

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

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**The Book of Genesis
to
The Book of Psalms 48**

The Book of Genesis

The Dignity of Man

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“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, Faussett, 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 discomfiting 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 Sodom 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 Canaanitish 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".

2

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.

3

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 tithe 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 garners 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)

The Book of Exodus

The Grace of Foster-Mothering

Minden, LA

May 9, 1937

“The story of the rescue of the baby Moses.”

Exodus 2:1-10

One of the most appealing stories in all history. It is truly a story of mother love -- the love that sharpens wits and heightens courage and sweetens toil. What a great mother Jochebed must have been! To have a son like Moses is worth much privation and sacrifice. It is to the type of motherhood exemplified in the mother of Moses that this special day has been set apart.

But some of the greatest mothers the world has had never had children of their own. They manifested the true motherly spirit. The world would have been poor indeed without them. In fact, one basis of our hope for a better world is to be found in the over-spilling of the mother-spirit beyond the limits of the natural blood relationships.

The latter type of motherhood is represented in a measure by the daughter of Pharaoh who saved Moses from the Nile and adopted him as her son.

Egyptian history is a little uncertain here. But according to Dr. Geikie, Seti I must have been reigning at the time of Moses' birth. It must have been from him that the decree emanated requiring that all male children be killed (among the Hebrews) at birth. The woman who rescued Moses from the bulrushes must have been the daughter of Seti I, and the sister of Rameses II. Josephus gives the name of this daughter as Thermouthis (Ant. II:ix:5) and Eusebius as Merris (Proep.Evan.ix:27).

Amram of the tribe of Levi took to wife Jochebed, and to this union were born three children: Miriam, the oldest, twelve years older than Moses; Aaron, who was three years older than Moses; and Moses. The decree of Seti I made it necessary that something be done if little Moses was to live. So the plan of the ark in the bulrushes of the Nile was tried. As someone has said, before Jochebed laid her child in the bulrushes, she laid it in the heart of God.

The daughter of Pharaoh must have been of independent mind. When she saw the babe and heard his little cry, she knew it to be a Hebrew child. She knew, too, that she was going contrary to the royal decree. She may not have been in sympathy with the policy being pursued. Tyranny does not necessarily run from father to daughter. She did not feel compassion because it was her duty, but because it was her nature. The child's utter helplessness appealed to her motherly nature.

And so, she had him drawn out of the water and gave him the name of Moses, which means “drawn-out”. She adopted him, and thereby made him eligible to the best that Egypt had to give.

The fact that, at Miriam's suggestion, she secured the mother of Moses to nurse him changed the course of human history. For we may be sure that his mother fortified his soul against the evils to which he would be exposed in the court of the king of Egypt.

Only a moderate education would have been possible to Moses under normal conditions as a Hebrew child. But as a son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had access to most unusual advantages.

Moses was trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians. We know little about that "wisdom", since the priestly scribes held this as their peculiar treasure to be communicated only to the members of the circle. It probably embraced knowledge of politics, geometry, astronomy, physics, morals, medicine. It is thought that Moses was educated at the University of On, which was just north of Memphis. The obelisk that now stands in Central Park, New York, was once located at On, and was perhaps frequently passed by Moses. Moses learned to ask "Why?" -- Why the bush was not burned. He became mighty in words and works (Acts 7:22).

The result was that Moses came to have the furnished mind, the confidence, the poise, the assurance, the knowledge of policy, method, spirit, -- all of which wonderfully equipped him to be the leader of his people when the time for the liberation came.

So, there is no estimating the debt of the Hebrews and of the world to the foster-mothering which the daughter of Pharaoh bestowed upon Moses. Moses' refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter any longer was not an act of ingratitude. He was separating himself from the relationship that involved social participation which were contrary to his moral principles.

An Oft-Repeated Experience

Something like this has taken place over and over again in the history of the world. The world is richer and happier because the spirit of motherhood has not been restricted to those of one's own flesh and blood.

Only yesterday, I heard a man telling of having been amazed at the wonders produced from the peanut by a very humble negro. This humble negro, however, is an international figure. His name is George Washington Carver. He is a scientist of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, now over 70 years of age. From the peanut, he has made 300 useful products, including cheese, candies, coffee, pickles, oils, shaving lotion, dyes, linoleum, face powder, printer's ink, and axle grease. From the sweet potato, he has made 100 products. He has been offered large salaries by concerns which wish to use his abilities. But he has refused, wishing to serve his own people in the South.

This modern man was born a slave on the farm of Moses Carver, near Diamond Grove, MO. When he was six months old, night riders carried away the baby and his mother. The raiders took no care of the child. He developed whooping cough and was dying when emissaries sent out by Moses Carver arrived to buy back the stolen slaves. The mother could not be found. She was never heard of again. The baby was traded back to his owner for a broken-down race horse.

The Carvers reared this sickly boy. They gave him their name, with the prefix of "George Washington". They gave him an education after a fashion. But his continuance in

studies was made possible by his own efforts. Booker T. Washington finally secured him for Tuskegee, where he has remained in spite of tempting offers to go elsewhere.

You never know what is wrapped up in a little bundle of humanity called a baby. I remember hearing a speaker at Montreat last summer refer to the fact that when Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born he was so small that the nurses debated whether he ought to be permitted to live. Isaac Newton is best known for reasoning he did after observing the falling of an apple. Some students since have held a grievance against him for having invented binomial theorem. But the greatness of the man was witnessed to by Alexander Pope, who said "God said, Let Newton live, and there was light".

Another classic story of foster mothering is connected with Abraham Lincoln. Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, parents of Abraham, had had few advantages in the way of education. The exactions of making a living under most primitive conditions absorbed the energies of the family, so that there seemed to be no place for books or learning of any sort.

Lincoln's own mother died in 1818, when he was only 9 years of age. The following year, Thomas Lincoln married Mrs. Sarah Bush Johnston, who had three children of her own. She had also three books, one of which was the Bible. She found that there had never been a book or newspaper in the Lincoln cabin. She was thrifty, wise and kind. She fired the imagination of young Abraham. Under that inspiration he went on from one achievement to another, until he came to the presidency of his country. It was of this foster-mother that Lincoln said, "All I am, and all I hope to be, I owe to my darling mother". She survived him four years.

When Edgar Allen Poe was orphaned in Richmond, VA at the age of three, had he fallen into less kindly and able hands than those of the John Allans, America would have been denied her greatest literary genius. He was the son of David Poe and Elizabeth Arnold, actor and actress, both of whom had died when Poe was three. The Allens took Edgar into their home, educated him as a son, even taking him to England to study. He fell into bad ways and vicious habits, which worked against him. His character has been the subject of much heated controversy. But there is no denying his genius.

And so, we might go on multiplying instances of contributions made the world through the foster-mothering of sons and daughters of great potentialities.

Step-Mothering

We are familiar with the designation "stepmother", which is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and means the mother of those bereft or bereaved. A stepmother is a foster mother. It takes a brave woman to undertake seriously the responsibilities of such a station, for she treads on dangerous ground. She often falls under the fire of sharp criticism. Prejudices have been built up against such relationship. Fairy stories have pictured her as cruel, hateful, and unjust. Relatives meddle with the seemingly heartless determination to make it as hard as possible for the woman attempting to fill that station. Mother's virtues are sung about, but the foster-mother is left to trudge along over her rocky road.

The foster-mother who makes a success of her task is a greater mother than a natural mother. She does not have the advantage of natural ties and the sympathetic environment. Besides, she must learn so much of the inherited urges in the children she mothers. She must know where to draw the line. She must know when temperament becomes temper, and when Johnnie's manliness is plain meanness.

Institutional Mothering

It is interesting to note in this connection that it has been the custom to call the institution which one has attended one's "alma mater". This is the Latin for "foster-mother". Milton called the university "a stony-hearted step-mother".

Think of the great good that orphanages have done and are doing.

Do you remember that great wartime poster of the American Red Cross -- the picture of a Red Cross nurse in uniform, with the inscription, "The greatest mother in the world". The idea was that here was an institution which followed the boys into the danger zones where mothers could not go, and ministered to their wounds, moistened their parched lips, cooled their fevered brows, just as mother would have done had she been able to be there.

There is no end of this kind of thing. Here is a Sunday School teacher who, Sunday after Sunday takes a motherly interest in the little lives that are being shaped under her observation.

There are numberless instances of kindnesses shown, encouraging words uttered, assistance rendered, by women who are more than mere mothers of their own.

I suppose there is nothing wrong about bestowing affection and care on poodle-dogs and Persian cats. But in many instances, it looks like a misappropriation of a wonderful endowment.

Products of Composite Mothering

Everyone, I dare say, is the product of the mothering of more than one woman. I could call the names of several in my own life. I remember so well when I preached my first sermon at Dunlap Memorial, Shreveport. I felt older than I probably looked. After the sermon, Mrs. Bickham, an aged saint of some 70 or more years, took hold of my arm in a motherly sort of way, and said, "I'm so glad you have come; and I want to be a mother to you".

This all explains why our wives assume such complete control of our movements -- insist on getting our rubbers and raincoats, putting us to bed, getting the thermometer under our tongues, and dishing out spoonfuls of this and that. They are mothering us.

It was a great day for Moses and Israel when the mother instinct of the daughter of Pharaoh reached out and took the little baby Moses in. It is a great day for any child when he becomes the object of the mothering instinct of any good woman. So, today, as we think of mothers, let us not forget our foster-mothers.

The Wages of Motherhood

Minden, LA	May 8, 1938
CCC Camp, Minden, LA	May 12, 1940
Colonial, Dallas	May 12, 1946
Rockdale, Texas	May 12, 1957

“Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”
Exodus 2:9

While Pharaoh’s “Gestapo” was hunting babies in the streets in ancient Egypt and carrying them off to slaughter, an indescribable fear clutched at the heart of the mother of little Moses. As an act of desperation and resourcefulness, she hid him in the bulrushes, in a strategic place, where the executions would not find him but where the daughter of Pharaoh might. Miriam, an older child, was stationed nearby to watch and to make a suggestion, perhaps. The crying baby needed a nurse, thought the princess. Miriam knew where one could be gotten. She went running to get the mother of the baby. To her the princess said, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

Everyone knows that even a princess does not have in her power to bestow or withhold the rewards that belong to true motherhood. The mother of Moses did not care for anything particularly that Pharaoh possessed; and she taught her son not to have any undue regard for it. She had rather have seen him turn out to be the man that he became than to have everything that Pharaoh owned.

We are not told very much about this mother. We do know that she is one of the great mothers of the Bible history. Yet I doubt that many here today could call her name. Her name was Jochebed.

The daughter of Pharaoh probably paid Jochebed the wages of a servant, and considered that such was an adequate compensation for all that she put forth in the care of that child. But such was not the case. Jochebed was intent on better wages than that. There was the joy of ministering to her own. She would have done that without any pay at all. Could she have lived to take part in the great exodus which her son led, and have followed all along through the journey to the land of Promise, she would have known that her efforts were well spent.

Mother’s Strategic Position

When the records of time are disclosed and credit is given where it is due, it will be found that countless individuals, till then unknown, will be accorded honor and praise for accomplishments with which others have been credited. Just how much of credit for the achievements of Moses should go to Jochebed remains yet to be known.

Just a few years ago, our Methodist brethren were celebrating the 200th anniversary of the heartwarming experience had by John Wesley at Aldergate, London. The celebration was being used as the occasion of a new emphasis on personal religious living in the program of the church.

Naturally, there was considerable interest created in the life of that man who started the movement resulting in the establishment of the Methodist Church. Several new biographies of Wesley were written. I noticed one bearing the title, "Son to Susanna". The reviewer of one magazine did not think so much of the book. But the title is at least very suggestive. Susanna Wesley was the mother of John. John is said to have been very much like his mother and that he followed her leadership very readily. It is held that Susanna Wesley deserves as much credit for the establishment of the Methodist Church as does her son John.

We may be sure that if Susanna is viewing the earthly scene in this time, she feels amply repaid for all the effort she put forth in the rearing of her family. She could testify that the wages of motherhood are beyond all monetary valuation.

True Modern Motherhood

Doubtless each of us has an ideal mother in mind. It might be difficult to describe her. It is barely possible that some of us might go back a generation or two to find her. She would be rather lonesome and even out-of-place in this modern world.

One editorial writer recently took the position that the popularity of Whistler's picture of his mother is inspired more by sentiment than judgment, or at least practicality. Modern mothers, says this writer, are no longer studies in lavender and old lace, knitting and tatting. She is no recluse. She is a student of diets and pedagogy and world affairs and investments. Carnations are all right. But the glow of a lighted mind in her children is far more beautiful to her.

I have not heard much about it lately, but before the late war, the Golden Rule Foundation set out to make an annual selection of an actual flesh and blood mother who in their estimation represents some of the qualities that belong to the best conception of motherhood. They actually named the person.

It is interesting to consider the bases of the estimation: 25% for character, 25% for her record as a mother, and 10% each for community activity, public speaking, health, personality and human appeal.

It is my opinion that true greatness does not conform to a pattern. The greatest mothers are those who have not stood out so much themselves, but who have had a burning ambition for their children. I doubt seriously that the Golden Rule foundation would have chosen Jochebed; or Hannah, the mother of Samuel, or Eunice the mother of Timothy, as ideal mothers.

Just being a mother does not in itself call for any special eulogy. But there are qualities in motherhood that deserve our highest praise.

1. Sacrificial love: The mother of Jesus at the cross. Dr. McCartney tells of a mother from Texas who went to Virginia after the Civil War and took back her son who had been deprived not only of his sight in the war, but also of his reason. She was leading him back home. She sent out her son of promise, and this was what she got back.

S. D. Gordon says that William James, the famous psychologist, told this story on class to illustrate one of his points. In a little country school house in New England, the teacher called on one of the boys to recite in a class in fractions. She said, "If your mother divided a pie for the family made up of father and mother, Jack, yourself, Sally, Susie, and Mary, how much would each of you get?" Jimmy slowly drawled out, "One sixth". The teacher's brow knit. "Don't you know better than that? Don't you know fractions, Jimmy?" But Jimmy stuck by his guns. Slowly he drawled, "Yes'm. I know fractions -- some. But I know mother. She's say she didn't want any."

One of the great books of recent years was Eve Curie's biography of her mother Madame Curie, who, you recall, in collaboration with her husband, discovered radium. What the daughter has to say about the mother would have gratified the mother more than all the many honors and acclaims given her in every corner of the world. Here is a paragraph from the Introduction:

"I hope the reader may constantly feel...what in Marie Curie was even more rare than her work or her life: the immovable structure of a character; the stubborn effort of an intelligence; the free immolation of a being that could give all and take nothing, could even receive nothing; and above all the quality of a soul in which neither fame nor adversity could change the exceptional purity. Because she had that soul, without the slightest sacrifice Marie Curie rejected money, comfort, and the thousand advantages that genuinely great men may obtain from immense fame....She did not know how to be famous." This confirms the statement found in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, where the ideal wife and mother is described: "Her children arise up and call her blessed" (Prov. 31:28).

This is a day of freedom for mothers: (1) Political freedom -- right to vote and hold office. (2) Economic freedom. (3) Intellectual freedom. (4) Matrimonial freedom. Ease of divorce. (5) Social freedom. Drinking and smoking. What will she do with it? Too many children left to grow up. Children usually go further in indulgence than their parents.

2. Purity of Heart and Life: Don't forget that seeds of sorrow are sown in the home when children are young and apparently unobservant. But mental impressions recur later in life when reasoning faculty becomes alert.

The freedom now prevailing in the relationship of boys and girls is something appalling. If the statements of physicians and correction institutions are correct, the future mothers of America cannot boast of the purity that has hitherto been the glory of womanhood.

We wonder how some women today can hope to have the veneration and respect of their children. Sin always hurts another. There is a solidarity of life. "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced." Mothers will look upon children whom they have betrayed.

Will the future mother be the symbol of purity?

3. Faith in God: Paul's words to Timothy regarding his mother and grandmother. The chief repositories of the faith are mothers.

The inscription on the grave of the mother of Phillips Brooks, the great Episcopal minister of Boston: "O woman, great is they faith. Be it unto thee according to they wish". (Words of Jesus to the woman who wanted daughter healed.)

No mother can do her full duty by her children without religion.

The True Wages

1. Upright, useful living. When children do well, the mother's satisfaction is complete.

2. Love and appreciation. This is secondary to the former. But it is a greater reward than any material recompense.

Thomas Carlyle drifted far afield in religion, and he snarled at a world he never loved. Yet he retained a deep love for his mother. She was a simple, devout, Scotch peasant woman. His letters to her were full of tender love which the world never believed he possessed. Long after she was in her grave, he wrote, "Yonder from your grave in Echelfchen kirkyard, you still speak and bid me play the man; that I will try to do".

Benjamin West said: "My mother's kiss made me a painter". Moody said of his mother: "All I ever accomplished in life, I owe to her". When Garfield was about to go to Washington from Hiram, OH to be inaugurated, he wanted his mother to go with him. She demurred. She said she would be out of place with the great folks there. "I'll not go without you." She went. Garfield, after the inauguration said to those about him, "Gentlemen, all I have achieved and ever hope to achieve I owe to her".

I have known some mothers who would have given anything in the world if they had realized the worth of such an aim in life earlier.

Man and His Burning Bush

Minden Presbyterian (LA)

September 28, 1924

“The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.”
Exodus 3:2

It has been said that “the attitude of the average man of today toward the Christian religion is not one of open hostility but rather one of careless indifference (Prof. A. S. Hobart, in Preface to “Religion for Men”). The same observer remarks that actual and avowed atheism is a thing of the past. Yet people live as though there is no God. So many men are indifferent to the claims of religion.

It is borne out in the Word of God, as well as in the experiences of a vast host of men, that God beneficently intrudes. He brings his claims to the attention of men, and that too, very often, in a very forceful manner. Men very often do not heed the call. Some resent the intrusion or interruption. But other men have recognized and heeded the challenge in a wonderfully inspiring way.

All are familiar with the manner in which God presented the challenge to Moses. It was through the medium of a burning bush.

Recall the situation. In the vicinity of Mount Hebron, there was a man who for forty years had lived the very inactive and obscure life of a shepherd. But this was no ordinary man, though he was performing a very ordinary duty. This man was versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was a university graduate. He was trained in the manner of the king’s court, and was favored as though he were a son of the king. Josephus tells us that Moses was made Commander-in-Chief of an expedition against the Ethiopians, in which he was successful.

By virtue of his mother’s training, he came to know that he was a child of the enslaved people of Egypt, and doubtless he entertained hopes of relieving to some extent their oppression. But he seems to have left God out of his plans. It seems that he felt able to take matters into his own hands, and the result was that he made a serious mistake. He was not master of himself and was hotheaded. He failed, and in fear fled from the country, and in all probability delayed the deliverance of the people of Israel many years.

There Moses was, in the desert about Horeb. A man trained for a great work, spending his years in doing an ordinary man’s job.

The situation would probably have remained as it was, had not God interrupted. He appeared in a burning bush, and threw out a challenge to Moses that fairly dazzled him. He tried to evade the task, but finally accepted it. The vision of the desert experience in his mind, he entered wholeheartedly into the perilous duties that were imposed upon him.

Many another man has had his burning bush experience, without which his entire life would have been aimless and Godless. In other instances, when he bush burned, men have not taken the trouble to turn aside and see.

Mrs. Browning wrote:

“Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.”

Jeremiah found the Lord in a budding almond tree, while all around it was dead.
“Wordsworth stood before a little primrose on a rock, and it became to him the court of deity”
(Jowett).

Philip I. Roberts, in “The Dry-Dock of a Thousand Wrecks”, tells of a man by the name of John Tyler. He began drinking at an early age, and for 42 years afterward he was a drunken and a vagabond. He became a wanderer over the whole world. The slums of New York, of Calcutta, Paris, Hong Kong, and London had been his stamping ground. He had even gone to Australia. All effort on his part to break the habit was futile. He was one day sitting on a bench at Mulberry bend on East River, New York, when a beggar went by. A man sitting next to Tyler said, “See that feller? I’ve known him for twenty years. For all the use he is to himself or anybody else, in this world, he’d be a thousand times better dead. Why he doesn’t go and make a hole in East River gets me”. John Tyler said to himself, “That hits me”. The statement that “He’d be a thousand times better dead” exactly fitted his condition. Why shouldn’t he go and make a hole in East River, as many another poor wretch had done? When the man sitting near him got up to go away, Tyler found an evening paper that he had left. In it was the account of the anniversary celebration of the Jerry McAuley mission. He remembered having visited this place with some ladies some years before. While he thought it would be of no use for him to go, the recollection of his mother’s faith made him resolve to make the effort. At the Mission he found the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave him power to overcome his evil habit. Can we not say that Tyler was face to face with his burning bush while out on Mulberry Bend?

Charles Kingsley, at the age of 22, was strongly tempted to follow a roving life of adventure and pleasure. An item, bearing the date of June 12, 1841, is as follows: “My birthnight! I have been for the last hour on the seashore, not dreaming, but thinking deeply and strongly, and forming determinations which are to affect my destiny through time and through eternity. Before the sleeping earth and the sleepless sea and the stars I have devoted myself to God”. Am I not right in saying that one’s burning bush may appear within the confines of one’s own thoughts?

Men sometimes shrink from the duties to which the Lord calls them through the burning bush. Moses did. He made many excuses. He sought to persuade the Lord that He was mistaken in the man. But God makes no mistakes of that kind. He knows what is in man. If there are any handicaps, He knows of them.

Excuse-making is a very common thing. It is liable to become habitual with people. The result will be that glorious opportunities will be passed through the habit of making excuses.

When Luther was called upon by his Superior to preach, he shrank from the call. He said, "No, no! It is not a little thing to speak before men in the place of God."

Some of us are too often so sensitive and afraid that we cannot measure up to the demands of unselfish service.

A certain Junior in college was asked upon his return to the campus to room with a Freshman. The request came from one of the professors, who seemed to have a high regard for the character of the Junior, and who had a personal interest in the welfare of the Freshman. The Junior accepted the responsibility. But when the Freshman arrived, he was such a crude specimen that the friends of the Junior were constantly wanting to know where he had been captured. It was a source of embarrassment to the Junior. Through the earnest insistence of his friends, he gave up his room to another, and joined the friends of the previous years. This was always afterwards a source of regret to the Junior. He felt that he had had a glorious opportunity to make a contribution to the life of a young man, and had evaded it. He was not equal to the challenge of the burning bush.

It will be recalled that the challenge came to Queen Esther through the words of Mordecai: "Who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther accepted the challenge, and made the attempt to save her people.

There is a tradition to the effect that when the persecution at Rome became intense, that Peter decided that it was best for him to leave the city. As he was going out, he met Jesus in the way. Peter said, "Master, wither goest thou?" Jesus responded that he was going back into Rome to be crucified again. Peter could not stand that. He turned and went back to die the martyr's death.

The call came to David Livingstone through the memorable words of Robert Moffatt. He said, "I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been". That to Livingstone was the challenge of the burning bush.

Paul could say in after life, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision".

I am wondering if we have not been thinking too much about our own selves in our attitude toward life, and not enough about the service that we can render. A man sometimes tells me that he can get something better somewhere else. But religion is more than getting. The great word in the program of Christianity is Service.

"And, as the path of duty is made plain,
May grace be given that I may therein,
Not like the hireling for his selfish gain,
But cheerful in the light around me thrown,
Walking as one to pleasant service led,
Doing God's will as if it were my own,
Yet trusting not in mine, but in his strength alone."

-- Whittier

God's Response to Human Readiness

Minden, LA	April 22, 1924
Colonial, Dallas	April 16, 1944 (rewritten)
Wilshire, Dallas	March 5, 1950
Lott, Texas	July 22, 1951
Barlett, Texas	July 29, 1951
Killeen, Texas	December 2, 1951
Fairfield Avenue Church, Shreveport	January 20, 1952
Waco: Westminster	June 8, 1952
Rockdale, Texas	April 12, 1953

“And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him.”

Exodus 3:4

This is said of a man who was a criminal, fleeing from the authorities of Egypt. One day, this man had taken matters in his own hand and killed a slave driver. His conscience condemned him. He disappeared into the wilderness. He came to the region of Sinai, and there remained in hiding for 40 years. He became a shepherd for a man whose daughter he married. The man was Moses, an Israelite, graduate of the great university of Heliopolis, had perhaps commanded armies, a scholar and prince of the great empire of Egypt. But now, he was not much more than a hireling, whipped out, defeated.

There must have been something in this situation that set Moses thinking afresh about God -- the God of whom his mother-nurse had taught him. Much of the truth we have been taught lacks reality because we have not meditated enough over it. The majesty of those great expanses in which Moses moved seemed to make very real the presence of the great Creator. One day he came upon an acacia tree afire. He turned aside to see. When he did, God called unto him.

Unseen Wonders Are Around Us

That burning bush may have been in the desert long before Moses ever noticed it. At any rate, we are discovering wonders around us that have been here ever since the world was created. No one ever saw them before. There are innumerable wonders still unseen, right at our sides. Future generations will wonder that we never saw them. There are inventions based on these discoveries yet to be given to the world, even yet to be worked out.

In Thursday's (June 6, 1952) Dallas Morning News, I read the account given by a Dallas banker, Eugene McElfaney, of an experience he had when he “flew all over God's heaven just short of sound speed in a TV-2 Shooting Star,” as an excited passenger. He wrote: “We were fairly catapulted into space and I felt I was off for the moon in a space ship”. (Sound travels at

the rate of 1,000 feet per second). We do not have atomic powered automobiles yet, but who knows that even some of the older of us may drive one yet.

During our recent drought, a neighbor of ours in Marlin asked me if I did not think that man was tampering with the Lord's business when he resorted to artificial methods of making it rain. She said she thought we know more of the Lord's secrets now than we know what to do with. She is right in that, I think. But as Christian people, we have the gospel which will produce the character necessary to handle aright the tremendous power which man is acquiring. Where we are falling down is in our quest of ways by which to make the gospel potent in the lives of people.

Solomon is credited with a saying: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter". God conceals for more than one reason: Man cannot comprehend some things; he does not need to know other things; and man appreciates the knowledge that he has had to dig for. It is so written into our nature that the pursuit of knowledge is good, wholesome, elevating (Prov. 25:2).

God makes his disclosures to an inquiring mind. This is true in what we might call the secular world, as well as in the religious world.

Untapped Resources Are Within Us

Parents still beam with pride when their child comes home with straight A's on a report card. But a high IQ is no assurance of success. It is often the cause of failure, because of neglect of other qualities such as character, ambition, leadership, social graces. Dwight Eisenhower graduated from West Point 61st in a class of 164. He has other qualities that have made him a great leader of men. Albert Einstein as a boy was considered backward, and Thomas Edison during his brief schooling was at the foot of his class and was considered a dunce. One of the glories of our American way of life is that there is opportunity for lads who stand before their burning bushes and hear the call to worthy living and noble service, whether it be an Elihu Burrit, blacksmith -- statesman; J. Fennimore Cooper, sailor-man of letters; Ezra Cornell, mechanic -- philanthropist; Lincoln, rail-splitter -- President.

Emerson said that the great difference between men is that one is a mere man and another is a man thinking. There's the difference. A modern executive, Ray Giles, recently produced a book entitled, "Turn Your Imagination Into Money" (Excerpts in Reader's Digest, April, 1934). He has this advice: "Cultivate the habit of looking at things as though you never saw them before. Then start thinking about improvements. Keep looking, looking, looking. New ideas are sure to come". He tells of a shipping clerk who had admitted that he was dumb. But he was told to look at the boxes that left his department with a view of improving them. "How can they be made to look better? How simplified? How made to do more than they are now doing?" He began to look on Monday. By Thursday he had an idea. "Why not print a ten-word sales talk on the box along with the name? There are many people that handle that box before it is finally cut up for kindling. Some small boy will make use of that box as body for his car and parade it around town, exhibiting that ten-word sales talk". The \$10,000 a year sales manager admitted

that he ought to have thought of the idea himself. Then the shipping clerk decided that he had been dumb by choice and not by necessity.

Countless people had seen steam spouting from the kettle. But James Watt saw in it a source of power. The discovery revolutionized the world. Howe was working on his sewing machine. The needle was giving him trouble. Mrs. Howe was at a sewing party and thinking as she worked. It occurred to her then that better work could be done if the eye of the needle were in the point rather than the head. She went home and told her husband that she had the idea that he needed for his machine. Out of thinking minds have come automobiles, telephones, radios, electric lights.

“God led me in my search,” declared George Washington Carver, the Negro scientist of Tuskegee, often called the “Wizard of the Peanut”. He published a booklet showing 30 products that can be gotten from the peanut, 105 ways of preparing the peanut for table use. He also found in the sweet potato, flour, starch, tapioca, dyes, mucilage, ink, synthetic rubber. He turned aside to see and God spoke to him.

This Principle in the Realm of Religion

The process is even more rewarding in the realm of religion. God speaks to men anxious to look into such matters. It leads to a vision of God.

1. The Bible: The outside of the Bible is so familiar; but the inside of it is becoming more and more unfamiliar. We are forgetting the things we learned in earlier days. Even familiar passages mean little to us because we have ceased to think them. The greatest teachers of the Bible are those who look long at familiar passages. We can never hope to see much in the Bible unless we turn aside to see what it contains.

Dr. Halford Luccock, a nationally known minister, says, in one of his books: “I graduated from the theological seminary back in the bronze age; perhaps a better metallurgical term would be the “age of brass”. In those days, quite a number of us young Apollos on graduating, having become men, put away such childish things as texts and Bible stories. I, for one, in the pulpit, lived among the immensities and starry galaxies”. He goes on to say that after he had preached his sermons on “The March of Progress,” “Science and Religion,” and “Pragmatism,” he (like the prodigal) began to be in want. “Then I came to myself and said ‘In my Father’s Book are texts enough and to spare. I will arise and go to the Bible’.”

People see nothing in the Bible because they do not take the trouble to explore its treasures. There are riches there for the person who will turn aside to see. People are suffering from atrophy of the spiritual optic nerve.

2. God’s Works: This is one of the themes of the Bible. “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained...The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork”.

Robert A. Millikan, physical scientist of note says: “Of all my acquaintances in the scientific world, I know none who are atheists; almost all of them are convinced Christians” (Quoted by E. Stanley Jones, “How to be a Transformed Person”, p. 100).

“If at first you do not believe, look again before you doubt,” is the heading of a recent article by Professor Tinkle, Professor of Biology in a California College (Christian Digest, August, 1943). Look, he says, at nature, how animal life is suited to the conditions under which it lives -- cranes with long legs and long beaks, ducks with webbed feet, oil in feathers, and wide bill. The speculations of the 19th Century led some away from God, but the actual discoveries of the 20th Century have strengthened the foundations. There is no quarrel between science and the Bible.

3. God's Church: Some like to ask what is the matter with the church. Probably it has had too much success. It has been basking in the favor of people generally. There are too many people who are in the church, at least nominally, because it is the prevailing custom. But they have no particular devotion to it. They run away from any situation that calls for sacrifice of time, effort, money or social convention. The man most critical of the church is the man who does not really know what the church is doing.

Roger William Riis is a “Roving Editor” of the Reader’s Digest. In the November, 1951 issue, he wrote an article entitled, “I Am For the Churches”. He says that he had at one time scoffed at churches, and that he had not attended one in 22-years. During the war, on a sudden whim, he attended a service. He went away stirred and grateful. He went again a week later, and the result was similar. He has since made it a point to attend. He says this: “I state with assurance that critics of churches today don’t know what they are talking about. It is obvious that the assailants of churches do not go to church...When you go to church, you should actively seek something. It is an exciting spiritual adventure, this going to church”.

Well, you remember that it was in the sanctuary that the psalmist, who was beginning to question the divine order of things, saw the whole thing more clearly. His feet were well nigh slipped, until he went to the church (Ps. 73).

4. God's Son: “What think ye of Christ?” a most important question. So many people have no opinion. They have not turned aside to see.

When Zaccheus, head of the tax gatherers, who had both position and money, heard that Jesus of Nazareth was to pass through Jericho, he wanted to see him. Being short of stature, he could not see him for the crowd. “The eagerness of his soul got into his feet” (E. S. Jones). He climbed a tree to see. Jesus called to him out of the crowd.

We are living in a world of wonders. As Christians, we have been entrusted with a wonderful gospel. We have the answer to the world’s needs. But until all this becomes to us a living reality, we will never do much towards convincing others of these claims.

“Open my eyes that I may see
Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for Thee,
Ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Spirit divine.”

* * *

Thousands of people had seen the foreign seaweed that littered the shores of Spain. But Columbus looked at it thinking.

Do you not think that when the Magi set out to see what the appearance of the new star in the heavens meant, there were people who shook their heads in indication of their feeling that the three visionaries needed to get their feet on the ground?

The leading editorial in the Dallas Morning News of June 8, 1952 has the heading: "God's Business is Big Business". The writer speaks of the churches in Dallas County -- 600 of them, 260,000 members, property values at a quarter of a billion, hospitals, theological schools, bookstores, a 25,000,000 university, largest churches in the denominations. The editor concludes: "Yes, God's business is big business, but of its bigness, you will notice this editorial has mentioned only its least significant phase -- statistics".

Reverence in a Presumptuous Age
Reverence as a Law of Life

Minden, LA
Louisiana Tech, Ruston: Baccalaureate Sermon
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“And Moses hid his face.”

Exodus 3:6

It was a great moment in human history when Moses stood before the burning bush in the land of Midian, while he was shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law. As he approached the bush, there came a voice from it saying, “Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”. The oriental showed, and still shows, respect by pulling off his shoes. We of the West take off our hats, when we have them. When the voice revealed the fact that it was God who spoke to him, Moses hid his face, in reverence.

A less reverent soul might have been very careless as to his deportment under those circumstances. We have stories in the Bible of those who were presumptuous, and came into sacred areas without authority. One notable instance was when King Saul offered the sacrifices when Samuel was not there to do it, just before going to battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:8f). The great King Uzziah also presumed to go into the temple to offer incense, when the priests should have been asked to do it (2 Chron. 26:16). He became a leper and continued so until his death.

We are living today in a very presumptuous age. Sacred conventions of the past are flouted and shocking things are preferred. There seems to be an unquenchable thirst for the gruesome facts of social disorder. Uncleanliness is designedly injected into literature with brutal frankness. Delight is found in cheapening human life, and characters are smeared almost indiscriminately. Modesty in dress is outmoded. We hear often, “Nothing shocks me”. Bald sophistication has replaced cultured gentility. Holy days are being commercialized and reduced to the level of holidays.

Such a day as this provides an occasion to sound a clarion call to greater reverence towards certain aspects of life. We need this virtue, for our own sakes, as well as for the sakes of others. It has an ennobling effect on character. We recognize something finer in the personalities of those who manifest sincere reverence for the better things of life. It is a sublime quality.

What is reverence? It is more than common politeness, or formal courtesy. It is a genuinely felt sentiment of respect and esteem, a profound respect mingled with love and awe. It

is a spiritual appreciation of transcendent values. True reverence is based, not on servility, but on fellowship and trust. The Jews would not pronounce the sacred name Jehovah in the Scripture. There was a measure of superstition involved there.

1

We Need Reverence for Truth

By truth, we mean that which conforms to fact or reality, that which is in accord with what is, has been, or must be.

It has come to pass in our American life that we do not know what to believe. Accusations are made that are proven to be without justification. It appears that men in public life suffer defamation of character at the hands of unprincipled political opponents who know the aspersions they cast are not true.

Some men do not hesitate to manipulate facts to suit their ends. Proponents, with conclusions formed in advance, search for material with which to substantiate those conclusions. There are those who use the Bible in that way. Even the devil quotes Scripture to obtain his ends.

It has been claimed that as knowledge increases, reverence will decrease. The assumption being that with fuller knowledge, there will be fewer mysteries. But that is not the case. It is true that we know more about some things, but with fuller knowledge we have more to awe us. Do you not think that the psalmist who stood in awe of the "heavens", the "moon and the stars" (Psalm 8) would be utterly speechless were he able to look into those same heavens through a modern telescope?

A true scientist is reverent, for the more he knows about the world, the more he is impressed with the wonders of it. The silences of the universe, as Pascal expressed it, awe them. Men of lesser breed treat these lightly. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Let it be said that there is variation in the importance of truth. Some of it is more important than the rest. Jesus once said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". Some would make this statement refer to some special propaganda of their own. Jesus was speaking of the truth regarding man's redemption. The Bible is the highest expression of truth. It is truth regarding the most important subjects upon which man can think -- his origin, his nature, his salvation, his eternal destiny. A lack of reverence for the Bible reveals a lack of reverence for truth. "Thy word is truth."

2

We Need Reverence for Human Personality

The Old Testament enjoined respect for parents, old people, and rulers. Jesus told a story of a plantation owner who, after thoroughly equipping his estate, let it out to his overseers and tenants, and moved to the city. The collection of the third and fourth he left to his agents. But when those agents came to collect, they were grossly mistreated by the overseers. When the

owner heard of this, he decided to send his son. "They will reverence my son," he said. But the son received even worse treatment. They were devoid of reverence.

Jesus taught respect for human beings. He was fired with indignation over any manifestation of inhumanity. He instilled the principle of loving one's neighbor as oneself.

I remember reading that the writer saw in a Tennessee railway station this declaration on the wall: "COURTESY: found in two places, in the dictionary and HERE". He said he proceeded to try it out and found the declaration to be true.

Character thrives best in an atmosphere of appreciation. It does one good to be shown respect. "No one really loves another who does not feel a certain reverence towards him" (Newman).

The Senate Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, which did a very good job with reference to comics, is now turning its attention to the terrific impact which television shows are having on children. I quote from the report said to be forthcoming:

"The domination of crime and violence (in these shows) is increasing rather than diminishing....It was found that life is cheap; death, suffering, sadism, and brutality are subjects of callous indifference; and that judges, lawyers, and enforcement officers are dishonest, incompetent, and stupid....It was found that hundreds and hundreds of exposures to the suffering of others for the purpose of entertainment most unfortunately have brought about in many children an atrophy of such desirable emotions as sympathy and compassion towards those in distress, and also of the desire to help alleviate the pain or misery of those being maltreated, even to the point of torture" (Drew Pearson, 2/10/55).

I like those words of Hamlet when he says: "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension like a god!"

3

We Need Reverence for God

There are many conceptions of God, some are too small to command much reverence. Some make Him out to be a mere force in the universe. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote:

"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God;
And only he who sees takes off his shoes..."

Happy is the man who has an adequate conception of God. The old artists hesitated to picture God. They used symbols and parts of the body, as a great arm. We have no way to picture God. Jesus came in human flesh to reveal God. But we know that God is a spirit. He should be revered.

There is inconsistency in the lives of those who claim to reverence God and yet indulge in profanity. Both men and women often give the name of God coarse and even vulgar

association. When you stop to think, you realize that the word “damn” is a prayer, even though the name of God does not precede it. We need to catch the meaning of the petition, “Hallowed be thy name”.

The house of God should provoke reverence. Jesus drove the desecrators of his Father’s house from their money tables. They had put gain above God. To Jesus, it was a house of prayer. Someday, we hope to have a sanctuary which will impart to all worshippers a sense of reverence. We need a place in which we can be still, and lift our spirits unto God.

Reverence for God involves respect for his holy day. Sabbath observance may easily become a formality. The true spirit of reverence may be lost in conformity to legal routine. That had come to be true in the day in which Jesus lived and taught. But his saying that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” should not be used to justify sacrilege. The Sabbath is a sacred day to the Godly. It does not matter whether irreverent indulgences are against the law of the land or not. Their conformity is to a higher principle.

The spirit of reverence is extended also to God’s Book. In many homes, it is never opened, never read. Jokes about the Bible, or about incidents recorded in the Bible, may indicate a lack of respect for the Book.

And so, we might apply this principle to many phases of life. Reverence is the atmosphere in which the soul grows.

I have seen the statement that when botanists subject a tree to the process known as destructive distillation (burning it in a vacuum furnace) it is found that the elements which are enduring and permanent are not those which are gotten from the ground through its roots, but through the leaves from the atmosphere around us. The soul’s best life is drunk in from the environment of true religion.

There is no greater character in Old Testament history than Moses. He entered reverently into the crowning achievement of his life. It was only when he lost that spirit for a moment and became irreverent that he committed a deed which deprived him of the coveted privilege of entering the land of promise. There has always been something finer about people who observe the prohibitions of sanctity, who did not intrude presumptuously, and who have an inbred respect for worth and truth and goodness.

The God of Our Varied Life

Minden Prayer Meeting, LA
Minden Evening Service, LA
Colonial, Dallas

February 26, 1933
May 24, 1942
December 1, 1946 (revised)

“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Expression found also in vs. 16, Matt. 22:31; Mark 12:26; Acts 7:32).

Exodus 3:6

The great present day need for contact with God. Job said (23:3): “Oh that I knew where I might find Him” The cry of the world in present distress.

It has been said that modern atheism is due, among other things, to three causes:

1. Too much absorption in things: That English preacher, extensively quoted recently, spoke truly when he referred to the preference people had shown for automobiles, seashore pleasures, money, buildings, to the neglect of God. Now he says the automobiles are being eliminated, people are barred from seashores, money is taen away in taxes, buildings being destroyed by air raids. The person who has lived for things, and lost his God, finds himself without support in the hour of his greatest need.

2. Rationalization of feeling: The modern person is inclined to yield to his feeling and then to justify his action. The heart is regarded as the seat of emotion. The heart of man is wicked. He justifies his course by convincing himself that there is nothing wrong in what he does. “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” If a man is going to follow the course of his evil heart he must get God out of the way. So he says in his heart, not his mind, there is no God.

3. Mistaken conceptions of God: In all probability, the atheistic trend in Russia has been due to the aversion of the people to religion as represented by the established Church, the head of which was the Czar. Man, human that he is, has more imperfect conceptions and misrepresents the character of God.

