? Or one with long sleeves? Maybe both. The Hebrew leaves you in doubt, being found nowhere else. The oriental loved (and loves) colors. It may have been a patchwork of colors. It would be thought gaudy today. But it was a mark of distinction which excited the envy of the rest of the family. The sight of that coat was very unwelcome.

His principles were of a higher order than were those of the older sons. This is one road to unpopularity. A mouth who is ready to tell the truth when called upon for it can easily incur the disfavor of those who want to do wrong. Well, in the world of gangdom you know how that kind of person is dealt with. In that respect, Joseph's brethren were gangsters -- they "put him on the spot". Jacob sent Joseph out with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah to shepherd the sheep, and Joseph gave a true report of what they did (Gen. 37:2). They regarded him as a tattler. One of the great difficulties of principle is determining where honesty and truthfulness pass on into unnecessary tattling. At any rate, Joseph incurred the disfavor of the older brethren for his reports to his father.

As a climax to it all, Joseph related two dreams that he had had. One he related to his brethren: they were all binding sheaves in the field, he said, and their sheaves did obeisance to his. "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" they sneeringly asked. Another dream he related to his brethren and his father: in this, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars did obeisance to him. "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" asked his father, rebukingly. But the father kept the saying in mind (Gen. 37:11).

Then came the incident at Dothan. The ten brothers had taken the sheep to Shechem, where water was plentiful. Jacob wanted to know how things were going with them. He sent Joseph. Joseph found that they had left Shechem and gone to Dothan for better grazing -- a few miles further North. The country was level, and Joseph could be seen quite a distance away -- coming. "He comes the parental pet -- the smart-Alec -- the goody-goody boy -- the dreamer! Doesn't he feel stuck up in his coat? This is our chance." Before he got to them, they had planned what they would do. The first proposal was to slay him, but the oldest, Reuben, objected and proposed putting him in an underground cistern alive, hoping to deliver him back to his father. This was done, after taking off the coat of many colors. The cistern was bottle shaped. There was no water in it, but it must have been inhabited by crawling creatures. But with utter indifference, they sat down to eat, probably the things sent to them by the hand of Joseph. "They are

not grieved for the affliction of Joseph” (Amos 6:6). Reuben was evidently not with them.

While they ate, a caravan of Ishmaelites and Midianites approached, carrying spices, balm, myrrh to Egypt. (Used in embalming, for incense and medicine.) Such caravans often carried slaves to Egypt. They pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him to the caravan for about \$15 (20 pieces of silver).

Nothing is here told us of Joseph’s attitude and deportment under the circumstances. But we are told many years later that the brothers still remembered how Joseph looked and acted then. They confessed to one another: “We saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear” (Gen. 42:21). The boy’s pleas must have rung in their ears continuously for years and years thereafter.

“We shape ourselves the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made.
And fill our future atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.
The tissues of the life to be
We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown.”
-- Whittier

2

The Development

Let us pass over twenty years. Years of sorrow to the old father. But now, Joseph is governor of Egypt, married to the daughter of Potiphar, a priest of On. He has two sons, the older of whom he named Manasseh, “Forgetter”, for he said “God hath made me forget”. We can’t help wondering why Joseph had not let his father know of his good fortune. A message could have been sent by the caravans which moved back and forth through Hebron constantly. He was barely 30 years of age yet, and the most influential man in the country, with the possible exception of Pharaoh himself.

The famine is on. It reached out over Palestine as well as Egypt. It had run for at least two years. There was distress in the family of Jacob. The father was old. It was the duty of the sons to get provisions. But they were helpless, stunned, perplexed. They could only look one upon another (42:1). Jacob said, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; get you down thither and buy”. The caravans were moving constantly. News of this sort of things spreads rapidly. Distress has a quick ear. Let a welfare organization begin to operate. It does not need to put notices in the press. Yes. They knew about Egypt; but they did not want to think of Egypt. That road was haunted.

The ten brothers went -- the same ten who tended the sheep at Dothan twenty years before. All ten were needed to care for the beasts, and for defensive purposes. On the way, they no doubt reflected on the incident at Dothan. They wondered what had become of Joseph. Reuben probably advanced the idea that he was dead -- he probably

hoped so, rather than that he should be a slave in Egypt. At any rate, the conscience of these men was at work. However much Joseph may have been out of their thoughts during the past 20 years, he was very much in their thoughts as they entered Egypt.

Finally they arrive at Memphis. They go to the magnificent hall of the granaries, where the grand vizier sits in a chair of state, surrounded by a bodyguard, superintending the distribution of supplies. Clerks and secretaries are writing out his orders. The surroundings were calculated to deeply impress the foreigner. The hall was perhaps crowded. Awed by such splendor, swift moving chariots, plenty and power, these ten rough-looking countrymen, staring, came and prostrated themselves before the governor, who immediately recognized them.

Why did they not recognize Joseph? He was governor, and not a slave. He wore the Egyptian headdress, was clean-shaven, as were the Egyptians. He spoke a foreign language, through an interpreter. He was twenty years older.

Joseph decides to try them out. "Where are you from?" he asks roughly, and adds, "Ye are spies, come to see the defenselessness of the land."

"Nay," they said, "but to buy food are they servants come."

"Nay, but to observe the unfortified conditions of our boundaries are you here?"

"We thy servants are twelve (why twelve?) brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"Ye shall be proved," declared Joseph.

It may have been that these brethren, when at Dothan, accused Joseph of coming to spy on them. They spoke to him roughly, and put him in prison -- in the pit. Now the scene is in a way reenacted. He accuses them of being spies, talks roughly, and puts them in prison for a while.

This makes us think of the episode in the play of Hamlet when Hamlet has the players to reenact a murder scene before the king that he might see its effect on the conscience of the king, whom Hamlet had reason to believe was the murderer of his father.

It had its effect, for they recalled the horrible deed at Dothan and how Joseph looked when they did it.

"I sat alone with my conscience
In a place where time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living
In the land where the years increased.
The ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,

And things that I thought were dead things
Were alive with a terrible might;
The vision of all my past life
Was an awful thing to face,

Alone with my conscience sitting
In that silently solemn place.”

“We thy servants are twelve brethren...and one is not.” Why mention the last fact? However a man may attempt to conceal his wrongdoing, he will himself make the disclosure. “A lying tongue is but for a moment.” Officers of the law rely on this to great advantage. At an unguarded moment, something will be said that will give away the hidden secret. “Murder will out.” “Truth is mighty and will prevail.”

The reason is that the thought of it is always bobbing up. “My sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:2). A man in Minden the other day was telling me of a man who heard another man say that he was going to kill someone. Now the man to whom he said that had himself killed a man. He said to the man who threatened, “Man, don’t do it! You will see that man’s face every day as long as you live.”

A certain man died recently. Some who knew him a long time said that he began to go down from the time he killed a man in another state. He seemed to be addicted to habits that he thought might for the time enable him to forget it all. He gave up his church. He died by his own hand.

What a relentless pursuer conscience is. The Bible furnishes us with several instances. Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7,8). David (Ps. 51). Herod after murdering John the Baptist (Matt. 14:2; Lu. 9:7). Peter after denying his Lord (Matt. 26:75; Mk. 14:72; Lu. 22:62). Judas returning the 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 27:3). The men accusing the woman taken in adultery (John 8:9).

It will be recalled that it was Simeon that Joseph held as hostage. Some believe there was a special reason for that choice. He was no doubt the roughest in the crowd. We are told of the ferocious way in which he dealt with the Shechemites. He was probably the one who tore off the coat from Joseph at Dothan and threw him in the well. Joseph knew he had been a bad fellow. He was held in Egypt while the brethren went back. As he remained in prison, he had plenty of time to think. He no doubt could have said with Richard III in Shakespeare:

“My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.”

3

The Deliverance

We cannot leave the story there. There is one other scene which we need but to mention. They have returned. Benjamin is with them. They give every evidence of being changed men. They are penitent.

Great souls are not spiteful or revengeful. Joseph was a great soul. He could restrain himself no longer. After he had cleared the hall of curious onlookers, he said “I

am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt". He gave them the assurance of pardon of love. He brought them to the land of plenty to live.

You will recall that as a man journeyed to Damascus to do ill, he was stopped. Some think his conscience was already at work, troubling him. Then there appeared to him One who made known his identity. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Jesus whom one had sold for 30 pieces of silver, but now the Lord of heaven and earth, and one not ashamed to call us brethren.