Dr. Roy L. Smith tells of an eccentric old man who ran a drugstore in a southern Indiana town. It was really an old curiosity shop, with many old curios on exhibition. One of the treasures, very wonderful to him, was the whole crucifixion scene in a bottle. It had a tiny crucifix, with three women kneeling at the foot of the cross, wooden soldiers not far away, the reed with a sponge on it leaning up against the cross, two tiny little dice near a rock on which lay the clothes of the crucified. Above the figure on the cross was the inscription. The mouth of the bottle was sealed. The whole thing was said to have been done inside the bottle (Ministers Annual, 1933, p. 526). Dr. Smith goes on to say that one of the most tragic mistakes that people make is trying to bottle up God, squeeze him inside some definition, or carving, or creed.

We do not hear so much boasting of God favoritism of nations as we heard in the World War No. 1. Emperor William II had much to say about God’s deliverance of the Germans.

God is a God of all. There are no people who have any claim on his particular favor. The variety of his interest and the range of his consideration are seen in this expression, the words of the text.

The God of Abraham

I suppose the predominant characteristic of Abraham was his unwavering faithfulness.

Abram was a Semite, descendant of Shem, son of Noah. God chose Shem of the sons of Noah as the channel through which he could accomplish the redemption of the race. Abram lived 2,000 years before Christ. He was a native of Ur, located between the Euphrates and the Tigris, a spot favorable to commerce and civilization. Ur came to its peak of glory about 3,500 BC. Much archeological data are now available.

Why did God select Abraham? He was a ready man. While others were absorbed in evil practices, he was communing with the eternal spirit. There were dim remnants of the faith that Noah manifested. It was doubtless an imperfect faith at the beginning.

Abram went out, not knowing whither he went. A most important journey was that. Abram was not the fully developed man of faith that he later became. He was a deceiver in Egypt, about the relationship of Sarah to him. He was reproved by an unbeliever. He later manifested a lapse of faith in connection with his heir, not believing that it would be possible for him to have a son. But all of these experiences helped him to grow. They were mistakes, but from the best of motives. God knew Abram's heart to be true. He changed his name to Abraham, and called him the Father of the Faithful. He entered into a covenant with him. He promised Abraham the land of Canaan. Abraham pledged obedience. Then came the trial of his faith in the command to offer his son as an offering.

There are people today of the type of Abraham.

The God of Isaac

The predominant characteristic of Isaac was the tendency to follow the line of least resistance.

Isaac was his mother's only son, the child of old age. Under the spell of maternal authority. He was prevented by his mother from marrying early. Married at 40 Rebekah. He was content to send a servant to choose a wife for him. While Abraham sent for a wife for Isaac, he was not concerned enough to get wives for his sons. Esau married a Canaanite woman, and probably Jacob would have done so had not Rebekah, who was strong-minded, intervened. Isaac lived an unadventurous life. Was a great sheik. Noted for digging wells.

There are many of that type today: commonplace people, doers of drab things. They have a part to play in the work of the world. God is mindful of them.

The God of Jacob

Jacob's was a colorful personality.

He was at first a supplanter, later became prince of God. Name changed to Israel. Took advantage of his brother, his father and his father-in-law. At Peniel he became a new man. There he wrestled with the angel. Self gives place to God.

The world is full of these. When they are won for God and righteousness, they are valuable. Jacob had great qualities: patient endurance, splendid tenacity, industry. His faults were greater because he was a positive personality.

In the famous Cripple Creek area in Colorado there is a famous gold mine. Three prospectors spent all their wealth and several years of their lives digging a shaft. They gave up. They sold their claim to fresh prospectors who discovered a rich gold-bearing vein of ore the first day they worked their claim. Over three million dollars worth of gold was eventually taken from the mine (Minister's Manual, 1933, p. 187).

The Universality of Jesus

Jesus began by surrounding himself with disciples who were different in background and temperament.

The appeal of Jesus was felt by people of all conditions and classes. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Matthew and Zacchaeus. Andrew and Peter, fishermen. Mary and Martha. Greeks and Romans.

That has been the history of the Christian religion.

Right now, we know that here we have the hope of the world. We may talk about the brotherhood of men, but we will never realize this ideal apart from Christ. We have before us a demonstration of the utter futility of trying to work out a satisfactory understanding among nations apart from the Christian motive. People sometimes speak in disparaging terms of the divisions in the Christian Church. But it is nothing in comparison with this.

“In Christ there is no East nor West,
In Him no North nor South;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth...

Join hands then, brothers, of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be,
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.”

-- John Oxenham

In the current issue of Life Magazine (December 2, 1946) pictures are reproduced of exposures taken of the earth 65 miles high. An automatic camera was attached to a German V-2 rocket and set going. It clicked away as the rocket mounted to an altitude five times higher than man has ever gone. Theoretically, the camera reached a point at which it had a range of vision covering 1 1/2 millions of square miles. Only half way up, the mountain ranges look like tiny wrinkles. At the peak of the trajectory, the surface of the earth looks like the covering of a ball, with huge masses of clouds far below forming what looks to be a discoloration of the ball's surface.

All of this reminds us of the relative triviality of the issues that separate us in our little anthill of existence. The larger our outlook, the less important some matters become.

A God of Varied Moods

The varied mood to which I refer is not God's but ours. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. We are changeable.

I have just read an address by a Navy Chaplain (Jas. V. Claypool: Best Sermons, 1946) in which he says that man travels spiritually in four directions. Being a wide traveler by ship where direction is a matter of supreme concern, he naturally carries over some of the ideas of seagoing people into the realm of religion.

Some journey towards the setting sun -- westward. "Twilight and evening bell." A time of reflection on the past, on what we have not done or done wrong. Rather melancholy days.

Others, he says, travel south, where things are languid, lovely, pleasant. No rough seas, no mountains. Maybe tinged with boredom. Some young people give up the difficulties of getting prepared for life and get married, thinking that everyone will be all right.

Some travel north. Such a course is bleak, dark, dreary. There is grim reality. Times seem to be out of joint. Hardship and reverses.

The rest may be said to be traveling east, towards the rising sun. To them life has new hope, new achievements. Zest for life.

These experiences may come to each of us. It is likely that no one sees life the same all the time. Our outlook is so strongly influenced by our moods and our physical condition.

But we have a God who understands and who will go with us all the way. "He knoweth our frame, and he remembereth that we are dust."

He May Be Our God

All that I have said might not be of any particular interest to us here today. The fact that He is a God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of James and John, of certain other great souls, would not be of more than academic interest to us, but for the fact that He can be our God also.

Paul wrote the Philippians: "My God shall supply all your need" (4:19). Paul did not mean that he had any monopoly on this God. He was the God of the Philippians also.

God becomes ours when we come to him as he directs. The "way" is Christ. We should give him heart, soul, mind, strength. We live then in him.

You recall that song that the men like to sing. We can sing it truly:

"There is a Shepherd who cares for his own,
And He is mine;
Nothing am I, He a King on a throne,
But He is mine."

What is in Thine Hand?

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas
Wilshire, Austin, Texas
Killeen, Texas
Rockdale, Texas

October 13, 1940
July 7, 1946
February 19, 1950
December 16, 1951
August 21, 1955 (rewritten)

“And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.”
Exodus 4:2

Familiar to even the most casual Bible reader is the story of the lone shepherd tending the sheep of his father-in-law in a remote portion of the desert of Arabia. Who was that shepherd? Moses, who had been for many years a fugitive from Egypt, where he was born, bid by his mother in the backwaters of the Nile, adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and where he slew an Egyptian taskmaster because of his cruelty. Fearing for his life, he sought to bury himself in the solitude of Sinai. Sitting at a well in Midian, he was watching seven (7) daughters of Jethro draw water for their flocks, when certain Arabian shepherds came up and rudely tried to drive them away. Moses intervened, and subsequently was introduced to the father because of his chivalrous act. Later, Moses married one of the girls. He had for years been content to dwell in quietude in Midian. He was no longer young. He may have thought that he would finish out his days in this locality. But one day the continued burning of a wild acacia bush excited his curiosity. He went to see. He found himself talking to the God of his fathers. He was told that he had yet a great work to do. He must go to Pharaoh and demand the release of his people. He pleaded his lack of fitness for the task, his certainty that the king would not be impressed. It was then that the Voice from the bush asked, “What is that in your hand?” “A shepherd’s crook,” but what of that? It is an indispensable article in handling sheep, but useless in dealing with an Egyptian monarch. But he was led to see that under the blessing and control of God, its usefulness can be multiplied many times.

As we know now, from the record, Moses was about to enter into the notable career of leading a vast host of people back to their homeland, and the instrument (visible) with which he was equipped was merely a shepherd’s crook. This was afterwards known as “Aaron’s rod”. It was used in bringing on the ten plagues of Egypt. It was finally placed in the Ark of the Covenant.

When confronted by some great challenge, which by some peculiar combination of circumstances seem to have divine sanction, we are inclined to make excuse. We persuade ourselves that we do not have what it takes. The teaching of the Bible is that we do have what it takes, if God is calling us. There are powers and aptitudes within us of which we may be unaware. Endowments may seem insignificant and common place, until God opens our eyes to their worth.

What Do We Have?

We are living in a time of distorted values. We usually determine the worth of persons by financial standards. But wealth often takes wings. Possessions once thought to be of minor importance turn out to be of major value, sometimes.

We see references frequently to the material wealth of the United States. It was once said that our country, having less than 7% of the population of the world, and about 5.3% of the land of the world, has 33% of the wealth of the world. That naturally involves a responsibility. Were some divine Voice to ask, "America, what is that in thine hand?" we might be inclined to answer "Wealth".

Our country has coveted the goodwill of other nations. She had been rather lavish in her distribution of her resources for the betterment of nations. We have been disappointed that the instrument with which we had hoped to gain the friendship of nations has proven to be ineffectual. And the distribution of our American made movies has not been any help. All seem to have created the idea that ours is a loose-living, luxury loving social order. You probably recall that visitors to our shores during the World Council meeting at Evanston in 1954 expressed themselves as being amazed at the full churches and religious fervor of the people. Obviously we are not exporting the best asset that we have.

Sometimes you hear it said that a certain person "married well", meaning that he or she would become the beneficiary of material resources possessed by the other. Experience has shown that such is not always true. There are personal qualities that far outweigh possessions in importance.

As you reflect, what answer would you give to this question, "What is in thine hand?" Your time, your abilities, your influence, your personality. The worth of a possession is not always determined by its market value. In the Bible we have a record of the great value of a "ram's horn," "a cake of barley meal," "an earthen pitcher," "a shepherd's sling," "five loaves and two small fishes". It may be a voice to sing, a gift to teach, a skill to play an instrument, the ability to organize.

There are unexplored depths in all of us. There are capabilities, powers, possibilities, capacities. There are mute, inglorious Miltons, gems of purest ray serene, which have never been discovered and utilized. It is the calling forth of this that is involved in Christ's mission to earth. "I have come that ye may have life and might have it more abundantly."

How Did We Get It?

The Bible is very clear in teaching that what we have is from God. The parables and other teachings of Jesus reveal that man is a steward. Stewardship involves possession, responsibility, freedom of use, and accountability. A democracy provides a good setting for the practice of stewardship.

John Calvin maintained that all material goods are bestowed by God, and he had good Biblical authority for such a belief. Nevertheless, Calvin advocated the virtues of industry, frugality, honesty, sobriety...

It was in 1904 that Max Weber, a German came out with a treatise on "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". It appeared in English in 1930. Weber insisted that the capitalistic spirit is the child of John Calvin -- the great French reformer who lived in the first half of the 16th Century, and who had much to do with the reestablishment of the Presbyterian Church in Geneva and Europe generally. He encouraged the removal of the prohibition of usury. But he vigorously condemned avarice and covetousness. He had no intention of building a system of competition based on the profit motive. There is much in our present economic order of which I am sure Calvin would disapprove.

Fritz Kreisler, one of the great violinists of the world, had the idea when he said: "I was born with music in my system...It was a gift of Providence. I did not acquire it...I never look upon money I earn as my own. It is public money. It is only a fund entrusted to my care for proper disbursement...In all these years of my so called success in music, we have not built a home for ourselves. Between it and us stand the homeless of the world."

When we come really to the conviction that what we have is by the grace of God, it puts a different light on the use to which we put it. If what we have -- small or large -- is a trust, we will try to exercise the judgment of a true trustee. Maybe that little possession which we value lightly may have a significance far beyond our wildest thoughts.

What Shall We Do About It?

1. Face frankly the facts regarding what we have.

You have seen statements made by Major Alexander P. de Seversky, one of the great aviation authorities in this country. At the age of 21, as a member of the Russian Air Force, in 1915, he lost a leg. His first reaction was that there was little more in life for him. He came to America in 1917. He attributed his later success to his handicap. "The hardest thing to overcome," he has said, "is not a physical disability but the mental condition which it induces."

Many people who are rather bored with their lot, and even themselves, seek relief from their sense of frustration in glamorous fantasy. Hollywood has made hundreds of millions of dollars feeding such people "compensatory illusions", providing men and women and adolescents daydream fulfillment of their hopes. There's the ideal lover, sumptuous surroundings, gay festivities, lovely clothes -- all on the screen, in contrast to the commonplace factors of real life, as they have it. What have you in your hand, so to speak? A dish rag, an ironing board, last year's clothes, a husband who comes home from work and just sits.

Peter Marshall, late pastor of New York Avenue Church in Washington, in one of his published sermons, calls Andrew, one of the apostles and Simon, Peter's brother, "the saint of the rank and file", for says he, Andrew was not endowed with brilliancy along any particular line. He played second fiddle to his famous brother, Peter. Marshall thinks that as children, Andrew was overshadowed by Peter, who would nominate the games; that Peter's hand always

went up first in school when the teacher asked questions. Andrew was no great leader of men, no great preacher, no great missionary establishing churches. But he became immortal by doing the thing he could do best -- bringing other people to Jesus. Who knows that there would have been a Peter at Pentecost if there had been no Andrew to acquaint him with Jesus? Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. Andrew's Clubs are in existence all over the church, committed to the task of bringing others to Christ. "What is in thin hand, Andrew?" Just an interest in people and a desire to acquaint them with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Use in the task that immediately challenges.

The great call comes to us to "Brighten the corner where we are". There may be a temptation to wait for a bit moment. Who knows but the big moment is now?

About 35 years ago (1921), Ernest Poole produced a work of fiction entitled "Beggar's Gold". Peter Wells and his wife Katherine, both young, dreamed of going to China to help the Chinese to see that though they thought themselves poverty stricken, they were richer than their wildest dreams. They compared China to an old beggar in a fable, who lay down by the road. He was in rags and covered with dust, and so tired and so hungry and sick that he rested his head on his beggar's bag, and very soon he fell asleep. In his sleep a god came to him. "Look in your bag," he whispered. "It is not rubbish put pure gold." The old man woke up and trembled. Quickly he seized the dirty old sack and jerked it open, and out on the ground pored a torrent of gold and precious stones. Peter and Katherine wanted to go to China to convince the people that they were sitting on bags of gold. But they were delayed by one thing and another -- sickness of Katharine, tasks at home could not be evaded. By throwing himself into the task at hand, Peter demonstrated abilities that he little dreamt he had. It ended with his being made School Superintendent of New York. While he was feeling a sense of disappointment over not being able to show the Chinese that they were sitting on bags of gold, he had to learn by stern experience that he too was a beggar on bags of gold.

3. Effectiveness of effort depends on the blessing of God.

A shepherd's crook unattended by the blessing of heaven would be ineffective in the courts of Pharaoh. In the days of the Judges, Shamgar slew 600 Philistines to save Israel. "What is in thine hand, Shamgar?" An ox goad. Samson broke the bonds that held him on one occasion, when he was about to be turned over to the Philistines, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he slew about 1,000 of the terrified men. "What is that in thy hand, Samson?" A jawbone.

Down through the course of human history, there are countless examples of the potency of a consecrated use of ordinary abilities. Mr. Moody, the great evangelist, early in his career, heard a speaker say that the Lord is waiting to show what he can do with any man who will let Him have his way in his life. Moody then resolved that he would be that man.

When Queen Victoria asked Benjamin Disraeli, her prime minister, a Jew who had been baptized in the Church of England, what his religion was, he replied "I am the blank page

between the Old and New Testaments". That describes a good many people who have religious connections. They are spiritual nonentities.

4. Patient and persevering effort on our part is essential.

Psychologists conduct what are called Human Engineering laboratories. By means of them, they discover aptitudes of people: They tell you that you have an aptitude for engineering, accounting, salesmanship, teaching, managing, etc. Aptitudes are inherent, not acquired. But just having one is not enough. They must be supplemented by knowledge and skill. One must be willing to overcome marked deficiencies.

Another fallacy that is sometimes consented to is that one's fate is predetermined by some greater power. As Shakespeare has Hamlet say:

"There's divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will."

But we should never forget that divine power works through human instrumentality. Destiny is not independent of our resourcefulness or of our character. There is no such thing as inevitable progress. We can by our attitudes and efforts modify, or even wholly neutralize, the forces that are at hand. Consecrated human personality achieves wonders.

Dr. John Grier Hibben, of Princeton, after making observations such as those just quoted, adds a quotation from Goethe: "What you have inherited from your fathers, you must earn for yourself before you can call it your own" (See Reader's Digest, March, 1933, p. 7).

"What is in thine hand?" Well, whatever it is, it is from God, and it is your duty, and mine, to put it to use now, with prayerful planning, initiative, resolution, vision, and in cooperation with God. Failures in life are too often due to a lack of mobilization of the resources, both potential and actual, which are at the command of personality.

God's Emancipation Proclamation

“Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go.”

Exodus 5:1

You know well the story of God's appearance to Moses in the desert and of his placing on him the responsibility of delivering a message to the king. For four or five centuries the people of Israel had dwelt in Egypt, a major portion of which time they were in subjection. They had grown to be a great people. The time had come for their return to the Land of Promise. So the message that Moses was to deliver was “Let my people go.”

Man has an inherent love for freedom. He is not always careful in the exercise of it. Neither is he always able to preserve it when he has it. But history is filled with the heroic records of men who fought for freedom.

“‘Tis liberty alone that gives the flowers
Of fleeting life their lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it.”

-- Cowper

Man has also sought persistently to enslave his fellowmen. We are always anxious to use our fellowmen -- make them do our pleasure. Man enslaves physically, and it exists today, where people are able by manipulation of the law and financial dependency to hold in subjection the helpless and ignorant.

We enslave mentally by keeping people in ignorance. There are those who oppose general education, on the ground that it unfits the people for life. The real reason in many instances is that they are unable to use an informed individual as easily as an ignorant one.

There has been a tendency to enslave spiritually, through the ecclesiastical agencies. The hierarchy assumes the right to tell people what they should do and what not to do. “Burdens grievous to be borne.”

God's desire is that his creatures should be free.

It is not everyone, or every nation, that is capable of exercising the rights of freedom. Some training is necessary for this degree of development to be achieved. India. Philippines.

There have been times when it became necessary to place God's people under the domination of others. The subjection in Egypt. In Babylon. The people of Israel were given the Mosaic law as they came out of Egypt. That was the schoolmaster to bring the world to Christ.

Jesus stood one day in the synagogue at Nazareth and after reading the passage from Isaiah (61:1) about one sent to “proclaim liberty to captives,” he declared that He was that individual.

He came to stir the hearts of enslaved peoples to desire freedom.

1. The bondage of sin: The mistaken idea of freedom. No man is free who is under the domination of sin. Only that man is free to do what he wants to do who wants to do what is right.

The statement in Hebrews (11:35) "Others tortured, not accepting deliverance". This means deliverance into bondage. Diana versus Christ. Petty martyrdom of every day. Taking a better job on condition of compromise in principle. Woman false to her own heart. What if Jesus had refused deliverance? Jesus maintained his freedom by not compromising.

Jesus calls people to freedom from the domination of corrupt desires.

"Out of my bondage sorrow and night

Jesus I come

Into thy freedom, gladness and light,

Jesus I come to Thee."

2. Freedom from ceremonialism: It is to this that several of Paul's statements refer. "With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

By love, one is made free in Christ. The simple requirements of the new dispensation.

Man has ever had the tendency to place additional requirements. Let us hold to those of the Scriptures.

3. Freedom from ignorance: Millions of people are enslaved by ignorance. We were astonished at the extent of ignorance in this country when examination for the draft was made. Spiritual ignorance. Blind leaders of the blind.

Religion has been left too much to the unguided emotional demonstrations of the ignorant.

Jazz singing, preaching, crowds in excitement.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

4. Freedom from fear of death:

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

Fear of the experience of death. Dr. Samuel Johnson. The feeling that death ends all. The certainty of judgment.

Jesus enables one to triumph over all of these.

Men with the light of a new hope on their brows are marching on, while others are content to remain as they are.

Tomorrow

Radio Station KMIL, Cameron

November 28, 1948 (recorded)

“And he said, Tomorrow.”

Exodus 8:10

I don't suppose that Russia would be any more reluctant to part with one of her satellites upon which it had been imposing heavy demands and from which it has been draining extensive resources, than was Pharaoh to part with the enslaved Israelites upon whom heavy tasks had been imposed. As Moses anticipated, his request that Pharaoh let the Israelites go was declined. Then ten plagues were sent upon Egypt and the king to awaken the people and the king to the necessity of letting the Israelites go.

The first of the plagues was turning the great river Nile into blood. Both the people and the cattle were hard put to it to find water to drink. But Pharaoh remained obstinate and would not listen to Moses and Aaron.

Then came the plague of frogs. The Nile began to swarm with frogs, which came up into the palace, the king's bedroom, the king's bed, the houses of the people, their ovens, and kneading bowls. The frogs would climb up on the people. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and urged them to take the frogs away, promising to let the people go. “When shall I ask for this to be done?” asked Moses. “Tomorrow,” said Pharaoh.

Later, when Pharaoh saw that relief had come, he changed his mind. He might have concluded that he had shown wisdom in putting off the execution of the agreement until the next day. He might have concluded that the frogs were going to leave anyway. There were eight more plagues that followed.

The Human Tendency to Procrastinate

I do not need to tell you that the tendency to put off is common among us. I suppose there is not one of us who is free of this urge. Some have overcome it better than others.

Someone has written a poem about Put-Off Town:

“Did you ever go to Put-Off Town,
Where the houses are old and tumbledown,
And everything tarries and everything drags,
With dirty streets and people in rags?

“On the street called Slow lives old man Wait,
And his two little boys named Linger and Late,
With unclean hands and tousled hair,
And a naughty sister named Don't Care.

Did you ever go to Put-off Town,
To play with the little girls Fret and Frown?
Or go to the house of old man Wait,
And whistle for his boys to come to the gate?

To play ball all day on Tarry Street,
Leaving your errands for other feet?
To stop, to shirk, to linger, to frown,
Is the nearest way to this Put-Off Town.”

(Quoted in Doran Manual, 1939, p. 532)

An emperor of Brazil was once asked the reason for the lack of progress in his country. His reply was “Manana”. The word means “tomorrow” or “before long”. He referred to the tendency to use up tomorrow’s resources and to put off today’s responsibilities until tomorrow.

We have a phrase “by and by”, which has come to mean “eventually, sometime”. We sing of the “sweet by and by”. If we say we will do something by and by, we mean that we will do it when we get around to it, or when it is convenient.

But that was not the meaning some 300 or more years ago, when the King James version of the Bible was produced. It then meant “right away, immediately, at once”. There was a certain holiday occasion when the daughter of Herodias came in and danced before King Herod and the chief officials and notables of the realm. Herod said to the girl: “Ask anything you like and I will give it to you, even if it is half of my kingdom.” After consulting her mother, she said “I will that you give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist”. She meant she wanted it right then, at once.

What has changed the meaning of the phrase “by and by” is the dilatory action that has accompanied its use. We have said that we are going to do something “by and by” and have put off the doing so constantly that the phrase has come to mean that we are going to do it sometime -- perhaps.

How We Get That Way

Now let us admit that there are times when to act in the present would be premature. We get in too big hurry. We “jump the gun”. We are not ready. You have heard that you “marry in haste and repent at leisure”. In many other ways, we are liable to act on impulse, when we should wait for more mature judgment.

But more often, our procrastination is prompted by less worthy considerations. It may be due to reluctance on our part to face reality, or an unwillingness on our part to comply with the requisites of a situation. It may be due merely to apathy, inertness, languor, lassitude. It may also be due to a feeling that if we put off action long enough, the occasion now calling for it may eventually become nonexistent. Lawyers for defense of an indicted man are said to try to delay trial as long as possible in the hope that time and circumstance will make it more difficult to establish guilt.

A Revealing Trait

In Margaret Mitchell's famous novel "Gone with the Wind", probably best known as a screen production, the character of the heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, is an interesting study. Dr. H. T. Kuist, Professor of Bible in Union Theological Seminary, Richmond (later of Princeton Theological Seminary), contributed an article to the Union Seminary Review of October, 1939, on "Reflections on Theology from 'Gone with the Wind'". One of the observations he made is that Scarlett is the type of person who will never come clean on any moral issue, but will always go around it. She simply put unpleasant matters off until another day. He lists quotations of remarks by Scarlett to illustrate the point:

"I won't think about it now" (p. 541).

"I won't think of Tara now. I'll think of it later when it won't hurt so much" (p. 590).

"What would Mother say?...I'll think of all this later" (p. 662-3).

"I won't think of it now. I'll think of it later when I can stand it" (p. 928).

"Not tonight! Tomorrow morning. I'll come early and do the things I must do, say the comforting things I must say. But not tonight. I'm going home (p. 1,019).

The closing incident of the book is the parting scene of Rhett and Scarlett. He has told her that he is through, that he is going his way and that she can go hers. Then she says, "I can't think of it now...I'll think of it all tomorrow at Tara. I can stand it then. Tomorrow, I'll think of some way to get him back. After all, tomorrow is another day" (p. 1,036-7).

Then Dr. Kuist observes: "Unhappily, in the moral universe the morrow of opportunity never dawns. Character is only formed in the realities here and now. And our choices and our decisions today are reaped by their consequences tomorrow. The only tomorrow that ever dawns is the morrow of reckoning, the morrow of judgment. It is not without significance that the stern requirements of moral urgency are prescribed in the Bible: "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts".

The Challenge of Christian Faith

Of all the decisions which you and I are called upon to make, the most important is that which is presented to us in the gospel.

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It tells us that Man's hope is in Christ, whom he needs to accept as his personal Savior -- Now. "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation". Man needs to repent and purpose with the help of God to live a better and more useful life -- the church will provide them with congenial fellowship -- Now. All should relate every plan in life to the Kingdom of God, beginning Now. This includes vocation, education, home, and friends. All should make it their firm purpose to study the Bible and make it their guide in life -- beginning Now.

Probably you have already taken these steps, or at least some of them. You have no doubt said that when you can get around to it you will do all of these things. I am simply reminding you of the peril of delay.

There are at least two things that make delay hazardous: One is the uncertainty of human life. That grim fact becomes more and more evident from news reports each day.

The other thing is the fact that inclinations and urges not acted upon while they are most active have a tendency to disappear. Tomorrow, we may not have the inclination which we have today.

Scholars differ in their opinions regarding the sincerity of Felix, the Roman governor, who after hearing Paul speak, said with trembling voice, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But the fact remains that he never called for Paul, so far as we know.

Never leave that until tomorrow which you can, and should, do today. It is hazardous to do so.

What Christmas Should Mean This Year

Colonial, Dallas

December 17, 1944

“Your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?”

Exodus 12:26

Let me admit at the very outset that the connection of the text with the observance of Christmas is very remote indeed. The reference in the text is to the Feast of the Passover, wherein there was symbolic reference to the atonement later made by Jesus, in preparation for which Jesus, on the first Christmas day, was born in human flesh.

The passage come to mind in the present connection principally for the reason that we are reminded by it that observances need to be justified constantly in the minds of succeeding generations; and that it is the duty of mature minds to maintain and transmit clear and accurate conceptions of the purpose and significance of religious observances.

Christmas is an observance which is especially in need of such safeguards.

In the light of the fact that Christmas has so large a place in the calendar of the modern church, it might come as a surprise to many to be told that we do not have in the Bible any command to observe such a festival. Neither do we have any special and definite information that the early church observed this anniversary. It seems not to have become general until about the fourth century, and even then there was some confusion as to the proper date to be used for the commemoration. One large branch of the church maintained for a long time that January 6 was the proper date.

Then, as the observance became more and more and more widely practiced, there were additions made to customs and symbols associated with Christmas. The yule log, mistletoe and holly, the tree with ornate decorations, candles, the sending of gifts, Santa Clause or St. Nicholas, the singing of carols. A rather modern addition (1846) is the sending of Christmas cards.

Along with these, there has also developed certain attitudes and associations that have not been in keeping with the best traditions of Christmas. There is the spirit of commercialism; there is the spirit of indulgence; and there is the burden of reciprocity in giving. We would do well to discourage these aspects of our observance. There are certain basic principles that should guide us in Christmas observance.

The characteristic of Christmas observance, and its true significance might be stated in acrostic form:

Christlikeness

Helpfulness
Reverance
Intelligence
Sociability
Thoughtfulness
Moderation
Appreciation
Salvation

Another way of presenting these might be by alliteration, employing the letter S as initial.

Shall we say "Merry Christmas!" in such times as this? "Yes," says Dr. J. H. Marion in the current issue of the Presbyterian Survey. He conditions his answer in a proper understanding of the basis of good cheer. Christian people have abundant reason to be happy in these days. There is the possibility of victory over the tyranny of autocrats, over doubts, sin and despair. There is reason to be thankful for the possibility of permanent peace. True merriment does not mean indulgence, vulgar songs, ribaldry, coarse hilarity. It does not call for worship at the shrine of Bacchus, the Latin god of wine. These tarnish the joy of Christmas. It is proper that we should be happy. Christ was no gloomy ascetic. He told of rejoicing at the return of the prodigal. He had a good sense of humor. We cannot be unmindful of those boys who are in the thick of the fighting and who are facing the hazards of war. But we do not help them by a sad and somber spirit.

The merriment of some seems to be upset by the limitations brought on by war rationing - less gasoline, fewer parties, crowded schedules, high cost of living. But if by these concessions -- and they are not even worth mentioning under the circumstances -- we can help along, we should be happy that we have a part. That ought rather to add to the good cheer of Christmas.

Christmas this year should be a forceful reminder of our indebtedness to God. He has provided us with deliverance from our foes.

Dr. J. Calvin Reid, in the last issue of the Presbyterian Outlook, says that one of his little girls had been singing a familiar popular hit of recent months, but with a new rendering. As she said it, it went: "Pass the Lord and praise the ammunition". He felt that this is exactly what we have been doing. We have been forgetting the Lord and putting dependence entirely in the munitions of war. This Christmas should find us at the house of God, thanking him for his deliverance of our nation, and praying his continuance of leadership.

Our greatest debt for deliverance, however, is due to Christ's work of atonement for our sin. The way to show appreciation is to publicly accept him, and labor to have others become followers of His.

The Significance of Christmas

High School, Minden, LA

December 19, 1941

“Your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?”

Exodus 12:26

We are so constituted that we need reminders, of the right things. We seem to easily remember the things we ought to forget. The Negro minister was admonishing his parishioner: “You must never cherish enmity against your neighbor, Brother Jackson -- if you neighbor does you an injury, you must forget it”. “Oh, I does forget it, Preacher, but I’s e got a powerful bad memory, an’ I keeps forgettin’ that I forgot it.”

When the Lord led the children of Israel through the Jordan, he did not want them to forget that. So he had them take huge stones out of the bed of the river and pile them in a heap on one shore, so that in the future when the children asked, “What mean ye by these stones?” the fathers would tell the story all over again.

We have different ways of establishing reminders. We erect monuments. We establish museums. We perpetuate names.

One effective way is to set aside a day or season in the calendar. Each time that rolls around, we are reminded of it. February 22, July 4, November 11, Easter, Thanksgiving, all mean something as they roll around. So with December 25.

There is one trouble about memorials, and that is that we can become so familiar with them that we lose sight of the purpose for which they were established.

If I were to go about asking people representing different phases of life “What does Christmas mean to you?” I might get different answers. Merchant: “more business”; mailman: “heavier packs”; debutante: “parties” (knew one young lady who had engagements for 15 parties during the holidays, and she was distressed -- because she had only one dress to wear to all of them); school boy or girl: “vacation”; indulgent man: “eats and drinks”; servant: “cooking and scrubbing”; a child: “Santa Clause”.

But in every case, there is a realization that underlying all this is a fine stream of wholesome feeling and thinking which make it the finest time of the year.

It is a Birthday Anniversary

There is no denying the fact that Christmas celebrates a birthday -- the birthday of the most interesting person the world has ever known. That person has exerted a greater influence in the world than any other person in the history of the world. He has brought more comfort and hope and peace and strength than any other.

Some who want to divest the blessed season of its true significance will say that it is but the perpetuation of the old Roman Saturnalia, which was celebrated in December. It is true that some of the merry customs associated with the Saturnalia have been also associated with Christmas. During the Saturnalia, the schools closed, distinctions of rank were laid aside, slaves sat at the table with masters, there was exchange of gifts. One of the characteristics of the Christian religion has been to take the best in thought and action and infuse the right spirit into it. Our Lord took the Golden Rule and made it a basis of religious principle. And so with the employment of customs at the time of the celebration of this great birthday.

When you celebrate a birthday, you endorse the character of the life which it inaugurated. This is the case of Washington, Lee, Lincoln, and others.

It might seem a bit absurd, to one who doesn't know better, to pause in the midst of the greatest war in history to celebrate the birth of a baby born in an obscure land, in a lowly manger, of humble parents, and that twenty centuries ago.

It may be a coincidence, but it is interesting to note the association of great birthdays with wartime.

At the time Jesus was born, there was peace, but it was Pax Romanorum, with Caesar Augustus dictating the peace. There were a few border skirmishes. Military rule prevailed, and soldiers were all about. The decree had gone out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, for wars have to be paid for by some people. No one particularly was thinking about the birth, except a very few faithful watchers in the night waiting for the dawn. When the babe grew up, it became apparent to all in that region that a most unusual person had come into the world. It has been found since that the greatest of all earthly inhabitants had come.

An Illinois congressman relates that one evening he had his little daughter sitting on his knee. She had a new little brother whom she regarded with wonder. "Today," said the father, "a man offered to give me a whole roomful of gold for little brother. Shall I sell him?" The child shook her head. "But," said her father, "think how many nice things a roomful of gold would buy! Don't you think I had better let the man have him?" "No," answered the girl, thoughtfully, "let's keep him till he's older; he'll be worth more then."

We can never tell just how much a babe will amount to, and even how much more important a birth might prove to be than the things that fill the minds of people at that time.

Back in the year 1809, Napoleon was trying to do what Hitler is trying to do now -- subdue all Europe. In many respects, the career of Napoleon is being duplicated in the case of Hitler. I am thinking just now of the disastrous retreat from Russia. In that year of 1809, when Napoleon was centering his attention on Austria, there were several babies destined to become famous who came into the world. I will name a few: W. E. Gladstone, British statesman, orator; Alfred Lloyd Tennyson, English poet; Oliver Wendell Holmes, American essayist and poet; Charles Darwin, English naturalist; Abraham Lincoln, American statesman and president; Felix Mendelssohn, German musician; Edward Fitzgerald, English poet and translator of the Rubaiyat. Men were thinking about battles, but babes being born then were destined to remold the world.

Even today, we know that dictatorship will not be triumphant. Just as Napoleon met his Waterloo, so will Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo and the rest. Some today, too young to fight, or even to know that there is a world at war, are no doubt being prepared for the great days that lie ahead.

We are sure that it will be on the principles of the Babe of Bethlehem that the world of tomorrow will be established.

It is a Basic Principle

In order to get the true spirit of Christmas we must take our cue from the life whose beginning it commemorates. What was the underlying principle of that life?

It was in one of the dark periods of the world's history. Some of the philosophers entertained hope of a better world, but they were unable to prescribe a remedy for the ills that existed. The idea of loving one's neighbor did not seem to have been seriously considered. The custom was to live selfishly. The principle was dog-eat-dog.

There came into the world a great teacher, who introduced a new philosophy. It was the principle of love, operating in man's relationship to even his enemies. He lived out this principle in his own life, and taught man that this is the only means by which he will be able to solve his social ills. He taught respect for personality, love for even the outcasts.

A new spirit was born in the world -- homes, the backbone of the nation, became joyous: schools, hospitals, asylums. The child became the center, and the child-like spirit the criterion of worth.

This new spirit pervades ancient Rome. It survived the invasion of the Goths and Vandals.

A new barbaric invasion is taking place in the world, by people who repudiate all that Christmas stands for. But it cannot triumph. It is the spirit of Christmas that will ultimately claim the world.

What is that Spirit? It is love manifested in disinterested self-giving. It is all embodied in the statement: "God so loved that he gave".

Selfishness Out of Place

This means that selfishness in all its forms is out of place during these days. It isn't a question of what we will get, but what we will be able to give of ourselves. It would be a blessed thing if we could get away from the giving of things of intrinsic value and let the value be determined by the extent to which the giver goes with the gift.

There were two selfish families that lived side by side. When one bought a \$1,000 car, the other bought a \$1,200 car. When one built a \$3,000 home, the other built a \$5,000 home. Finally Mister Number One died. The family wanted an inscription for his monument that could not be surpassed. So they decided on this one: "Here I lie as snug as a bug in a rug". A little later Mister Number Two died. They wanted an inscription for his monument that would excel the other one, so after a great deal of meditation, consultation, consideration, deliberation and examination they decided upon this one: "Here I lie snugger than that other bugger".

American has been sitting with a feeling of snugness. We find now that we are not so snug after all. Perhaps that will lift us out of our complacency and selfish policy of isolation.

There should be an absence of insincerity and hypocrisy. We have no little of that in these days.

This is a time, too, to be sprightly, sunny, smiling. It is traditionally a time of good cheer. Some scientist is said to have discovered that cheerful people resist disease better than glum ones. As he put it, "The surly bird catches the germ".

Ours should also be a sane Christmas -- one not given to excess. Not too much turkey, oyster dressing, rice and giblet gravy, fruit cake, and plumb pudding. Not too much expenditure pleasures.

It should be a sacrificial Christmas. We cannot be too often reminded that our cherished liberties hang in a balance. When we sit down to our dinners in peace and safety, let us not forget the boys who are away, some very far from home at Pearl Harbor, or in the Philippines, bent on "freedom's high adventure", "in careless self-surrender, they battle for mankind".

We can't afford to be too frivolous and self-centered while our friends and relatives as American soldiers or sailors or airmen are imperiling their lives day and night. They are "over the waste of waters and beyond the verge of the world". Some are wounded, some fill watery graves, others lie buried on foreign soil.

Not only must we keep the home fires burning, but we must give of that which we have.

Let us then make this a selfless, sincere, sprightly, sane, and sacrificial Christmas. You will then have a real Christmas.

(Notes for a Sermon Unwritten)

“How I bare you on eagles’ wings and brought you unto myself.”

Exodus 19:4

Eagles: characterized by remarkable powers of flight and vision. Also duration of life.

The Golden Eagle: magnificent bird, found in Europe, North Africa, Asia, North America. Lives in mountains. 3 feet high, 7 feet expanse, and weighs about 12 pounds. Mates for life. Has strong, self-sustained flight, fierce, untamable.

The Bald Eagle: American. Slightly larger than the Golden eagle. Plunges from great heights with such velocity that eye can scarcely follow its descent.

Eagle has commanded respect in all ages: in mythology it represents the sun, was chosen as an emblem of Zeus. It is said, after an eagle had brought him a thunderbolt; was made the emblem of the Egyptian kingdom by Ptolemy Soter, was one of the most important insignia of the Roman empire, and adopted into medieval heraldry after the time of Charlemagne. Bronze eagles were used as a standard of war by Napoleon’s armies after 1804. A German emblem. The double eagle of the Austrian kingdom. The American emblem.

The proverb-maker Agur said: “Three things, nay four are too wonderful for me: the way of an eagle in the air.

The strong sustaining power of God:

Strength: God as father and as Lord
What faith in that strength does.
Religious man a strong man. Quickens intellectual powers.
Amos and other of Old Testament.
John, Peter and others of New Testament.
Wm. Silent -- Coligny -- Knox -- Cromwell
Froude on Calvinists: They attracted to themselves every man in Europe that hated a lie. They were crushed down but they rose again. They were splintered and torn, but no power could melt or bend them. They abhorred as no body of men ever abhorred, all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of every kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscious fear of wrongdoing is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people’s hearts”.

Vision: God’s knowledge of the future.
Atheism of force and fear. Guns, Kings, Politicians.
The church and the future.
Anxiety about our own affairs.
Robert Morrison and China.
Every man’s life a plan of God.

Discipline: Deuteronomy 32:11
Scattering of the Christians at Jerusalem.
Blood of the martyrs.

Shall mount up with wings like eagles.

Christianity's Part in National Recovery

Minden, LA

June 25, 1933

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.”

Exodus 14:15

In the round of the consideration of the causes of the Church, our calendar brings us again to the consideration of that phase of its work usually designated by the term Home Missions. There is no essential difference between Home Missions and Foreign Missions. Distinctions have been made by the church for the purpose of organizing its work, and allegiances have been established and preferences declared by individuals in the church from motives that have not in every case been commendable. Too often a narrow nationalism and racial prejudice have warped the judgment of good people with reference to their Christian duty.

Home Missions, as we usually think of it, concerns the propagation of the Christian religion within the bounds of our own nation. And certainly that needs to be done. We must make our religion more effective in the homeland if it is ever to be of much influence in the rest of the world through any efforts of ours. Too often, Christianity has stood discredited in the eyes of those whom we have sent missionaries because of the failure of the so-called Christian America to manifest respect for the Christian religion.

It is in times of crisis that we come to see how slight is the hold which our religion has on us as a people. There is the memorable instance of the Great War, when we gave such a pitiable exhibition of Christianity. And then, right on the heels of that, the church seems to have become enamored of the power of money and the essential importance of physical factors in religious programs. It stood impotent when the crash came.

The Need for the Forward Look

Our situation today and that of the Israelites at the Red Sea are not altogether dissimilar. The Israelites had been in bondage in Egypt for many generations. They were out from under it, but were afraid of the future. They were longing for the old life. The flesh-pots of Egypt.