The only escape from a conscience of guilt is by drawing near to this Brother who, in the providence of God has gone on before us to prepare the way.

Therefore, in the words of the author of Hebrews, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

The Superiority of the Spiritual

Minden, LA

May 24, 1931

“And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.”

Genesis 47:7

It is necessary to imagine oneself in the royal palace of the most powerful king of his day. We are in the luxuriously furnished apartments of the king. The throne room. There sat the king on a throne of precious wood, or ivory, “elaborately carved with figures of men and animals, his feet resting on a stool of scarcely inferior magnificence”. Guards stood on either side, clad in plain white linen tunics, and armed with short spears and shields. Courtiers were gathered in groups through the hall.

With what I believe to have been great pride, Joseph, Prime Minister of this great kingdom, led his aged father, 130 years old, into the presence of the king. Joseph’s attitude towards his father had been beautiful all along. Recall his touching message to his father in Egypt -- “Tell him of all my glory.” Shepherds and cattlemen were regarded as degraded by the Egyptians of that day. But that did not deter Joseph from bringing his people down into Egypt. He was proud of his father and found great joy in presenting him at court.

The conversation probably abridged in the record. The question regarding age. The reply of Jacob

The act of Jacob in blessing Pharaoh. A highly significant thing. Would not be so regarded today in lands in which there is recognition of the supremacy of the spiritual. Might have been taken as an act of presumption. The failure to resent the act may be attributable to the great respect which the Egyptians had for age.

Looking at the situation from this more remote point of view, we find that there was real superiority, and not a mere assumption, in Jacob. Though Pharaoh was the great living monarch of his day, Jacob was greater. Jacob was as truly a king. He stood for the spiritual side of life, and Pharaoh represented the material and temporal.

This reminds me of a situation of much greater significance in the later history of the Jewish race, when Jesus stood before Pilate. Pilate stood for the temporal, the representative of the Caesars -- most powerful of living rulers. Jesus stood for the spiritual. Though without a country, he was without doubt a King. “Thou sayest that I am a king.” Culture and eloquence and power were inferior to the spiritual qualities represented by Jesus.

Other great scenes of like character: Ahab and Elijah, Paul and Agrippa. Julian the Apostate, one of the Emperors of Rome, is said to have acknowledged the supremacy of Christ in the exclamation, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean".

Melchizedek, king of Salem, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. The author of the Hebrews, commenting on that said, "Beyond all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (7:7). This is a similar case.

1. Jacob was greater as custodian of truth.

It was through the descendants of Abraham that God chose to reveal his will and character. Because of this knowledge, Jacob was greater.

The argument recorded in I Esdras (3:1f) conducted by Darius: Which is the strongest, wine, the king, woman. The third wrote, Truth beareth away the victory. The king awarded him the honors of the occasion.

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again."

"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

2. Jacob was superior in character.

Years before God had appeared to Jacob in a dream while he was fleeing from his brother. But for years afterwards, the subtlety of his character remained unchanged. His deep cunning and craftiness. He was only half-honest. Twenty years or more later, he returned to his own land. The crossing at Jabbok. Trusted all to Jehovah. Wrestled with the angel at Jabbok. The statement of the angel that Jacob had "power with God and man and prevailed". From that time on, Jacob was a different man. This was signified by a change of name. Jacob, supplanter, was supplanted by Israel, prevailer with God.

Now, many years after that, we find this prince of God, matured in character, standing in the presence of one who had not had any such experience.

We think back over the year of history to the days when John Knox stood in the presence of Mary, Queen of Scots. Though Mary was feared by all Scotland, she cringed in the presence of this man of rugged character. Character is always superior to mere kingly power.

3. Jacob was greater by virtue of service.

It was his desire to serve. The word "bless" is often used in the scripture to denote salutation, but the salutations used among the Hebrews were real prayers addressed to God for blessings upon the one saluted.

The man of true worth is not the man who sits upon the throne, but the man who serves. This was taught by our Lord. "He that would be greatest must be servant of all."

The motto of the Prince of Wales (?) “Ich Dien”, I serve.

Though in a strange land, as his descendants were constantly, Jacob could sing the Lord a song.

“One man with a dream, at pleasure,
 Shall go forth and conquer a crown
And three with a new song’s measure
 Can trample a kingdom down.”

How Old Are You?

Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas
KMIL Radio, Cameron, Texas

August 18, 1943
April 29, 1957

“And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, ‘How old are you?’”

Genesis 47:9

It must have been an impressive sight -- the patriarch Jacob in the luxurious palace of Pharaoh in Egypt. Jacob must have presented a picturesque appearance. He interested Pharaoh, for we judge the people of Egypt did not live to be as old as did the people of Canaan. This was probably due to the nature of the climate and to the habits of the people. When the king saw this aged figure before him, he was led out of curiosity to ask him how old he was.

Jacob’s answer is interesting. He said: “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are 130 years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage” (Moulton).

The days of his years may have seemed few in retrospect; or they may have been regarded as few in comparison with those of his fathers. Our past seems good or ill according to the feeling of the moment. Just at that time, there was a great realization of trouble fresh in the mind of the old man. There is no doubt that Jacob did have a great deal of trouble. Therefore, he told Pharaoh that his days had been evil.

If I were to ask each of you tonight this question, what would be your answer?

Different Ways of Measuring Age

1. Chronological: This is the ordinary way of measuring age. We assume that people who have been in the world the same number of years belong in the same class. That is the basis on which we classify children in school. This was the way Jacob stated the answer to Pharaoh’s question. We know, however, that some people have lived more in a given number of years than have others. We know that some people who have lived a long time are still childish, while there are some people who seem never to have been young.

2. Psychological: By this, I mean the degree of mental maturity. We know very well that some people are further along in life at a given age than are others. Some never get over their silliness. There are some exceptionally bright children. It might be observed that children often seem brighter to their own parents than to anyone else. Some say we ought to grade children according to psychological age. But you get into no little trouble when you go to doing that.

3. Physiological: I saw the statement once that “a man is as old as his arteries”. High blood pressure is a factor in our lives that we must consider. Some never have this, and seem to retain the zest of youth a longer time. But the body often gives down prematurely from other causes.

4. Emotional: “A man is as old as he feels,” is a frequently heard statement. Some elderly people are temperamentally childish. They have never grown up.

5. Experimental: There are people whose lives have been so full that they have gone further along than others. Methuselah lived 969 years. His life may have had some other feature than mere length, but none is given us in the record. Jesus lived to be but 33 years of age, and what a life it was.

“We live in deeds, not years,
In thoughts, not breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heartbeats.
He lives most who thinks most,
Feels the noblest,
Acts the best.”

The Signs of Age

One thing is pretty sure, you cannot tell how old people are actually by merely looking at them. You cannot tell how old they are in the real sense by knowing how long they have lived.

Persons may preserve the appearance of youth as they grow older. But the appearance of youth is not half so important as the spirit of youth. If we preserve the spirit of youth, we may have more or less the appearance of youth.

One man has said that we can keep young by “sympathy and association with the young, by looking for what is good and hopeful in our surroundings, and by exercising our constructive value rather than our critical faculties” (C. C. Albertson).

1. The backward rather than the forward look: “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days are better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.” The petty regard for what we have done in the past. We insist on having the younger ones hear our recountal of experiences. They may be very interesting. But the danger is that we are liable to find ourselves living back in the past. The outlook of youth is towards the future. To retain our youth, ours must also be in that direction.

2. An aversion to change: There have been men who established and made a successful business and then proceeded to put it to death by being unwilling to change. The Kelly Brothers were liverymen in Shreveport. They controlled the livery business of the city. When automobiles began to appear, they maintained that the horse-drawn

vehicles were here to stay. They were urged to put in automobiles. They would not and were soon thrown into the hands of a receiver.

Henry Ford is quoted as having said, "There is only one thing in business that is certain and that is change. I don't know what tomorrow is going to be like, but I do know it is bound to be different from yesterday and today". Yet it is said that for a long time Ford opposed having his cars any other color than black.

Habit is our salvation and also our peril.

When Jesus came, he offered a civilization that had grown old something new. They had rather put him to death than to change.

3. Childishness: We talk about the second childhood. Children are self-centered. They want to be noticed, and do foolish things to attract attention. They may resort to temper tantrums, they may be talkative, and act peculiarly. When a man says, "I want what I want when I want it," he is speaking as a child. Paul says, "When I became a man, I put away childish things". Some later take them up again.