We find ourselves in a rather similar crisis. We have been driven out of the old situation and we are afraid of the future. We are spending our time longing for the old life. “Back to normalcy” has been revived in spirit if not in verbiage. We are thinking of the days before October, 1929. We are talking about the return of prosperity. Our look is backward.

Before his inauguration, our President published his book entitled “Looking Forward”, which sounded the keynote of his administration. That should also be the keynote of the forces

of Christianity. That, at any rate, was the watchword of the hour as Israelites stood at the shore of the Red Sea. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward."

Slave Drivers of the Old Days

During the last three years, we have opportunity to study a little more closely the character of the "good old days" before 1929. One man (Gilbert Seldes, in "The Years of the Locust") ventures the opinion that our real panic began back in 1926, when we started on a joy ride of speculation. He says the nation became a mob in 1928 and 1929. He quotes another man as saying that during the twelve years preceding the crash, the American people spent 17 billion dollars more than they earned.

We find that there were certain slave drivers under whose compulsion we were forced to lines of effort that brought on the inevitable conditions of the present.

1. The necessity to produce: Success was measured in terms of amount of production. Machinery was installed with the idea of increasing production, on the farm, in the factories, in the home. Where there was heavy production, there must be super-salesmanship. Success in life was determined by the ability to produce, make business, get ahead. Billboards along the highways, smoke in the cities, pollution in our streams, screaming advertisements were to be tolerated because they made business. People were being educated to waste and consume that more production might take place. The "go-getter" was the ideal business man.

The result was that we find ourselves with a vast amount of food, staple, and manufactured goods, while people are penniless and unable to buy. They must go hungry and destitute. They must shiver in the cold. They are paying the price of their enslavement to the urge to produce.

2. The necessity to be happy: There has been the prevailing idea that we must be happy at all costs, and that anything that interferes with that is in an intolerable imposition. Duty and responsibility are flouted if they interfere with happiness. The motive in marriage has been too much a search for happiness. After the tidal wave of sentimentality has subsided, the petty irritations incident to adjustment lead to speedy separations that work hardship on others, particularly the children and often the community. An automobile must be had at any cost, possibly two would be better. But it is a recognized principle that to seek for happiness is to lose it. It is plainly our duty to see "life steadily and see it whole".

3. The bondage of fear: To a greedy man, all others are greedy, and he is afraid of them. The fear of employers and employees, mutual as it usually is, gives rise to the ugly industrial messes that we must so often wade through. This fear in business has affected the relationship of nations. Business has insisted that governments protect and advance their projects. This has led to war. Suicide is due largely to fear. Afraid to grapple with a seemingly relentless world (Above three points taken from Bowie: "When Christ Passes By").

The Call to Something Finer

Israel could not afford to go back. There was too much ahead, even though it meant suffering and labor. So with us. We may be poorer in goods, but we can be richer in spirit. Christ is the Moses to lead us on.

The Saving Factors

Guizot says that the factors which hold and advance civilization are government, education, and religion. It is our boast that we have emancipated the one from the other and that each pursues its own way. Government has been freed from domination of religion, and vice versa. Education has escaped the clutches of the church and now enjoys academic freedom.

But we find today that these are getting mixed again. It seems impossible for these to go on separate paths. Education without religion is producing a generation of conscienceless intelligentsia. The state must concern itself with the conduct and opinion of its citizens.

There are frontiers on which it seems necessary that government, education and religion meet.

1. Economics; the rights of labor. Social justice.
2. Race relations.
3. Prohibition. No one wants free and unlimited circulation of liquor. There are laws which require schools to teach physiological effects of alcohol. The church must help. There is a lack of unity in this solution.
4. The Family. This is both a religious and governmental problem. The school may be defective in training for the most important relation of life.
5. International relations: Ethics of war; institutions of peace, militarism. Professor D. C. McIntosh of Yale.

Is Christianity Equal to the Task?

That which has been called Christianity has fallen down in times of need in the past. If it is to do its part in the struggle of the future, there must be more of Christ in our Christianity.

Making the Bitter Sweet

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

July 14, 1940
June 22, 1947

“And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”

Exodus 15:25

We cannot appreciate this incident without knowing something of the setting. The people of Israel were beginning a noble adventure. For generations they had, while serving as slaves in Egypt, been entertaining the hope that they might return to their land and repossess it. They were waiting for God’s appointed time and the appearance of a leader.

At last the time had come. Moses came and brought about the deliverance, with God’s help. The people were led out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and had entered Arabia. The Egyptians, in the attempt to recover their subjected slaves, had pursued him and were drowned in the depths of the Red Sea.

This provoked the song of Moses, a remarkable expression of thanksgiving. There was great rejoicing in the camp of Israel. Everything was moving along splendidly.

Then came the wilderness of Shur which lay in the northern part of the peninsular of Arabia. The wilderness of Sin lay in the southern portion. They advanced three-days’ journey into the wilderness of Shur, and there was no water. The water they found at Marah was bitter. Hence the name given the place (“marah” means “bitter”). The spot has been located in a region where the water is still salty, bitter, and nauseous.

The people began to murmur. They were beginning to see what they had before them. Their joy was soon transformed into disappointment. The crises were not all behind them. They came to Moses with their complaint. “What shall we drink?” they asked. While the people murmured, Moses prayed. The Lord showed him a tree. Moses cast it into the waters and the waters were healed. This was one of the miraculous provisions of God for his people of which there were many.

Then they came to Elim, where were twelve wells and 70 palm trees. There they camped in a welcome oasis.

Life of Achievement Has its Bitter Springs

Israel could have avoided the bitter springs of the desert by not doing anything. They could have stayed in Egypt and been slaves.

In these days when democracies are being exterminated and our own is imperiled, we turn our minds backward to the days of the launching of our ship of state. We want to catch something of the spirit of those fathers of our republic.

John Adams is said to have delivered a speech in the Continental Congress in July, 1776, in favor of a declaration of independence from England. He began by saying “Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote”. Further on he says “Sir, I know the uncertainty of human affairs; but I see clearly through this day’s business. You and I, indeed, may rue it... We may die, die colonists, die slaves, die, it may be, ignominiously and on the scaffold! Be it so! If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready at the appointed hour of sacrifice, come when that hour may. But while I do live, let me have a country, or at least the hope of a country, and that a free country”.

There came the bitter springs of poverty and suffering, the chilling blasts of winter, the bitterness of Valley Forge, the treachery of professed friends. But victory came and the great undertaking became a reality.

Thus we might consider any other noble purpose. That of leaving the parental roof to establish a home of one’s own; or that of achieving success in a chosen field. These are necessary to achievement.

Israel evidently felt that all would be easy after the Red Sea was behind them. A free people. A delivered people. But we know now that their hardships had barely begun. They had obstacles, privations, fears, weariness, war.

Surely, life is not a long song of triumph. It soon turns to crisis again. That is true in friendship, business, pleasure, home.

Ways of Dealing with Bitter Waters

There are different ways in which people meet the trying experiences of life. We will consider only two or three:

1. Some run away from home: They surrender. They employ a mechanism of escape. They beat a retreat. There were a great number in the camp of Israel who would have gone back to Egypt. They began to talk about the flesh-pots of Egypt. They would have sold the land of promise for the flesh-pots.

Jonah was a prophet of God, and enjoying his preferment, no doubt, until he was commissioned to go preach to the contemptible Ninevites. That was a bitter dose. It was too bitter, in fact. He took ship for Tarshish.

The world is made up today of people who, in the common phraseology, “can’t take it”. They are failures. They may have dreamed of noble deeds, but the bitter waters scared them off. They took to cover. Devastating the character.

2. Some stay with it, but murmur: Usually such people do not see the situation sanely. I have seen the statement that the eye of a fly has many facets, so that it sees not one spider but many. Whatever the fly looks at is multiplied many times. Sometimes we seem to have the eye of a fly in that respect. Our troubles are multiplied. We have different eyes, however, when we look at our blessings.

“What makes a good traveler?” someone asked a chaperon of a travel party in the East. Her answer was: “Having two eyes of different kinds. One eye must be blind to discomforts near at hand and have a clear vision for beauties at a distance. The other eye must be blind to dangers of difficulties in the distance and see everything of interest and charm in the immediate foreground.”

About the most undesirable companion in the world is one who is always murmuring at their lot, one who is seeking pity. There are some people who never leave you in the dark as to what they are going through.

Out of such approaches come nervous collapses, personality complexes.

3. Some find a way to sweeten the waters: Moses went to God and God “shewed him a tree”. Evidently God had not figured in the thought of the people. They were heaping the blame on Moses. Moses went to God in prayer. That changed things.

We are now studying Job in Sunday School. He certainly encountered bitter springs. It is interesting to observe that Job was tempted (1) to run away from it. That was what his wife advised him to do -- curse God and die. He wished he could die. He cursed the day he was born. (2) He was enduring his trial but murmuring against God. (3) He finally had the experience of having God sweeten the bitter springs, so that he saw it all differently.

After all, it is the way we see our experiences that determine their bitterness. Paul and the thorn, and his other trials.

The life of Beethoven has always interested me. Always had a great horror of deafness. He finally found himself becoming deaf. He became prey of anxiety bordering on despair. Doctors and quacks were consulted. Many devices were made in the effort to overcome deficiency. Then he became stone deaf. It was then that he wrote his grandest music.

“Brighten the corner where you are.”

Jesus, the Healing Tree

Jesus is the Christian’s cure for life’s bitterness. It is easier to be good when He is near. He takes out the bitterness of sin.

Christmas. Zacchaeus. The Bethany home. Matthew. Paul.

The ideal kingdom is not here, but religion is. We can sweeten the bitter waters of the present state. Increase of patience, forbearance, kindness, gentleness, righteousness, and love.

George MacDonald, a Scotch novelist, has one of his characters to say in complaint against the hardness of life. “Oh, I would to God I had never been made.” The friend replied, “Why, my dear child, you are not yet made; you are only now being made, and you are quarreling with God’s processes”.

Religion in Wartime and Any Time

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

March 7, 1943
August 8, 1943

“Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.”

Exodus 17:19

Study of our idiomatic English is interesting. Take for instance the various ways in which we use the word “hand”. If you “keep your hand in” you keep in practice; if you “keep hands off” you let something alone; if you keep your “hands out” you are begging. If you “put your hand to” a thing, you begin; if you “lay your hand on” something, you take it. If you “hold up your own hands”, you surrender; if you “hold up another’s hands”, you support and encourage him.

There are reasons behind all of these uses. Bible incidents very frequently furnish the background for expressions we use every day. It would be a surprise to many to learn that the idea advanced when we speak of “upholding” another in any undertaking, or of “holding up someone’s hand” is rooted in an incident recorded in the Book of Genesis.

Moses and the Battle with Amalek

I suspect that if some casual observer, over 3,000 years ago, had happened upon the scene at Rephidim, somewhere between the Wilderness of Sin and Sinai, he would have been puzzled by at least one feature of the situation. While a battle was being waged in the plain, the leader of one of the contending elements was standing on a hill within sight of all, with his hand up. If this observer were guided in his interpretation by such codes as we have today, he would have concluded that this man was indicating a willingness to surrender. But we know that quite the reverse was true.

The people of Israel were just leaving Egypt and were well on their way to Sinai, where they were to receive the law. At a place called Rephidim, they encountered the Amalekites. Moses told Joshua to draft some men, lead them out to battle; and said that he (Moses) would go and stand on the hill with his wonder-working rod of God in his hand. It was the rod with which he shepherded while tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro in that same region. With uplifted hand, Moses pointed to Jehovah as the ensign under which Israel fought.

So long as Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur realized that Moses was needing assistance. His arms became weary in their uplifted position. So they devised a plan of having Moses sit on a stone which they brought for him, while they held up his hands, the one on the right and the other on the left. “And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.” That meant victory. They memorialized that event, not only by writing the record in a book, but also by building an altar there and called the name of the place “Jehovah-nissi”, which means “God is my banner”. That

was what Moses was indicating as he pointed heavenward during the course of the battle, and that was what Aaron and Hur were supporting when they held up his hands.

Our Amaleks

Authorities on Old Testament history seem to be in doubt about where the Amalekites came from. Usually it is said that they were the descendants of Esau. Some think they had even a more ancient origin. We will leave that for scholars to work out. We know that they were a nomadic people, and the traditional enemy of God's people. They stood for the opposite of that for which the people of God stood. It would seem from Deuteronomy 25:18 that this was a sneak attack that Amalek made on Israel. Their army crept upon them from behind, when they were weak and weary and unprepared.

We have our Amaleks today. There are those who seem to be against the principles of righteousness and freedom and truth. They are cunning, and vigilant, and intense. They beguile you into unpreparedness and come in upon you when you are unsuspecting. Pearl Harbor stands as the symbol of the Amalekite type of warfare. Pearl Harbor is the modern counterpart of Rephidim.

Each Christian has his Amalek. He is faced with many temptations which assail when one is least prepared. They test strength. The situation calls for watchfulness and wisdom.

It could have been true that the people of Israel sat down and complained at God for not averting that war. They were newly out of bondage and unarmed and untrained. Amalek ever remained a thorn in the flesh of Israel.

Was this not a part of the training of the people of God? When we look at this record, it seems to have for us helpful suggestions. It must have been even more valuable to the Hebrews.

The important feature of this event was Moses on the hill with uplifted hands. All eyes seemed to have been fixed there. Let us look there ourselves. What was the significance of Moses on that hill?

1. It was a definite avowal of personal and national allegiance.

Moses pointed heavenward, and thereby proclaimed to Amalek and all others concerned that God was their commander-in-chief. That was the reason why they called the place "Jehovah-nissi", "God is my banner".

David said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Sam. 17:45).

We are reading some wonderful declarations of personal faith that have come from the battlefronts. We hear of religion in foxholes, of religion on rafts in mid-Pacific, of religion of pilots who seek God's help to direct their planes.

When these fighters turn their eyes to the safe hills behind the lines, what do they see? Millions of nominal believers in God and Christ never lifting a hand in avowal of their faith in the God of battles.

2. It was a prayer for God's guidance and blessing.

Uplifted hands signify prayer. It was a recognition on the part of Moses and the people that without the help of God there was no hope of victory. They were not prepared for war.

Voltaire, French satirist, who was bitter against the church of his day, said: "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions always". This has been repeated by many others. It may not have been original with Voltaire. It is in danger of becoming the basic belief of the allied nations in the present war.

We know that even though there be victory on the field of battle, all can be lost in the efforts at settlement. How we need to pray that God would guide the thoughts and feelings of men and women so that the right course will be pursued in the adjustments.

A well known minister says that about four years ago he saw the statement that the American people consumed in 1938 four million pounds of aspirin, which he says, gives us an idea of the size of our national headache. What, he asks, is the great American disease of which the headache is the symptom? He says we are too hurried to get our bearings. "We take our directions from the rear lights of our fellow speeders rather than from the guideposts of God" (Sockman).

When Da Vinci was painting the "Last Supper", the monks who watched him grew restive as they saw that he would gaze at his canvas for an hour without making a touch with his brush. Da Vinci said: "When I pause the longest, I make the most telling strokes with my brush".

Everything is bent today on speed of production, which is good. But let us not forget that we make time, and gain power, when we "take time to be holy".

Of a famous European amusement center, says Dr. Sockman, it was once said "The lights of the Casino have blotted out the stars". In this modern carnage, there is danger that the stars will be blotted out.

Let us not fail to keep our hands lifted toward heaven.

3. It brought courage and zeal to those who waged the battle.

It might have been asked, "Why did not Moses get into battle himself?" It was because Moses on the hilltop with his uplifted hands was worth more than he could ever have amounted to in battle. He stood as the symbol of a great and confident faith.

You know it must cheer the heart of every boy to know that people back home are praying for them. There are people, I regret to say, who never take the trouble to pray. They are too busy doing something else.

In the last war, it became a slogan that one should “do his bit”. Coningsby Dawson, a young Canadian writer, a soldier in the last world war and a casualty of that war, wrote a book (“The Glory of the Trenches”) in which he tells of an event in the Battle of the Somme. The battlefield was in mud. A company of infantry had advanced too far. Most of them were wounded and some were dead. From the trench behind, Dawson and his party could see through the thick battle smoke a flag wagging of a signal. It was a desperate appeal. They wanted reinforcements and also a curtain of fire from the artillery to protect them. The signaler with Dawson interpreted the message. He turned to his senior officer, “What will I send them, sir?” “Tell them their messages have been received and that help is coming”, he replied. Out the boy scrambled and he ran out where his signals could be seen. He sent the message once and again. All about him the mud began to leap and bubble from the guns of the enemy. He went on. At last they had seen and signaled “Okay”. Then a shell lifted the boy off his feet and landed him in a huddle. That was his bit. It was what he volunteered to do.

As we stand safe on the hill behind the lines, we can at least signal, “Hold on, help is coming”.

The Sabbath: A Holiday or a Holy Day?

Minden, LA

January 17, 1926

“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.”

Exodus 20:8

Upon the announcement from me that such is the theme upon which I expect to speak this morning, I suspect you have surmised that you are to be given the usual mournful dissertation on the modern disregard of the Sabbath. You may be of the same mind as that of a very thoughtful elder in a Shreveport Presbyterian church, who took me to task for suggesting the importance of church attendance as a theme for the Layman’s convention. “Why,” he said, “that group of men know they ought to go to church. Why waste time saying anymore about it?”

In like manner, you might say to me, “We know we ought to keep the Sabbath. The people you need to talk to are not here. So why take our time discussing the subject?”

My answer to this inquiry would be very much the same as was my answer to the elder. It may be true that men and women feel that they ought to do these things, but I doubt if many of them are able to give satisfactory reasons why they should. Much of our religious exercise is habitual. We do it because we have made it a habit. No one’s influence will make for a better observance of the Sabbath unless his convictions regarding the necessity of it are well established.

Furthermore, the laxity of many church members in the observance of the Lord’s Day leads one to feel that there is need for frequent presentation of the claims of the Sabbath. If it were not for the patronage and encouragement given Sabbath desecration by the church people -- or by members of the church -- we would have much less to fear at the hands of the rest.

Peter urged upon his readers (1 Peter 3:15) that they be “ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you”. The most of us find that in order to do this it is necessary that we frequently review the grounds of our belief.

We need to keep in mind the fact that the Lord lays claim to 1/7 of our time. That is the principle thing. Some people attach much importance to the day observed -- whether it be Saturday or Sunday, the 7th day or the 1st day. To my mind, it is far more important that we observe some one day during the week in the proper manner. There is good reason for believing that the holy day was changed to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus. But I doubt whether by counting back 98,581 weeks from today we would come to the exact day of the Resurrection. Aside from being the day of rest, it is also a weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

It could not be left to individual initiative alone to determine which day each would observe. It would be almost impossible for all to have separate Sabbath days. There is advantage in concerted action. It is far easier to observe a day when all others are observing it. The Jew has a hard time observing his Saturday in a country which recognizes Sunday as the day of rest. It is always difficult to go contrary to convention even in small things.

Here we have some justification for a Sunday law. Law is a rule of concerted action. We often look upon law as existing for the purpose of compelling somebody to do something. 44 of our states have Sunday laws. 4 have none. The four having none are Montana, Oregon, California, and Arizona. Louisiana has some laws, but our state is regarded as an "open Sunday" state. Sunday laws have been receiving considerable attention in the last few years. We are fast approaching the day when our Sunday will be commercialized. It is becoming more and more the big day in sports. The movies, baseball, racing and state fairs, theaters, dancing, excursions, and open stores are coming to be more and more active on the Sabbath. That these are demoralizing to the young, and offensive to those who hold the day in holy regard, is a fact well known.

In the fights that have been waged in the states, the ministers have come in for no little abuse for their contention for strong Sabbath laws. But this is a struggle for the Christian people of the nation and of each state. We may be sure that unless we exert our influence always for a properly observed Sunday, our Sabbaths will become more holidays and no longer holy days.

There is great difference between holidays and holy days. Etymologically, they are the same. The word "holiday" was originally written "holyday". But usage has given the different meanings. In the popular mind, the holiday is not only a day of exemption from labor, but a day of amusement, of festivity, of gayety. A holy day is one set apart as being sacred, hallowed, as is also holy week, Holy Writ, the Holy Family, Holy place. To school pupils, Saturday is a holiday, but Sunday should be a holy day. July 4, January 1, and February 22 are holidays. Christmas Day and Thanksgiving day should be termed holy days.

"What shall I do on Sunday?" That is a frequent question, and a timely one. It is said that there was an old Puritan regulation to the effect that a boy should not whistle on Sunday. I believe we could do without that regulation. I say that without intending to cast reproach upon the Puritan. It seems to be the popular thing to abuse the Puritan for their strictness. But while we might not want in our day all the regulations which they established for their time, we feel sure that they suited the conditions then. We have new conditions now; and new conditions call for some adjustment and adaptation of laws.

Our employment on Sunday should be different from that on other days. This is demanded by our physical and mental natures. Our bodies have been compared to storage batteries that need recharging, and to clocks that need to be rewound. Dr. Haegler of Basle, in a scientific work on "The Expenditure and Repair of Vital Force", speaks of the relation of sleep and Sabbath rest. He says "The night rest after a day's work does not afford a complete recuperation of vital force". The Sabbath rest is needed to regain full normal vigor.

Six days of eight hours each is the standard of work. Any less is not advisable. A great many people keep bad hours during the week and claim that they are tired from a hard week's work on Sunday and must sleep. Rest does not necessarily mean sleep and idleness. We rest by change in employment.

There is a psychological value in the Sabbath properly observed. Minds need rest as well as body. It is well known that minds come back with vigor and freshness to a subject if it has had a rest. In the case of the mind as in the case of the body, a change is a rest. The muscle may be idle, but the mind cannot be. Men of active minds have hobbies to which they turn for rest. Therefore, for psychological reasons at least, one's Sunday employment should be different from those of the week days.

Our employment should be different for the further reason that to the Godly the day is holy, that is, set apart, hallowed. Since the beginning of the world, the day has been set apart; and God expects his creatures to observe it in proper manner. In the words of our Confession, this Sabbath is to be "kept holy unto the Lord". In carrying this out, it is necessary that worship - - social worship -- be engaged in, if possible. And the worshipful attitude should characterize the activities of the day. There are works of necessity and mercy that should be attended to on the Sabbath day.

The rules established in the home in which I grew up were something like this: The worship of the sanctuary must be engaged in. At other times during the day there must be a difference in occupation. Instead of the newspapers read during the week, read the church papers; instead of novels, read a good religious book; instead of school books, read Sunday school literature; instead of social calls, go to see the sick or strengthen the ties of family life; instead of ragtime music, have music of a higher grade.

In those days, there were no automobile or radio questions to decide. Horses were not driven except to church. There is nothing that I can see wrong in a Sunday afternoon drive for recreation. But I do not believe that Sunday automobile touring is in keeping with the spirit of the day.

In the selection of a radio program for the Sabbath day, it seems to me that the same principles should operate that held good before the radio became a factor in our social life.

In our attitude to the Sabbath, we should remember that we are creatures of habit. What is not regularly done will soon be omitted. Unless we have recurring seasons during which we will cultivate the nobler faculties of our nature, we will soon come to neglect this cultivation altogether.

In this day of demoralizing and distracting influences, it is very important that we seriously consider our habits, lest we drift away from the moorings that keep us safe.

The Day of Days and Our Modern Ways

Minden, LA

September 18, 1938

“Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest.”
Exodus 23:12

During the short period of my attendance upon the Ministers' Conference in Chicago in July of this year, I had the opportunity to observe to some extent the part the Sabbath plays in the life of a great modern city. I arrived in the city on Saturday afternoon, and bought three papers (two of them Sunday editions on sale Saturday night) in the effort to learn where I might be able to attend divine worship the next day. For some reason, the Chicago papers seemed to ignore almost entirely the religious activities of the city. The only information I was able to get from the papers regarding religious services in Chicago on that Sunday was gotten from very small, inconspicuously placed paid ads, and some of those were about strange cults. But the papers were full of attractively designed park attractions, weekend trips to other cities by rail, and the other amusement attractions.

Another minister, likewise a stranger, and I decided that we would visit three churches that day -- two which had the little ads in the paper and another church we knew about, but which had no newspaper notice. As we ventured forth, we found the street cars filled with people, some of whom had baskets and evidently bound for the parks. Many automobiles seemed to be headed for the country. But when we arrived at the churches, they were filled or were rapidly filling with Sabbath school students or church worshippers as the hour would indicate.

The latter experience was a great relief. While searching the papers for some information regarding the religious institutions of a great city and their activities on a religious day, one is likely to get the impression that they are negligible. In the papers, then at least, there was practically no encouragement to the casual visitor to go to church. It is a depressing experience to one committed to the idea that religion is the hope of the world.

But when you approach one church after another and find everything astir, people hurrying with Bibles in hand, and cars banked all about the edifices, and the auditoriums filled with worshippers, you realize what it is that keeps Chicago, and any other city, on dependable foundation. I was told that some churches were closed for the Summer. But those I saw were open and very much alive.

This Chicago experience, commonplace to many, but new to one whose duties restrict his Sunday observations elsewhere, has caused me to reflect again on the question of our use of the Sabbath.

How Important is This?

You remember the story of the lawyer who came to Jesus and put a question to this effect: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" The religious authorities of that day liked to classify the laws and designate which were more important than others.

Not long ago, we discussed at the mid-week service the relative importance of the ten commandments, raising the question as to whether they are to be considered as appearing in the order of their importance. If I remember we had a sort of informal poll of those present, but have forgotten the results.

What led me to introduce that at a mid-week service was an article on the results of a similar poll taken at Depauw University in 1935, in which the answers of 100 students were tabulated. The question asked of the students was: "What should be the order in which the Commandments appear if arranged according to their importance today?" First place was given the 6th; second place the 8th; and third place the 7th. The 4th Commandment was given 9th place. The 2nd Commandment was assigned to 10th place.

More recently, I saw a statement that a similar vote was taken by the students of Simmons College (Boston), where there are about 1,000 students. In fact, two such votes were taken, seven years apart. In both polls, first place was given the 5th Commandment, and last place the 4th Commandment.

This at least indicates that in the eyes of the youth today, practical moral conduct is of prime importance. It is noticeable that there is a reversion to the Biblical order. And you will recall that Jesus, in his answer to the lawyer, replied that "you must love the Lord thy God with all they heart, and with all they soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22:37,38). Relationship to God is placed first because it is fundamental and essential to all the rest.

It is so easy for us to limit our attention to the symptom of a disease and work on that, whereas we ought to be going to the root of the trouble. We may take aspirin to reduce fever, but we ought also to be giving most of our attention to removing the cause of the fever.

So, we may say we ought to be doing something about the disregard of human life, dishonesty, and impurity, and we ought. But one of the factors that contribute to this collapse of high principle is the breakdown of the Christian Sabbath.

Religion Undergirds Morals

Yesterday, in the Parish Library, I happened upon a magazine section of a recent issue of the New York Times, in which there was an article based on an interview with Dr. Cyrus Adler, prominent religious leader and head of Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. Born in Van Buren, AK, 3/4 of a century ago.

Dr. Adler reflects on the fact that present day racial hate, narrow nationalism, and international jealousy would have been thought impossible in 1918. He attributes this to the fact that religion has been forgotten. He says that worthy standards of moral life come from the practice of reverence, obedience and worship of the Supreme Being. Because this has been neglected, he says, there has come a breakdown in morals -- both personal and national. Depression has come in spite of a highly developed knowledge of economics. Without such

religious principles as social justice, human brotherhood, and the spirit of tolerance, economic maladjustments cannot be averted, he says. He believes a return to faith must, and will, come.

We know that Dr. Adler is saying no more than a host of other keen observers of our modern ways are saying. Our nation's leaders have said it ever since we became a nation.

The Sabbath Undergirds Religion

Whether we have a disregard of religion because of our disregard of the Sabbath, or a disregard of the Sabbath because of our disregard of religion, might be difficult to determine. It is probably both, and we have a vicious circle.

Man is superior to the brute in that he is capable of knowing his Creator. Man has a soul, which grows through fellowship with God. The time element is essential. There are people who are spiritual dwarfs, just as there are physical dwarfs.

One of the most interesting couples I ever married were midgets. That was not very long ago. They were probably not as tall as this pulpit desk. But they were surprisingly normal in other ways -- in common sense, intelligence, and wholesome sentiment. I feel sure that I have married others, normal in physical proportions, but dwarfs so far as qualities of soul are concerned.

Through neglect, we are coming to have a nation of spiritual dwarfs. Not only must people have the opportunity to embrace the advantage offered by the religious institutions, but they must be encouraged to make the most of them. In these crowded days, the Sabbath must be used to the fullest in home and in church for the spiritual development of both child and adult.

Back in the early 17th Century, when King James of England ordered that Sunday be a day of sport and play, a day of games and pleasure, the Puritans and Pilgrims strenuously objected. They believed that the Sabbath properly observed is essential to civilization. They believed that so much that they sought a place in which the might put their ideas into practice. They came to this country and made Sabbath observance traditional. The nation was founded on the principles of groups which observed the Sabbath -- the Pilgrims, Puritans, Cavaliers, Quakers, and Huguenots. We depart from those principles at our peril.

What has led us away from those ideas about the Sabbath? (1) Immigration from countries which have radically different conceptions of the Sabbath. (2) Rapid changes in our manner of living, brought about by autos, radio, airplane and movies. (3) Increase of Sunday business and labor, as the result of keen competition. (4) Sunday amusements for commercial profit. (5) The Sunday newspapers (It has been said that W. R. Hearst, with his 16 newspapers and circulation of 5,353,631, probably speaks to as many people each Sunday as all Protestant and Catholic preachers of America address on Sunday morning. (6) Sunday excursion, with inviting weekend rates. (7) The Seventh Day Adventists, though only 150,000 strong, are unbelievably zealous in furthering a gigantic and subtle propaganda. (8) The failure of church members themselves to preserve their own institution by personal support.

How Preserve the Day

Dr. Joseph B. Sizoo, prominent minister, formerly of Washington, now of New York, has a sermon, now published in tract form, to which he gives as a title this question: "What is Sunday For?" He says it is for three things: (1) Rest, in a day when the pace of life is so intense and the race of life is so keen. (2) Fellowship, particularly in the home and in the church. (3) Worship, both private and corporate. I would add one other: Neighborly ministry. You will recall that Jesus used the day for that. He ministered to the needs of the sick on the Sabbath, as well as observed rest, fellowship and worship.

Sunday becomes a problem in the modern home when we fail to plan for its proper observance. Children come to dread Sunday because we have made it stand for things we cannot do. We parents should do a little constructive thinking on this question and plan to enrich the day by suggestion of things that can be done and that too in a way that will be enjoyable.

The Folly in Religious Neutrality

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

July 24, 1932
February 18, 1940
April 27, 1947

“And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.”

Exodus 32:26

While Moses was receiving the Law on the top of Mount Sinai, the people became restless. They called upon Aaron, who seems also to have weakened as a result of the absence of Moses, to make them gods to lead them. Aaron obliged them by taking their gold earrings and molding a calf to lead them. Aaron obliged them and prescribing a base form of worship before it. While they were in the midst of their revelries, Moses and Joshua came down the mount. They heard the shouting afar off, but when the two came in view of the camp and saw what was taking place, and the shame of it all, Moses cast down the tables of the Law which he had just received from the Lord and broke them. Moses naturally looked first to Aaron, who was the leader in the absence of Moses. Aaron made a very lame excuse, placing the blame all on the people. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and made his ringing challenge: “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me”. It was a call to decision.

The challenge of Moses rings on down through the years. We are having too to make the momentous decision. In our day, it takes on the aspect of what we will do with Jesus Christ. “What shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?”

While I do not doubt at all that God rules in the affairs of men, he has nevertheless left us the power of choice. Moral freedom is ours, and we are responsible for the decisions we make. We cannot place the blame on some primordial urge. We cannot say simply God made us the way we are, and thus evade responsibility. We are charged with the responsibility of making this choice and it is one of eternal moment.

1. It is folly to even think neutrality is possible.

In the scene described in the text, we note that some decided to join Moses. No mention is made of decision on the part of others. But they decided nevertheless. In making no decision, they decided nevertheless.

A man may say “I refuse to be challenged. I will have nothing to do with the whole religious question. I will be neutral.” This is impossible. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth”. Pilate tried that matter of being neutral. He washed his hands of the matter. But upon Pilate’s hands lay the stain of guilt.

We may avoid church. We may avoid Christian people and make fun of them. We may declare religion antiquated and foolish. But Jesus will not be avoided. As someone has said, Jesus is love, and love laughs at locksmiths. The doors were shut after the resurrection, but Jesus came. He is closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.

As it is, man is in a precarious situation. He must do some thing or else come to grief. I have thought about what must pass through an aviator's mind while he is in the air when his motor stops. He must either take to his parachute or go down with his machine. If he does nothing, makes no decision, he nevertheless decides to go down.

Few people deliberately decide against Christ. They simply do not decide, which means that they decide against him.

2. Reasons for failure to make proper decisions.

If we were pressed for a reason why we fail to properly decide this matter of our attitude to Christ and the Church, we might find some difficulty in finding it. However, there are two more or less fundamental reasons for our lack in this respect:

(1) The desire to avoid a disagreeable matter. If there is likelihood that there is anything unpleasant involved, we have the tendency to want to avoid any matter. Not infrequently we hear men say today "I may be broke, but I do not want to know it. Therefore I do not even take an inventory and estimate my liabilities".

One of the interesting stories of the Bible is the record of Paul's appearance before Felix, prosecutor of Judaea, while Paul was prisoner at Caesarea. He was corrupt in private and public life. He made no decision regarding the disposition of Paul which was in keeping with his policy of evading unpleasant questions.

Man dislikes to be confronted with his own shortcomings. We do not want to think of our sins. We want to brush the whole matter aside.

(2) The unwillingness to surrender a cherished pursuit. And here we see a reason for the course Felix took. By his side, when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, sat his illegal wife, Drusilla. Felix trembled. But the issues involved too much. "Go thy way for this time," he told Paul. "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Man feels at the present the fascination of the thrill, color, and music of life. The gold and the glory of the world dazzle his eyes.

After all, most often it is not so much a question of mind, but of will. The difficulty is not intellectual, but moral. The trouble is not making up mind, as much as giving up cherished pursuits.

3. It is dangerous to delay proper decisions.

(1) We are not sure of tomorrow. Yesterday is gone. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart". Some of the greatest regrets of my ministry have been due to my failure

to make one more effort to secure the decision of some who looked as if they had their lives before them.

(2) Likely to be deprived of the blessings of the Christian life here. Religion is not something which has bearing only on the next world. It is provided to enable us to get the most out of this life. It gives us the life with the fewest regrets. There are so many people in the world who would like to undo what they have done. They would like to substitute something better for the unworthy influence, example, and activities of their lives. But it is only by an early decision for the right that the proper thing can be done. The policy of prevention is better. So many parents wait until they see the evil effects of their lives in their children to change up. It is then too late. The deadly work has already been done. We are helping or harming people day by day.

(3) We are likely to be ill prepared to die. There is coming most inevitably the last solemn hour. We do not know how it will come nor when. It is a great thing to be prepared for it at any time. Have you ever tried to talk to a dying man who was frantically pleading with you to do something for him quick? I have had several instances when people, who had quite a good number of years to take up the matter, would call for the preacher in the last few minutes to help them save their soul. It is distressing. Compare that with the death of the Christians you have known.

(4) Delay increases the difficulty of deciding. There seems to be something in “the vengeance of neglected opportunity”. The greatest soul malady is the weakness born of indecision. It becomes more deadly with time. Procrastination is the secret of many a failure.

One rests under the delusion that he will always feel as he does at any particular moment. As one gets older, he changes. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth”.

There are many people around us who cannot decide now for the reason that they have put it off so long. The longer they put it off the more difficult it becomes to decide.

4. The call is for immediate decision.

We should say, I accept now. Paul did on the road to Damascus. Augustine did in the quiet garden.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune.”

The Judgment scene: “You did it not”.

The Books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

The Law of the Unreaped Corners

Minden, LA

February 26, 1933

“Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of the field”.

Leviticus 19:9

The Mosaic Law, given by God through Moses to the people of Israel, at Sinai, and recorded in the Pentateuch, is a simple but most remarkable code. This body of statutes controlled the general form of worship, protected human rights, regulated personal conduct, and prescribed sacred seasons and sacrifice (Davis Bible Dictionary). Much of this old law was of local and temporary significance. That portion has been abrogated. But the fundamental portion, expressed summarily in the Ten Commandments, was intended for the Christian as well as the Jewish dispensation. While the habits and customs of peoples change, and the specific laws bearing thereon become antiquated, yet the principle which those laws embody should still be operative.

At several points in the law of Moses, we see statements such as that which constitutes our text today. “You must not reap your field to the very corners, nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you must not glean your vineyards bare, nor gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you must leave them for the poor and the resident alien, since I the Lord, am your God” (American Translation).

When the laws were rehearsed by Moses just before the entrance into the Land of Promise, this one was made a little more explicit. The people were told that if they should discover that they had left a sheaf of wheat in the field in the harvesting they should not go back for it, but rather leave it for the needy. Neither should they go over their trees again in beating out the olives (Deuteronomy 24:19,20).

The principle upon which this law is built has not been abrogated. It is Christian. Jesus taught that it is the spirit not the letter of the law that is operative under the Christian dispensation. Probably none of us here today have anything to do with wheat fields, and I am sure that none of us have ever shaken olives out of trees. But each has a field of effort where he labors and from which he reaps the fruits of his labor. This law would remind him that he has a responsibility to discharge to those less fortunate, that he should not be too self-centered in his thought and effort.

Corners as Criterion

It might be put down as a law that our “corners” are the criterion of our characters. They represent our humanity, or lack of it; our religion, or the lack of it; our neighborliness or the lack of it.

All of us know the spirit of neighborliness that is manifested in the little sharing participation of the community. When a hog was killed in the country, each of the neighbors was remembered. We have all had occasion, I am sure, to be grateful for the toothsome morsels which the thoughtful wife of a neighboring family has sent over from time to time. When away at school, we enjoyed the boxes that we got from home, filled with fruitcake candy, and other delicacies, if we could share them with the rest of the gang. In every institution, I suppose, there is always someone who wants to eat his morsel alone. According to the law of the nation or the state or the municipality or the college, such a person is under no obligation to share. But there is a moral principle involved, as is evident from the fact that estimates of characters are formed from these little things.

The Mosaic law inculcated the spirit of generosity towards those who by chance were not as fortunate as others. The same spirit was engendered by Christ and his disciples. The spirit has become inseparably connected with the Christian religion. So prominent has the characteristic become, that some people have been led to feel that this is about the whole of religion. That is going too far, but at any rate, it is a very good thermometer of religion.

Where the Principle Needs to Operate

The modern economic order has as its cornerstones the three principles of self-interest, competition, and profits. It has been claimed in the past that an economic order built on these would be self-regulating, and that any tendency to infringement on the part of one person would be offset by the acts of others. But we know now something of the injustice that has been caused as the result of the pursuit of this policy. There have been combinations of capital, the formation of big business, the development of the machine, and mass production, with the result that the field has been swept clean, and no corners are left unreaped. Modern efficiency methods leave nothing. No provision is made for the less fortunate man. It is just too bad, think the more fortunate, that the poor are so. But that does not keep them from feeling that they have a right to take all -- to reap the corners of the fields.

Under the strain and stress of today, we find advantage taken of the less fortunate. Miss Frances Perkins, Industrial Commissioner for New York State, testifies that she has found girls working in sweatshops for ten cents a day. This explains, she says, why you can buy today a silk dress for \$4.95. The girl who makes it pays the price of the reduction in cost.

There is an assumption on the part of people who have been favored by circumstance that those who are in need are to be blamed for their lot. There are a vast number of most deserving people in dire need today. We need more religion in the hearts of people who are in position to do something.

Unquestionably, the relief problem is an enormous one. The government is trying to grapple with it in a large way. Just whether the measures are good or not remains to be seen. But we as individuals cannot leave all this responsibility to the government. There is a personal quality that we must think of. For its effect on ourselves, we cannot afford to be unsympathetic.

It is true that the kindly spirit is taken advantage of by the unprincipled. The willingness of people on the highway to give the helping hand to people without means of conveyance has been stunned by the criminal practices of highwaymen.

So also have the methods of charitable relief in this country been taken advantage of by the undeserving and shiftless. This is hardly preventable. But we cannot afford to withdraw into our shells and let the deserving suffer. Solicitors during the roll-call for Red Cross were told frankly by many that they did not have a penny to give Red Cross. Whether such an attitude is justified is not the question now, but such individuals should guard against doing nothing for the less fortunate in life.

There are people in this world of ours, and some are in the churches, who have no thought for anything but their own business and their own pleasures. They seldom if ever think of doing a kindly act.

Jesus told the story of the priest and the Levite who saw the man wounded and bleeding on the roadside. They had nothing for the poor man. Only the Samaritan would minister. He had an unrequited corner for the down and out.

Uncut Corners for Religion

Selfishness in the heart of man manifests itself conspicuously in his attitude towards his religious duties. Such a person has no time for meditation, no time for the cultivation of the Christian virtue.

Some church people are so busy reaping the fields of business and pleasure that they have no corners for church duties, no time for God, no time for the cultivation of the finer qualities of the soul.

There has come to be such an excessive desire for things. "What shall a man profit if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There is something more in life than merely getting.

In fact, I believe we might put it down as a fundamental law of life that the portion of our fields of effort which really enrich us are the uncut corners. They make life worth the living. They bring us the greatest satisfaction.

"Freely as ye have received, so give,
Said He who hath given us all;
How shall the soul in us longer live
Deaf to the starving call?
For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,
And his body broken to give them bread,
If we eat our morsel alone?"