4. Carelessness as to Manner and Appearance: We slump and sprawl. Forget our manners. "Old age is simply a mass of bad habits." We presume on our age, and offend by our lack of consideration for others.

Religion Helps Us Keep Young

What we need to keep us young is the forward look. A true and vital religion helps us. A religion gone to seed will hinder us.

A church can get old as well as a person. When we live in the past, when we become averse to change, when we become arbitrary and fitful in our church relationships, when we get careless about the appearances of things, we are growing old as a church. That church has life whose look is toward the future.

Bows that Reach Over the Wall

Rockdale, Texas

June 15, 1958

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.”

Genesis 49:22

The property in Marlin which was owned by the Presbytery of Central Texas and used as a manse for the Director of the Church Extension had on it, or adjacent to it, several highly productive pecan trees. Our neighbors' trees had branches extending over the fence and well into our property. They dropped a generous supply of nuts on our lot every year. Our trees, in turn, extended over the walk and into the street on one side. They showered quite a supply of nuts in the street and made that route a favorite one for children coming home from school. It seemed to be a sort of unwritten law that the fruitage of branches which extended beyond the walls or fences belonged to those upon whose property it fell. There are people who derive a great deal of pleasure from the service they render through the branches, the vines, the streams that extend beyond the limits of their own domain.

Old Father Jacob, now old and blind, realizing that his remaining days in this life were limited, had his twelve sons to pass, as it were, in review. They were at the time sojourning in Egypt. Jacob made his son Joseph promise that he would not bury him in Egypt, but would take his remains back to the land of his fathers for interment.

“Gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come,” said Jacob. The father's deliverances are in poetic form. He takes the sons one by one. Joseph, very naturally, is highly favored in the father's prophetic outlook. He begins what he has to say about Joseph with the words we are using today as our text: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well (spring), whose branches run over the wall”.

There are two or three interpretations that might be given the expression, “whose branches run over the wall”; but it seems to me that the most plausible one is that the branches reach out to be of help to others who do not have access to the enclosure. That at least is an interpretation that fits the life and character of Joseph. He was not one who thought only of himself. He liked for his prosperity to be shared by others.

The Eventful Life of Joseph

Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob, and the son of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Because of the favoritism shown Joseph by his father, the older brothers disliked him. They decided to get rid of him. They sold him to Midianite merchantmen for the sum of

\$15, who in turn sold him as a slave in Egypt. Joseph's abilities were soon recognized. But on false accusations he was committed to prison. His interpretation of a dream caused Pharaoh to appoint him superintendent of the royal granaries. He thereby saved Egypt, but also the regions adjacent to it. He saved his own people who still lived in Canaan. "His branches reached over the wall."

Joseph is one of the most beautiful characters in history. He was grievously mistreated by his own brothers. He endured temptation and suffered revenge. In times of adversity and in times of exaltation, he was true to high principle. His was a fruitful "bough". Probably the secret of his greatness is to be found in the expression, "his branches ran over the wall".

This all leads us to make the observation that it is the overplus of life that furnishes a key to its character. The difference between mediocrity and greatness is to be found in the degree to which one is willing to extend his ministry beyond the limits of his own self-interest. This is true of nations and institutions as well as of individuals.

What Makes a Nation Great?

Recently, we had a large company of people from over the world to visit this country for the first time, as participants in an international (Rotary) convention in Dallas. To many newcomers, ours is a strange country. One commentator on the impressions received in America declares that "if one seems bewildered on his first touchdown in the United States, this hour of arrival is really his most lucid moment for assessing the meaning of this vast contradictory country" (Dr. Geo. M. Docherty: One Way of Living, p. 160).

But even so, one finds here a basic religious conviction that has come down from the founders of this republic. There are spiritual concepts derived from the Bible. There was in early American history a sense of destiny that transcended personal ambitions. On the official coinage we place "In God We Trust". Congress is opened daily with prayer. The President takes his oath of office with his hand upon the Holy Bible. Immigrants conclude their oath of naturalization with the words, "So help me God". Since June, 1954, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag has included the words "under God".

A country so signally blessed has a mission in the world. There are some isolationists among us. Our foreign aid program has been misunderstood, and perhaps mismanaged in certain instances. But that is no reason why we as a nation should declare that we will henceforth lop off the branches that extend over the wall.