Numbers

Burdens: Bane or Blessing

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

April 28, 1940
April 29, 1956 (rewritten)

“According to the commandment of the Lord through Moses they were appointed, each to his task of serving or carrying (AV. burden).” (RSV)

Numbers 4:49

The acute situation now existing in the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean, where the modern Jews are seemingly intent on repossessing the land of their fathers, calls to mind the story of the return of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity in the 13th Century before Christ, under the leadership of Moses. To this piece of history, the Bible devotes quite a large amount of space. It took almost a half-century to make the journey.

During a period of over 200 years, Jacob and his descendents dwelt in Egypt. Evidently they remained segregated. They grew rapidly in numbers, and so much so that the Pharaoh began to persecute them, to oppress them with heavy burdens and to kill off the male children to prevent further growth in number. But God raised up a great leader in the person of Moses, who secured deliverance of the people and led them down to Mount Sinai, where they encamped for a time. During this time, God gave Moses instructions on many things. Among the objects concerning which very explicit instructions were given was the tabernacle, a sort of moveable pavilion, or place of worship. This tabernacle was the forerunner of the temple which was constructed in Jerusalem after the people became established in the Promised Land.

You can easily see how important it was to have organization and assignment of responsibility, when you recall that there must have been 2,400,000 people in the caravan. So far as I know, we do not have any definite figures regarding the whole number. But we arrive at that figure by inference.

There were three numberings of the people of Israel during the pilgrimage. Two were made at Sinai, about nine months apart, and the third at the Jordan River in the 40th year. They were made for different purposes. The first was for the purpose of levying a poll tax, the second for the purpose of preparation for war, and the third for the purpose of making a proper division of the land which they were about to possess.

Two of these numberings are recorded in the 4th book of the Old Testament. For that reason, the book is called “Numbers”.

In this second numbering, out of the record of which I am choosing my text today, all able-bodied males of 20 years old and upwards were counted in all the tribes but that of Levi. It

was found out that there were 603,550 such men in the twelve tribes, which means, according to the ordinary means of computing population, that there must have been about 2,400,000 people in the caravan.

The tabernacle was the center of the life of the Israelites. The care of it was committed to the members of one tribe, the tribe of Levi. Members of this tribe were not enumerated in the war census. They were not to go out to do battle. Specific instructions were given regarding the construction of the tabernacle, its furnishings, the ritual of the services, the procedure connected with its transportation when the camp moved from place to place. So well organized was the work that the movements were accomplished without confusion or delay. Each had his responsibility.

There were three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, Merari, each of whom became the ancestral head of a large family. When camp was pitched, the Gershonites were located on the West side of the tabernacle, the Kohathites on the South, and the Merarites on the North. Moses, Aaron, and his sons were stationed on the East. These had charge of the tabernacle.

When camp was broken, Aaron and his sons would come and take down the covering of the tabernacle, and wrap the furnishings in the coverings (in part), and turn the matter of transportation over to the Levites. The whole was sacred. It must be carried on the shoulders of the able-bodied men. It was not a light load. It has been estimated that there were nearly 11 tons of metal employed in the tabernacle, not to speak of the skins, hangings, cords, boards, posts, etc.

The Gershonites carried the curtains; the Merarites carried the framework of the tabernacle -- the pillars, boards, bars, sockets, and other solid parts; and the Kohathites transported the most holy things -- the ark, the table of shewbread, candlestick, golden altar, etc.

So we see just what is meant when it is said that “they were appointed each to his task or serving or carrying”. The word used in the King James version is “burden” -- “Everyone according to his burden”.

The Nature of This Burden

1. The burden was assigned by God. Moses was the agent of God in the organization of the forces. Nothing was by chance or accident. Neither was it by choice of the bearers. The carriers were called to their tasks by the Master Workman of the race.

2. The burden was therefore a sacred charge. It was a trust, a stewardship. The bearers were accountable to God. They could be sure that the manner in which they discharged their duties, and the spirit with which they went about their work would be observed. They would therefore have to act conscientiously. It would not be a matter of just getting by, of striving after a minimum of effort. They would be ever under the “great Taskmaster’s eye”.

3. Each burden was necessary to accomplishment of the purpose. The Kohathites could not do anything until Aaron and his sons had wrapped the furnishings. Then each had his part in the transportation. Nothing must be left behind. You can easily see how smoothly it must have worked, with each person discharging his responsibility.

4. Each burden was different, according to ability. The heaviest were borne by the ablest. The Merarites had the heavier loads. While they carried the posts and the timbers, they also carried the pins and the cords, so that even within the group there must have been variation of assignments. The Merarites did not have as many male members of their group as did the other two, but they had more serviceable men.

5. The burden was not for weaklings and idlers. The very nature of the task called for regularity, perseverance, endurance, promptness. One was not enlisted in this service until he was 30 years of age, although one was enlisted for war at 20 years. There would be heat, rough roads, and hindrances of one nature or another. There would be need for discretion and resourcefulness.

The Burdens We Bear

The word for “burden” means something to be lifted, carried, borne.

It could be a burden of responsibility in some situation -- in a home, in an organized business, in the church. In a church paper last week, there is an article entitled, “Something to Do”. The writer (Dr. Lingle) says that the thing which started him thinking along this line was the remark of a young man, member of his church, that he was not interested in coming to church unless he was given something to do. There are a lot of people like that. The point which the writer makes in his article is that there is always a responsibility in the church for the man or woman who wants one.

We have come to think of a burden as being grievous, wearisome, or oppressive. In the sense in which we usually employ the term, church responsibility should never become a burden. There is apparently no implication that the loads on the backs of the men of Israel were distasteful. A burden may be welcomed, as when we are glad to care for a family.

There is that oft-repeated remark of the little girl who was trying to lift a young boy who was quite large for her. To a passerby who asked “Isn’t that a mighty big load for such a little girl?” she replied, “No, he’s my brother”.

One burden that the great head of the church has placed upon every follower of his is to be a witness for him. There are some who say frankly that such a responsibility is truly a burden. But unless the members of the church carry their part of the load, the church will drag its heels.

Last week, a man was telling me of the zeal being manifested by members of one of our Rockdale churches, which has set itself to trying to entice members away from the churches they are in to unite with their denomination. He said that in some instances, these enthusiasts monopolize the conversation in the carpool trips out to the plant and return.

I have known members of official boards who manifested little interest in learning what their duties were and who were quite dilatory in performance.

The other day I saw this quotation: “There are three kinds of people -- the few who make things happen, the many who watch things happen, and the majority who have no idea what has happened.”

Unfortunately, we are inclined to overwork the willing souls. Dr. Lingle says that he once asked a successful apple grower what he thought of a certain variety of apples. He replied that it is all right except that it easily falls into the habit of bearing only every other year. He explained by saying that all during the Summer an apple tree is busy under the bark preparing for the buds that will bloom the next Spring. If the tree is overloaded with growing fruit during the Summer, its strength is wholly consumed by the growing fruit. There is no energy left to make the necessary preparation for the succeeding year.

The point which Dr. Lingle makes is that one can become so absorbed in the performance of certain outward duties that he neglects the inner qualities that are so vital to one's growth.

Every Life has its Burden

It is welcome in some instances, it is not in others. Some burdens are self-imposed, others are God-imposed.

There are people throughout the world who are carrying burdens of bodily affliction, family trial, secret sorrow, painful longing.

These involve responsibilities which we would like to escape. Some do run away from such. I read once of a man who ran away from his family and was thought to be dead for years, but who showed up at a time when there was a financial legacy to be distributed.

The Value of a Burden

A burden is a test of the bearer. You can get an insight into the character of a person by the way he or she reacts to responsibility, the challenge of it as well as the support of it.

I have seen the statement that one way of telling a diamond from an imitation is to place the stone under water. The imitation stone is practically extinguished under water, while a genuine diamond sparkles under water and is visible. Many a person fails when immersed in a responsibility (Hallock #24). Job was put to a severe test. Jesus Christ carried the greatest load.

A burden is also a boon to the bearer. There is nothing like responsibility to enrich life. A carefree life is a weakening life. A burden is a discipline, and discipline is good for us all.

A visitor to a famous pottery related that he was puzzled by the act of the workman when he occasionally pounded a lump of clay with a mallet. When he asked about it, the workman told him that this was done to beat out the air bubbles. "I could never shape the clay into a vase if these air bubbles were in the lump", he said. "Tribulation worketh the patience," Romans 5:3-5) (Hallock #708).

Divinely Administered Burdens

There is a burden for each in the plans of God. It is essential to the accomplishment of the divine purpose. It will be suited to ability. Jesus said: "Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

There are other gracious Biblical promises: "As thy days so shall thy strength be". "My grace is sufficient for thee."

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Grapes, Giants, Grumblers and Grapplers

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas
Goodwill Industries, Chapel
Radio Station KMIL, Cameron

August 20, 1939
October 26, 1947
January 30, 1948
November 25, 1958

“Surely it floweth with milk and honey...There we saw the giants.”
Numbers 13:27-33

The Bible is a wonderful record of human nature. A great deal is often wrapped up in a single story. Here is one that is rich in suggestiveness. It has been repeated numberless times in human experience. In fact, it is being reenacted every day of our lives, in some form.

The Incident

For a moment, let us turn back the pages of history for some 32 centuries, and transport ourselves, so to speak, to the region we now call the Near East. We find some 2,000,000 people encamped at a place then called Kadesh-Barnea south of the border of Palestine. Two years before, this vast host were slaves in Egypt. They had spent some time at Sinai being trained for their new responsibilities. Now they were on the border of the Land of Promise, ready to go in and take possession. This was a good point of entrance. The time had come for them to move in.

Some one came up with the idea that it would be the wise thing to send some representatives to look the situation over before making the venture, a foolish idea, in the light of all that they had experienced thus far. But the people took to the idea, and 12 men were chosen, leaders of the 12 tribes. They were told to look over the land, to see whether it was good or bad, wooded or clear; to look at the people to determine whether they were weak or strong, few or many; and to bring back fruits. They traversed the length of the land. They were fascinated by the fertility of the valleys, where grapes, apricots, figs pomegranates were grown. But they were awed by the big men they saw.

Incidentally, let us say that there was no monster race in those parts. They may have been large and strong in body, having lived in the free mountain spaces. The Israelites had been stunted physically through slavery. They had an inferiority complex also. When the people of Israel did come to grapple with those giants, they did not seem to experience much difficulty. The overthrow is mentioned only casually (Joshua 15:14).

The upshot of it all was that the report of the majority and their recommendation, was unanimously adopted by the congregation. It was the demonstration of a strange lack of faith. It shows how we can so easily forget. Obviously this bunch of grumblers were not fit to go in and

enter the conquest. A new generation was needed which had not known subjection, into which the spirit of Caleb and Joshua could be implanted. Thirty eight-years would be needed to achieve that end. A generation of grapplers would have to take over.

The Difficult and the Desirable

This incident brings to mind the fact that the desirable is always associated with difficulty. This has been set forth in fiction as well as in fact.

In Greek mythology, the Golden Fleece was thought to have power to ensure knightly power and dominion to him who possessed it. Jason agreed to go in quest of it. He was told by King Aestes that to get the fleece he must harness to the plough two fire-breathing oxen with brazen feet, and sow the field thus ploughed with dragons' teeth, from which a crop of armed men would spring, whom he must slay (Nelsons).

Well, that is life. None of the prizes of life worth having are obtainable without effort. The lovely view from a mountain top comes only after a laborious climb. It is the difficulty involved that determines value; Gold, a rare coin, an old relic, skill in piano playing, a lovely voice.

Fathers and mothers who have acquired their material resources by dint of effort and self-denial will attach a value to what they have which their children cannot appreciate.

Jesus laid down the terms of discipleship: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). While we have more professing Christians in America today than ever before, proportionally, there is the feeling that hey for the most part represent a soft type of Christianity. The church means so little to many people because they have so little of themselves invested in it. Each church should undertake a program that challenges its very best.

Attitudes Make and Reveal Character

This incident revealed the true character of the people of Israel. It showed them to be incompetent. They were chronic grumblers. I have listed twelve (12) instances when it is stated in the Bible that the Israelites grumbled.

The world is full of grumblers. Usually those who are least affected grumble most. I remember once hearing Dr. E. S. Richardson, at one time president of Louisiana Tech, remark one morning, after having wrestled with a toothache all night, that he was ready to hit any man who had slept all night and grumbled.

People are demanding better roads, better and larger schools, better provision for old age, and at the same time they are grumbling about the taxes they are already paying. There is no painless remedy for the ills we have.

One man had in his office this motto: "No talent, no self-denial, no brains, no character is required to set up in the grumbling business".

Caleb and Joshua were ready to grapple with the situation. Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Promise. When choice was given Caleb to select the place he would like to settle in, he said, "Give me that hill country". There was the abode of the giants.

Faith a Requisite

The entrance of the Israelites called for a venture of faith. They had reason to trust a God who had led them safely, even miraculously, thus far. But they preferred to trust their own judgment.

There has always been something apparently unreasonable about a Godly life. To some, said Paul, preaching is foolishness.

With the revival of learning, there came a demand for certainty. It was held that there is a basis upon which to build. Mathematics was selected. Descartes developed thinking along this line. Where mathematics was not able to enter, rational deductions were drawn. But it was found that these were not reliable. It developed that those things thought to be so stable and certain were not so certain after all.

Those whose philosophy of life is based on a mechanical conception of the universe have been disappointments in the world of affairs. While those who have moved forth in faith have been the builders, the constructive forces of life.

As Newman wrote in his great hymn:

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that
Though shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.

Effort Counts

When there seems to be a clear call from God that we attempt a difficult undertaking, it is our clear duty to make the effort. The call was clear to the Israelites to go over and possess the land. There is every reason to believe that victory would have been theirs had they gone forth in faith.

Success does not always crown conscientious effort. But it is a great achievement to have made the effort.

I have read that over the entrance to the University of Pennsylvania there are these words: "In the dust of defeat, as well as in the laurel of victory, there is glory to be found, if one has done his best".

There are giants where the grapes flourish. Will we be grumblers or grapplers?

Kadesh, or Facing Difficulties with Faith

Minden, LA
Westminster, Shreveport, LA

November 10, 1935
November 17, 1935

“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephumneh...spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying...The Lord is with us, fear them not.”

Numbers 14:6-9

God had definitely promised that the land which he had given Abraham, but which for the time being had passed from the possession of God's chosen people, should be repossessed. The family of Jacob in Egypt had increased tremendously during the 430 years (Exodus 12:40,41) of their sojourn there. Under the leadership of Moses, they were delivered from captivity, brought to Sinai and given the law, and were now come to the border of the Land of Promise. The God who had led them through many difficulties was now ready to give them back the land of their fathers.

As they came to Kadesh, located in the upper portion of the Wilderness of Paran, it occurred to the people that it would be the better part of wisdom to make a survey of the land, and the people, that they might determine whether the project was a wise one or not. The fact that the idea originated with the people is not brought out in the Numbers account, but Moses reminded the people of that fact at a later date (Deuteronomy 1:22). Moses approved the idea and God permitted it.

Nothing New about Surveys

There is nothing that some people enjoy so much as making surveys and tabulations. There has been the feeling that this is modern, and an evidence of the superior sanity of our day. But all too often, the surveys have proven to be snares rather than helps.

Some will recall the Interchurch World Movement of a decade and a half ago. It was contemplated then that through cooperation of all denominations the great work of evangelizing the world could be speedily accomplished. Millions of dollars was raised, and a gigantic organization was set up. But faith was soon lost in it. The money was all going into surveys. About the only things that remain of that ambitious plan are the published volumes of “World Surveys”.

More recent still (1930) was the so called “Laymen's Inquiry” after 100 years of mission -- to appraise the work being done and to determine the advisability of continuing or changing Foreign Mission activities. We have several volumes of “findings”, “appraisals”, and recommendations. Some of it sounds very much like the report of the ten pessimistic spies at Kadesh.

Early in my ministry, I went to Columbia University for a summer course. The social aspect of Christianity was then interesting me very much. In my effort to find a course that would be of help to me, I interviewed the head of the Department of Sociology, Dr. Giddings. The best that he could suggest was that I take his seminar course with a view to going back home -- then Shreveport -- and make a sociological survey.

But this mania for surveys is not modern. Here we have an instance of the desire for one 1,300 years before Christ. There are records of several census taken of the people of Israel. The people were numbered three times in the wilderness: 1. Exodus 30:11-16; 2. Numbers 1:1-46; 3. Numbers 26:1-51. You will recall that Jesus insisted that one count the cost before going into any undertaking, especially that of becoming his follower (Luke 14:25-35).

In making surveys, two things must be kept in mind: First, the motive. The numberings in the wilderness were at the command of God. But when David numbered his people, his incentive was pride. It brought woe. Secondly, we must be sure, in making estimate of resources, to include all. The mistake of the ten was that they failed to take God into account in their findings. But here I am getting ahead of my story.

Commission Assemble Data

A commission (good Presbyterian term) of twelve was appointed -- a leader from each of the tribes. It is interesting to look at the names of those men: there is a touch of irony there. Igal, meaning "God saves him"; Palti, meaning "Jehovah saves"; Gaddiel, meaning "prosperity is from God"; Ammiel, "the servant of God"; Geuel, "the majesty of God". The prominence of God in the names of these men is noticeable. On the other hand, the name of one of the men was (when he received his appointment), "Oshea", meaning simply "deliverance". But Moses, or some one else, later felt that his stand on the issue that confronted the people justified adding the prefix "Je", the sacred name, making his name "Je-oshea", or Joshua -- the man who stoutly maintained that Jehovah would deliver his people.

The charge to these men was that they should study the productivity, the population, and the preparedness of the land. They seem to have gone the whole length of the land of Canaan -- even to the vicinity of Hamath. They may have gone up the Jordan valley and down the coast. The region of Hebron impressed them greatly -- the massive men and the luscious fruits -- grapes, pomegranates, and figs. They brought back an enormous cluster of grapes. The manner in which they carried it was not made necessary because of weight so much as because of the ease with which the grapes would become damaged.

Majority and Minority Reports

The people were brought together to hear the report of the investigators. Naturally, where there are majority and minority reports, the majority is represented first.

Skill was shown in the presentation. There must be a show of fairness. They exhibited the specimens of fruit. "Surely the land flows with milk and honey; nevertheless -- the people be strong, the cities are walled and very great: and moreover -- we saw the children of Anak there!"

The desired effect was produced. The people were frightened. Caleb, representing the minority, stood up and stilled the people: "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it".

But the majority got the ear of the people again. When a man begins to depreciate himself and magnify his difficulties, you may be sure he is looking at the matter through the colored glasses of his own desires and prejudices. Under such circumstances, it is hard to tell the simple truth. When you call upon someone to do something and he begins to speak of his lack of this or that and of his many obstacles, you may be sure he does not really want to do it.

So the ten began to enlarge on their previous report: "The land eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight". Evidently, an exaggeration.

These giants did not prove to be so formidable. You may recall that in the division of the land, Caleb asked for the hill country where these giants dwelt. The giants were dispossessed by Caleb, and the record is made only incidentally (Joshua 15:14). There is no hint that he had much difficulty.

This leads us to reflect that majorities are not always right. Here we see a small group -- Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua on one side, and the rest of the Israelites on the other. The plea of Caleb and Joshua was, "The Lord is with us; fear them not" (Numbers 14:9).

Popular Attitudes: Ancient and Modern

There must have been quite a commotion in the camp of Israel after the report of the majority was made. "All the congregation lifted up their voice and cried: and the people wept that night. And all the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God we had died in Egypt...in this wilderness...They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Numbers 14:1-4). When Joshua and Caleb stood up to urge an advance in the faith of God, "all the congregation bade stone them with stones".

These people were born in slavery, with craven minds. They were not equal to such a situation. Another generation must spring up. They must remain in the wilderness a year for every day of their spying. A new and more valiant race must arise.

But even now, after all these centuries, followers of Joshua are saying that the commands of God cannot be carried out. After the incident at Kadesh, the Lord said to Moses, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord".

The Great Commission of our Lord contemplated making that conception a reality: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature".

But some Christians say the task is too great, the difficulties are too gigantic, our resources are too limited.

Paul was not dismayed by the vastness of the non-Christian world. He knew that he had a gospel that was equal to the task. Great strides have been made in proclaiming Christ to the world. But there are vast areas not yet touched. There are areas of vast extent into which no Christian has ever gone. We have been studying Latin America these past few days. It is a surprise to us to learn that if you cut off a strip of 150 to 200 miles from the seacoast around the continent of South America, you will have left the great unevangelicalized heart of the continent, containing 26, 500,000 people. You can draw lines 4,000 miles north and south, and 2,000 miles east and west and never touch any Christian agency, Protestant or Catholic (Speer: Christian Realities, p. 206).

The whole thing looks even more disappointing when reputedly Christian nations give such a poor demonstration of their Christianity.

With God We Cannot Fail

This whole matter resolves itself into a personal policy. What is to be my attitude in the face of God's will and purpose.

Bunyan evidently knew this problem. Timorous and Mistrust came to the Palace Beautiful, but were turned back by the lions on the outside. They met Christia and tried to discourage him from going on. "The farther we go the more danger we meet with, exclaimed Timorous. Mistrust talked of the lions, but did not know whether they were sleeping or not, but was afraid they would pull him to pieces."

Some pupil gave as a definition of an optimist one who looks after the eyes, and a pessimist one who looks after the feet. That pupil was trying to employ a little Latin as help. There is some truth there, however. The optimist is the up-looker, the pessimist the down-looker. The optimist says "I can," and the pessimist says, "I can't".

That man who is convinced that he is going according to the will of God need not fear the outcome. "If God be for us, who can be against us." Felix of Nola said, after being delivered by the presence of a spider web at the mouth of a cave: "Where God is not, a wall is but a spider's web: where God is, a spider's web is a wall".

The Gracious Hinderer

Minden, LA
First Presbyterian Church, Shreveport, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX

August 12, 1923
August 24, 1924
March 31, 1946 (rewritten)

“And the angel of the Lord said unto him...Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me.”

Numbers 22:32

In the great pilgrimage which the Israelites had made under the leadership of Moses out of Egypt through the wilderness and to the vicinity of the Promised Land, they had at last come to a point some distance East of the center of what has been known as Palestine. A little journey to the west would bring them to their destination. But when they sought permission to pass peacefully through the country they were denied the request and opposed in the way.

Balak, king of the Moabites, sought a very novel way of overcoming this invading army. He sent a hasty message up into the mountains of Armenia, to Pethor, where dwelt a famous prophet, by the name of Baláam. The messengers carried with them rich gifts which fascinated the eye of the prophet. They bore the request that Baláam come and curse the people of Israel. You know the story of how Baláam tried to get the Lord to approve what he wanted to do. The Lord forbade and then relented. God sent the angel to withstand him in the way. But Baláam went on. He knew the right, but he was covetous. Really, he did not pronounce a curse on the people, but he devised a plan whereby the people of Israel were led into sin and brought into disfavor with God.

It was as much for Baláam's sake as for the safety of his people that the Lord sent his angel to warn the prophet. A gracious Hinderer He is always when His people are about to go astray. While it is refreshing to learn that from the teachings of the Word, it is really just what we would expect from a loving Father.

This story of Baláam so closely parallels a common experience in human life that I believe it well worth our consideration for a few minutes.

1. One may go wrong if he is determined to.

Despite the warnings, Baláam went on in a course which meant his ruin. He won for himself the epitaph: “Baláam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15).

I recall a little incident which took place in our home some years ago, and I am sure that each of you could recount similar instances. There are times when children seem to have a particular aptitude for choosing the wrong thing to do. One day, a little two-year old child of

ours seemed to be drifting inevitably into forbidden paths. Finally, when her little hands reached up for a plate on the table, her mother gave a sigh of despair. It seemed that she had said nothing but “Don’t” all morning. She decided to refrain for once. Off went the little one with the plate. But presently the plate slipped. A toe was hurt. Then followed an hour’s cry and a week’s limping. Even the doctor had to be consulted before it was over.

Even those of us who have grown up may not have learned that receiving permission is not receiving sanction. The Lord may be letting us learn by experience. You remember that Israel desired a king like other nations. This was not God’s will, but he let them have their desire. Israel in the wilderness longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt. They grew tired of manna. In the words of the psalmist: “They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul”.

Because God does not show His power in the way we outline, we presume to declare that God either does not exist or he is not concerned. Since man is not awed into submission, he becomes obsessed with the idea that there is nothing to stand in awe of. The superman idea did not originate with the Nazis, nor are they the only people who have favorably entertained it. We Americans have a pretty good opinion of ourselves. We like the words of Shakespeare as expressed by one of his characters: “What a piece of work is man” -- especially of the American type; “How infinite in faculty; in action, how like an angel”. Americans like to strut. We are coming to like the sound of clanking sword. Greatest navy, finest army, mightiest air force. Possessors of the atomic bomb.

As one stanza of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam runs:

“Ah love! Could you and I with him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits -- and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart’s Desire?” (IX)

Well, it is not beyond all possibility that man might be entertaining the idea that with these bombs we might be able to blast the nations that will not cooperate with us into bits that we may mold them after our own heart’s desire.

Dr. Paul Scherer says in “Event in Eternity” (p. 83), that “before every one of history’s tremendous catastrophes, people have been obsessed one way or another with the world they live in and with their own supremacy over it”. He gives as instances Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, and now we have the modern tendency to explain everything without God. He says a modern version of a familiar jingle would be:

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
We know perfectly what you are!
We’ve studied your size, and got your mass:
You’re not a diamond, you’re helium gas!”

Yes, nations and individuals can go wrong if they want to. They can become enamored of their own might and wisdom and resourcefulness.

One of the most comforting truths of the Christian religion is that:

2. There is a gracious providence in human affairs.

That may be a helping providence, or it may be a hindering providence. So long as we are in the path of right, we may be sure of his help.

We have the words of Christ to warrant us in believing that God is mindful of the smallest of his creatures and the personal affairs of each child of his. You recall what he had to say about the sparrow, the hairs of your head, the lily of the field, in the Sermon on the Mount.

But we should be on our guard against making God's conformity to our wishes a test of the validity of a belief in His presence in human events. There is a vast difference between the man who is trying to know God's will that he may walk according to it, and the man who is trying to get the Lord to go according to his will. We so often decide what we want to do and ask the Lord to bless us in it. If He doesn't, we say in resentment "There is no God".

Somerset Maugham, in his autobiographical "Of Human Bondage", says that the bitterness of his mature years was formed in youth, when he prayed God to make him well of a clubfoot. In the morning, he would feel down under the cover to find out if God had answered his prayers. His angry conclusion was that God was a lie.

People are always taking the circumstances at hand and drawing pictures of God, says Dr. Scherer. We are not inclined to get the larger perspective. We want to think that God belongs to us. We need to remember that God is concerned as much with our neighbor as ourselves, with other nations as much as with America, with other races as much as with the white race.

Let us remember that what may seem to be failure on the part of God to answer our prayer may be still a beneficent answer. It may be that we would be hurt by the attainment of some ambition. We may need the handicap to keep our feet on the ground.

Furthermore, there are times when God seems to warn us. The angel said to Baláam, "Behold I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me".

Jesus went to see the disciples on that wonderful day -- the most wonderful day in the history of the world -- but the door was shut. But he went on regardless. So a beneficent providence often intrudes. We may have shut the door. We may have even locked the door. We may be absorbed in our own affairs. But "love laughs at locksmiths". He comes on in.

God is still trying to make it hard for you and me to go wrong, just as he hindered Baláam on his evil mission. We may still go on, but to do so we must push God's angel rudely aside.

3. Providential restraint comes through many channels.

Never, with us, does that restraint take the form of an angel standing in the way with a sword drawn.

Dr. Scherer says that if God “had spelled out his name in electric lights and hung it up and down across fields and through events, we should have been compelled to believe Him. He never wants to compel”.

But the Lord still restrains by His Word. Recall how our Lord talked on the night that Judas betrayed him. How his words must have pierced the heart of Judas. “Ye are clean, but not all.” What thou doest, do quickly.” But this was only the last of many restraints that must have been put forth during the past months. In spite of it all, Judas went on with his evil plans. Those are solemn words that John then records. “He went out, and it was night” -- night in the soul as well as in the city.

The old psalmist said: “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee”. The word has ever been to man as the angel in the way.

The Lord restrains through our friends. When Pilate’s wife sent the governor the message, “Have nothing to do with that just man,” she was but an instrument in the hands of God -- the gracious Hinderer.

Many of us when going astray have had the kind warning of a friend. Acting as the angel in the way is often a very thankless undertaking. We cannot always refrain from our duty, even though it be at the time unappreciated. More than once, I am sure, some in this congregation have helped others to keep from doing wrong.

The Lord also restrains through conscience. Recall Macbeth outside the door of his room in which sleeps the unsuspecting Duncan. Macbeth trying to justify his acts.

In the “Idyll of the King”, Queen Guinevere was developing an unholy relationship with Sir Lancelot. In addition to the forces without that urged the wisdom of severing those relations, Tennyson says that

“Henceforth, too, the powers that tend the soul
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her”.

We need no introduction to this restraining force in life. Our consciences trouble us a great deal, but that troubling is our salvation.

God restrains us through special events of providence. Many of you can bear witness to that fact. There are times when such evidence is unmistakable. These events of providence do not come alike to any two. G. H. Morrison thinks this fact may throw light on the mystery of the white stone spoken of in the Book of Revelation. There it is said a white stone is given upon which is a name which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it.

In sickness, in sorrow, in unavoidable accident, in strange coincidence, we often see what appears to be no less than the hand of God.

4. What is our duty here?

First, it is clearly to heed the warning of God. No one can successfully oppose God. It is foolish to hasten on at full speed after the torpedoes on the track have been exploded and the red flare of the danger warning has been seen.

Physicians tell us that pain is a warning signal that something is wrong. There are two ways of dealing with such a situation: one is merely to kill the pain, and the other is to remove the cause of the pain. There are drugs that merely kill the pain. They merely remove the danger signal.

When Jehoikim heard the words of God spoken through Jeremiah and written down by Baruch, he took the writing, cut it with a knife, and cast it into the fire. He burnt the warning, but he did not avert the prophesied disaster.

So we may disregard all warnings, but the danger remains.

Second, we should do all in our power to fortify the souls of those whom God has committed to our rearing. With the help of God we should make it as hard as possible for those who go out from our midst to go wrong. This we can do by filling their minds with the word of God, by helping them cultivate the noblest friendships, by training in them a regard for enlightened conscience, and teaching them a belief in the immanence and loving care of a heavenly father.

Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, in his book "The Contagion of Character", says that in the story in which an old man had recently given of his wonderful career, he told of an hour of weakness when he was yielding to the temptation to forsake his home and city and turn his back on his honor. As he alighted from the carriage at the railway station, he saw his old father, long since dead, standing in the door of the station. As the son approached, the father seemed to raise his hand, exclaiming "My son, my son, my son. Go back, go back". The son could not stand that. He rushed back and was soon filling his accustomed place again. Testifying forty years afterwards, he declared that that vision saved his soul. It was undoubtedly an illusion -- the product of conscience, memory, and imagination -- but one thing is certain, it served well in the providence of God to withstand him on an evil way.

The Significance of the Last End

Minden, LA
Rockdale, Texas

March 23, 1941
August 5, 1956 (rewritten)

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Numbers 23:10

A friend of mine in Minden, LA (David Thomas) was never happier than when he was called on to make a speech, and incidentally he did a good job of it. He was talking to me one day of his preparation for an occasion on which he was to speak on a patriotic theme. He said he had been working only on his peroration, the conclusion to his speech. The rest he said did not matter. “If you end good, it’s a good speech.” He was only half serious.

It is said that some professional singers make a bid for applause by a flourish at the end. A great deal of attention is given the closing scene of a play, or the last chapter of a book.

Some people may entertain the thought that if one can manage to get religion just before he dies, it will not matter so much what has gone before. One of the thieves of Calvary managed to do this. This is a perilous course to follow deliberately. Even those who have lived conscientiously and usefully hope that their terminus of life will have a measure of honor and distinction. The words of our text expresses a desire that is well nigh universal.

Hamlet, in his famous soliloquy, was reflecting on this. He talked about “a consummation devoutly to be wished,” when he would “shuffle off this mortal coil” and his “quietus make”. But he was not satisfied that ending it all with a “bare bodkin” would prove to be the thing he really wanted. He would much prefer that his end come in the accomplishment of “enterprise of great pith and moment”.

A Desire That Was Not Realized

It is recorded that the man who made this wish never had it fulfilled. He did not die the death of the righteous. The fact that he died on the battlefield did not redeem his record. His name is mentioned by several writers in the Bible and associated with evil. His memory is a reproach. The man who made this wish was Baláam, the ancient prophet of Jehovah.

Baláam’s story is weird and very suggestive. We go back more than 3,300 years, to the time when the long journey of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt to the Land of Promise was about to end. It must have been an impressive sight, even a terrifying one to some, to have this vast host move steadily on a mission of repossession. In that host, there were 601,730 men 20 years of age and over (Numbers 26:1-51). You can figure for yourself how many women and children there were in addition. Sihon and Og kings of the Amorites tried to stop this host, but they were hopelessly defeated in two battles. Balak, king of the Moabites, was very sure that he

could not win against this host if Sihon and Og had failed. He decided to try strategy. He formed a coalition with the Midianites. They decided that if they could have a curse pronounced on these Israelites, they could hope to defeat this seemingly invincible host. They decided that the man to pronounce this curse was Baláam, a famous diviner who lived quite a distance away - in the town of Pethor on the Euphrates River. Now evidently Baláam was a descendent of the patriarchal church, preserving the ancient tradition. His blameless simplicity awed the people around him. He was a brilliant man and an orator of great power, and a poet. He had lofty conceptions of righteousness. He had convictions to which he was true only after a fashion. He had a knowledge of God and sought divine guidance. But he is roundly denounced not only by Old Testament writers, but also by Peter, Jude and John.

Balak first sent elders of the Moabites and Midianites to ask Baláam to come and curse these intruders. Baláam declined, but the elders came back with the impression that he could be persuaded. So Balak sent a more impressive delegation of princes, and offered him riches and honor, if he would come. He refused at first, but was evidently interested. We pass over intervening events to say that Baláam did come, but plainly told Balak that he could say only what the Lord instructed him to say. Balak took Baláam up where he could see that vast host, and prepared the setting while Baláam consulted the God of Heaven. The heart of Baláam was evidently stirred by this great host of Israel. He uttered no word of denunciation, but of evident approval. It was in this utterance that Baláam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his".

Balak made two other attempts to get Baláam to utter a malediction against Israel, but in vain. Balak was incensed and dismissed him without conferring any of the honors he had promised. But Baláam seems to have lingered among the Midianites, nourishing a grievance against the Israelites. He counseled the Midianites to join with the Moabites in seducing the people of Israel by inviting them to the festival of Baal-Peor, celebrated with the licentiousness of a heathen orgy. The Israelites fell into the snare, and the curse it caused was more effective than any divination that Baláam could have effected. In the course of time, the Israelites descended on the Midianites and utterly routed them. Among those killed with the sword was the crafty prophet, Baláam, who once said, "Let me die the death of the righteous". It would have been better if Baláam had cast his lot with the people who worshipped the same God he worshipped, or had gone on back to his distant home. Evidently, Baláam was torn by two urges.

The Aspirations of Our Better Moments

There is something that sounds very human about this story of Baláam. It is true that he merits the condemnation that has been heaped upon him. This is the story of a man who had a great opportunity, with impulses that would have brought him immortality. He was not big enough in the crises.

James said, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Judas, the betrayer, had lived under the guidance and counsel of our Lord for many months. He saw the light, and he failed. His failure was far greater than that of some person who never knew Jesus.

There are people who pride themselves on maintaining an open mind. Baláam seems to have maintained an open mind all along. He was not able to see that the Lord was not favorable

to his acceptance of Balak's invitation. The trouble was that the worldly honors offered him also interested him.

In the Presbyterian Survey (Augst, 1956) which came yesterday, there is a poem by Roger W. Hegner on the dinosaur, the famous prehistoric animal-reptile, which sometimes grew to the length of 90 feet. Naturalists believe it had two sets of brains, one in its head and the other in its tail.

“Thus he could think without congestion
Upon both sides of every question.”

Quite frequently, the human animal has two minds on many questions: Morality, church attendance, drink. Broadmindedness is often shallow-mindedness. There are some people so tolerant that they cannot take a definite stand on important issues.

Baláam evidently had two minds. And, let it be said, so do most human beings. Paul knew what this struggle was. When he would do good, evil was present. He felt that he was bound to another self that held him down.

The idealism of youth is wonderful. When we see it we feel like offering a prayer that it may never be supplanted by some baser motive. Longfellow compared this aspiration to climbing the heights:

“The shades of night were falling fast,
As though an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
The banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!”

Effort was made to dissuade this youth by old man and maiden. But he pressed on.
Then, at break of day --

“A traveler, by the faithful hound,
Half buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping, in his hand of ice,
The banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!”

I do not know what inspired this poem. It may have been the report of an inscription on the grave of a mountain guide: “He died climbing”. There was where he wanted to die -- in the heights.

Baláam may have wanted something like that -- in his better moments.

Requisites for Realization

Would that all could live up to the longings of their better moments. So many come to ignoble ends. They disappoint themselves and all those who put their hopes in them.

Rabelais, French master of burlesque and buffoonery of the 16th Century, exclaimed in his last moments, “Drop the curtain, the farce is played out”.

The mighty and magnanimous Saladin, opponent of Richard I in the Crusades, in his last moments bade his princes take his shroud and fasten it to his victorious staff, and bid the heralds cry through the city streets: "This is all that is left, of all his greatness, to the mighty Saladin".

The supreme requisite for a noble ending is noble living. To die right, one must live right. Baláam cast in his lot with the wrong people. He loved the wages of unrighteousness.

I have read that at a Sabbath morning gathering, a Quaker of venerable character arose and said, "Many say it is a solemn thing to die; but bethink you all, and bethink you well, it is a solemn thing to live".

A great Southern statesman is said to have been asked by someone, as his pulse was failing, if he wished someone to pray for him: "No, my life must be my prayer. This solemn moment is not so significant as the solemn years that are gone. Let them stand" (Barton, p. 409).

You have read about the discovery of a guard still standing at his post when the ruins of Pompeii were unearthed. Even though the volcano was pouring forth its death, the guard remained at his post. He could not have done that had he not had the discipline of the years.

Helen Keller has said, "Our worst foes are not belligerent circumstances but wavering spirits".

Before one can be sure of dying the death of the righteous, he must have an experience of God. There is repose in a settled faith. Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

One must have a clear conscience. There must be a sense of forgiveness -- the feeling that all is right with God and with himself.

One needs assurance of eternal life. Too many people trust vaguely to the goodness of God. With Tennyson, they say:

"Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die".

An artist once said, "I watch the sunset as I look out over the sea, and there is no mystery beyond the horizon line because I know what is there. I have been there. Well, there is another land that I look towards, as I watch the sunset. I have never seen it...but it has a more abiding reality than any of the lands that I do know" (Reid: "Why Be Good", p. 175).

One fact that is brought to our attention with tremendous force day by day is that life is uncertain. If we expect ourselves to die the death of the righteous, we should lose no time in getting ready.

The Obligation of Opportunity

Colonial, Dallas, TX

January 28, 1945

“The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came...saying...let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan. And Moses said...if ye will go armed before the Lord to war...until he hath driven out his enemies before him...this land shall be your possession before the Lord.”

Numbers 35:2,5,20-22

We have been looking a great deal at maps lately. I wish you could open up the atlas of your memory to that familiar map of Palestine, where God enacted the drama of his great revelation. You note on this map which you have in your mind's eye that Palestine is bounded on the west by the Mediterranean, and that down the country, somewhat to the right of center on the page, glows the Jordan River.

It was up the east side of this stream that Israel came from their wanderings in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses. There they encountered opposition of forces under Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan. The next step was to enter Canaan proper, which was on the west side of the Jordan.

At this point, two tribes, Reuben and Gad, shepherd tribes with a vast number of sheep, came to Moses with a request. The tableland of undulating downs, luxuriant vegetation, and forest lands was just the region for their habitation. It looked good to them. The report of the spies as to the difficulties involved in the region west of the Jordan still lingered with them. Why could they not be permitted to settle here?

Moses very frankly said that he did not believe this to be an honorable request. It was prompted by selfishness. The whole of the army of Israel had helped to defeat Sihon and Og, and now these tribes were ready to settle down and enjoy the fruits of this victory without going over and helping the other tribes to possess the real object of their pilgrimage. Not only were they asking special favors in grant of land, but they were seeking to evade responsibility for the rest of the undertaking. It was unjust, and would prove to be disheartening to the rest. It was recourse to one's own resourcefulness rather than submission to the leadership of God.

But Reuben and Gad avowed their loyalty to the cause, and declared their willingness to send their armies to help with the conquest until the job was done. Moses then acceded to the request of these tribes for the section east of the Jordan on condition that they fulfill their obligation to the rest of the people of Israel. He gave to Reuben and Gad the kingdom of Sihon, and to one half the tribe of Manasseh the inaccessible heights and impassable ravines of Bashan, strongholds of Og.

Life's Inequalities

Even with the amendments which Moses insisted on, the request of these tribes brought them advantages. They were able to settle their sheep and families on their possessions and travel unimpeded in their conquests of Canaan. Their families did not have to experience the danger and unrest and migration of the invasion. They could be getting settled in this rich land and building homes. There was an inequality there.

Furthermore, there was inequality in the apportionment of the land among the three tribes. Reuben, the largest tribe, got the smallest amount of land. Gad, a smaller tribe than Reuben, got twice the amount of land that Reuben got. Manasseh (½) the smallest group of all, got 15 times as much land as did Reuben.

This reminds us that life is like that. There is no equal distribution in life, although there are ideologies which hold to the principle of equality. We have to explain what we mean when we say that "all men are created free and equal". We know very well that men are never equal. They do not start out in life equally. They are not equally endowed with mental equipment, or physical strength or beauty. The providential provision for man varies, some being the recipient of favorable conditions and others seemingly not.

So God did not start his people out equally in the land of Canaan. But he expected of them a feeling and recognition of responsibility that was in proportion to their lots. To be the recipient of favor is to incur responsibility. It is the failure of members of the human family to recognize that principle that lies at the root of the world's ills today.