President Eisenhower has asked Congress for some \$4,000,000,000 for foreign aid in 1959. He will probably not get that much. Nearly half of this is for military assistance to maintain American security around the world. But over \$2,000,000,000 is to go for economic support, to be used with the grants from other nations, in lifting living standards and in helping the less fortunate peoples of the world to make their contribution to the progress of the world as a whole.

William Hard, writing in the Reader's Digest, observes that while two billion dollars seems to be an enormous amount, it is really only 6/10 of one percent of the national income. He says that we spend \$6,000,000,000 for tobacco and \$10,500,000,000 for liquor, which together is seven times the amount asked for use as nonmilitary economic aid.

Now, we are well aware that some branches of the American bough drop fruit that is not wholesome. Some of the films we send abroad create false impressions of America. It is all right to sing "God Bless America", but we should remember that to receive such blessing involves an obligation on our part to be a blessing to the rest of the world.

The Church with Outreach

Let us think for a moment of this principle as it applies to the church. The church's boughs must reach over the wall. It is easy for a congregation to limit its interest to those who constitute its membership. It could become more interested in maintaining the status quo than in reaching out for the unchurched. An old minister is quoted as saying: "Christ called me to be a fisher of men, but my congregation has always wanted me to be the keeper of an aquarium". We need to be charged with the spirit of evangelism.

Another phase of the church's outreach is designated as Benevolences. That is an item on the annual church budget. Some do not know what the term means. Others manifest little interest in the causes embraced in this item.

As every well-informed church member knows, the Benevolences include such causes as World Missions, Church Extension, Christian Education, Educational Institutions, Annuities and Relief. The Benevolence item in the budget is the branch that reaches over the wall. It has been said that, "The mission of the church is missions".

I have seen the statement that there are some 2,000 tribes in the world today without the gospel, 2,000 languages into which no part of the Word of God has yet been translated (Oswald J. Smith, of Toronto).

Where Christ has gone, there are hospitals, schools, orphanages, leper asylums, homes for the blind, nurses and doctors. Christian marriage replaces polygamy, and life is sacred.

Our Presbytery has asked that this church drop fruitage over the wall this year to the extent of \$1,430. I have heard Geo. Sullivan, pastor of the little new Presbyterian Church in South Austin, say that his congregation has decided that it would contribute to benevolences an amount equal to that which it spends on itself. Some churches do even better than that.

Lives That Spill Over

Attending to one's own business is all right provided one has an adequate conception of what his business is.

Jesus had much to say about true neighborliness. He told the story of the Good Samaritan. He went beyond the bounds of duty. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (Matt. 5:46,47). The mark of genuineness in religion is the overplus.

Jesus said: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with what measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lu. 6:38).

It is the "second mile" Christian whose branches reach over the wall.

There is the outreach of friendship, love, gratitude, influence. There is nothing wrong about having money honestly gotten. It is how you use it that determines your rating. Remember Dives and Lazarus. The thing that complicates our life today is selfishness.

One of the most unforgettable characters in American life was Will Rogers, actor, comedian, philosopher, who was killed in an airplane accident in Alaska in August (15th) 1935. He was noted for his bigness of heart. He made a great deal of money, and he gave generously. He was quoted as saying, "Money doesn't worry me any more. All I care about is a good blue suit"; and after a pause, he added, "It doesn't have to be good". He raised \$100,000 for the 1927 flood sufferers in the Mississippi valley. In 1930, he gave a series of 14 - 15-minute talks over radio, at the price of \$350 a minute. He gave all of the \$72,000 received for that to charity. His branch reached over the wall.

It as said of Jesus that he "went about doing good".

Everyone as a matter of fact, is disseminating influence. The other day, I discovered a poem by W. L. Stidger which has the thought of our text, but in reverse:

"Your seeds blow into my garden, friend,
Whenever the wind is right;
They blow on the wings of the wind by day,
And they ride on the gales by night.

Whatever you grown in your garden, friend,
Of beauty or ugly weeds,
The fall will come and the wind will blow,
And over will come your seeds.

You words blow into my life, my friend,
Or, whether of good or ill;

White down on the winds of love they fly;
Or daggers that pierce and kill.

.....

Your life is a garden of love, dear friend,
And planted with kindly deeds;
So ever and over the wall will blow,
Into my garden, your seeds.”

(Book: “I Saw God Wash the World”, p. 69)