People are often incensed at the seeming injustice of life. Why does God permit such inequality of lot? No one can answer that question. He hasn't made the earth level, nor the climates of even temperature. There are bad days as well as good. But then, who wants to live in a world of monotony? Were it not for the bad days we could not appreciate the good. Were it not for sickness, we could not appreciate health.

With his bestowal of favor, however, God imposes an obligation. It was expressed by the apostle: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

The Peril of Failure

Moses sounded a warning to these favored tribes. Should they fail to discharge their obligation, their wickedness would not go unnoticed. "Be sure your sin will find you out," he said (Numbers 32:23).

So far as we know, these tribes carried out their promise. But subsequent history reveals tragic consequences of their choice. Reuben became a tent-dwelling people. It produced no great leader, no judge, no prophet, no hero. It eventually became estranged from the rest, due to its being out of touch. It preferred to remain by the sheepfolds when the national crises arose

(Judges 5:15,16). The history of Gad and Mannasseh was similar. Misunderstandings arose. These tribes were open to attack by enemies, and were the first carried away into captivity.

Nations in the Present Conflict

Questions that have been asked ever since the present World War began have centered to a large degree around this point: Will Russia, or England, or the United States decide to withdraw from the conflict as soon as either nation gets what it wants? Will there be a premature effort to gain advantage by means of unilateral treaties? Will Russia withdraw prematurely as she did in the 1st World War? Will England go on with the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany? Will the United States revert to an isolationist policy at the end as she did in 1919?

Secretary of State Edward Stettinius tells us (Reader's Digest, Feb. 1945) that the Dumbarton Oaks Peace Plan has four corners. Three of these, at least, deal with this very principle. (1) Peace can be maintained only if peace-loving nations of the world band together for the purpose. (2) Great powers which have the strength must be ready to use their resources to preserve peace and stamp out aggression. (3) There must be a concerted effort to achieve worldwide economic cooperation for improvement of living conditions. (4) There must be progressive general reduction of armaments.

America has been greatly blessed. It is her responsibility to render the world service in proportion to her endowment. Our failure in this respect in the past has brought unhappy consequences already. Isolationism would be fatal now.

Recall our Own National History

An article in the current issue of Reader's Digest (Feb. 1945) brings to our attention the postwar problems the nation faced in 1787. After the revolution, there were 13 independent republics, held together rather loosely by the articles of confederation, drawn up at the time of the Declaration of Independence, but not accepted by all the states until 1781. It was a document similar to the agreement among the United Nations in this war. There was no strong central government. Congress was weak. It could enforce no laws, raise no money, maintain no army or navy. Washington urged that a real union be effected, even at the sacrifice of local interests. New York frankly was not in favor of it. Governor Clinton stated that New York had everything -- strategic position, a great port, fertile lands and room for expansion. Why give this up for uncertain advantages? Rhode Island prided itself on being "the state of the otherwise minded". Eventually a great nation was born. But its strength lies in the principle of having the strong help the weak.

As Applied to Capitalism

The only ground on which there can be freedom of economic enterprise is a willingness on the part of the strong to help the weak. Only on such a ground can capitalism be justified. It is true that freedom to accumulate wealth is an incentive to industry. But no one has a right to accumulate vast fortunes for his own enjoyment while there are millions who live in need and hunger. If capitalism fails, which it may do, it will be because of the selfishness of those who

have, the unwillingness to render service to the less fortunate. Not all the wealth now in the hands of individuals has come through the industry of those who have it. Much is inherited or acquired through a favorable turn of fortune, as when one discovers that he has minerals on the land which he happens to possess. For people who have such a turn of fortune to show no interest in helping the less favored is the height of ingratitude. It will do more to usher in some form of communism than all the propaganda which fanatics can disseminate.

The warning of Moses holds here: "Be sure your sins will find you out".

As Applied to the Church

This spirit of selfishness can get into the church. There was a church in Asia Minor, one of the seven to which our risen Lord sent messages through the apostle John. It was the church at Laodicaea. The church was rich and felt that it had need of nothing.

For any organization to fail to accept its full responsibility in the crusade for righteousness and truth in the world is folly. Missions is the antidote to selfishness. It is carrying the conflict on to the west side of the Jordan.

As Applied to the Individual

Ultimately, it is an individual attitude, according as we are members of a nation, economic order, church. The man who has an advantage must share that with his neighbor. Self-interest is a fatal policy. "All for privilege, nothing for obligation" is a sure road to disaster.

Deuteronomy

Setting Out From Seir

Minden, LA	December 3, 1939
Minden Prayer Meeting, LA	June 17, 1942
Colonial, Dallas, TX	February 4, 1945 (rewritten)
Westminster, Waco, TX	October 12, 1952
Rockdale, TX	October 11, 1953

“You have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.”
Deuteronomy 2:3

These are the words which were addressed to the Israelites by the Lord through Moses, after their many years wandering and just before they began their triumphal advance toward the Land of Promise. As you recall this generation of Israelites was not the generation that came out of Egypt. The former generation was not equal to the undertaking of possessing the land of Canaan, because of a lack of faith and courage. A new generation had to be reared. But even that needed discipline.

In the portion of the book of Deuteronomy from which our text is taken, Moses is relating certain outstanding facts in their national history, particularly of the more recent past. He reminds the Israelites that their fathers came up out of Egypt and to Kadesh-barnea, just south of the land of Canaan. Their fathers had shown themselves unfit to go in by their reaction to the report of the spies. God ordained that they should not go in, but that their descendents would. So the band of Israelites remained in the vicinity of Kadesh-barnea for about 37-years, until a new generation could be developed, hardened, trained. Then the movement started again.

Just east of them was the land of Edom. Moses made request of the Edomites that they be permitted to pass through their land. That request was declined. Being a kindred people (the descendents of Esau), they had no desire to violate their wishes. So it became necessary for the Israelites to go south and around the mountainous and extremely rugged country inhabited by the Edomites. It was the region of Mount Seir. It was a long and wearisome journey. It involved some unhappy experiences -- the death of Aaron and his burial on Mount Hor, and the fiery serpent incident in the lower section. It was necessary to spend more time in the detour than was necessary. At any rate, the word came to Moses from the Lord saying “You have been going about this mountain country long enough; turn northward” (RSV).

The journeying of Israel are an inexhaustible source of instruction for us. The way God dealt with Israel is the way He deals with the people of all ages. We can profit by these records.

We should avoid the mistakes that Israel made. We should heed the counsel given Israel by the Lord.

We should not of course go ahead of God's time.

In carrying out the will of God, our continuance in any situation must be "long enough". In the providence of God, there is such a thing as "the fullness of time". That was true with reference to the coming of the Savior. From the beginning of human history, the Redeemer was promised. The ceremonial law of Israel was prophetic of the Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world. The prophets had much to say about the Messiah. There was a state of constant expectancy. But it was not until the "fullness of time" that "God sent forth his Son".

At the time of our Lord's ascension, he told His disciples that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father -- the Holy Spirit who would charge them with power. We read that they waited in the spirit of prayer and expectancy.

The reason for God's delay is not his lack of readiness, but ours. He was ready to lead the people of Israel into the land of Canaan 40 years before they finally went in, but the Israelites were not ready. It was a slow process that God followed in getting his people in shape for the conquest of Canaan, and for settlement under a government of their own. But at long last, he was able to say to them, "You have compassed this mountain long enough".

We believe that it is the will of God that His Kingdom be established in the world. We pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven". So far as the United States is concerned, one might conclude that the Kingdom is really coming, if he relied on figures alone. The other day, I heard Dr. Harry Munro, now professor in TCU, Forth Worth, make the observation that throughout our national history there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of citizens who belong to some religious body: in 1890, 22%; in 1910, 43%; in 1930, 47%; in 1950, 57%; and in 1951, 58%; but that we as a nation are becoming more and more secular all the time. The value of church membership has declined, he says. The only hope, he says, is the establishment within the church of a highly disciplined group. If we do not discipline ourselves, God will discipline us, just as He did the Israelites in the Wilderness through which they were led.

We should ourselves be ready when the time comes to advance.

We know, from the record of Israel's murmuring and complaints, that the factor which delayed the arrival of the fullness of time was lack of readiness to do what they had left Egypt to accomplish. They were easily intimidated, scared, discouraged. It was so much so that God despaired of doing anything with the old generation.

As Christians and church members, we have a part to play in the accomplishment of the fullness of time. It may be that we are delaying the blessings of God by our lack of readiness. We may be content to keep on compassing the familiar mountains.

This can easily be true of churches. As I think of the churches with which I have had association through a rather long ministry, I recall instances in which it seemed to me that the members were content to keep on compassing certain mountains, so to speak, when they should be entering upon the conquest of new areas. Instead of heading for the land of promise, they are sitting down in inactivity.

Some of the compassing centers that come to my mind may not have particular relationship to this particular church, but they might have in time. Perhaps you are too new in your enterprise to have become fixed in the compassing habit. But it might do us good to spot these mountains, and stay clear as much as possible.

1. The Mountain of Memory

Many people live in memories of the past, whether it be the war or some religious experience. It is easier to dwell in the gilded halls of yesterday than to face the grim realities of today. It could be that some mountain peak of Christian experience is our hindrance to progress. We are singing, "Where is the blessedness I knew".

It is related that a Polish artist by the name of Munkacay once stood with John Wanamaker in the Wanamaker Gallery before the famous picture, "Christ before Pilate", painted by Munkacay. The artist said, "This is my greatest work. I shall never do anything else as fine". Mr. Wanamaker deplored the fact that the artist felt that there was nothing better ahead. Compare the attitude of St. Gaudens who, when someone asked him, "Mr. St. Gaudens, is not your statue of Lincoln your greatest work?" replied, "My next work is always my greatest" (Hom. Rev. Aug. 1932, p. 133).

I have just had the privilege of sharing in the activities of a great downtown church in Fort Worth, while they worked out a forward-looking program of evangelism. The church is already running over its facilities, and to add many new members will involve an acute problem. The leaders in the church have seen that this is coming and have begun to make plans. A spacious lot of some 3 ½ acres has been secured a few blocks from the present site, and it is proposed to raise about a million dollars for the erection of a structure adequate to meet the needs. But more than one of the leaders in the church told me that they would much prefer that everything stay just as it is. My suggestion of colonization as the solution of the problem was to some of these no more acceptable.

It is possible for a church, or individual members at least, to compass the mountain of memory too long, and become averse to any change. This applies to the matter of procedure and methods, even though they are not suitable to a new age.

2. The Mountain of Self-Centeredness

It is a very difficult thing to keep self out of any situation. It is for that reason that our Lord laid down as a requisite for true discipleship that one "deny himself". So many people do not begin to know the meaning of that requirement. People talk about denying themselves when they give an offering to the church that they never miss. We talk of observing the week of

Prayer and Self-denial for Church Extension, when we have probably not really denied ourselves one dime or a moment of time for the great cause of extension of the gospel in this great country of ours.

We do not know what self-denial is so long as we are insisting that everything be just as we want it before we will help with the work of the church. So long as we consider the church an institution to minister to us as individuals and cater to our whims, we are simply going around a mountain that will keep us out of the land of promise.

So long as we are too much absorbed in our own affairs that we do not have time for the church, we are failing as Christians.

You will recall that Moses had a great deal of this kind of thing to deal with. The Israelites were continually finding fault with the way things were working out. They didn't like the food they had, there was question of the authority of Aaron and Moses (Numbers 16:1f); Aaron and Miriam did not like the wife of Moses (Num. 12:1-4). There were numerous murmurings. The people were thinking of themselves and not the great purpose on which they were supposed to center.

If there should be in any of our hearts the tendency to put self above the cause, we have been compassing that mountain long enough.

3. The Mountain of Indifference

There seems always to be a large portion of any church who do not seem to care whether the church goes on or not. They never come, they never contribute to the budget. They are like the excuse makers of the parable of Jesus. We hear alibis of being tired, busy, having company on Sunday. This mountain is rather crowded. The paths around it are rather worn.

We are to be confronted with a big program of building during the next few months. It is time to pull up stakes and advance.

The greatest satisfactions are in adventure with God.

Life can easily become very commonplace and wearisome. It may be nothing but a compassing of some mountain. It may go on too long.

People do many things to escape boredom. They seek new thrills. Each new form of entertainment is a desperate effort to stimulate outworn sensibilities. Each year we have something more risqué. We see that reflected in magazines and movies and radio programs. Drink is often an escape from monotony. Millions are spent on amusement halls.

Stimulus from without will always end in boredom. "All is vanity."

The indwelling God is the secret of zest.

While we are making plans for an advance, we need to be sure that it is the will of God that we follow. Having decided that the course we take is of God, we can pray earnestly that God will bless us.

Two very definite courses are before us:

1. We must all pray that God will bless our efforts and crown our labors with success.
2. We must put every ounce of energy and material resource we can command towards the achievement of our goals.

As Shakespeare puts it in Julius Caesar (iv:3):

“There is a time in the affairs of men...

.....
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our venture.”

As I give my thought local application, I am reflecting the sentiment that has been expressed by some of you. Some of you have said to me, in effect: “We have compassed this mountain long enough”.

We have started out for that “promised land” of having a Presbyterian Church in Rockdale. We have the organization, but we are still limping along. We have made little progress for many weeks, due to some extent to the interruptions of vacations and the debilitation of heat. Now that is all behind us, and we should be ready to move into the land of promise.

1. The church with which you are now associated, like others, has a program which is very full and challenging, and it has organizational procedures by which it hopes to carry through that program. Any church succeeds just as its members support its program. But to support it adequately, they must know what the program is and how it proposes to carry it out. The Rockdale Church is a unit in that denominational body, and we are being the recipients of the generosity of that organization. We do not intend to be parasites. We may not for a time be able to make a very sizable contribution to the financial phase of the program, but we can at least become familiar with that program and lend a sympathetic hand in its activities.

We will never be able to maintain interest in something about which we know nothing. We ought therefore to begin to learn what our church is doing. We should become readers of the church papers and magazines and books. We have seasonal study books. For instance, our study book for this season is “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder”, concerning the Negro Work in the South and our church’s responsibility.

2. We need to take steps looking to setting up a Sunday school. This is very urgent. Our church has an excellent body of literature for use in the various classes and departments. It is designed on modern educational principles. It cannot be taught according to procedures followed when some of us were children. We need to know how to use the literature to make it effective. For this reason, we have institutes and leadership schools and laboratory classes.

Our prospective Sunday school enrollment. The Institute in Austin.

3. The Women of the Church have an organization that is widely acclaimed among the protestant churches of America. It is most efficient.

We need to get our women lined up in this.

4. Men's organization.
5. Youth's activities.
6. Home influence. Training children in the principles of the church.
7. Choir.

In the old days, when fishing was done in flat boats, pulled by oars, and sometimes they leaked, the slogan was: "Fish, pull, bail, or cut bait". There was no place for an idler. So in the church.

Did Moses Revise the Ten Commandments

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

September 13, 1933
May 19, 1946
December 12, 1954

Deuteronomy 5:11-21 -- Compare with Exodus 20: 3-17

The Exodus version given by Moses in a report to the people of Israel at Sinai, upon his descent from the Mountain.

The Deuteronomy version was also given by Moses, during the last months of his life. Evidently, it was at the time for the people to enter the land of promise. A new generation had sprung up. None of those who were at Sinai still lived except Caleb and Joshua. The type of life had now changed, or was about to change. They had been a nomadic people. They were now to settle on tracts of their own.

The Book of Deuteronomy is made up of three addresses given by Moses to the people. This was not all in the same day, but probably over a period of time. The 2nd address is the longest. The Commandments come at the very beginning of the second address. This address is an exposition of the law.

Some Differences Noted in the Versions

There are several changes, or variations, noticeable. They are not of great importance in any case. It would seem that Moses was suiting his presentation of these commandments to the new situation in which the people were to find themselves.

This prompts the question as to whether Moses revised the Commandments and then as to whether similar liberty with them is to be justified in the later days. It is not infrequently the custom of human beings here and there to revive these commandments to suit their own conveniences. The difference between the revisions shown in the Bible and those made by the rest of us is that the Bible revisions make the Commandments even more binding and extensive, whereas revisions make them less so.

The version that is most familiar to us, the version we memorize, and the version dealt with in the Standards of our Church, is found in Exodus. The supposition seems to be that the Exodus version is the authoritative version.

A Change in the Fourth Commandment

The reason given for keeping the Sabbath holy, in Exodus, is theological; in Deuteronomy it is humanitarian. In Exodus, the reason given is an observance of a memorial of creation. This is not necessarily displaced by the failure to mention it in Deuteronomy. We may

assume that the commemorative idea was well known. In Deuteronomy, there seemed to be another reason for the observance: "That thy manservant and they maidservant may rest as well as thou". They were not to forget how it had been with their fathers in Egypt, where they could not rest.

The obligation to keep the Sabbath rests on people as individuals, as heads of families who direct the activities of sons and daughters, and as masters who have servants. The servants should be given the privilege and encouragement to observe the day.

This is reasonable -- one day out of seven is not an imposition. It is right that God should have this claim on us. His goodness should lead us to do this without command. Remember Egypt, said Moses.

Paul said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am".

A Change in the Fifth Commandment

In Exodus, the reason given for observance is that one's day may be long upon the land which the Lord gives him.

In Deuteronomy, the reason given is: "That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee".

Paul refers to this Commandment in Ephesians 6:2-3, and quotes from the Deuteronomy version.

We know that there is more to life than length of days. But we do know that as a common experience, children really live longer who honor their parents and obey them. This commandment was given before the days of automobiles. Parents know more, even though the children do not think so.

Dr. Clovis Chappell relates that a friend of his once said to a group of young girl graduates, "You know quite a bit". Their evident approval seemed to say, "Quite right. You are speaking even more wisely than you realize".

"But you do not intend to quit learning. You do not expect to become victims of arrested development. You expect to know far more 25 years from now than you know today". At once they nodded their heads in eager approval.

"Since that is the case," he continued, "it is well for you to remember that your mothers have had just about that much start of you. Therefore, when you get home, you might listen to them a bit".

It is bad for us to grow up without learning discipline. As children we need to be shown that it is bad, as Dr. Chappell suggests, to play with a razor instead of a toy dog, drink Lysol instead of milk, eat mud instead of spinach. We need to be driven to get that education we do not want, but which we regret not having in later life. We need to be pressed into cultivation of religious habits. Everyone needs to learn to obey. The reason for marriage failures is so often

the determination to have one's own way. Juvenile delinquency is fundamentally rebellion against authority. Obedience of the laws of God are essential.

So, we see that there is justification of the additional reason given by Moses in Deuteronomy: "That it may be well with thee".

A Change in the Tenth Commandment

In fact there are three changes that we might notice:

1. A change in the order of covetousness named -- house and wife. Wife is named first in the later version, therefore is said to be more modern.

Dr. Kenneth Foreman said he heard of a woman who would not go to church because in the commandments (Exodus version) she was sandwiched in between a house and a manservant.

This change complicates the position of those who divide this last commandment, after having united the first two (the Catholic position).

2. A substitution of the word "desire" in one place, for "covet". This is not particularly significant. The basis of all coveting is desire.

We are told to covet some things. "Covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31). We are not to covet that to which we have no right, or to covet more than we need.

Mr. Livingston in "Santa Claus' Partner", an active and aggressive young man, wanted a fortune of a million dollars. Why? To help his fellow man? To build an orphanage, a college, or a hospital? When a friend asked him why he wanted a million dollars, he said: "In order to tell the other fellow to go to the devil" (Quoted by Chappell).

3, In the later version, "field" is added to the list of things that must not be coveted. This is significant. Up to this time, the people had no fields. They were not to become an agricultural people. There was reason for this addition.

Our Lord's Revisions of the Commandments

Jesus showed very clearly that the law as it stood was insufficient. He noted that the religious leaders of the day were concentrating on the letter of the Law and neglecting the spirit of it.

In the Sermon on the Mount, he gave a new interpretation of the commandments: There is for instance the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill".

Jesus taught that this commandment is violated in one's attitude (Matt. 5:21-22).

The Seventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery". The same observation as in the case of the Sixth Commandment (Matt. 5:27-28)

The Westminster Standards revised the commandments in the light of the New Testament, and Christ's addition to them. See Fourth Commandment.

The observance of the 1st day of the week instead of the 7th.

Supremacy of the Law of Love

Jesus gave a law that is far greater. The law of love, manifested in the second mile idea. The Ten Commandments are of value in helping us through the elementary stages of Christian living. They are fundamental in morals. Christianity begins where the Commandments leave off.

Love must be supplemented by intelligence. The Holy Spirit makes one want to do the right thing.

Religious Fidelity and Idolatrous Filigree

Minden, LA
Shreveport, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

July 22, 1923
August 26, 1923
June 24, 1945
January 19, 1958

“The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein.”

Deuteronomy 7:25

These are the words of Moses. He was speaking to a people whom he had led out of captivity in Egypt and to the border of the Promised Land, the land of their forefathers, but a land now inhabited by a pagan race. For forty years, had he not witness their vacillating moods, their susceptibility to evil influence? He knew this advice was sorely needed. The trouble was, they did not heed the warning.

It may not be so easy for us to understand the bent of the Hebrew mind of the time of Moses. People of our day have a tendency to superstition. But certainly among Protestants, as a rule, the presence of objects formerly worshipped by heathens would not be a snare. Our soldier boys brought back from the Far East objects worshipped by the oriental. But there was no evidence that they were a snare to the boy who had them.

But evidently, the Israelites had not been far enough removed from the worship of the heathen gods to be immune to the influence of the presence of idolatrous objects in their midst. Such things seemed to be particularly fascinating to the Israelites.

What was this counsel that Moses gave? It was to the effect that when they overcame the inhabitants of the land, they should completely destroy the graven images of the gods, not preserving even the silver and the gold with which they were ornamented. Evidently, some of the images were elaborately and exquisitely adorned with silver and gold. Some would certainly say that the sensible thing to do would be to preserve the metal and put it to some profitable use. But the command of Moses, which was no doubt of divine origin, was the silver and the gold be destroyed.

“Why this waste?” That is a natural question. It was a question asked by Judas once, when Mary anointed Jesus with a very costly ointment. It has been asked often since. For those in whose eyes things that are seen are more valuable than things that are not seen, there seems to be no satisfactory answer. A foolish waste? Not when eternal factors are involved. Not when lingering thoughts of their association are certain to prove a snare to the souls of the possessors.

Power of Association

In this command, God showed his recognition of the tremendous power of association. The memory functions according to laws of association. It can be seen readily that by one peculiarly susceptible to the heathen influence, the history of the silver and gold could not be easily forgotten.

We are not to infer that the Lord forbid the acquisition of silver and gold. Both metals were used profusely in the Temple in Jerusalem. I am sure he had no objection to filigree, ornaments, on objects that were not idolatrous. He is simply saying that when among human beings a thing has been profaned by sinful use it is often better to destroy even that which is not sinful in itself that it may not be the occasion of evil suggestion. You recall the comment by Paul on the subject of eating meat offered to idols.

Parallels in Modern Experience

Because of the fact that our own experience parallels in so many ways the experience of Israel, we have found God's counsel to Israel of great value to us. We read the history of the Hebrews, and we think how foolish they were to go after the heathen deities and thereby bring disaster upon themselves. But what about ourselves? Isn't superstition, a relic of heathen idolatry, still rife among us? Do we not still have the tendency to substitute something temporal as the object of our faith for a faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Don't we find ourselves drifting? Doesn't our spirituality at times reach a low ebb?

Haven't you observed that there are people who start out rather confidently in the Christian life, and then drift off? They are dependent on revivals now and then to get them interested again. There are alienating influences to which they are particularly susceptible. Such influences vary with different people. But the trouble is that when they burn their idols, they keep the silver and the gold which adorn them.

Good Present with the Bad

Without question, there is very often something of value in even harmful instruments. You remember, in "As You Like It", Shakespeare has the exiled duke, who is trying to display a cheerful spirit as he shivers in the chill of the winter's wind in the Forest of Arden, to say:

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks
Sermons in stones and good in everything” (II:1)

I wonder if you are ready to agree with the duke that there is good in everything?

No human being is wholly bad. I do not recall any experience that is not associated with some good. Even poisons have their values. Sin is said to be the improper use of proper things.

But so often the evil in some object is of such potency as to make it necessary to ignore the good. There are books that are very harmful. Even mature minds are contaminated by them. Some of them are prize-winning books. The very excellence of diction and the vividness of portrayal can give added potency to the evil, the sordidness of the plot.

There is more than one reason for the relatively small patronage of the movie theaters. Television has something to do with it. But another reason is the fact that so many depict a type of life that is morally reprehensible. Actors debase extraordinary powers to portray low ideals. When one remonstrates over the hurtful effect of a certain picture, someone exclaims, "O, but the acting is simply wonderful, and it teaches a good lesson". But the question is: Why wade through so much filth to get to the good?

I have known people who give their Sundays almost entirely to recreation: fishing, hunting, baseball, golfing, auto trips, lakeside offerings. They stand ready to defend their practice. They tell you that they work hard all week and that Sunday is the only time they have left for recreation. Maybe so. But think what the practice involves: the neglect of the great salvation, and the evasion of responsibility in the church. Often, children are involved. They grow up without the value of religious instruction. The silver on this idol does not redeem it.

A mother says to her boy: "Son, I much prefer that you do not associate with Bill Simpkins" "Why not?" asks the boy, "Bill is my best friend. He fights for me. He gives me things. He's no sissy." "That may be true," replies the mother, "but Bill uses vile language, he is disobedient and disrespectful; he doesn't tell the truth, he hates school, and I can see that he is filling my boy's mind with thoughts that will mean his utter ruin". There is some good in Bill, but a great deal of bad.

People go after modern isms and fancies. Some are heard to praise oriental religions and to point out the good in them. There is doubtless some truth in all of them. Because of that, some will adopt them. You read constantly now of disillusioned Communists. The silver and gold never does make these isms worthy.

The Good Involves the Bad by Association

But I hear people say, "In all matters of this kind, why cannot one take the good and let the evil go?" If you can do that, then well and good. Destroy the image and take the silver and the gold and shape it into something fine and useful. That is something, however, that the Hebrews could not do, for the reason that the silver and the gold were inseparably associated in their minds with the use to which it had been put. To preserve it meant that they would be snared thereby.

Paul wrote Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), who may have lived where water was not pure, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of the stomach and your frequent ailments" (RSV). I have known some alcoholics to whom I am sure Paul would never write that.

The Apostle enjoins us to lay aside the sin which so easily besets us. Very often that besetting sin is closely associated with worthy things, things which we really have a right to, but which, because of association, we have to surrender.

Surrender the Good to Avoid the Associated Evil

There are some people who are fighting losing battles against their besetting sins, because they are not willing to make the sacrifice of the good that is associated with the evil. There is no form of evil that is so dangerous and subtle as that which is associated with good.

Some are fighting doubt, immorality, greed, low ideals, idleness, pleasure-seeking, selfishness. The battle they fight is a losing one for the reason that they have not made a clean severance from all entanglements.

It is this very principle that Jesus was setting forth when he said, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. 5:29-30).

Real religion calls for sacrifice. There are some things to which we may feel we have a perfect right. But it may involve too much. Jesus had a perfect right to change stones into bread. But he decided that it would be better to go hungry for a time than to reveal a lack of faith in the general provisions of providence.

Achan stole the golden wedge and buried it. Then the wedge buried him. Gehazi coveted the scarlet robe. He accepted it, and brought ruin upon himself.

Someone has said that John Wesley, when he died, left as a heritage two silver spoons and the Methodist Church. Had there been more of the first element in that heritage, there might have been less of the latter, and the world would have been impoverished thereby.

"One thing thou lackest," said Jesus to the rich young ruler. Our point of deficiency may or may not be the same. The call of Jesus is for full and complete discipleship.

Do you recall the words of one of our great hymns which run like this?

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shall be."

When we destroy our idols, let us not retain the filigree.

Considering the Source of Our Substance

Colonial, Dallas, TX

June 24, 1945

“Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.”
Deuteronomy 8:18

Israel was about to be given possession of a land that “flowed with milk and honey”. There were perils to be encountered. They were the perils of prosperity. Man has never been able to come through such perils unscathed. In one of his three addresses to the people of Israel, Moses sounded this great warning.

The people had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Now they were to become settled in a good land: “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass”.

The perils that all this involved were many. They were likely to become self-indulgent, proud of heart, and self-congratulatory. They were likely to forget that all they had came from God. They were likely to forget their deliverance from bondage by the Lord, and their deliverance from their enemies, and their establishment by Him in this good land of their fathers.

This warning given the Israelites by Moses, and the history that proves that it was abundantly justified, would be of no particular interest to us here this morning were it not that it is very typical of the whole course of human nature. A record of Israel’s shortcomings is kept and emphasized that men in all ages may avoid the calamities that always follow a similar course on the part of members of the human family.

While it is never a pleasant subject to preach on, the minister of Christ must talk often of a man’s attitude towards money and its equivalent, for it is there that man shows the sincerity of his religious professions more than anywhere else.

The Vital Nature Seen in Bible History

At the time of Creation. After God had brought the world and its adornments into being, He placed man in the world and gave him dominion “over all the earth, and over every creeping thing”. He placed man in the Garden of Eden to keep it and to dress it.

In order that man might have an incentive and purpose in carrying out this responsibility, God gave man a physical nature that depended upon physical environment and the mastery of the forces of nature.

God laid down certain laws for the government of man in dealing with this trust committed to his care. But man argued that he should have the right to do as he pleased even

with that portion which the Lord declared to be sacred. The result was that man fell down. His failure was in the matter of handling the material possessions entrusted to his care.

Under the Theocracy. God having failed with the race as a whole, He inaugurated the plan of choosing a people to be an ideal nation. He gave this nation possession of a special dominion. He gave laws governing the handling of the land. There was the basic principle which he set forth: "The land is mine", He said. He established the Law of the Tithe, by which recognition was to be given of the principle that the fruit of the land was God's; the Law of the Sabbatical Year, when the land was to lie idle; the Law of the Jubilee Year, when the land was to revert to the original families.

Under the Kingdom. While the nation chose its kings, prophets were sent by the Lord to remind them of the obligations to God. The great theme of the prophets was the misuse of property. Greed, selfishness, love of luxury were decried. The last of the prophets gave the ringing message, charging the people with having robbed God, and promising them that with the return to the Lord of that which was His, the windows of Heaven would be opened and a blessing poured forth that would more than fill all available space. Again it is seen that the criterion of religious fervor in a nation's life is the use to which it puts its wealth.

Under grace. We do not find any change under the dispensation of the gospel. Take for instance the Sermon on the Mount. There our Lord talks about the impossibility of serving God and Mammon, and warns against laying up treasures upon earth. This note he sounded throughout his ministry. He emphasized the fact that riches are the peril of the soul. He even declared that the salvation of a rich man is the only supreme achievement of God's Grace. The parable of the talents. The parable of the rich fool. Of Dives, who eventually came to torments, the offense seemed to have been his misuse of property. Judas Iscariot was worked out to meet the emergency.

Paul was a great advocate of liberality, and systematic support of the work of the church. He said: "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

The Witness Experience

It has been observed throughout human history that money is one of the most perilous forces with which we have to deal.

The wars of history will be found to be caused chiefly by the economic factor. In working out a peace plan, this factor looms up. If a means of adjusting the economic differences of nations could be worked out, we would have the peace problem about solved.

Marital relations are marred chiefly by the economic problems.

The only successful method of solving the problem of the money appeal is through the inculcation of a proper conception of wealth and its source, as well as its purpose.

When men make the acquisition of wealth the aim of their endeavors, they are working at variance with the laws upon which the cosmos has been established. When we measure success in terms of the amount of money a man has, we depart from the standards which God employs for the measurement of men.

There is no virtue in being poor, neither is there any virtue in being rich. The virtue consists in the use one makes of what he has, be it little or much.

Thus money becomes the acid test of character and religion. The way a man handles his possessions will reveal his character and his religion as quickly and as accurately as any other action of his life.

We see the man revealed in the motive he has in acquiring wealth. Is it for the prestige that wealth gives one? Is it for the power it has? Is it for use in indulgence? or is it purely out of a love for the thing itself?

We see the man revealed in the methods he employs in acquiring his money. Does he justify dishonest methods on the ground that the end will exonerate the means? Does he employ admittedly shady practices in business because that seems to be the accepted standard? I once knew a man who had nothing and who wasn't able to make a living in his profession. The fact that he taught a Sunday school class didn't give good people anymore confidence in his religion or make them any less suspicious of his methods of getting ahead.

We see the man revealed in the use to which he puts his money after he gets it. Here is the great battleground. People who seem to be very sincere in their purpose and honest in their methods will often find it difficult to live up to their intentions.

We are all very ready to say that if we had as much as some person we might think of, we would use it for the good of other people, or the advancement of the kingdom of God. The way we would handle much is very well indicated by the way we handle the little we have. To sit down and wait until we get enough money to give without being ourselves inconvenienced is entirely unworthy.

The Church the Best Channel

There is no better channel through which a man may do service in the world than the church. It isn't an easy thing for one to wisely use his money through his own resources.

That is very clearly illustrated in the matter of personal charity. The happy hunting ground of the professional beggar is the individual who feels that he knows better how to dispense his charitable funds than an institution.

Men of means have been exploited mercilessly by schemers.

There is no place better than the church in which you and I can put our dollars and make them serve so many good uses throughout the world. Besides the church stands for God in the world, and one can acknowledge his debt to God by supporting God's institution.

The Value of Church Giving

It imparts life to the Church. It puts "food in my house". The work of the church is supported by giving, as the nation is by taxation and industry by profits. The most unhappy situation that could develop would be for a church to become endowed with adequate resource.

It creates interest in the work of the Kingdom. It broadens our sympathies. We have a sense of ownership. "We borrow greatness from the causes we serve."

It develops loyalty. 60% of the average church membership do all the giving. 35% support the benevolences. The inactive and faultfinding members belong to the 40% who give nothing. One feels better towards the church when he gives to its support.

It is an essential part of ownership. The protestant elevation of the sermon to the climax. The bane of calling the act of "collection". Giving should be the climax.

It increases the prestige of the church in the community. When an organization is housed in shabby property, with no touch of care, worldly folks are not attracted. Professions of loyalty are belied by such neglect.

Wasted Loyalties

Minden, LA	September 30, 1928
Noon Lenten Services, Episcopal Church, Minden, LA	March 25, 1931
Natchitoches, LA	November 3, 1932
Alabama Ch., LA	July 31, 1934
Springhill, LA	October 5, 1939
Prayer Meeting, Colonial, Dallas, TX	August 4, 1943
Hockaday School, Dallas, TX	January 11, 1948
Colonial, Evening Service, Dallas, TX	January 11, 1948
Rockdale Presbyterian Church	September 13, 1953

“Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place thou seest.”
Deuteronomy 12:13

To properly appreciate these words, we must visualize the scene with which they are connected. There is pathos there. Moses, the great leader of the Israelites, through a pilgrimage of 40 years, who brought an enslaved people out of Egypt, down by Sinai where the law was given, through the wilderness, and now at long last to the border of Canaan into which they were about to enter -- Moses was about to take leave of his people and turn the leadership over to Jordan.

Picture in your mind the hundreds of thousands of people now about to realize their cherished dream, standing impatiently on the east bank of the Jordan. A certain amount of preparation was necessary before they entered the land. Some 38 years before at Sinai, God gave Moses the laws and principles by which his people were to be governed. But of the people who were at Sinai, all but three had died, and a new generation had arisen. So it was necessary that the laws and ceremonies which they were to observe be rehearsed and expounded by the one who knew them better than anyone else. So Moses gathered the people together and went through the whole code of requirements.

The three addresses, or the one address in three sections, make up the Book of Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Old Testament. The word “Deuteronomy” means “second law”, the second presentation of the law. Our text is in the 2nd address, which sets forth the principal laws governing the ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic life of the people. This address covers 14 chapters.

He reminds the Hebrews that the inhabitants of Canaan were a religious people, but that they worshipped pagan gods. No mention is made of temples, but references are made to “places” on summits of mountains or mounts, or in groves of oaks, poplars, or elms. Altars were there on which they made their offerings to their gods.

Now the Lord had outlined a very complete ritual of worship for his people, and it involved offerings for various purposes. Some of the offerings were to be animals -- cattle,

sheep goats -- which were sacrificed. Procedures varied according to whether it was a peace offering, a sin offering, or a burnt offering. In the last instance, the entire offering was consumed on the altar. It was expressive of the entire dedication of the offerer to Jehovah. It is conceivable that this offering was the most sacred of all. Naturally then, Jehovah was very careful to specify that special care should be taken to preserve the sacredness of the burnt offering.

As a step in this direction, the Lord commanded that these “places” of the heathen should be torn down. The temptation must be removed. But perchance some of the altars would escape destruction. We know for a fact that the Hebrews failed to carry out the instructions of Moses. If the Hebrew should come upon an altar conveniently near, he was not to offer his burnt offering on it. God would designate the place to which he would bring his offering. God sought thereby to preserve the purity, the sanctity, and the unity of the worship. As you recall, the sacred places were established at Mizpeh, then Shiloh, and then Jerusalem.

A Tendency to Digress

This counsel by Moses was no arbitrary regulation. It was very essential and, as a subsequent history reveals, it was needed. Moses knew the people with whom he had been associated for four decades. He probably knew they would do just the thing they did -- burn some of their offerings on heathen altars. The people had little to give by way of offerings, so why squander their gifts on heathen altars. Why not reserve the best for the God who had led them to this great land?

Human nature has not changed. God’s people drift in their religion. They experience a decline in religious fervor and become negligent of their religious cultivation. A man begins to shape his theology to suit his decadent moral principles. He begins to pay homage to strange gods.

One start out by persuading himself that a man can worship God anywhere. One favorite resort of the man who is losing interest in church is the great out-of-doors, where one says he can get closer to God:

“Talk not of temples, there is one
Built without hands, to mankind given;
Its lamps are the meridian sun
And all the stars of heaven.”

-- David Vedder: Temple of Nature

We can and do worship in any place where we can assemble -- in school rooms, libraries, lodge halls. These are emergency recourses. What our hearts crave is a house of God, rich in symbolism to Christian faith, and charged with an atmosphere of reverence and peace. To create a shrine of such significance is worthy of the supreme sacrifice of a congregation.

“To thy temple, I repair,
Lord I love to worship there,
Where within the veil I meet

Christ before the mercy seat.

From thy house when I return,
May my heart within me burn;
And at evening let me say,
I have walked with God today.”

I do not take it that our text would prohibit us from worshipping elsewhere than in a house of God. But care should be taken that we do not contaminate our worship with alien influence.

While the Jewish captives sat in sadness by the waters of Babylon, far from Jerusalem, their “tormentors” would say jestingly, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion”. To have done so, they thought, would have been disloyal to God. “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” It would be treason. They would not offer their praise merely for the entertainment of pagan listeners. It would be casting pearls before swine (Ps. 137).

Squandering Our Best on the Trivial

Even in this enlightened day, we squander our sacrifices. We take that which is invaluable and bestow it on trivial things.

Mark Rutherford was the pen name of the English writer who died back in 1913. In one of his books, “The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane,” he says, “Is there anything more touching than the waste of human loyalty and love? We sadden that destiny should decree that in a world in which piety is none too plentiful, it should run so pitifully to waste, and that men and women should weep hot tears, and break their hearts over bran stuffing and wax”. And I suppose I might have added, poodle dogs, parakeets and gold fish.

1. In Worrying: I quite agree with Dr. Boreham, an Australian preacher and writer, who observed that we need a dissertation on “The High Art of Worrying Well”. There are some who have gone to premature graves because of worry, and others who, because they did not worry, soon had nothing to worry about. There is a happy medium, which we would do well to find. Probably the secret is that we should be more careful to select the important things to worry about. We go offering our worry on every altar that bids for it. The consequence is that when the big occasion for worry comes, we have little reserve left for it.

2. In Friendships: In a great struggle for popularity, one may be tempted to bid for the favor of every person one meets. The result is that we have a thin veneer of friendship and are rendered incapable of participating in a great friendship such as were those of David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, and others.

In Shakespeare’s play “Hamlet”, the advice of Polonius to his son, Laertes, is very appropriate to this connection:

“Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade” (I:3).

Maurice Maeterlinck, Belgian essayist, has an essay on the dog. He says that man lives in a world of creatures that hate or fear him, or ignore him. His horse can be ridden by any stranger, his cattle care only for the food he gives them, his cat will leave his hearth for a warmer one. The jungle animals seek to kill him. Only a dog seems to love man. The dog has saved families from burning buildings, kept the drunkard from freezing. It was the faithfulness of the dog that pulled Peery to the North Pole, and furnished meat for him on his return. Is it any wonder that man loves a dog? The dog reserves his best for his master.

3. In Love Affairs: I cannot refrain from speaking of this principle as it applies to that most sacred of relationships of life -- the love of youth and maid. I have in my library a book entitled, "The Love Affairs of an Old Maid". It is not the flippant book that its title might suggest. It is not the old maid's love affairs, but the love affairs of her confidantes. One of the chapters deals with "The Heart of a Coquette".

People come to grief who play high and loose with the sacred relationships of life. Boys and girls who burn their sacrifices, so to speak, on every altar that strikes their fancy, are headed for tragedy. When one comes to the true altar, where one would like to place his or her best, there is nothing to give. It has all been squandered on the common altars by the roadside.

4. In Life Purpose: Dean Russell Wicks, of Princeton University Chapel, wrote a book some years ago, made up of his answers to numerous questions which students had been asking him. He gave as a title to the book, "The Reason for Living" (1934). He begins with the question, "Why live?" Is it for the pursuit of happiness? The Declaration of Independence claims that man has an inalienable right to engage in the pursuit of happiness. But making that reason for living is, as the author of Ecclesiastes says, a "striving after wind". Is our reason for living merely to do our duty? There is little incentive for real effort in that. A far better reason for living, he says, is to cooperate with other people to help something better become real (p. 7). In other words, a man really begins to live when he forgets his childish tendency to grasp everything, and turns his attention to creative enterprises.

5. In Religion: Here we have the greatest application. Every life is a burnt offering. Like a candle, it is burning out. Shall we give our offering to the gods that bid for it? or shall we reserve it for the highest?

It is said of Jenny Lind, famous Swedish singer, one of the sweetest that ever came to these shores, left the opera stage at the very height of her fame, simply because she found that she could not serve two masters. Shortly after her retirement, a friend found her on the seashore with her Bible on her knee. The friend asked her why she had retired from the stage. "Because every day it made me think less of this," pointing to the Bible, "and nothing at all of that," pointing to the sunset glory.

The Athenians tried to worship all the gods, and even included the Unknown God. But such promiscuity in worship avails nothing.

Johann Heinrich Dannecker, the sculptor, made his reputation by forming statues of Grecian gods and goddesses. At the prime of his life, he wanted to produce something that would command all of his powers. He set himself to carve the figure of Christ. He asked the little children to express opinion. "It's a great man." He worked again, and the children said, "It is a very good man." But the third time they claimed "It is Jesus". The statue made Dannecker

immortal. Napoleon sent for him. "Come to Paris and make me a Venus for the Louvre." "Sir," replied the sculptor, "the hands that carved the Christ can never again fashion a pagan goddess." He would not squander his offering on a roadside altar.

I have heard beautiful voices singing the praise of God in the sanctuary. People have said, "My, what is she doing here singing in a church?" They say she should be on the stage. The inference is that only second rate voices will need to engage in the praise of God.

But God today is calling for your best and mine, whatever be the nature of it. He needs it in his service.

"Hark the voice of Jesus crying,
Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvest waiting:
Who will bear the sheaves away?"

Let our response be in the lines of a young Cambridge student, found in his Bible after he had been killed in a road accident:

"Just as I am, young, strong and free,
To be the best that I can be,
For truth and righteousness and Thee:
Lord of my life, I come, I come."

Strength According to Our Needs

Minden, LA

June 7, 1925

“And as they days, so shall thy strength be.”

Deuteronomy 33:25

Moses before his death blessed the people of Israel. Each tribe was mentioned by name and the special blessing pronounced. It was of Asher that this prophecy was made. But well do we know that it does not apply exclusively to Asher. The Scripture abound in declarations of this character which teach the same truth unmistakably as applied to all people who are willing to avail themselves of the privilege.

Most acceptable must have been this declaration to the people to whom it was addressed. They could hardly have been blind to the unabated strength and undimmed eye of him who made the declaration. To see his remarkable preservation at such an age must have been reassuring to those to whom Moses spoke.

Not infrequently in these latter days, when a complex standard of life places a tremendous tax on our physical and mental powers, we find ourselves entertaining the wish that we might be able to come to the close of life in possession of sufficient power of mind and body to prevent our being helpless and dependent. And it is often the dread of that dependent state that makes us miserable even in the days of our strength. In fact, it is the fear of helplessness and failure that works greater harm than the helplessness itself. Not only does the dread of that condition have something to do with bringing it on, but it also paralyzes effort. Tasks of great proportions are not attempted because of fear.

I wonder if you have not said that you would do something that needed to be done -- some specific task that challenges you -- if only you knew you would have the strength to go through with it. You have, I am sure, and perhaps you have not attempted undertakings that you could have carried through to completion, to your regret. We know that to go through life without attempting a piece of work that brings into requisition every power and faculty of our nature is cowardice. Yet through fear, we never enter upon any great undertaking.

This is perhaps due to lack of faith in God. For we may be sure that if God is able, He is not going to call us to a task for which He does not give us sufficient strength. The thing that would seem to be necessary then is to determine whether the call be of God or not. If it is, then we may know that power in sufficient measure will be ours.

Let us read again the thrilling array of facts presented in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. That shows what can be done by people who depend upon God for strength to do what they know to be their duty.

Some of you may have read a recent article in a metropolitan daily (NY Times, Mar. 29, 1925) which bore the title "The Great Epic of Power". Evans Clark, the writer, traces the rise of the control of power in the world. There have been six great eras, he says, and we are now living in the super-power era. The first was the era of the power of the individual man, grappling single-handed with the forces of the world. Then came the utilization of domesticated animals, then of slaves, then of serfs, and then came steam. And this revolutionized the life of man.

We have not yet ceased to wonder at the power of steam. The other day, I had pointed out to me one of the new engines turned out in the local L. & A. Railway shops. Later I heard that it pulled a train of 50 loaded tank cars south. You need only to exert your own strength against the weight of one of those cars to realize what a great advance has been made in harnessing power since man was forced to depend upon his own strength alone.

But the writer to whom I have just referred reminds us that we are living in still a later era than that of steam. It is the age of electrical power. We are told that a perfect torrent of power sweeps over the network of wires that screens our nation. He says that 54,000,000,000 kilowatt hours were produced in 1924, whatever that may mean.

He astonishes us still more by saying that another reservoir must be tapped, and we will then be living in the seventh era of power.

Possibly we have not yet begun to comprehend the full measure of power that is available in the world for the service of mankind. Still greater reservoirs of powers will be tapped in the future, just as we need them and have tasks for such power to perform.

Jesus told the disciples from whom he was about to depart to heaven that at Jerusalem they should receive power which would equip them for the tremendous work that was before them. The Lord had called them to a great task, and he was going to see to it that they had strength for the task.

"As thy days so shall they strength be." That means that the limitless reservoir of power is available to us in proportion to our need. "He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength" (Is. 40:29). When he commands the paralytic to rise up and walk, he gives power to carry out the command. When he calls to Lazarus to come forth from the grave, he gives power to carry out the command. When he calls upon each man and woman to take up each his cross and follow him, he gives power to carry out his command. He gives us strong shoes for the rough roads of life.

The trouble which worry us most are usually those which never come upon us. People have spent years in dread of a disease which they never came to have. The authors of Hebrews referred to those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2:15).

It is said that President Wilson was once urged by a friend not to endanger his life by marching in a long procession through an excited city, adding that "the country cannot afford to lose its President". Mr. Wilson's reply was that the "country cannot afford to have a coward as a President".

But we may be sure that trouble will sooner or later come upon us. He who lives the most happy life, will most likely have most to endure. The more friends we have the greater is the possibility of loss. But we may be sure that whatever the nature of our need, strength will be given for endurance. When physical strength fails, grace is given in such measures that the loss is compensated.

This should lead us then to attempt great things for God. In fact, it is a requisite for the acquisition of power. For as our days, so shall our strength be. It is not a question as to whether there is enough power available. The question is whether or not we have plans big enough to use the power for which we are asking. We pray for power. But have we prepared to use the power when it is made available? Power without work to do is dangerous.

Those who have been on the ocean in a storm, when the vessel would be riding the waves, have observed how the boat would occasionally tremble. They were told that this was caused by the rudder of the ship whirling at a tremendous rate when lifted out of the water. Power at work with no work to do. The plan of God is to give power as we need it. We need therefore to make our plans large.

Another means by which this becomes available is prayer. "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13). "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

Our duty is then to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread". We need expect no more. Just as the manna was for the day only, so is God's strength given us for the day. God does not race the engine. He gives no surplus.

In the development of the automobile it not infrequently happened that a car would have more power in the engine than the car needed. There was too much power for the strength of the parts which had to handle it. On the other hand, there were those cars which had too much weight for the power which the engine could develop. In these latter days, there has been a better adjustment of the relation. There has never been this disproportion in God's workmanship. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The outcome of these observations should be that we cease to fret and worry over the future. Only the present is ours. While we may make our plans large, let us be sure that we make the most of the passing moment.

"Lord, for tomorrow and its needs
I do not pray;
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin --
Just for today.

Let me both diligently work.
And duly pray;
Let me be kind in word and deed --
Just for today.

Let me be slow to do my will,
 Prompt to obey;
Help me to sacrifice myself --
 Just for today.

So for tomorrow and its needs
 I do not pray;
But keep me, guide me, hold me, Lord --
 Just for today.”

Compensations in Life's Disappointments

Minden, LA

August 18, 1929

“And the Lord said unto him, This is the land...I have caused thee to see it with thin eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither”.

Deuteronomy 34:4

Who has not felt keen sympathy for Moses at this point in his career, when all seemed to be ending in disappointment? His life had been an adventurous one from its very beginning. It will be recalled that he was dramatically rescued from probable death by the daughter of Pharaoh, adopted, and made a possible heir to the throne of Egypt. He was trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians. But when he reached man's estate, he chose to cast in his lot with God's people. He championed their cause. He led them out of bondage, across the Red Sea, and down to Sinai, where he served as medium through whom the will of God was made known, and the law of God was established. He then led them through the wilderness for 40 years, and disciplined them, and prepared them for the undertaking of being a nation through whom God would manifest Himself to the world.

We can safely conclude that one of the great desires of Moses was to be able to go over into the land with his people. But God said, “Thou shalt not go over”.

A friend of mine once wrote in a letter that she never really came into possession of anything that she ever earnestly desired. “Every life sooner or later bites the dust of disappointment”. Sometimes it looks as if an evil spirit accompanies us in our life, thwarting our purposes and blasting our hopes.

Old Elijah, servant of God, must withdraw to escape the vengeance of Ahab. A drought has been decreed by Jehovah. Elijah goes to Cherith, but soon the brook dries up. There is a frequent drying up of the brook of income, health, friendship, faith.

I have seen the statement that commercial reports show that 95% of all merchants fail, soon or late. The physician eventually sees a falling off in his practice. The lawyer finds the number of clients becoming fewer. The aged minister finds it difficult to get a hearing.

I remember hearing Prof. C. E. Byrd, who once conducted a chautauqua assembly near Ruston, tell of how Governor Bob Taylor, accustomed in his prime to vast audiences, was thrilled to see once more on these grounds a gathering that suggested the old days. “Mr. Byrd,” asked the governor, as he saw the people assembling, “what is bringing all these people here today?” “Why, they are coming to hear you, Governor.” “Isn't that great?” he said. But the brook had already begun to dry up.

Probably, we should keep in mind the fact that sooner or later vitality runs low, and there may be loss in the rhythm of the heartbeat. In other words, we will grow old if we live long

enough. And with the advance of age comes the thinning out of the ranks of old friends. Then, unless one has a great amount of charity, one finds his faith in his fellowman diminishing, for he has found so many who are unworthy of confidence.

There are two reactions that we may have in the time of disappointment. One is that of revolt against the powers that be. We become resentful. We ask why it should be so. Why should a life of work and uprightness be doomed to despair? The other reaction is that of spiritless submission.

But there ought to be a means of averting this disappointment. We would do well to look into the reason for this common experience.

I believe it can be said that our disappointments are the results, first, of our own choices.

1. We build our hopes on the wrong thing. Our ambitions are worldly. They are based on temporary factors -- business conditions, health and vigor, popular favor, perpetuation of present situation. These are all uncertain, and it is to court disappointment when we build on any one of them. The counsel of the Book is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and be assured that all other things needful will be added. Our life should be hid with Christ in God. We should set our affections on things that are above.

2. We have hurtful qualities of character. Some well-meaning people meet with disappointment because they have certain hidden moods that can be sensed by others and that form prejudices that work against them. There are faults that are unknown to ourselves, and there are faults that we may feel are unknown to others. But people can detect our egoism, our selfish self-regard, our self-centered ambition.

I wonder if there was not something of the kind in the case of Moses. It may have been not so much the intemperate remark of Moses that caused God to forbid his going into the promised land, as the quality that his remark revealed.

A woman recently said to me about another, who is a religious worker, "She always arouses in me the inclination to do just the opposite of that which she wants me to do".

We must not lose sight of the fact that sometimes our disappointments are His appointments.

"Thou comest not to thy place by accident" (Milton). Nothing can happen save by God's permission. Our times are in His hands. We should trust God's rulings. "Commit thy way unto Him -- and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart".

God is a great compensator. He found for Moses a greater land of promise, and for Elijah he found a place by the stream that flows from the throne of God. It is significant that both Moses and Elijah should be present at the Transfiguration as evidence of God's compensation. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

It is not always easy to see the hand of God in the experiences we have. There was Hezekiah, a good king of Judah, who did his utmost to promote the religion of Jehovah. He was a reformer, a God-fearing and pious king. However, after all his efforts, instead of rest and satisfaction, Sennacherib, king of Assyria came (2 Chron. 32:1). This threw Hezekiah upon Jehovah. Whatever of disappointment Hezekiah may have felt was due to God's appointment.

In like manner, we read of Abraham who, after heroic loyalty in leaving all to settle in Canaan, had hardly settled in the new land before famine came. In like manner, we read of Abraham who, after he wrote loyalty in leaving all to settle in Canaan, and hardly settled in the new land before famine came. We read of Job -- a good man, referent, blameless -- -- who was wrecked in material resources, domestic times, and physical well being. But something better was in store for Job. John, the beloved Apostle, might have been crushed over the outcomes of his efforts -- being exiled on the Isle of Patmos. But while there he saw visions that have meant much to humanity. Then, most of all, a friend of mankind, a lover of the world, who went about doing good. The end of it all was the cross. But the promise is that He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Beethoven, the great musician whose compositions we may hear constantly over the radio, had always a great horror of deafness. Eventually, he found this affliction stealing upon him. He became despondent. He got together a vast collection of ear trumpets and other means of preserving his hearing. But deafness became eventually complete. But it was after he was dead to all sense of sound that he composed his grandest music.

Mr. Homer Rodeheaver is today probably America's outstanding leader of gospel music. It is related of him by Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, that he first chose law as his vocation. He and some friends purchased 1,400 acres of timberland to help finance his undertaking. It was a failure. Before the failure, he had been asked by Dr. J. Wilbert Chapman to go with them to California as a member of his evangelist party. Later the invitation was renewed. A second time he declined. After some business debts had been paid, a third evangelistic invitation came from Dr. Biederwolf. He accepted for a two week trial, and stayed for five years. He had decided on other work, when the invitation from Mr. Sunday came, and they have been together since -- 17 or 18 years.

One of the greatest characters of the Bible is John the Baptist. He passed through that trying experience of seeing his vast audiences pass from him, and seeing another become the center of interest. But that was what he desired. "He must increase, I must decrease."

While lying in prison apart from the course of the world he was led to wonder. It was not a case of disappointment so far as his own interests were concerned. His hope was in another. He was desirous of being sure that his trust was rightly placed. He sent asking, "Art thou He that should calm or must we look for another?"

Think of the greater confidence of Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day".

The Books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth

Providence, Personalities and Progress

Minden, LA

November 7, 1937

Rewritten and delivered in Colonial Presbyterian Church on the Sunday, April 15, 1945, that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was buried in Hyde Park, NY.

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan.”

Joshua 1:2

During the past three days, there has been but one prevailing interest in the mind of the American people -- the sudden passing of our distinguished president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on April 12, 1945, and the impressive events that followed. It has now been but in hour or two since the remains of this world figure were laid to rest in Hyde Park, New York, thus terminating the physical aspects of the colorful career of a notable national and international leader, the significance of whose career can be accurately measured by future historians who study his deeds, his policies, his influence, in the light of a remote perspective.

There is no denial of the fact that his has been a most significant life. That has been attested by the homage paid his memory by the people of this nation and of the world. The English language has been taxed to the limit to convey the feelings and high estimates of people in all walks of life. Even when allowance has been made for the conventions of diplomatic and political procedure, and the general desire to speak only good of the departed, it remains that people generally feel that one of the most notable figures in American history, and even of the world, has just passed from the scene of human action.

Much has been said of Roosevelt's mastery of the arts of statecraft, his insight and foresight, his courage, his warmheartedness, his astuteness, his indomitable spirit. He has been called the “great organizer of the struggles of freedom-loving nations against the common enemy and the leader of the cause of ensuring the security of the whole world” (Stalin), and “the pivotal statesman of more than thirty (30) United Nations which pooled their might to smash the German-Italian-Japanese Axis” (newspaper writer).

But for the fact that these recent events are so fresh in our minds, and so persistent in our thoughts, I would not attempt to comment at all on the career of our late president in the hour of divine worship. I am not the person, nor is this the time, to evaluate the political and economic significance of the events now taking place. There are certain religious observations which current events give us occasion to make. Since we need the light of revelation to guide us, we turn back to the passing of Moses for an instance to form the basis of our remarks.

The people of Israel had come to the border of the land of Canaan. Having been in bondage to Egypt for 430 years, the nation had to be trained in the art of self-government. This took a number of years of sojourn in the wilderness. The great leader through it all was Moses -- deliverer, builder, prophet, lawgiver, soldier, patriot, poet. But now, by the will of God, Moses was with them no more. The announcement came to Joshua: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise and go over this Jordan".

1. Sometimes leaders seem essential to a cause.

That would seem to have been a sad day in the history of Israel. The great leader was dead. They knew that giants were in the land which they had come to possess. Now as never before would they need the help of his generalship and courage and faith. They might easily have said that they could not go on with the undertaking. The essential person -- so they might have thought -- was no longer with them.

We often speculate on what might have been. What if Washington had not lived through the harrowing days of the Revolution? Would we have had freedom for the colonies? What if Luther had not survived the dangerous days of the early Reformation Period? Would the Reformation have gone on?

In one of our Summer motoring trips, such as people generally used to take, we passed through that section of our country in which George Rogers Clark distinguished himself in the days of the Revolution. At Vincennes, Indiana, there has been erected a most impressive memorial building on the plaza covering some 20 acres, commemorating the achievements of Clark and his associates in the winning of the old Northwest. Clark came down the Ohio River with 150 men to Fort Massac, where he landed and sank his boats, and took possession of the strategic points of the country, including Vincennes. It was the indomitable courage of Clark that carried them through. If Clark had not lived through the undertaking, would the Northwest have been claimed for the nation?

In the states in which I grew up, the war of 1861-65 left its scars. The war was fought over again and again, verbally at least, by those who had to live through those unhappy days. It was maintained by a great many people that had Stonewall Jackson not been accidentally killed, the outcome of that war would have been different. Furthermore, it was claimed that had Longstreet not failed in his part (if he did!) at Gettysburg, the bats will would have been won, and the friends of the South abroad would have been more ready to lend assistance.

People have been saying that had Woodrow Wilson been able to carry the plan of the League of Nations directly to the people as he was about to do when he was stricken, we would have avoided the tragic events through which we are now passing.

God has a way of removing seemingly indispensable men. It would seem to indicate that no man or group of men is indispensable to the accomplishment of His ends.

2. Note the brevity of the divine obituary.

“Moses my servant is dead.” Short, indeed! seemingly commonplace. We would have drafted long resolutions, saying “whereas this, and whereas that”. No panegyrics here. No word-painting. Is God indifferent to toils and tears and travail?

There is a difference in God’s method and ours. We wait until death comes to say our kind words. Then having said them we dismiss the case. Not so with God. He cheers the living heart and helps it to fight the battles of life. The flowers with which we adorn the graves will wither, but the encouraging words we give the living will be transmuted into deeds of daring rectitude. God, having given encouragement all along, need employ no final encomium. Jesus accused the leaders of the day in which He lived of stoning the prophets and then erecting monuments to their memory.

The obituary, though brief, is most significant: “My servant”. One may claim to represent the King without being recognized by the King. God claimed Moses as his own, and so he was. God chose him, protected him, ordained him, girded him, empowered him, sustained him, enlightened him.

God does not say, “Your emancipator, leader, lawgiver, benefactor is dead”. “My servant.” That is a greater distinction. Jesus said, “ Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20: 27). The person who serves his fellow man serves his God.

Insofar as our late president was able to lead the nations in the preservation of peace and liberty in the world, he was after all but the servant of the Almighty God.

3. We see a manifestation of divine preparedness.

There may have been gloom in the camp of Israel, but none in the heart of God. The people may have felt that the project was a failure, due to the fact that the peerless leader was taken at the critical moment. They might have said that they could not go on, since Moses could have no successor

But God does not have to depend upon any one man.. No man is indispensable. Carved on the Wesley medallion in Westminster Abbey are these telling words: “God buries his workmen, but carries on His work”. It has been said that “when the Greathearts fall, the faint hearts may give up”. But God has His plans. He has a man to step in the breach.

Observation has been frequently made that there always seems to be a great leader ready in our national life to help us meet a crisis. That was said long before Franklin Roosevelt came on the scene. Much comment has been made of the preparation that Roosevelt had for the great role he played in world affairs: his family background, his education, his experience in the Wilson administration, then his physical disability which came upon him with terrific power in 1921. These were all factors in shaping his course. In so many respects, his experience was not unlike that of Moses, during the days of preparation.

The hands that laid the foundations of great enterprises are seldom the hands that finish the work. One soweth and another reapeth. Some may have asked, “Who will fill the place of Moses?

Who will stand in the gap?" The eternal is not taken unawares. Joshua has been groomed and his ready. He is equipped to do the particular type of work that needs now to be done.

Our cherished plans may fail, not the purposes of God. An institution not of his making may fall, but His aims will be achieved. Luther died, but the Reformation went on. Wesley is gone, but the Methodist Church lives. Roosevelt has passed from the present scene of action, but the cause of liberty will triumph.

"The Lord of the hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge". That is our assurance of victory.

4. In this, there is involved a personal challenge.

"Now there for arise and go over this Jordan". Time (30 days) is allowed for emotional adjustment. But sorrow must not unfit us for our tasks. We honor the dead by furthering the cause they loved. Note the force of the "therefore".

There are times when we are to wait on God. But there are also times when God waits on us. We are called upon to move across the Jordan and face the menacing foes beyond. He does not tell us all his plans. He commands us to go forward.

Can you visualize the situation of the Israelites? The River Jordan was flowing full. There were no bridges. There were alert faces on the other side, also walled cities, strongholds, hostile armies, precipitous crags. They might have lapsed into moody self-pity. But the great Head said "Go to work".

Back in the 19th-century, there was a great English statesman by the name of John Bright. At that time, England had enforced what was known as the Corn Laws, which placed a heavy duty on imported corn, and hence made the price of food prohibitive for the average man. Here is a record of a situation in his life made by Bright himself: "the light and sunshine of my home had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life, and of too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time, he looked up and said: "there are thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now," he said, "when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed" (Tarbell, 1913, p. 429).

We are stirred today by the realization that a great warrior has gone to his rest. A sword has been sent back to its scabbard. A knight worn out by the great conflict has retired from the arena. A rich and vibrant voice that inspired confidence has been hushed. A great leader has passed from us.

Therefore it behooves us all to dedicate ourselves to carry out his ideals, to hold forth the torch that has been committed to our hands.

Isaiah said: “in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord”. God would teach us that our dependence is in Him.

“Lead on, O King eternal,
The day of march has com;
Henceforth in fields of conquest,
Thy tents shall be our home;
Through days of preparation
Thy grace has made us strong,
And now O King eternal,
We lift our battle song.”

What Mean Ye?

Minden, LA (Memorial Day Address)

May 30, 1926

“What mean ye thy these stones?”

Joshua 4:21

They were memorials. They were intended to perpetuate the memory of a deliverance.

Memorials are valuable as reminders. This is called Memorial Day. I might ask the question, "What mean ye by this day?" We might say first, that practically every state in the Union has a Memorial Day. Its original purpose was commemorating the soldiers fell in the Civil War. May 30 has long been the day observed by the Northern, Western and Virginia states. North Carolina and South Carolina observe May 10, wild Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida observed April 26; Tennessee the second Friday in May, and Louisiana observes Jefferson's birthday -- June 3. But since the World War, the custom has prevailed of observing the 30th of May as Memorial Day with especial reference to the more reason war.

Today we place wreathes on the graves of those who have paid the full measure of devotion to their nation's perpetuity. They have answered the summons that knows no refusal. These were young lives, the best the nation had. They came to an untimely end in a struggle, the making of which the most of them had nothing to do. We cherish their memory. We glory in their unstinted patriotism.

Hence, we can in a manner say very readily something, at least, of what these services, these monuments, these poppies, mean.

But they ought to mean more than just that. Just how to give due glory to those who die in war, without giving any glory to the cause of their death may be difficult. The latter thing is just what we do not want to do.

These Memorial Days should always remind us of the tremendous cost of war.

In 1921, the Disarmament Education Committee of Christian Endeavor issued some posters which contained information that is rather startling.

One represents a pair of scales, in one side of which is placed a weight indicating the cost of all wars (Napoleonic included) from 1793 to 1910 -- \$23 million. In the other is placed a weight indicating the cost of the World War -- \$186 million.

Another pictures and "Appropriation Pie", 68% of which goes to past wars, 25% future wars, 6% goes to general public, the farmer, the laborer, and only 1% goes to education.

Another gives a picture of Columbia University, the largest in the world, with this inscription: "Two great universities like this, each a permanent institution, could be established for the cost of one capital ship, which soon becomes obsolete".

Another shows the picture of a home. We are told that "The money appropriated by Congress for the year 1921 to 1922 for the Army and Navy would build 148,000 dwellings, costing \$5,000 each, 3000 new homes in each of the 48 states".

Another gives pictures of school buildings, and adds, "One week of the World War cost you a sum of money sufficient to build in your state:

"Twenty \$100,000 high schools,

"Thirty \$40,000 grade schools,

"Ten \$100,000 churches, and

"Forty \$35,000 recreation centers with playgrounds and swimming pools".

Another represents the cost and lives. The Spanish-American war costs 10,000 lives; the Franco Prussian war 184,000 lives; the American Civil War 700,000 lives; and the World War 9,980,000 lives.

Add to all this the cost in devastation, pain, demoralization and spiritual decadence.

This day should also remind us of the utter folly and futility of war.

We can well remember how war developed in our hearts murderous hatred. When we came to know better those we hated, we found that our hatred was not justified. War is fostered by lies. It develops within us the beast of the jungle. It is sordid, base, horrible. It goes without saying that it is unChristian.

And what has war ever accomplish? War is a process of settling matters by the rule of might. But everyone will admit that might does not make right. Right is not always on the side of those who have the biggest armies and the largest guns. We call ourselves civilized, but we settle matters among nations according to the wall of the jungle. Might does not settle anything. The fact that the world is liable to blaze out in a fresh war at any time is due to the fact that injustices have been done and there is a determination to right the wrongs done hitherto.

General Pershing, in an address in New York in 1920, said regarding the movement to limit armament, "unless some such move be made, we may well ask ourselves whether civilization does not really reach a point where it begins to destroy itself, and whether we are thus doomed to go headlong down through destructive war and darkness to barbarism".

Major General Maurice, of the British army, said in Carnegie Hall in 1919: "I went into the British army believing that if you want peace you must prepare for war. I believe now that if you prepare for war you get war".

We should be reminded on this day of the fact that there are factors now at work which are favorable to a continuance of war.

There is an extensive preparation made for the enlargement of our fighting equipment. We now have the most expensive army and navy in the world.

The youth of our land are being given military training in our public schools and in our colleges. This is said to be good training in a physical way. This is not any longer the old-fashioned drill, for that kind of thing is a very little use in modern warfare. Boys are being trained to kill. This training in the schools encourages the belief in violence as a means of adjusting international differences. It creates the idea that preparedness for war is essential.

Another thing favorable to the continuance of war is the division among peace advocates regarding the method by which to carry out the plan. People are hopelessly divided over the League of Nations, world court, proportional disarmament, outlawing warring nations, packs like

the Locarno treaty, etc. But we should not lose sight of the main objective in our effort to work out the machinery.

The mind of the people is being kept disturbed by innuendos regarding the intentions of Japan and Mexico.

This day should cause us to consecrate our efforts to the serious undertaking of outlawing war.

On April 18, Dr. Cadman delivered an address at Bedford Branch of YMCA in Brooklyn, and in his address referred to the military training carried on in our schools. Some army officers attended the meeting and created such a riot that they had to be ejected from the meeting by police.

But this seems to me to be the time when we must act as Christian people. But as Dr. Jefferson says, we cannot enter war by hating it, by appealing to fear, or by appealing to prudence (Norman Angell), or by passing resolutions, or even by prayer. Something definite and effective must be done. There must be an abolition of secret diplomacy, we must disarm, and by some concerted effort seek to bring about a just settlement of the world's troubles.

We forget too soon the horrors of war. But we have not yet seen the extent to which the horror of war can go.

"Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

The Price of Progress

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Wilshire Church, Austin, TX,
Westminster Church, Waco, TX
Rockdale, TX

February 9, 1941
March 14, 1948
December 11, 1949
April 6, 1952
March 1, 1953

“Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side of Jordan.”

Joshua 7:7

You may recall the story of the Californian who went out, with a flourish, to follow up a grizzly bear, but who, after being gone three days, returned without his game. One of his cronies was particularly inquisitive. "Did you lose the trail, Bill?" he asked. "Naw, kept on the trail all right." "Then, what's the matter?" "Well, the footprints were getting too fresh, so I quit."

Joshua, successor to Moses as the leader of the people of Israel, was at the time he spoke the words of our text about ready to quit. Things were not going right. He had just sent 3000 men out against the men of Ai and they had been put to fight in a skirmish, with the loss of 36 men. It was not a great battle, nor were the losses great. But the indications were not good. If such a turn developed in a skirmish, what would come of a conquest.

Perhaps we should get a little more of the historical setting. Joshua was one of the two spies who, less than 40 years before, had said so confidently that the people of Israel could conquer the inhabitants of the promised land. So by divine appointment, Joshua succeeded to the leadership when Moses died on the east side Jordan. A great deal of territory had been conquered on the east side, and a portion of the Israelites asked permission to settle down there. This was granted on condition that they go over Jordan and assist the rest in subduing the west side of Jordan.

Under Joshua's leadership, the host passed over Jordan, in camps in Gilgal, observed the Passover, ate of the old corn of the land(after which the manna ceased), and then marched on Jericho.

The peculiar manner in which Jericho was taken is a familiar story. The city was encircled by a procession once each day for six days. The procession was made up of a select group of armed men in front, followed by seven priests carrying trumpets of rams' horns which they blew continuously. Then came the ark of the covenant; and that was followed by a host of people (probably the militia, not the whole company of 2 million people). This procession, on the seventh day, encircled the city seven times. Towards the close of the seventh circuit on the seventh day, the people, who had been silent in all previous moments, shouted. The walls crumbled.

By previous order, the city was declared devoted. The silver, gold, brass, and iron, and other possessions, were not to be appropriated for any personal use. There was a man in the host

whose name was Achan who became actuated by selfish desires and who took for himself a goodly Babylonish garment (mantle), 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of 50 shekels' weight, all valued at much less than \$1,000. None but the immediate family seems to have known about this violation.

After Jericho, came the Battle (or skirmish) of Ai. It was humiliating to Joshua and to the elders. With dust on their heads, they lay on the ground before the ark until eventide. They were aroused by the Voice of the Captain of the Lord's Host, who told them what the trouble was. Joshua then corrected the trouble and the hosts moved out to one victory after another.

There are some very helpful suggestions in this incident for those who wish to progress. There is particularly good guidance for the church, since the history of Israel is preserved for us for its value in furnishing direction for the people of God in every age.

1. Progress involves a venture of faith.

The people of Israel had enjoyed success in its conquest of the east side of Jordan under the leadership of Moses. But as they now turned their faces towards Canaan proper, they might have had some misgivings. There would be a new leader, Joshua. Furthermore, the great giants they had heard about were on that side of the River Jordan. Joshua doubtless felt the weight of responsibility very keenly. We do not wonder that he was depressed over the outcome of his first skirmish (for you recall that Jericho was taken without even a skirmish). "Words of God we had been consent, and dwelt on the other side of Jordan," he said.

That statement of Joshua's sounds very familiar, at least in substance and principle. How many of us have not reproached ourselves for having ever started on some undertaking. We say, "I wish I had never gotten into this". We talk about that "weak moment" when we gave our consent to help with a certain enterprise.

But all progress has been due to an unwillingness to be content with things as they were. H. G. Wells was one of Britain's leading novelists, a voluminous writer, who died in 1946. He had an article in the American Magazine of March, 1925, on "The Ten Great Discoveries". A graduate of the Royal College of Science, he turned his attention to letters, and produced scientific romances. He held that discovery rather than invention has been responsible for the great epochs in human experience. Man simply would not be content with things as they were and began to explore. Here are the ten great discoveries as Wells saw it: (1) the use of implements -- needles, fish-hooks, razors; (2) morality; (3) speech; (4) fire ;(5) the domestication of animals; (6) agriculture; (7) the subjugation of water -- washing, rowing, irrigation, fishing; (8) writing; (9) money; (10) means of eliminating distance.

Progress in the matter of eliminating distance is still under way, as you know. There was a time when our missionaries in the heart of the Congo were practically "out of this world". Now they are in close touch with all that is going on. They can fly home in three days. Henry M. Stanley, in 1869, was commissioned by an American newspaper to find Livingstone in Africa. It took him two years to do it. Now he would have chartered an airplane and done the job in a much shorter time.

It is of the essence of the Christian religion that its adherents should be constantly striving for new gains in witnessing both by precepts and example.

Dr. Walter L. Lingle is one of the editors of the Christian Observer. He relates that when John J. Egan, of Atlanta, Georgia, was made head of a great business, he met with the directors for the first time and made the observation that all were professing Christians. He suggested that they try to run that business according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule. They agreed. The newspapers got hold of that and published the decision far and wide. Mr. Egan said afterwards that it was not his attention that this should get into the papers, but the thing that grieved him most was that the papers should have considered it news (Chr. Obs. March 8, 1939).

From the revelations which we have been having in recent months, there is great need for more people who will be willing to conduct the affairs of their offices according to the Christian principles. Some might hold that it would not work. The attitude of many in following religious guidance in the affairs of life is perhaps more accurately expressed by the old Scotch elder at a meeting of presbytery, before the union of the churches of Scotland took place. He had been a most vigorous opponent of the measure, but withdrew his opposition with the words: "I think this scheme is illegal, unconstitutional, impractical, and utterly ridiculous, there is nae doot it is the will of God".

The readiness of a group Christians to come together to form a congregation and erect a house of worship is something to stir the blood. It would be easier to remain content with the affiliations which already exist. It is the spirit of adventure that saves the church. Once the missionary urge is stifled, the church dies. The cause is lost when we become content to settle down, so to speak, on the east side of Jordan.

2. Hazards are involved in kingdom enterprises.

The mere fact a church is started is no guarantee that it will continue. There was a time when there were 20 more churches in this Presbytery than there are now. Churches were organized and they soon died.

Some enterprises fail because of discouragement. The Joshua who was wishing that he had been content to remain on the east side of Jordan seems to be quite a different man from the Joshua who, 40 years before, said to the host of Israelites at Kardesh-Barnea that there was nothing to fear in Canaan (Numbers 14:6f).

Someone wrote a fable about the "Devil's Wedge". Satan made public an announcement that he was going to retire from business and would sell his tools at public auction. On the day of the sale many came to see what he had to sell. They found malice, envy, hatred, jealousy, sensuality, vanity, deceit, and in one niche lay a wedge-shaped instrument marked at a higher price. The devil was asked the reason for the exorbitant price. He said, "That is Discouragement, the most useful weapon among all my tools. It is worth more than all the rest put together. I can pry open and get inside a man's conscience with discouragement when nothing else avails me".

People will ask, "What's the big idea in all this?" "We've tried this kind of thing once before." "Don't you know this is no time to build a church?" When the going gets a little rough we might be tempted to ask why we did not listen to those discouragers.

Some enterprises fail because of misdirection. It is easy to place the emphasis on nonessentials. Programs are good, but unless they find fruitage in better Christian living they have no place in a church.

A certain lawyer was charging a congregation at the installation of a new pastor. He said that his duties as a lawyer brought him in contact with many people, with whom he talked in the courtroom, on the street, and in the privacy of his own office; and that in his dealings with them, and in his conversations, he found it difficult to distinguish a Christian from a non-Christian. There may be where the chief source of the weakness of the church is. We do not succeed as a church because our connection with the church does not seem to make any difference.

Herbert Spencer said, "You cannot make a golden society out of men of leaden instincts". You cannot establish the Kingdom of God with people with worldly minds.

Some enterprises fail because of the self-centeredness of the members. Let's go back to the story in the Bible. Achan's chief concern in connection with the triumph over Jericho was how he was going to fare personally. "Where do I come in?" is the question of the hour. There have been a lot of Achans who have been helping themselves to the spoils of office.

We are ready to determine our attitude towards the church by the extent to which we get recognition. It is often a question as to whether we were spoken to by the members, or whether they came to call on us, or whether we like this or that.

The story comes down to us from ancient times that Trophonius and Agemedes, brothers and renowned architects, in building the Temple of Apollo for King Hyrieus, placed a secret stone in the wall of the treasure house which they could quietly remove from its position and by this means were able to rob at pleasure the king's treasures, without touching the seals or the locks. We so often outwardly seem to do such great things for our King. We lay our treasures at his feet. We then purloine time, talent, and tithes.

In one of his splendid daily devotion meditations in "How to Be a Transformed Person", Dr. E. Stanley Jones relates that an animal importer came into possession of a 15 ft. python which was very ill tempered. He began looking for an expert snake winder who could rewind the snake. It had been coiled in the box in the wrong way. He was trying to find someone to wind it the right way. Then Dr. Jones adds, "When we are coiled around self as the center, then we are coiled the wrong way. When the inner life is coiled around the God as the center, then we are good tempered, in harmony with ourselves and people and situations" (p. 50).

Men Who Match Their Mountains

Minden, LA	May 6, 1934
Evergreen High School, LA	May 13, 1934
Magnolia A & M College, AR	May 21, 1939
Colonial, Dallas, TX	March 3, 1946
Grand Ave., Sherman, TX	March 11, 1946
Group of Presbyterians in Lakeview Christian Ch, Later Covenant Presbyterian Church	August 3, 1947
Bartlett, TX	September 5, 1948
Fairfield, TX	May 8, 1949
Wilshire, Austin, TX	December 18, 1949
Rockdale, TX	August 26, 1956 (rewritten)

“Now therefore give me this hill country.”

Joshua 14:12

To thoroughly appreciate that request, one must know the person who made it and the circumstances under which he made it. These were the words of Caleb. But who was Caleb? He was one of the two men who, of all those who left Egypt with the liberated Hebrews under Moses, were permitted to enter the Promised Land. Now do you recall how it came about that there were only two? Well, this is the story: some 45 years before, the migrating host of the Hebrews came to the border of the Promised Land. They decided that before they attempted to enter they should send spies to explore and offer an opinion as to the prospects of their being able to take the land from the present inhabitants. So twelve men were sent to explore. Of the twelve, only two brought back a favorable report. These two men admitted that there were giants in the land, but they declared that the land could be taken. But the people listened to the other ten spies who asserted that the job could not be done. The people became fainthearted. The Lord decreed that not one of those thus affected should enter the land of their fathers. So they were caused to wander for 40 years in the wilderness until they had all died, excepting Joshua and Caleb.

At long last, the people entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, who succeeded Moses. The enemies were routed and the land substantially possessed. Then followed the task of apportioning out the land. Among those who came for a special request was Caleb, now 85 years of age. He said: “I am as strong this day as I was when Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, both to go out and come in”. “Give me,” he said, “this hill country”, for it is well known that it was here that the Anakim dwelt. Caleb had confidence that with the help of God he would be able to drive out the giants who had so completely terrified the hearts of the people of Israel. And consequently, Joshua gave the region of Hebron to Caleb.

One might imagine a conversation like this taking place between Joshua and Caleb while the allotment of territory was being made:

Joshua: "Caleb, as you know, most of the territory in this distribution is assigned by lot; but where one has been particularly faithful, he is allowed to choose. What do you want for your assignment?"

Caleb: "Give me the hill country around Hebron."

Joshua: "You haven't forgotten have you, Caleb, that it was in that region that we saw the giants in whose sight we were as grasshoppers? Surely you do not want that region."

Caleb: "That is my preference, and Moses promised it to me."

Joshua: "You remember that the fortress of the Giant Arba is there, and you are no longer a young man."

Caleb: "I am strong now as I was 45 years ago when Moses sent me to spy out this land and besides the Lord will be with me to help me."

Joshua: "It is true, Caleb, that it was there that we got that big cluster of grapes we brought back. But remember that much of that area is a dry and dusty frontier of the desert."

Caleb: "All this I know. Give me this hill country."

His request was granted. It was too sincere and earnest. It was no idle boast, no bluff, no vain pretense. It is a matter of record that this intrepid soul made war against the giants, and overcame three powerful sons of Anak: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. The land became the inheritance of his descendents.

We are not told, so far as I can find any statement of the reasons that led Caleb to choose this area, other than that the Lord had promised it to him. We may have to surmise reasons. It is apparent that he deliberately chose a hard task. He stands in marked contrast to Lot who, when he had the privilege of choice in that area, preferred the fertile plain, and left to Abraham the less productive hill country.

Values which Influence Decision

Elbert Hubbard, an able but erratic American author and publisher who went down in the Lusitania in 1915 (sunk by a German submarine with a loss of 1,200 lives) once remarked that the martyrs lacked a sense of humor. Someone else has remarked that Elbert Hubbard lacked their sense of values. Caleb evidently had a sense of values. What were the factors that influenced Caleb's decision? Are they factors that should influence us?

1. Sentiment

He evidently wanted to settle down in a place which had been made sacred by his great souled ancestors. Abraham had dwelt there, under the oaks of Mamre. Sarah died there, and was buried in the cave of Macpelah. Sacred ground!

It is enabling to treasure the memories of those who have gone before. We need shrines of people's devotion. Some people think it is foolish to spend time and money for the sake of sentiment. Probably some of you have seen the little cabin on the courthouse square in Dallas, said to have been the first home in Dallas, built in 1841 by John Neely Bryan, founder of the city

and county under the Republic of Texas. The Alamo occupies a rather valuable place of property in San Antonio. Why preserve that old ruin? Sentiment. But it is a noble sentiment.

That kind of thing would not have been favored by Judas Iscariot. The profit motive with him was predominant. You remember that when a grateful woman wanted to show her appreciation for what Christ had done for her, Judas remarked that it would have been much better if she had sold her ointment and given her money to the poor. The intimation is, however, that the poor might not have gotten the proceeds if they had been entrusted to his handling as the treasurer of the twelve. There are holy moments when it is cheap to be practical.

“There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.”

That green hill! What battles have been fought for its possession! You remember the history of the Crusades. Right now, there is conflict in that area. Those old hills around Jerusalem are not worth so much in themselves. The ideals they represent are priceless.

Some churches are sacred spots. In the Spring of 1954, it was my privilege to deliver an address on the one hundred years of the history of the Presbytery. In preparation for that I read the records of the various churches. I saw names in windows and on corner stones. Some future historian will come to Rockdale and study the records of this church. He will find the names of those who through sacrificial effort made this institution possible. Now I am aware that sentimental attachment to historic structures can be a hindrance to progress. But when it becomes an incentive to noble effort, it is something to be treasured.

2. Sense of Duty

Caleb must have known that this was a highly important job that somebody had to get done. Why? The giants were there. As long as the giants were there, the situation would be dangerous, the land would never belong to the Israelites. Caleb may have said to himself: “Nobody is going to want that hard job. I might as well take it”. He had rather fail in a great effort than to succeed in one that was not worthwhile.

President Woodrow Wilson, following the First World War, strove earnestly to get his 14 points established. He worked out a pretty fair understanding at the peace conferences only to have the whole matter blasted at home. It was too much for his physical and mental strength. But he told Mr. Tumulty, his secretary: “I had rather go down in defeat with a cause which will one day be victorious than to win with a cause which will one day be defeated”.

We have both kinds of people in the world: those who are looking for the hard jobs, and those who are running away from them. It has been said that “more people are looking for positions than jobs, and more are after jobs than work”. We have tasks that challenge in the program of the church. Some accept the challenge, others evade it. Caleb could have easily

persuaded himself that he should take things easy for the remainder of the days. Instead, he said: "Give me this hill country".

3. Self Discipline

Having accustomed himself to courageous action, he could not make up his mind to settle down to inactivity.

The wanderings of the legendary king of Ithaca, Ulysses, after the Trojan War, is told us by Homer in the "Odyssey". He made a great contribution to the victory over Troy, but on his return home was forced to wander for some ten years before reaching home. He finally did get home, and with some of his men still around hi, he settled down to a happy old age. That is the way the story ends as Homer tells it. But Alfred Tennyson wrote a soliloquy which he imagined Ulysses uttered after he had spent a while in the uneventful and monotonous routine of his life at home. Tennyson has Ulysses say to his men:

"How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life...

.....
My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me --
.....You and I are old:
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars until I die."

There is an old hymn (not in our hymnal, however) beginning, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" It goes on to ask this question:

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flow'ry beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas...
Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word."

Bases of Confidence

We like the ring of confidence that runs through the words of Caleb. We look for reasons of his assurance. He gives them:

1. He still feels young.

He was only 85 years of age. He said he felt as young as when he was 40. Life began for Moses when he was 80.

Our physical powers are not as great a handicap to us as we think. It is our spirit that fails us. Many men have struggled with infirmities as great as age brings on us. Robert Louis Stevenson is a classic example. He was practically an invalid for most of his life, yet he became a notable man of letters. One way to keep young is to preserve the habit of contest.

2. He is being consistent with his preaching.

Forty-five years before, Caleb said “we can take the land, giants or no giants”. He could have found an excuse for not undertaking the conquest at his advanced age. But instead he said “Give me this hill country”.

3. He is counting on the help of God.

He was a man of faith. He was allied with a great movement to repossess Canaan. “God wills it” was true of this crusade of the Holy Land.

Paul said: “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me”.

A Worthy Example

The greatest need of today is for men and women of the Caleb type. We are a generation of ease lovers. We evade responsibility. If duty involves some inconvenience, we are very unhappy and purpose to get out from under it at the first opportunity.

Through the various media of propaganda, we are being told what men and women of distinction drink, what soap they use, coffee, cigarettes, dentifrice, face cream. We become tired from trying not to use the wrong thing at the wrong time. One may preserve that school girl complexion, have the skin one loves to touch, feel fit, dress well, have filmless teeth and cornless feet, and still be as unessential to our world as the foam on the ocean. The song we use to sing may still be appropriate: “I am forever blowing bubbles”.

There are opportunities for service today. There are hill countries to conquer -- within ourselves, in the community, in the nation, in the church. The chief requisite for accomplishment is the guidance of God.

Charles Templeman says: “I made a study of the lives of some of the greatest men and women in history and discovered that many of them were ordinary people with ordinary talents and ordinary opportunities. There was but one extraordinary thing about them, and that was their faith in God” (Life Looks Up, p. 124).

A man should begin just where he is, and with the task at hand. “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might” (Ecc. 9:10).

Spiritual Values in Domestic Life

Rockdale, TX

May 5, 1957

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

That great leader Joshua, successor to Moses as the commander of the people of Israel, after having led the returning Israelites into Canaan, conquered the inhabitants, divided out the territory among the tribes, was now ready to relinquish his headship. He was an old man and he had lived a very busy life. So he gathered the leaders of the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and for the last time exhorted the people to be faithful to Jehovah. They were already feeling the influence of the heathen practices that had been allowed to exist in the land. Joshua reminded the people of their glorious past, and the favors they had received at the hands of God. He called upon the people to choose that day whom they would serve. As for him and his house, they were going to serve the Lord. The people responded, “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods”.

There is peculiar significance in that famous declaration of Joshua's. It has been echoed innumerable times down through the course of human history. Conditions have changed repeatedly. Procedures followed in serving the Lord have been changing from century to century. But the import of the declaration has not changed.

1. Note his recognition of the integral character of the family.

The family is a unit in human society. At the dawn of human history, God said, “It is not good that man should be alone”. Eve was formed. God said, “A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”. Thus the family unit was established.

Whenever the integrity of the family is impaired, the social order is weakened. The unity of the family is essential to the life of a nation. For it is in the home that rising generations are prepared for the responsibility of state and church.

In some respects, the unity of the family was more apparent in previous days than it is today. In colonial days, for instance, the family lived as a unit. Little encouragement was given the desire for careers. Family unity now is based on training children for careers. This is a unifying pursuit in itself.

We are aware of the fact that many responsibilities have been taken away from the home in large measure: formal education, recreation, health protection, entertainment, religious education, group loyalties (Scouts, Clubs, etc.). But even so, the home is still the rallying place, the base of operations.

Some maintain that television is keeping the family at home more than in the recent past. We often observe that there are not enough nights in the week for various claims that are made on us for our participation outside the home.

Joshua wanted it distinctly understood that his family as a unit would serve the Lord, regardless of the course followed by other families in the neighborhood.

2. Note the purposeful character of his family.

“We will serve,” he said. The family should have and does have a purpose. In some instances, there are limited conceptions of just what that purpose is, or should be. It is more than rearing a family of healthy bodies, in comfortable surroundings, in an atmosphere of reasonable freedom. Family responsibility is more than providing food, shelter, and pleasure.

The home is the place for the development of character, for training in habits, for cultivation of ideas.

Yesterday, the Austin American (May 4, 1957) had an editorial on the FBI’s latest report on major crimes in the United States. The FBI report stated that in 1956 there were 2,500,000 major crimes in this country, 46% of which were committed by youths under 18 years of age. Crime in this country is increasing 4 times as fast as the population.

The older of us are inclined to maintain that this is due chiefly to a lack of discipline, a failure to instill in children respect for authority. Certainly the permissiveness so widely practiced in recent years is responsible for some of the lawlessness. While a return to the rigid discipline of the old days may not be the solution, there can be the practice of what one writer calls “developmental discipline”, one suited to the age, ability and situation. Children are different and they respond differently. Parents should back each other up, and should stick by what they have said.

It has been maintained by those who have studied the situation that delinquency can most often be traced to a loveless situation. Youth protests against being deprived of the love essential to his normal development. It is also stated that some patients in mental institutions are there because of this deficiency. Love is the deepest human need. It takes that to make children into persons. The potentialities in an infant can be realized only by being aware that it is wanted in the family relation. Parents express their love in acts of giving, but also in acts of depriving. Uneducated affections, intemperate affections are detrimental.

This comes at high cost. Some money, yes. But more in nerves, patience, self-denial, self discipline. It calls for the orderly direction of the parents’ own lives, and wise counsel of the children committed to their care.

3. Note the religious atmosphere of his family life.

The family is our most important religious institution. For religious education is more than instruction. It is the orderly direction of lives.

A home should be committed definitely to a central purpose from which there is “no variableness nor shadow of turning”. That was true of Joshua’s home: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”. The threshold should be guarded against the intrusion of factors which would tend to change the dominant purpose of the household.

There must be an atmosphere of chastened character and experience. There must be many disciplines. Companionship is a key factor in family life, where husband and wife bring their different gifts in equal honor and equal exercise, two people rejoicing in each other’s individuality.

A consciousness of the reality of God is essential. That is necessary to hold things together. Romance so often ends in wretchedness because neither husband nor wife has a loyalty higher than his own desire. It is when both look up to the ideals of holiness which worship has taught them to behold in God that affections are purified and selfishness is overcome. Furthermore, children need a sense of security that is more than physical. Parents will eventually pass out of the picture. Children should have from childhood a consciousness of God. Parents can teach their children of God by attitudes, practices, interpretations of life. If there is a lack of these, a child can easily come to feel that God does not count.

There should be a habitual life of service and love. Jesus taught that “serving” one’s fellowman in the name of Christ is serving God. The Christian spirit must be evident. The religion of some people is a stern, forbidding thing.

Customs of worship are vital. Worship, both private and public, is a requisite. God can be seen in all nature, and command reverence.

The family should worship together at church. The child may not understand the service. But he can get a sense of Something big enough to cause people to come together to think about him and to talk to and about him. “God must be important,” he thinks. Children’s criticisms of church are usually the reflection of adult attitudes. Sitting with adults in church has an enriching effect. Hymns develop a feeling long to be remembered. Expressions of hymns linger in the house of God. A child needs to begin early to have a part in the services of the church. Children may not find church activities as interesting as a club, baseball, swimming, etc. If the parents reveal the feeling that the church is most important, the child will come to feel likewise.

Judges

Tolerated Symbols of Life

Minden, LA	January 26, 1930
Natchitoches, LA	November 4, 1932
Bastrop, LA	December 7, 1932
Winnfield, LA	May 27, 1937
Tallulah, LA	October 28, 1937
Minden, LA	March 22, 1940
Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX	April 5, 1944

“Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.”

Judges 1:29

The Canaanites were descendants from Ham, while the Hebrews were descendants from Shem. Canaan was a son of Ham, and his descendants occupied the land of Palestine at the time the Israelites came out of Egypt. Palestine was known as the land of Canaan.

But these people were idolatrous and superstitious. They bowed down to stocks and stones. Their supreme beings were known as Baal and Ashteroth. Because of their sinfulness, God’s command to Israel as the returning horde advanced on the promised land was that these sons of iniquity should be driven out. Even at Sinai, God said “And thou shalt drive them out before thee” (Exodus 23:31).

Then again, to the succeeding generation, that stood in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, God by the mouth of Moses said, “Ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places” (Numbers 33:52).

But Israel did not obey this clear, unequivocal command. This is set forth in all its grim reality, and with the force of constant repetition. “The Children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites” (vs. 21). “Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean” (vs. 27). “Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron” (vs. 30). “Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho” (vs. 31). “Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh” (vs. 33).

Now it was not long before it became apparent that a great mistake had been made. We need but to read on into the second chapter of the book of Judges to see that the Lord was right in his instruction. They perhaps remained true to Jehovah during the days of Joshua, but eventually this record is made. “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served

Baalim, and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers...and followed the gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them” (Judges 2:12).

Last week, a friend of mine was telling me of a series of operations which it became necessary for his wife to undergo. There was found to be an abscess in the region of the liver. With the first operation, it was thought that sufficient provision was made for the elimination of the corruption within but not so. A second operation was necessary. Then a third. At last, nature was able to completely drive out the poisonous element within, and the woman became strong and well again.

We know well that we cannot harbor in our bodies the depositories of putrefaction. Nature does not tolerate their presence. If we leave it there, we are eventually conquered by it.

Likewise, in the realm of the spiritual, it is no less perilous to leave unmolested certain centers of pernicious infection.

One reason why we make so little progress in our efforts to do better is that we have the desire to preserve some of the symbols of our former indulgences. When Jacob decided to leave his father in law’s household in Haran, he slipped away. Without his knowledge, however, Rachel his wife took with her the teraphim, or household gods, of her father. Laban overtook the caravan and remonstrated with Jacob, not so much seemingly because he had taken away his daughters, but rather because he had taken away his household gods. But Rachel held on to them and carried them on into Canaan. But at Shechem, Jacob called for a surrender of all strange gods that were in the possession of his people (Gen. 31 and 35). Like Rachel, we try to carry with us into our new life the symbols of our former indulgences.

One of the most likable and one of the most able men I have known was all his life the slave of the habit of drink. He died under its influence. Often in his life he received warnings that danger was ahead, and he would stop for a while. But soon he would begin to reason that a little indulgence now and then would do no harm. He saw no reason why one should be fanatical on the subject. He would therefore keep it around his home. Others could do it, why could not he? But the result was always disastrous. For this man, strong in other ways, there was no safe course other than that of complete and final abstinence and withdrawal from any association with its symbols. But he was to the end too tolerant of that which was his snare.

The man who finds it difficult to live cleanly would do well to pull down from the walls of his room those reputed words of art which he may admire less for the stamp of artistic genius that is on them than for less worthy characteristics. Rare and costly though they be, it were better to consign them to the flames than to remain there and soil the souls of the susceptible. Others there may be who are not hurt by their presence, and of such the weak should not sit in judgment. But one may say “I do not believe in being puritanical about such things”. The man who easily falls should be nothing less than puritanical in this respect. Puritanism is by far preferable to impuritanism. We are too much inclined to be lax with ourselves, while requiring others to submit to rigid rules.

In Shakespeare’s play, Troilus and Cressida, son of Priam king of Troy said to Cressida, daughter of the Greek priest, of whom he did not feel so confident of faithfulness:

“Sometimes we are devils to ourselves
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers
Presuming on their changeful potency” (Act IV: Sc. 4:L.97).

I have the idea that when Jesus told the rich young ruler to go sell what he had and give to the poor that he was telling him to do just the thing of which I am speaking. His money was his god. The only way to secure eternal life was to destroy his idol. He was not tempted to impurity. He was not given to indulgence. He had kept the commandments after a fashion. But his weakness was money. He loved it.

The more we come to know of the real significance of being a Christian, the more we are impressed with the necessity for heroic procedure. There are some phases of the Christian life that may be easy for some people. But there is no one who will not find somewhere an idol which will tax his powers to the utmost to surrender.

Jesus himself was aware of the stern nature of his challenge. He earnestly insisted that the offenses must be eliminated. “Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands and two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire” (Matt. 18:8,9).

We say it is foolish for one who through vanity will seek to preserve some physical organ--an infected foot, teeth, tonsils, appendix or such like--when to be rid of it will probably assure a continuance of life. But we go on harboring a cherished idol. We leave undestroyed the monuments of our shame.

Coming as Israel was from a country in which idolatry was common, that people was peculiarly susceptible to the worship of these things. Therefore God commanded that all these symbols be driven out or destroyed. This was the only course of safety. The failure of Israel to do this was the cause of her humiliation and defeat. So it will be always with human beings.

But let this be said. We do not well to try to win by simply expelling the evil. We should cease to do evil, but we should also learn to do well. The Christian life is not a negative thing. We are not to be commended for what we do not do.

We can best drive out by filling. There is no place for vacuum in the kingdom of God. You will recall the tragedy of the man from whom the devil had been cast out. He returned (the cast out demon) to find the place unoccupied. He brought in others, and the last state of the man was worse than the first.

The rich young man was to go and sell what he had and give to the poor, but then he was to come follow Christ.

We are not only to cease thinking of the impure. But whatsoever things are pure--think on these things.

We will be able to win out in the warfare of life if we will but flood our lives with the spirit of Christ.

Let our prayer be:

“The dearest idol I have known,
What e'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee”.

The Snare that Makes or Mars

January 24, 1932

“I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died, that by them I may prove Israel.”

Judges 2:21,22

The command of God to the Children of Israel when coming into Canaan was that they should completely possess the land. Joshua led in a victorious conquest of the land for a time, but the task was not fully accomplished. We find that after Joshua's death, even the best portions of the land were still in the hands of the enemy. The fertile plains and river valleys were not in the possession of the Israelites. The coastal plan was in the undisputed possession of the Philistines, the Canaanites, and the Phoenicians. The Canaanites occupied the beautiful plain of Aesdreton. The Canaanites were also scattered throughout the highlands. Other heathen peoples were round about.

The Israelites were not united by close and compact organization, but were rather scattered. The different tribes in contact with the heathen peoples around them were inclined to make peace with them, rather than to oppose them. This resulted in an intermingling with the heathen nations, adopting the cultures, patterning their methods of husbandry, intermarrying, and appropriating certain of their religious ideas. Eventually it would develop that God's people were dominated by some of the heathen peoples which had been left in the land. It became necessary from time to time for God to raise up Judges to deliver the people out of the hand of the oppressors. And thus through many years of trial were the people of Israel developed under the supervision of God.

Now, God expressly states that He was leaving these nations there that by them he might “prove Israel”. However, it will be recalled that it was God's plan originally that these people should be completely driven out. As God said to Moses on the Mount, “Thou shalt drive them out before thee...They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a sanre unto thee” (Ex. 23:31f). When Joshua left the work incomplete, God let the unexpelled nations remain, as he said, to “prove Israel”.

Why should Jehovah, who was so interested in the welfare of his chosen people, have permitted hostile peoples to exist in the Promises Land to vex, harass, tempt, contaminate, and alienate the Hebrews? Why did he not make Canaan, Land of Promise, be as free of disturbing factors as that glorious Canaan of which the first was a symbol? Would not the Israelites, unmolested by hostile forces and uninfluenced by heathen practices, have lived in compliance with God's laws, and the awful chapters of her subsequent history, as recorded in Judges and Samuel, be averted?

I am sure that I am not able to answer that question. I have searched through the writings of others to find an answer to these questions, but in vain. I do not know that there is an answer.

But this thought occurs to us: If God had eliminated every factor in the new land that was likely to wrongly influence God's people, there would have been a situation there which was different from life as it is, or was. The situation would have been unnatural, and such unnatural situations do not tend to fit one for the actualities of real life.

I think it was William James, as he tells us in one of his books, who upon leaving Chautauqua, after a brief sojourn there, reflected on the impressions he received while in this delightful community. He decided that Chautauqua was an exceedingly pleasant place to reside in, but that it was not life as one found it in that day. It was unnatural.

I do not know any more delightful place to spend three years or more than a theological seminary. There is a homogeneity of interest, spiritual earnestness, uprightness, brotherhood in the social group therein assembled that one's soul craves. But because of that, the situation is unnatural. That is not the character of the world in which those men, when entering the work, will have to encounter. For that reason, the seminary often unfits for work in a real world. Professors who live continually in this unnatural environment lose their contact with life as it is, and unconsciously lose the ability to train men for the times.

Men have sought refuge in cloisters and monasteries and in colonies made up of select individuals. But shielded existence softens the fiber of the soul. It is the constant resistance to an evil intruder that gives stamina to character. It either makes or mars. While the crime of the Levite at Gibeah shows the moral degeneracy which might result, on the one hand, from the contact with the Canaanites, the story of Ruth and Boaz pictures the beauty of life and character which results from combating such harmful influence.

So, I think we might with safety put the matter this way: God's preference is that we eliminate the evil, that we completely drive it out. He will help us and through faith in His help we can overcome. But if we fail to accomplish this, God's second best plan is that we use the present evil as a soul developer.

Some years ago, the welkin rang from coast to coast with denunciations of alcohol as a beverage. Ministers, special lecturers, W.C.T.U. workers, and leaders generally joined in this wholesale condemnation of drink. Then national prohibition came, and the oratory ceased in large measure. It was thought that the enemy had been completely driven out. But it has come forcibly to our attention that the enemy has not been driven out. He is still here, and is doing still his dirty work. He is asserting himself, and bids fair to reestablish his supremacy, unless the forces of sobriety arise to combat it.

You will probably recall that one argument used for the legalization of the saloon is that it strengthens the character of youth to resist its appeal. There is just enough truth in that to give it acceptance with many. But let us remember that such a course is God's second best. First and always do your best to eliminate the evil. Where the evil is not eliminated, it proves a snare that either makes or mars us. Your attitude or mine to the evil that exists shows whether it is a curse to us or a blessing.

The price we pay for an unchallenged existence is illustrated in evils of prosperity. We seem to need occasional economic crises to awaken us from the stupor incident to

overindulgence, debauchery, self-centeredness. We go on a wild joy ride, oblivious to the possibility of untoward development. We disregard moral traffic laws, jest at fate, taunt those less favorably situated, make all the noise we can, and rush full speed ahead, until the fuel supply is exhausted and a tire blows out and the engine goes dead. Then we are brought to the humiliating realization that we were too confident and self-satisfied.

Hard times test us--prove us. Some people are shown to be dishonest by reverses. The reverses did not make them dishonest. The reverses merely showed the world that they were.

Henry Heinz, the vice-president of the Atlantic Citizens and Southern Bank, made a speech recently, according to a bulletin issued from our Stewardship department on Feb. 21, in which he said that if the letters d, e, and I, which when rearranged make the word "die", were eliminated from "depression", all we would have left would be the words "press on", which is strongly suggestive as to a manner in which we might use the depression to make us rather than mar us.

The whole Christian world is under everlasting obligation to Paul for his reference to that "thorn in the flesh" sent as "a messenger of Satan to buffet" him. There must have been pain of some sort connected with this affliction, as the comparison to a thorn would indicate. He besought the Lord thrice to remove it from him; but the Lord saw fit to leave it. God assured Paul that he would give him the grace to profit by that evil: "My grace is sufficient for thee". Then when Paul came to see the greater blessing that came to him through this means, he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me". "Therefore," he continues, "I am well content in infirmities".

How well a vital Christian faith serves us when we have to experience suffering, or so often what is worse -- stand by when others suffer. When you see some poor mortal writhe in pain, you ask, maybe, what has been asked a million times or more since the world began: "Why should it be necessary that people suffer like that?"

Suffering is as universal as existence. Insect, bird, reptile, beast, and fish -- all experience pain. But human beings suffer most, because of their self-consciousness. Man is capable of mental and moral suffering as well as of physical. In spite of all that has been done to eliminate suffering from human experience, there seems to be as much suffering as ever. The use of anesthesia has been a boon to humanity. Its use reaches back less than 100 years. But the use of pain preventives has made us more sensitive to pain, and it is barely possible that people suffer as greatly from the smaller pains of today than they did in their callused state from the greater pains of yesterday.

People have let their encounter with excruciating pain wreck their faith in the goodness of God. Why should a benevolent God permit such things, to torment the creatures of his hands? But when faith is thrown to the winds, what have we left? Pessimism, which maintains that life is intolerable; or stoicism, which is expressed in the phrase, "Forget it"; or some form of optimism that regards pain as an illusion.

The Christian attitude is that of accepting pain as a reality which may be used to good advantage. Like the presence of the Canaanites in the Land of Promise, pain is here to harass and ensnare us. It may either make or mar us.

By going back to the story of the possession of the Promised Land, we may get, I think, some light on the problem of the existence of pain. Pain is bound up in this larger problem of sin in the world. It is His will not that sin be driven out. When man is ready, with the help of the “Strong Son of God”, sin can be driven out. The day will come when sin will be eliminated. But since sin and pain are here, God urges as a second best that we employ the present evil for our good.

When Jesus was on earth, He saw suffering at every hand. But that did not seem to him to reflect on the goodness of God. He relieved pain wherever he found it. But he accepted the necessity of it, and employed its ministry to the full in his experience on the cross, declining to do one thing that would lessen the intensity of it. Jesus recognized that in the world sin serves a purpose. It is extremely difficult for us to see in every case just what that purpose is.

The Christian has an advantage of others in that he sees in pain the penalty of the separation of the soul of man and God. When the reconciliation has been effected through Christ, pain is not removed. But the soul has the assurance that through that pain the love of God will shine. It will find that “all things work together for good to them that love God”. We become reconciled to suffering, since we see that all progress is at the cost of pain. The value of it is attested by the fact that God Himself suffered also.

We endure pain much more willingly when we are reconciled to it by the realization that out of that experience good will come. When my parents poured turpentine on my cut finger, my boyish instinct was to rebel, until I was persuaded that out of that suffering good would come.

There have been heroes who seemed to fairly exult in suffering, because they were convinced that out of their experience good would come to themselves and to those they loved. Martyrs have fairly bathed their hands and faces in the flames that their executioners kindled around them. Gandhi has more followers today than any other human being on earth. In the promulgation of his non-cooperation campaign, he has opposed violence and urged vicarious suffering as the means of liberating India. Millions are ready to suffer because they see a purpose in it.

We are to continue our conquest of pain and suffering. It is not something sent upon us by God. Paul attributed his “thorn” to Satan. There is where our suffering comes from. It is a hindrance and a handicap. God does not see fit to remove it. Rather does He want us to triumph over it by our mastery of it. Just as Jesus refused to come down from the Cross, so should we refuse to cower and cringe in the presence of pain.

“It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still?”

The Beneficent Tests of God

Minden, LA

February 2, 1930

“Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan. Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof.”

Judges 3:1,2

The people of Israel, when taking the land of Canaan, did not obey the command of God and drive out the people who inhabited it. They failed to make a finished job of the undertaking. A remnant of the people was left. Israel made them pay tribute, and doubtless looked upon that situation with a degree of satisfaction, since the presence of these people would be financially profitable to them.

It is one of the laws of God that He will take a situation and make it work out to his glory. God did not drive out the people but left them to serve his benign purpose. We are told that He left them to prove Israel. He was going to use this aggregation of Philistines, Canaanites, Hivites, Sidonians to test the loyalty and faithfulness of his people.

1. God often proves, but never tempts.

James declares that “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (1:3).

There was once a man temporarily residing in Minden, who said that he was a follower of the New Thought cult, but who was a constant worshipper with us. This man asked me one day to preach on the passage in the Lord’s Prayer which runs, “Lead us not into temptation”. He said that he did not believe that God led any man into temptation, and he felt the prayer a useless one. I told him that I could not believe that any man was tempted by God, for the scriptures plainly teach that He does not tempt, but that I did not see why it should be amiss for us to pray that the proving which He permits not be a stumbling block to us, and that grace be given to enable us to win out in the conflict.

There was that “thorn in the flesh” which Paul speaks of in 2 Cor. 12:7. He called it a “messenger of Satan to buffet him”. He prayed the Lord thrice that it be removed, but God permitted it to remain to prove him. Whether that “thorn” be epilepsy (Lightfoot) or Ophthalmia, or Malarial Fever (Ramsay) does not matter. It was a serious handicap, and yet, instead of being a temptation it became a means of grace. The assurance came from God, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My power is made perfect in weakness”. A man with a thorn, plus the grace of God, becomes a power invincible.

These remaining peoples were a thorn in the flesh of Israel, even though they were not so recognized at the beginning. God's grace would have been sufficient for Israel and the presence of these people would not have led the Israelites into sin, had they relied upon God.

2. God's purpose is to show us ourselves.

He lets the overconfident man try his powers in order that he might know his weakness. There is the case of Peter. He did not think himself capable of doing so culpable a thing as denying his Lord. Neither did David think himself capable of reaching the depths of unworthiness. Men do not know their own hearts until they are tried.

John the Baptist, in the messages he delivered in the wilderness, spoke of Christ as one "whose fan is in his hand". It is a wise hand in which the fan is wielded. But it will test the genuineness of character.

I wonder if it is not true that we have an illustration of this in the statement "to teach them war". This statement at first seems strange in the word of God. What does this mean? Does it mean that the other peoples were left in Canaan that they might teach the Israelites to kill, to develop the martial spirit, skill in handling weapons, valor in the field of battle? Where else in the word of God is there any similar statement made? Is this not out of harmony with the spirit of religion? Rather is the whole teaching of the Bible opposed to this. But we recall that the previous wars of Canaan were fought by reliance upon Jehovah, and not because they were skilled in the use of arms, or were superior in numbers or in physical stature, or were better versed in the arts of war. Later in the history, Gideon led Israel to victory, but with a small band, and with torches and pitchers. The presence of this people was to be to Israel a means of developing reliance upon the kindly providence of God. It was to show Israel their need of God.

The proving of God is the touchstone of character. It shows us what we are. God does not need to know. But we do not know until we are tried. According to Bunyan, when Christian set out for the Celestial City, he was joined by Pliable, and both fell into the Slough of Despond. Pliable immediately lost heart. He struggled around for a bit and finally got out on the side near his house, and Christian saw no more of him. Christian got out on the side next to the wicket gate, and went on his way.

3. God will enable us to transform our weakness into strength.

We are told that Frances Ridley Havergal, Mrs. Robert Browning, and Robert Louis Stevenson were all frail physically. But we know that out of their bruised bodies there was distilled a fragrance of spirit that has blessed the world.

There have been people of sensitive nerves, who have suffered tortures by the many things that jarred -- things that are not noticed by the rest. But their very sensitiveness has been a blessing in that it has enabled them to appreciate the finer things of life. They more easily sense things. They may be more responsive to the presence of God.

The winds and the storms educate the tree as well as the sun and the dew.

Human suffering presents a problem. Man has suffered. From the dawn of human history, life has been a continual struggle. Man has had to struggle with nature and beasts of

prey. There have been human wars, and the curse of sin. There has also been the relentless invasion of disease. But God is using all this for the perfecting of the race. We have no spectator God. Everything has come at great cost -- progress, freedom, love. Man is better off because of the suffering that the conquest has involved.

Man is more important as a creature of intellect, imagination, judgment, reason, than as a mere organism of flesh and blood. Man is more important as the possessor of will, conscience, affections, and a moral nature than as a possessor of intelligence. He is still more important when these faculties have the proper objective. The only proper objective is God. The purpose of God is to lead us to know Him and rely upon Him.

A Goad, A Good Man, And God

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas

August 11, 1935
August 26, 1945

“And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.”

Judges 3:31

This is indeed a short biography. Persons of far less note have had long and voluminous biographies written about them. But here is a man about whom a simple statement is made. It is a greater memorial than are the pyramids. We wish we knew more about this mighty man. It would make interesting reading, I am sure.

Who was Shamgar, anyway? It will not take us long to tell it. For one thing, he was a judge. That does not mean that he was a judge as we know judges today. A judge in those days was one called to head a revolt against foreign oppressors, and to maintain the rights of the people. We have in the Bible the record of a period during which judges ruled in Israel, a period of some 400 years. There were twelve to thirteen judges named. The name of Shamgar appears third in the list.

Some have raised the question as to whether Shamgar was really a judge, since it does not appear as a matter of record that “God raised him up”, nor is he said to have ruled. But the statement that after Ehud was Shamgar (text) would indicate that he was regarded as one of the judges. At any rate, he arrested a calamity and put heart into others.

Another think we know of Shamgar is that he was a farmer. He was not a man of prominence. He had no royal blood in his veins. He was not a man of scientific knowledge. He was not a trained man, drilled and schooled in the arts of warfare. He was a man who drove oxen.

We are reminded that Columbus was a weaver of rugs, Luther a miner’s son, Elihu Burritt a blacksmith, Fenimore Cooper a sailor, Grant a tanner, and Lincoln a rail-splitter.

The times were rough. At the time when Shamgar came into notice, the Philistines dominated Israel. They had reduced the people to want. As soon as they had gathered their crops and threshed out their wheat, the Philistines would descend on them and seize it all. They would do very much the same with reference to the flocks and herds. We are told that the people dared not go on the highways, but rather frequented the byways (Judges 5:6). The foreign invaders saw to it that the people were utterly at their mercy. They took away their weapons, and let no blacksmith remain to make such weapons of war. The people were reduced to impotency.

The Philistines probably descended on Shamgar just once too often. The iron had entered into his soul. So one day he turned on his invaders when they felt it no longer necessary to be on their guard and slew 600 of them with an ox-goad.

The Septuagint uses a word that means plowhandle. But the Targum version holds to the idea of the prick against which the oxen would kick. Some one has described it as a stick about 6 feet long and about 6 inches in circumference, with a small iron paddle on one end to clean a plow. This could be a very destructive instrument in the hands of a strong and determined man, stirred to fury by a sense of injustice.

It has been suggested that Shamgar must have been the leader of a band of peasants who used such implements as they had to achieve this remarkable exploit. That is a mere surmise. The great deeds of the world have been achieved by the solitary souls of heroic mold who did the impossible things. Morse, Langley, Pasteur, Curie, and Marconi.

How did Shamgar come to do this? For one thing, according to Dr. Chappell, from whom I draw much that I have to say on this subject, he was possessed of a noble discontent.

Some discontent is ignoble -- discontent over one's social position. It is easy for one to become discontented with a Model T after having ridden in a V 8. Some people can be discontented in a small town because there are not the opportunities to find amusement, or to have access to large and attractive institutions which the efforts of others have produced. They want the prestige that comes from association with big cities, big institutions, famous people.

There is also such a thing as ignoble contentment. To be content with shameful conditions because it seems futile to try to remedy them. It is ignoble to be content with the worst when you can have the best. It is one thing to be whipped, and another to be content to be whipped. A man may be driven to feed swine but he does not have to be content with that lot.

Dr. Chappell's story of the eagle hatched among the chickens (95) and the fact that he was made a laughing stock because of his inability to pick up corn with his crooked bill. The call of the eagles above caused him to mount up to regions above.

There are those who by trickery, exploitation of human weaknesses, bribery, false promises, misrepresentation, deprive people of their rights, assume a dictatorship, browbeat and intimidate every protesting person. There is an expression of righteous indignation needed.

Shamgar was also a man of faith. He knew the strength of the Philistines. He knew there were no weapons among the people of Israel. But he also knew that God had wrought wonders in behalf of his people in the past. He knew too that God had worked through human instrumentality.

You let a people of faith believe that they are instruments in the hands of God for the accomplishment of His purpose, and you have a power that cannot be easily reckoned with. Mr. Hitler may yet come to grief at the hands of the conscientious objector to his totalitarian policy with reference to the Church. We may be sure that the people who produced a Martin Luther will not readily submit to a dictatorship in matters of faith and practice.

“Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth Christ within the shadow

Keeping watch above his own”.

He made a beginning with what he had. He could have easily found an alibi. Outnumbered. Unarmed. He had only an ox goad, but he used that. “What is that in thin hand?” asked Jehovah of Moses.

We are still in a day when the strong exploit the weak. One’s soul is stirred by the deliberate and high-handed course pursued by Italy in laying claim to Ethiopia, the last of the free countries of Africa. The undeveloped resources which Ethiopia is thought to have are coveted by Italy. On slight pretext, Italy proposes to conquer and subjugate Ethiopia. Her reason for the conquest will not be vindicated in any court of justice, and hence Italy is unwilling to submit to arbitration or to the League of Nations. One feels like praying the God of nations to raise up some Shamgar who with implements less deadly than the modern instruments of warfare might bring to miserable defeat such unjust and uncalled for procedure.

In every just cause, God will fight with those who place their resources in His hands and attempt great things for Him.

Noble Discontent

There is an ignoble contentment which the church can have. No church will ever be an effective instrument in the hands of God if it is satisfied with the way it has been doing things.

Paul said, “I count not myself to have apprehended”. Some Sunday schools are very much pleased with themselves. I knew one a superintendent of a rather large Sunday school who thought that everyone of the teachers in that Sunday school should be accredited as instructors of teachers because they were teachers in that particular Sunday school, when those who knew the situation were convinced that much of the instruction in that Sunday school was missing the point. The size of a thing is not necessarily a criterion or standard of merit. The largest animals the world has ever had on it have no living descendents. You will find some reconstructed specimens in museums.

I do not mean to encourage contentment with small enrollment. While we should never be content with the quality of our instruction, we should also never be content with our enrollment.

Some people manifest their discontent over enrollment by criticizing someone else for not doing something about it. There is no virtue or wisdom in that procedure.

But there is probably a good point in the story which Dr. McLaughlin relates (which he credits to Dr. Clovis Chappell). A church in Tennessee caught on fire. A man who had lived near it for a number of years but who had never attended any of the services, organized the neighbors into a bucket brigade and put out the fire. After it was over, the pastor said, “Mr. Jones, this is the first time I have seen you at church”. Mr. Jones replied, “Yes, this is the first time the church has been on fire” (The Gospel in Action, p. 58).

I have in my library a book in “Increasing Sunday School Attendance,” by Dr. Albert H. Gage. He says, “Any school can increase its attendance if it really desires a bigger school. Does it want to? That is a very pertinent question.”

Faith

Much has been said in commendation of the Christian Church in Europe during the dark days of totalitarian ascendancy. Individuals and groups went “underground” but the church did not. It spoke out boldly against the aggressions and injustices of the dictators. It suffered for it. But it saved its soul. It was because it had faith in God that it could persevere.

The new day calls for a spiritual leadership that is resolute and strong.

If our own church in this locality is to continue to minister to the needs of the portion of the world assigned it, there must be the great venture of faith.

Faith must be coupled with action. It is foolish to sit down and say “Everything will turn out all right.”

There has been much praise of the advice of Gamaliel to the Sanhedrin: “Refrain from these men...if this work be of men, it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it”. The advice was good as applied to this instance. But do you think the rule is always good to follow?

The devils cried out to Jesus “Let us alone”. So do all the factors of evil. The liquor people say, “If you let liquor alone, it will let you alone”. That is not true.

No, everything will not work out all right. We must do something about it.

The Courage that Counts

Minden, LA

June 27, 1937

“Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.”
Judges 7:5

Against a very dark and disordered background, in the history of the people of Israel, but recently established again in the land of their fathers, stands a very strong, versatile, and courageous man of valor by the name of Gideon. He was later called Jerubbaal, because he had dared to challenge Baal, the sun god of the Canaanites, which Israelites had in large measure come to worship.

To Gideon came the call from the Lord to lead in the deliverance of the people from the hand of the Midianites who roamed over the land seizing the cattle and the crops of the Israelites. Terror reigned. The people were without spirit. Gideon was called to the seemingly impossible task of routing these vast hordes from Israel.

After some dickering on his part, Gideon became convinced that the Lord was with him. So he summoned the men of Israel to meet him at Mount Gilboa. 32,000 came. There were at least 135,000 of the Midianites in camp over against them. But the Lord declared that the number of the Israelites was too great. The Lord instructed Gideon to say to the people that if any were afraid, they were to go home. More than two thirds (22,000) of the army went home. No wonder the well by which they were camped was called the “Well of Harod”, the well of cowardice. The Lord would not use cowards.

The number is too large yet. So the water drinking test was given. The remaining 10,000 were to be divided on the basis of the manner which they employed in drinking. Those who dipped with their hands in a lapping fashion as they went were to be put in one group, and those who bowed down to drink as would a cow or a horse were to be placed in another group. There were 300 who lapped with their hands. With these 300 the Lord proposed to make the attack on the Midianites. The other 9,700 were sent back to their tents (not home) to be used later.

We do not need to go further into the story other than to relate that the 300 made the attack with their pitcher, and torches that flamed up when brought out into the air, and their trumpets (in addition to their arms). They made their surprise attack in the night, breaking their pitchers, holding aloft their torches, blowing their trumpets, and shouting, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon”. The effect was telling. A wonderful demonstration of the power of courage.

Why This Theme?

Several factors have contributed to my choice of the subject of courage for our emphasis this morning. Through printed page and over the radio, during the past few days, we have had several reminders that this is a virtue which might well be emphasized just at this time, when the

information was brought to me that our brethren of the Pythian order purposed to join us in worship today. I recall having seen in a motto of the order that courage is one of the fundamental qualities of character emphasized by that fraternity. So I naturally concluded that a discussion of that theme would not be entirely beside the point at our service this morning.

It is said that the inscriptions on the three gates of Busyrane were these: First gate, "Be bold"; second gate, "Be bold, be bold, and evermore be bold"; third gate, "Be not too bold" (Hoyt's Quotations, p. 142).

This evidently inspired lines written by Longfellow, who counseled that similar words be written on our doors, but also observes:

"Better the excess
Than the defect; better more than less;
Better like Hector in the field to die
Than like the perfumed Paris turn and fly". (Morituri Salutamus)

During the past few years, I am sure that we have had some rare exhibitions of courage. People have sat in the ruins of their hopes and ambitions and life achievements and calmly set their faces towards the future. They have pressed on in great fortitude and with a resignation that is inspiring. There have also been demonstrations of cowardice. They were not equal to the odds that seemed to be against them. Crises such as we have had simply reveal the courage that already exists, waiting for the hour of its revelation.

Think of the courage that the 300 with Gideon were called upon to manifest when they faced the overwhelming odds before them. Some felt, when there were 32,000 that the number was insufficient. So 22,000 went home. But when 9,700 more were sent to their tents, the venture might have seemed sheer folly. But these were 300 picked men -- not a coward in the lot. What could they not do. Better to have 300 brave men than a 100 times that number, at least two thirds of whom were cowards.

Individual Courage

The recent death of Sir James H. Barrie, of England, the beloved writer and author of such books as "The Little Minister", ended a magnificent career of 77 years. He was the 9th child of a poor Scotland weaver. But he faced the odds and rose to fame and honor. He wrote novels, and later plays. In 1920, he suffered a stroke of paralysis which rendered his right arm useless. Ordinarily, this would have ended the writing career of a less courageous man. But he learned to write with his left hand. With it, he wrote, about two years ago, the first play he had written in 15 years, at the suggestion of Princess Margaret Rose, daughter of the present king of England, then 4 years of age. This play is entitled "The Boy David", which in itself is a suggestive title.

I am sure that Sir James Barrie must have been inspired by the courage of Sir Robert Falcon Scott, Antarctic explorer, and his friend, who after his successful visit to the South Pole, but unsuccessful return, penned lines to him while he slowly waited the hour of his death.

Another classic example is that of Ludwig Van Beethoven, born in Western Germany in 1770 -- a supreme musical genius. This was evident before he was four years of age. He gave a series of concerts before he was seven. Nothing in music seemed to be beyond the reach of this genius. But early in his young manhood, he slowly but relentlessly began to lose his hearing. In his early thirties, he was almost totally deaf. People passing his house would see him bending over his piano trying to hear his own music. Yet, one by one, his masterpieces were completed. He never actually heard some of his greatest symphonies. He died at the age of 57, murmuring the pathetic words, "I shall hear again in Heaven". The world is rich today because of the courage manifested by the great Beethoven.

If we could but be successful in implanting in the minds of people in need to maintain our morale, to doggedly refuse to pull down our banners in the face of unfavorable odds, we will enrich the world and redeem human character.

Thinking of What We Have

Courage can be built up only by long and patient discipline and by giving attention to certain very necessary essentials. We can have physical or intellectual strength only in this way. So with courage.

One law has to do with the objects of our consideration. We lose courage sometimes because we are thinking primarily of what we do not have, or have lost, and not of what we have. The 300 were thinking of the pitchers, the lamps, the trumpets, and "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon". It is astonishing what anyone can do with small equipment when he has the heart to attempt. Barrie still had his left hand -- and his genius. Beethoven still had his marvelous musical imagination.

Dr. Gilkey (Solving Life's Problems, p. 182) emphasizes this point. He refers to an advertisement appearing in one of our weeklies. Someone eager to sell health insurance worked out this curious prophecy: "If you are an average man and have never been examined for your health, there are three chances in 100 that you have tuberculosis; 10 chances in 100 that you have a bad heart; 66 chances in 100 that you have defective eyes; 85 chances in 100 that you have diseased tooth sockets, tonsils, or nasal cavities".

Here are statistics with an optimistic emphasis: "There are 15 chances in 100 that you have nothing the matter with your tooth sockets, tonsils or nose; 34 chances in 100 that your eyes are good; 90 chances in 100 that your heart is good; and 97 chances in 100 that you have escaped tuberculosis".

Link Action with Ideals

Much has been said about the recovery of our ideals. We need to say something about that. We need to harbor mental conceptions of standards of perfection and excellence in matters of conduct and work and character in this day of readiness to be satisfied with merely getting by.

But one of our best monthly magazines (Readers Digest, June, 1937) quotes at length from an essay by the late William James, psychologist, to the effect that "mere ideals are the cheapest things in life". James maintained that everybody has ideals in some shape or other, but

so many lacked courage to get them realized. He related that he spent a week at Chautauqua, NY, assembly grounds founded over 60 years ago (1874) for training of religious workers, and later expanded to promotion of cultural training along many lines -- an institution that has inspired the establishment of scores of similar institutions over the nation. At this famous resort, said William James, there were ideals in abundance -- "a studious picnic on gigantic scale", but no effort, "no human nature strained to its uttermost, yet getting through, and pressing on to pursue more arduous ideals". "What excites and interests us... is heroism ever and anon snatching victory from the jaws of death" (quoting from "On Some of Life's Ideals").

Dwelling on some Mount of Transfiguration indefinitely is not the best life. We can use well those moments of exhilaration and vision, provided we come down to the valley of need and with courage struggle with the demons that seek to exploit and ruin human life.

We ought to go to church. We can't live well without worship, meditation and inspiration. But real religion is shown in the world of cutthroat competition, cold blooded selfishness, and loose social living. In that world, a man with high ideals has opportunity to show all the courage he can command, and will no doubt feel the need for more.

Suffuse Courage with Friendship

The Pythians are right in lining courage and friendship. The two belong together. We cannot have either in its highest type without the other. There is a scriptural statement to the effect that "Perfect love casteth out fear".

The counsel of the world is, "Don't get involved in friendship or it will get you into trouble". That is the advice of cowardice, and selfishness.

Neither Damon nor Pythias could have been true friends without courage.

On the other hand, their friendship made them both courageous. So with David and Jonathan.

You recall the boast of Peter as to his bravery. He declared to his Master that though all forsook him yet would not he. He would die for his Master, he said. But he fell down, terribly.

Then you remember that incident on the shore of the lake after the resurrection, when Jesus talked with Peter. He asked, "Lovest thou me?" He asked over and over again. There could never be another denial if he loved enough.

You recall the tradition on which the story "Quo Vadis" is based, to the effect that Peter was leaving Rome when the fire of persecution burned intensely. He met his Master, who asked, "Whither goest thou?" Peter went back to face the persecutor with the rest.

Courage Must Rest on Faith

We will never be able to meet courageously the issue of life without faith in God. The greatest blunder that a man can make in his life is the neglect of religion. He robs himself of that which is the basis of all worthy achievement.

When faith is not present, the very bedrock of effort and achievement is gone.

We need the faith of the psalmist who said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear; the Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid”.

Honor to Whom Honor is Due

Minden, LA

May 31, 1942

“Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?”
Judges 8:2

Paul, in his letter to the Romans (13:7) lays down as a Christian duty the practice of rendering to all their dues: “tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor”. While he is speaking primarily of the respect which should be shown those who are in authority, he would undoubtedly insist that the same attitude be manifested in every human relationship.

There is nothing amiss in our memorializing those who in the past have laid down their lives in defense of the nation. We owe them a debt. We would be most ungrateful were we not to accord them all honor.

While we recognize the importance of giving such recognition, we are also aware of the great difficulty of giving credit in proper proportion. We read frequently now of decorations pinned on the breasts of men known to have distinguished themselves in battles with the enemy. We know very well that it is impossible to know of every act of heroism. We also know that results are not an infallible criterion by which to measure courage or devotion. So we cannot always give honor to whom honor is due, nor can we bestow credit in proper degree to each.

One reason for inequalities in acclaim is that some people are more adept in the art of having their exploits known and recognized than are others. Some flock to the limelight like moths to a candle. They see how the tide is moving and jump in, grab a banner, and lead the procession.

Gideon's Triumph

Let us go back in the history of Israel to the period of the Judges -- a period that followed the settlement of the people in Canaan after the return from Egypt. The twelve tribes had been settled in their respective assignments. They were frequently disturbed in their procedures by the hostile tribes and powers near them. The Midianites dwelt to the south and east of Palestine; the Amalekites dwelt east; and there was another tribe called “Sons of the East”. These began to swarm into Palestine like a plague of locusts; they came across the fords of the Jordan, with their households and their herds. They took everything. The grain was confiscated and all that they could use. These inroads took place constantly and systematically each Summer.

Two emirs led the host: Zebah, the “man killer”, and Zalumna, the “pitiless”, with two subordinate sheiks, Oreb, the raven, and Zeeb, the wolf. They came bedecked with gorgeous

appeal and jewelry, with their wives and camels. For seven years they afflicted the land. On this particular year, they came and occupied the plain of Esdraelon.

One of the poorest clans in the tribe of Manasseh was descended from Abiezar, a son of Gilead. Some of the men of this clan had already fallen in skirmishes with the Midianites. Gideon belonged to this clan. He lived 6 miles west of Shechem, at Ophrah. His brothers had been victims of the invasion. Gideon was busy when called of God. He was thrashing out his grain in a secluded spot in the hope that he might evade the greedy eyes of the Midianites. God let Gideon know that he must now lead the people in extermination of the foe.

When the Arabs began to pour in, Gideon blew his horn and members of his own clan rallied about him. Messengers were sent to the tribes surrounding the Plain of Esdraelon: Western Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali. Issacher was not summoned because it was occupied by the Midianites. 33,000 responded. Too many. The faint hearted were urged to go home. 22,000 departed. 11,000 remained. Too many.

Then came the test at the stream. The most of the men knelt down and dipped their faces in the water to drink. Gideon chose those who lapped water out of their hands. They were equipped with horns, torches and earthen pots. Divided into three divisions, they were to approach the enemy from opposite directions. At a given signal, they broke their pots, displayed their torches, and rushed with a war cry upon the enemy in the dark. The result was a confusion and a panic. The enemy made an effort to escape, and thousands were sent in pursuit.

Realizing that the enemy could flee southward to find a ford over the Jordan, Gideon sent word to Ephraim to seize the fords of the Jordan in their territory. This Ephraim did and cut off some. The slaughter was terrific. Among those taken and killed were the sheiks, Oreb and Zeeb.

The Jealousy of Ephraim

When the Ephraimites brought the heads of the sheiks to Gideon, you would have thought that they would congratulate Gideon on his great victory. They came with a protest, prompted by jealousy. "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply."

There is evidence of pride. Ephraim's traditional priority had not been preserved. Back when Jacob blessed his sons, did he not place Ephraim before Manasseh? Had not Moses spoken of ten thousand of Ephraims and only of thousands of Manasseh? Was not Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim? Was not the territory of Ephraim strategic, choice, historic?

It was an unseemly demonstration at a solemn moment in the history of the nation. When Gideon blew his trumpet, Ephraim did not bestir himself. When the call for volunteers was sounded, they did not respond. Nor did they apologize. They blamed Gideon for not giving them proper attention. They gave no recognition to the divine guidance under which Gideon worked. They were trying to make him uncomfortable to gratify their pride. There was a risk which might have resulted seriously had Gideon been a different type of man.

Gideon was calm. He refrained from recrimination. He had regard for the great interests that were in his hands. Strife now would have been suicidal for the country. He said, "What have I done now in comparison to you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" Thus he seems to have made use of a proverb of the day.

Then follows the significant statement. "Then their anger was abated toward him when he had said that." The pacification of allies often requires greater powers of leadership than the overthrow of enemies. Gideon seems to have attained to the ideal set forth by the apostle: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath."

Incidentally, it is interesting to follow the history of Ephraim down further. The same situation developed when Jephthah, the Gileadite, routed the Ammonites. The Ephraimite complained that he had not called them to go with him. This charge he showed to be false. He did not treat them so kindly as had Gideon. This jealousy ultimately resulted in the division of the kingdom of Israel when Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, led the ten tribes in an act of secession.

A Thought for the Times

In days like these through which we are passing, it is well that we should keep in mind the dangers of pride and jealousy and envy. People are making sacrifices. Tension is great. Emotions run high. It is then that the character of a people is manifested.

It is not at all easy to give honor to whom honor is due. It is not possible always to satisfy the cravings of people for distinction, or to tickle their pride and vanity.

Possibly our greatest trial will come when the peace is being worked out. Then we will have full expression of pent-up feelings of offended pride.

It will be recalled that the victory of the last war was thrown away at the peace table. The spirit of jealousy and envy ruled and the tragic failure of treaty is all too well-known.

In this country, we recall with sorrow, there were men who had not been called to offer counsel in the peace negotiations. They determined that Mr. Wilson should not succeed. Certain senators might have gone down in history as great men but for the show of smallness in the time of a world crisis.

Is it too much to say that the present horrible war is the result of the intrusion of jealousy and pride into the counsels of peace?

The thing that gives us concern is the possibility that the next peace will be marred by similar proceedings.

A Matter of Personal Concern

But why blame our national leaders, when we let this fault mar our own lives?

We recall that envy was a sin that crucified Jesus (Matt. 27:18). It was through the eye of envy that Saul looked on David.

It is said that Gustave Dore could not bear to hear mentioned the name of any other artist who had succeeded. Famous singers and preachers have given evidence of this feeling.

Its Satanic nature is revealed in the words of Milton, ascribed to Satan: "Better reign in hell than serve in heaven".

Magnanimity the Answer

Gideon met the situation well. It did not seem to do Ephraim much good. But it magnified the character of Gideon.

The famous incident of Stanton and Lincoln when Stanton called Lincoln "a low cunning clown", "the original gorilla". Why go to Africa to get what one could find in Springfield, IL, he asked. Then Lincoln made him Secretary of War, because he thought him the best man for the place. It was Stanton who stood at the bedside of the martyred president and said, "There lies the greatest ruler the world has ever seen".

The story is told about Sir Walter Scott and Byron. Scott had become famous before a line of Byron's poems was published. When the first volume of Byron's came out, an anonymous reviewer praised them very much and said that Sir Walter Scott could hardly be considered the leading poet of the day. People wondered how Scott would take it. Some time later it was found that the anonymous reviewer was Scott himself.

Rash Vows in a Crisis

March 8, 1942

“And Jephthah made a vow unto the Lord.”

Judges 11:30

After the Israelites occupied the Land of Canaan, under the leadership of Joshua, there was a long period of alternation between apostasy and restoration. There were probably some seven apostasies, in each instance judges were raised up to serve as deliverers. These judges proved to be able men, but often imperfect. One of these men was Jephthah.

The occasion for the rise of Jephthah was the oppression of the Ammonites. The people had become desperate. Guerilla bands had been formed, and men flocked to the standards of the leaders who seemed to be most capable of overcoming the enemy. One of these hands was led by Jephthah. He evidently was one of the most successful. The elders of Gilead came together to select someone to assume command of the whole undertaking of throwing off the oppressor. They decided to ask Jephthah. There is intimation that he had been driven to banishment by these same men. Now they were calling on him (vs. 7f). Jephthah made them promise that when he overcame the enemy, they would not banish him again, but would rather make him head of Gilead. They promised. Despite Jephthah's crude background, he was loyal to Jehovah. His every expression manifests that spirit. He knew the history of his people, and related that history in a message to the king of Ammon. The people met at Mizpeh and made Jephthah king of Gilead.

Jephthah and the people made ready for the offensive. The seriousness of the situation is evident in the solemnity of the procedure. Vows were customary under such circumstances among peoples of that day.

The vow which Jephthah made was this: “If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (30f).

Victory was speedy. There was the triumphant return. News of the triumph preceded the army. There was universal rejoicing. There was anxiety in the mind of Jephthah. He remembered his vow. He did not know what to anticipate. We have no intimation as to what he could have expected. Jephthah had an only child, a daughter who was the pride of his heart. She was proud of her father. So she gathered together her maidens and decked them in holiday attire, and with music and dancing, went forth to meet him. Jephthah was crushed. “Thou hast brought me very low,” he wailed.

It is likely that the daughter was greater than the father. She arose to the occasion with splendid courage and poise. In her response she manifested a readiness to be true to her duty as a daughter, zeal for the cause of God. She was ready to renounce her share of worldly honors, and live unselfishly. Was willing to lose life itself in the cause of God.

The record is not clear as to just how the vow was accomplished. There is no record in all of Israel's history that a human sacrifice was ever offered, nor any allowed. Abraham was instructed to offer Isaac as an offering, but that was never made. It was a trial of his faith. The law of Moses made provision for the redemption of burnt offerings (Lev. 27). The redemption in this case was evidently a consignment to a life of virginity, a condition which in the mind of the people of Israel as being nothing short of death itself. She got permission for a leave of two months to go to the mountains to bewail her virginity.

Old Testament Vows

A vow, says Davis, was a voluntary obligation to God, generally assumed on condition of his bestowing certain specified blessings.

Vows were frequently made by people in sickness or in a time of anxiety. Jacob, when he was fleeing from Esau, stopped at Bethel. There he promised the Lord that if he would care for him and bring him again to his father's house, the place where he was should be a sanctuary and the tenth of his income should be the Lord's. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, made a vow that if the Lord would give her a male child, she would give him to the Lord all the days of life.

The principles regarding vows seem to have been that a vow was voluntary, but once made it was regarded as compulsory. It was also a principle that vows should not be made rashly. There is a statement in Proverbs (20:25). It is a little clearer in the American Revised Version: "It is a snare to a man rashly to say, It is holy, and after vows to make inquiry". This means that it is wrong to make promise, or consecrate a thing, and afterwards to make investigation as to whether he is able to carry it out. All such inquiry should be made in advance, and vows assumed after careful thought.

What of Jephtha's Vow?

1. He did not do wrong in making a vow. There is evidence that God has approved of vows rightly made. This was not a bribe to God, for the cause was God's. This was the people of God who were oppressed. It may not have been the time for God's release for his people. There was nothing wrong in promising an expression of gratitude before the occasion.

2. The objects he had in mind were worthy. The issues were acute, and it was a case of life or death. By this recognition of the hand of God in the course of events, all glory of salvation would be God's. There would certainly be much acclaim, a great celebration. God should receive the honor. It also put a seal on his own obedience. He would be under obligation himself to love God more faithfully.

3. Jephthah left the choice of the offering to God. He said “Whatsoever cometh forth”. Since it was unknown that human victims should be offered in worship of Jehovah, God would not have permitted the only child to be such a victim. He who rules in battle, will also rule in the rest of life.

4. God made this a test of character. He chose the choicest possession of the hero. He often does that, and it is not every person who can meet that test. E. Stanley Jones’ story of his mother when he decided to enter the ministry and go as a missionary. Abraham’s test.

5. Jephthah made the mistake of not first counting the cost. When Ananias after entering into the agreement to sell all and have everything in coming, in the days of the apostles, was not able to bring himself to go through with it and brought only a portion to Peter, Peter said to him, “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?” This could have been said to all who have made vows that they found difficult to fulfill.

What Has This for Us?

1. There is value in a commitment.
2. It should be done with thought and foresight. People in sickness.
3. We should guard against rash statements. Much profanity is of this sort, “Ill be damned”.
4. Haste in promise in national crises. Appeasement of colonies. Labor elements.

Samson's Riddle

June 30, 1935

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”
Judges 14:14

American translation: “Out of the eater came forth something to eat, and out of the strong came forth something sweet”.

1. The Judges

The judges of Israel were men (one a woman) who during a period of something less than 300 years furnished leadership in Israel when the tribes were not united. The state of the nation was a distracted one.

These leaders were raised up to head successful revolts against foreign oppressors, and maintain the rights of the people.

There were 13 of these judges (if Abimelech be counted, who was a petty king and not called of God) (ix).

Seven of these received more or less extensive mention: Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson.

2. Samson

Samson might be called the playboy judge. “The most frolicsome and irregular creature that the Jewish nation ever produced.” “An incorrigible joker.” Had the laughter of good humor. Live in the open air, had great strength, at wholesome food, took exercise, practiced abstinence.

May not have all about Samson. He was devoted to his parents, but evidently spoiled. Must judge a man by the times in which he lived.

3. The Occasion of the Riddle

The Philistine damsel. The departure in choosing a heathen wife. Attitude of the parents. The 30 young Philistine men. The Wedding feast. Propounding riddles was common. The lion incident. Made no mention of it to his parents. Samson was not a boaster. The scheme to get the answer to the riddle. Samson's disgust with his bride elect.

4. Truth in the Riddle

He got food and sweetness out of seemingly unpromising conditions and quarters.

Joseph in Egypt. Gen. 45:5f

David's experiences enabled him to produce the psalms. The psalmist said, "It was good for me that I have been afflicted" (Ps. 119:71).

Paul. Imprisonment and his great letters. "I would have you know that the things which have happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel".

The storm. The shipwreck, and Paul's preferment.

The thorn and the special grace.

"All things work together for good to them that love God."

Jesus and Calvary. The Bread of life from the place of a Skull. Christianity from a Cross.

Man's Fall and Salvation by Grace.

Ruth

The Mothers of Those We Love Best

Minden, LA

May 8, 1932

“Ruth clave unto her.”

Ruth 1:14

Much has been said today throughout the land about motherhood. Some of the observations have been to very little purpose, no doubt. But much has doubtless been said that will make this a better nation. It seems to me that motherhood touches at the very heart of our national life. Where there is the proper conception of motherhood and sonship, there is necessarily a wholesome national order.

But while we are talking about our own mothers to whom we are bound by the ties of birth, and are trying to keep ourselves true to the obligations we owe them, let us not forget that other mother in the family -- the mother of the one we love best, presumably, commonly spoken of as mother-in-law.

1. A Difficult Roll to Fill

There is hardly any other place in our social relationships that is harder to fill than that of mother-in-law. The only possible exception would be that of stepmother. Undoubtedly, there have been, and are, conditions under which the life of a stepmother has involved tremendous difficulty. But as a whole the life of a mother-in-law seems to have more difficulties.

When a son or daughter marries, mothers declare that it is their firm purpose to be “the best mother-in-law in the world”. Many are able to carry out their intentions. Others run upon unexpected irritations and aggravating situations, and fall down in the roll they had hoped to grace with recognized charm.

Such failures, whether preceded by good intentions or not, have occasioned no end of comment on the part of jokesmiths and drawings by cartoonists. The mother-in-law joke persists in spite of determined efforts to eliminate it from the category of the fun-makers. The pathetic thing about it all is that the mother-in-law joke is tear-stained. It is born of pain and heartache.

2. The Charge Against Mothers-in-Law

Mothers-in-law are charged with being home-wreckers. I have seen the statement that the divorce courts attribute 75% of the broken homes to her (Purvis: God of the Lucky, p. 50).

That figure seems high. Even if she is charged that many times, I am in doubt as to her being really responsible, or at least wholly responsible, for anything like that many times. There is a break down somewhere else, too.

But this needs to be said. Many of the little tilts that come in the early portion of married life, while two young lives are getting adjusted to each other, will be settled eventually, provided mother does not take a hand.

She is charged with being a meddler. She is said to presume to try to manage her new son-in-law or daughter-in-law. She talks too much about what she has observed. She complains abroad at the poor biscuits on which the young wife is feeding her darling son. She complains at how extravagant her daughter-in-law is, how she neglects her children. She tells her daughter to watch her husband, as he seems to come in awful late. If she does all this, it is no wonder that she soon becomes persona non grata in the homes of her in-laws.

Let it be said that in many instances there is abundant justification for the unfavorable reaction on the part of the older, more experienced mother. It is a lot to ask of a mother to keep silent when she sees serious blunders being made. But where the blunders are not so serious, it is better to let experience be the one to call the younger ones to account.

3. Underlying Causes

In those instances in which mothers-in-law are in error, and intrude too quickly and too often into the domestic affairs of her children, there are underlying causes which it might be well to consider.

There is the jealousy that seems to be natural to motherhood. Mothers have a way of feeling that hardly any girl is good enough for her boy, or any boy good enough for her daughter. It is expecting too much for mothers to live sacrificially for their children for years and then cease to maintain zealous interest in their well being as soon as they marry.

This jealousy sometimes so controls the mother that she persistently discourages her children from getting married. They absorb their children. Instances could be cited in which mothers have deliberately gone about breaking up the homes of children, out of jealousy.

There is often too a jealousy on the part of the daughter-in-law. Ignorant of the fact that the love a son has for a mother is not the same as that which he has for his wife and therefore cannot conflict, some young wives make the sad mistake of deliberately trying to alienate a son from his mother. This often means the breaking down of ideals established by the mother -- a serious thing.

Not long ago, I was in the home of a young couple, the wife of which had been trained as a child to hate those who cared for those she loved. This had its beginning in connection with her father's second marriage. The child was taught by her mother's relatives to hate her stepmother. When she married, she began to cultivate a dislike for anyone who cared for her husband. The husband in this case has a mother that sorely needs her son. The situation is in danger of becoming tragic.

There is the tendency to be officious. Mothers who have exacted obedience sometimes forget that children grow up. They keep on commanding, and presume to dispose of the in-laws in much the same manner. They are both just children to the mother. She presumes to tell the young couple how they ought to do this and that.

4. What is Necessary?

First of all, it helps when both mother-in-law and the rest realize that the situation is very complicated, and that it involves some very delicate problems. One needs to proceed carefully.

I think it is generally recognized that whenever possible, separate places of abode are better. Two women loving the same man, even in a different way, will bring conflict eventually. Especially is this true during the earlier part of young married life.

But there are circumstances under which separate residence is highly inadvisable for other reasons. There is no choice in the matter. The son or daughter has obligations to parents that cannot be evaded honorably. When this is true, there is need for an abundance of Christian grace in all concerned.

There should not be any forgetfulness of the debt which the daughter-in-law, or son-in-law, owes the mother-in-law. Those mothers are largely responsible for making their beloved into the persons they are. Certainly these mothers cannot be expected to turn on their children in whom they have invested so much. When this mother becomes dependent on a son-in-law, all the chivalry he has should assert itself. A daughter-in-law should not be too insistent upon taking a son away from his mother.

There is place for the Golden Rule here. This daughter-in-law should bear in mind that sooner or later some slip of a girl will probably come along and make the same claim on her son. She should treat her mother-in-law as she would like to be treated as a mother-in-law.

Think of the qualities that are necessary if that very difficult situation in life is to be fulfilled:

1. Patience
2. Intelligence
3. Sympathy
4. Magnanimity
5. Self-discipline
6. Sacrifice

Dr. Boreham says that we all need mothering and that all women are instinctively motherly. True mothering, he says is essentially sacrificial. His story of the hen who perished in the grass fire while protecting her chicks (Expositor, 2/28, p. 911).

Life's Opportunities and Us

Minden, LA	March 4, 1923
Normal - Natchitoches	April 12, 1923
Men's Sunday School Class (Stamps, AR)	June 17, 1923
Minden, LA (Prayer Meeting)	February 18, 1931
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	October 10, 1943

“Where hast thou gleaned today?”

Ruth 2:19

Naomi, returning to her city of Bethlehem from Moab, wither she had gone in a time of famine, with her husband and two sons, was accompanied by a daughter-in-law only, for Elimelech and his two sons had died in Moab. Orpah yielded to the entreaties of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and returned to her people, the Moabites. But Ruth persistently declared that Naomi's people should be her people and Naomi's God her God. And she came with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem.

Seemingly without delay, Ruth set to work doing her part in providing for the support of the two of them. She went out to glean in the fields. By chance, she came into the fields of Boaz, who was a man of kind heart. He commanded his workmen to leave more than the occasional stalk that her efforts might be properly rewarded.

Naturally, at the close of the day, she had a showing which astonished Naomi. “Where have you gleaned today?” she asked. When Ruth told her, she understood all.

This reminds me that we all go forth into the world of opportunity and see before us fields varied in the possibilities they hold out to us. One does well to stop often and consider whether he is choosing wisely or not -- whether he is gathering worthless straw or the stalks with weighty heads -- whether the available supply be scant or abundant. “Where are you gleaning today?”

It is a fact which I think you will readily grant that some people are putting forth a great deal of effort without realizing returns that are in any way commensurate with the cost. And one reason is that they are laboring where only meager returns are possible.

Some of us in fishing work hard enough -- perhaps harder than necessary, but usually catch no fish, because we have not learned where to fish. We dangle our baited hook in places which any experienced fisherman could tell us would yield no satisfactory returns. To be a good fisherman we must know where to fish.

Sometimes, we hear it said of some man that everything he touches turns to money. On the other hand, there are men who never succeed at anything they undertake. Other factors may

enter in but the difference may be due to the fact that one knows where to go for results -- or, in other words, which field in which to glean.

There are people who seem to get so much out of life. They seem to get such rich compensation for that which they do, the institutions with which they are connected seem to grow and expand. What they do seems to count. They seem to be so necessary to the welfare and progress of the community.

There are others about whom it might be said only that they meant well. They have a zeal, but not according to knowledge.

Another fact which we need only mention, but a very important one to remember, is that some people have a recompense that is richer than others might think it to be. When we glean for gold we may miss the real grain of godliness. He may succeed as a speculator, but fail as a father.

I have been told by those who have read A.S.N. Hutchison's book, "This is Freedom", that the story illustrated the point which I am making. Parents, successful in one line of effort, may utterly fail in the far more important duties of the home.

It is better many times over to take whatever time may be necessary to guide the young aright than to use that time in adding to the inheritance we will leave behind to complete the ruin our own neglect has started in the children God has given us. There are fathers who will leave behind them no estate of value, but rather a glorious record that they raised their children well, educated them, paid their honest debts, served their God and their fellowmen faithfully.

There are fields in which we may glean even among the sheaves. What are we doing with our opportunities?

Are we filling our minds with the great thoughts of great men and women, or are we gathering up the trivial fancies which are of only momentary interest?

The ancient prophet saw the people vainly pursuing the idle fancies of life, and exclaimed, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

There are fields lavishly strewn with choice opportunity. There are pursuits that richly reward the effort that we expend on them. There are books that contain the refined gold from the deep mines of human thought. There are friendships from the daily cultivation of which there springs a fragrant and abiding influence.

Who is that enlightened people today who will say that it is futile to pay attention to diet? There was once a time when people generally thought little of this. We had the idea that anything good to eat was nourishing, and consequently we ate only what we wanted most. We called every earnest exponent of dietetics a fanatic. We labored for a time under the delusion that a country boy is always healthy and a city boy is anemic. But accurate statistics show conclusively that it does matter very much what we eat, how much, and when.

Every normal, well person is full of energy -- the problem is to properly direct that energy. The person who sits and does nothing is more or less deficient physically and mentally. Laziness, in the sense of aversion to action is abnormal. The normal person is active, but the activity is very often unwisely expended.

We make our progress day by day. We are constantly accumulating -- constantly building. Life is said to be a mosaic, made up of very little things -- each day adds its quota. What are you adding now? "Where have you gleaned today?"

A certain man of our city informed his wife that he believed that he could tell each evening which of three or four other women she had been with that day by the manner of speech and gesture upon her return home.

"They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

The soul is nourished by truth and service. There is a significant statement in Mark III: Jesus "appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach". He wanted them to be with him that they might "hear what he said, see what he did, and learn what he is" (Bishop McDowell). They were also sent forth into the world to apply that truth to a world in dire need.

Today, if we would only follow such a program, we would find our lives expanding and our souls growing.

As a Christian, where are you gleaning for life-giving truth?

"Green, in his "Short History of the English People", chap. Viii., gives a marvelous testimony to the effect of the printed Bible in Elizabeth's reign. "No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." "It was as yet the one English book, which was familiar to every Englishman. It was read in churches, it was read at home, and everywhere its words kindled a startling enthusiasm." It's literary and social effects were great, but far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large."

“One dominant influence told on human action.” “The whole temper of the nation felt the change.” “A new conception of life, a new moral and religious impulse spread through every class.”

Farrar, in his “Bible, Its Meaning and Supremacy”, says, “It was the Bible that gave fire and nobleness to her (England’s) language; it was the Bible that turned a dead oppression into a living church; it was the Bible that put to flight the nightmare of ignorance before the rosy dawn of progress...It was the Bible which saved England from sinking into a tenth rate power as a vassal of cruel, ignorant, superstitious Spain, whose Dominicans and tyrants would have turned her fields into slaughter houses, as they turned those of the Netherlands, and would have made her cities reek as she made Seville reek with the bale-fires of her Inquisition.” “Let England cling to her open Bible.” “You might as well quench the sun, and suppose that the world can get on without light, as to think that men or that nations can do without God.” “I tell you on the evidence of history that the stream of morals would dry up.”

“There is not a single historian of that period (the fifteenth century) who does not admit that a fearful moral retrogression followed on the overthrow of faith.” “Let the English working classes once adopt atheistic principles, and I would not give five years’ purchase for England’s happiness or England’s fame.” “Will England remain true to her God? Surely, to doubt it were well night to make the crusaders start from their marble tombs.” “And what the Bible did for England, it did for the United States of America. It was the Bible that made America what she is” (Peloubet).

If I mistake not, it is Whittier who tells of a quest made for wisdom and truth, from which those taking part returned weary and worn, only to find that all the sages said is to be found in the Book our mothers read.

We may find the truth in other fields. But if we are wise we will choose the field in which we may glean even among the sheaves.

In the fields of service, we must choose between that which gives poor returns and that which is better. Here, as in other instances, some people have a peculiar fancy for places where the gleaning is poor.

Sometimes people tell me that some particular church is alive because it is always busy with suppers and bazaars. Now, I can see the social value of working together in a common cause. It is fine to have that in a church. But I seriously question whether we can estimate the effectiveness of a church’s work by such activities. I have often thought that all the effort put forth in carrying out these plans might be used so much more advantageously along more direct lines.

Sometimes people will work long and earnestly to convert some hardened sinner, whose life has been spent in the service of the devil, when with half the effort, perhaps, a dozen young

children, responsive to every influence, might be saved from such a life as that. The hope of the kingdom of God is with the future generation. Let us glean in that field.

John Randolph Hearst declared, "I believe I should have been swept away by the flood of French infidelity if it had not been for one thing, the remembrance of the time when my sainted mother used to make me kneel by her side, taking my little hand in hers, and caused me to repeat the Lord's prayer.

The Books of Samuel 1 and 2

The Holy Charge of Motherhood

Minden, LA	May 11, 1941
Homer, LA	May 11, 1941
Colonial, Dallas, TX	May 14, 1944
Fairfield, TX	May 8, 1949
Westminster, Waco, TX	May 11, 1952
Rockdale, TX	May 13, 1956 (rewritten)

“For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord, as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.”

1 Samuel 1:27,28

While it is our custom to give acclaim to individuals who become prominent in human affairs, we know full well that after all the major portion of credit is due others who do not appear in the operations which call forth the praise. A notable achievement on the part of any person is usually the realization of a dream shaped long before by a great soul, and striven for through subsequent years.

We have an illustration of what I am saying in the case of Samuel, an Old Testament character. I wonder if you have refreshed your memory concerning the life and ministry of Samuel lately. If not, you might go home and read the First Book of Samuel.

When Samuel died, it is recorded that “all Israel gathered to lament him” (1 Samuel 25:1). And well they might, for Samuel was second only to Moses in Old Testament history, some think. He was a prophet, a judge, a leader, a statesman. Austere, simple, direct, self-forgetful, persevering, he served his nation and his God with faithfulness and distinction. What a man he was!

But when we come to think of it, we do not wonder that he was such a person. What a mother he had! His mother’s name was Hannah. She cherished a dream. Samuel was the fulfillment of that dream. Without Hannah’s vision, there would have been no Samuel.

To be childless was a reproach in those days. Hannah felt her deficiency very keenly. So, she prayed the Lord for a child. She was given a son, and she dedicated him to God. When she brought him to the tabernacle which was then located at Shiloh, where the high priest Eli ministered. As she placed the child under the care of Eli, she told him that this was a child for whom she had prayed. We can be sure that as the years passed and the boy grew to manhood, that mother’s prayers ascended to the throne of God every single day for him.

Many years ago (1911), I remember hearing a prominent New York minister (Dr. Cornelius Woelfkin) say at Winona Lake, IN, in an address, that after he became a minister, he learned that before he was born his mother used to repair constantly to a place of prayer and ask the Lord to give her a son and make him a useful vessel in his service. Dr. Woelfkin said that he wished he had written copies of those prayers. He would put them in his Bible, probably near

the record of the prayers of Hannah. He would gather inspiration and strength from them by constant reflection on them.

What was true in the case of Samuel, and of Woelfkin, has been true in a million other cases. And because of this, we very readily fall in with the custom of paying respect to those who have so profoundly molded the course of human events. Today, these mothers are called out to “take a bow”, a curtain call, so to speak. Were they not behind the scenes, the performance could not go on.

Such a thought as this was in the mind of Mrs. Sigourney (sig-er-ni), an American writer of the early 19th century, in some lines she wrote about the mother of Washington:

“And say to mothers what a holy charge
Is theirs -- with what a kingly power their love
Might rule the fountains of the new born mind.”

A “holy charge” indeed! Consider --

1. The Nature of That Charge

I do not need to remind you that a child has a right to be well born. By that I do not refer to the artificial distinctions that are made in human society. I refer to the physical, mental, and spiritual factors that one has by inheritance. Some children should never have been born at all. Inherited deficiencies and environmental influences cause them to be social liabilities. Let us hope that we are emerging from the silly idea that two people should follow blindly the chance attraction of the moment. Whether one has clean blood and character is a far more important thing than whether he or she has money and/or a royal title. A child has a greater right to a sound mind and a strong body, even without material comforts, than to have material comforts without mental and physical health. Mind you, I am well aware that deficiencies in children appear in spite of all precautions. I am referring to instances obvious irresponsibility on the part of shallow minded persons.

Another right of the child to be well bred. This is something that cannot be delegated. I do not mean at all to excuse the father from his share of responsibility in this matter. But somehow, it falls to the mother to instill right ideals, and moral and religious principle.

Mark Twain’s father died when he was about 11 years old. His mother, Jane Clemens, felt keenly her responsibility as a parent. She was of resolute nature and had strong convictions of moral and religious nature. As she and her 11 year old son stood beside the casket of the father, she asked him to pledge himself to be honest, industrious, and upright like his father. Mark Twain told her that he would make such a promise if she would allow him to remain out of school. This was 120 years ago, and in a pioneer section of the country. Education was not the factor then that it is today. So his mother said, “No, you will not have to go to school anymore. Only promise me to be a better boy and not to break my heart.”

Another right of the child is to be well bent. He has a right to be properly directed. While every child must live his own life, it is folly to wait until the child is mature before he is trained in the tried and proven principles of life. One of these factors is religion.

Hannah dedicated her son to the Lord even before he was born. He might have become a priest, but he didn't. But he became a man of great power in the nation. God wants men of worth to fill all of the important stations of the social order.

I remember reading some years ago (May, 1941) a Christian Herald article concerning Frantz von Papen, a German diplomat. He was there pictured as arch-intriguer of Nazidom, who betrayed his church, two political parties, his secretary to an execution that he deserved himself, von Hindinburgh into Hitler's hands; Schussnig, Austrian statesman, to the Nazis, and even tried to betray Hitler. We are told that von Papen's mother was a kindly gentle soul. She wanted her boy to enter the church as a minister. His father was a fire-eating old Prussian soldier; he wanted the boy in the army. The father won.

2. The Requisites for This Charge

Needless to say, it requires character. The eyes of great mothers shine with the pure fire of worthy principle and high motive. "I am a missionary to my nursery," once observed a Christian mother. "Six pairs of eyes are daily watching mama's looks, and listening to her words, and I wish my children never to see in me that which they may not imitate" (Preacher's Hom. Commentary, Minor Prophets, p. 15).

Unfortunately, it is not always true, even though a good man said it (Coleridge), that:

"A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive."

Recall the tragic experience of Hosea, the prophet, as recorded in the Old Testament. He married Gomer, and to their union were born two boys and a girl. Then Gomer left her husband to live a life of licentiousness. She finally became a slave. Probably before she had gone so far as that, the prophet who still loved his wife, said to his children, "Plead with your mother, plead" (2:2). Finally the prophet bought back his wife for 15 pieces of silver. But what a tragedy in the lives of the children.

Another requisite is sacrifice. The essence of motherhood is giving. Because of the exaction, some mothers abdicate their duties. But a true mother is a "fount of deep, strong, deathless love" (Mrs. Hemans). We note the "dear silver that shines in her hair, and the brow that's all furrowed, and wrinkled with care" (Young: Mother Machree), and are sure that such is the price of true motherhood.

Our century has seen a great change take place in the lives of women. The varieties of activities open to them has been increased tremendously. This has added complexity to woman's position. There are positions and distinctions in our workaday world that beckon. How can a woman respond to these and be a true mother? That is her question. It may cause frustration. She somehow does not like to put down as her status in life, "housewife". It doesn't help too much to point out the fact that as such she is business manager, cook, nurse, chauffeur, dressmaker, interior decorator, accountant, caterer, teacher, private secretary, and philanthropist. That which redeems the whole situation is motherhood -- an endless drama, a ceaseless adventure, a challenge to the wisdom and intelligence of keen minds. There is no career equal to

that of creating a center of civilization that is essential to the salvation of the world. It requires wisdom and insight to create spiritual values, develop human abilities, and integrate personalities. But some other opportunities must be passed up.

Another requisite is courage. There is danger from the very beginning. Motherhood is costly and its dangers and perils are great. There is danger to life, and there is even greater danger to heart and spirit. They bear the pain, disclaim the fatigue, and hope against hope. None but the mother knows the rush of tumultuous sensations that throng her mind as she watches her children's lives unfold.

3. The Rewards

The least of all is the praise of people. There has been some aversion to the observance of Mother's Day. To some extent it is justified. In some ways it has become a day of superficial sentiment and commercial exploitation. A lot of foolish things have been said on Mother's Day. We should be appreciative, and be ready to express that appreciation; but the wages of motherhood are far greater than that.

A far better reward is the reflex blessing. Being a true mother does something for one. There is nothing like "the lovelight in the face that bends above a baby". There is an indescribable change that comes over one who has played the part of a mother, even to children that are not her own. Some of the greatest mothers in the world are women who have no offspring of their own; and some of the greatest failures of the world are some who do have children of their own.

The greatest reward of motherhood is excellent children. The fine phrases we coin are lost to her ears if we have by our actions plunged a dagger into her heart. When a son or a daughter fulfills the fond expectations of a mother's heart, the price she paid seems trivial.

Robert W. Service has some lines on Motherhood. He speaks of the "singing in the heart and the rapture in the eyes, "the peace in the hearts and the glory in the ears" of mothers. Well, that is the greatest reward of motherhood, when she has been able to meet all the demands of her holy charge.

Vision is Vital

June 1, 1941

“And the word of the Lord was precious in those days, and there was no open vision.”
1 Samuel 3:1

This is not the only period of confusion and chaos in the history of the world; nor is it the worst. As we turn back through the pages of history we find many other periods that look darker by far than this.

It is not a bad idea to study such periods and learn how to direct our steps when the life of them recur.

There was such a period in the days of Eli, when Samuel was a lad dwelling in the sacred enclosure preparing for the role of prophet.

It will be recalled that Samuel came on the scene at the time of the transition from theocracy to monarchy. The period of the Judges was passing. There was moral, religious and political confusion. Corruption existed in strategic centers. A crisis was at hand. There was a need of seers, or prophets, and a need of organized government for purposes of defense, punishment of crime, and constructive leadership. The situation is summed up in the statement of our text: “The word of the Lord was rare in those days, and there was no open vision”. There was no recognized agency through which divine guidance might be secured.

That such a condition of affairs was serious then, and will always be serious, is apparent from the fact that, as stated by Proverbs, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (29:18). We usually think of “vision” in this statement as referring to some unusual power of foresight and prophetic insight. It really means revelation from God, divine guidance. Where there is no instruction from the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the people lose their way and become demoralized.

Amazing Progress of Certain Powers

One of the surprising features of the present world war is the seeming invincibility of the German war machine. It has apparently done what some military leaders and authorities said could not be done. True, there are some now how have become a little bolder and declare that they knew all the time that such would be the case, and that furthermore they believe Germany undefeatable. They advocate a settlement now on the best terms possible. What gives such power to these forces?

There is a great deal of truth in the assertion (by way of explanation) that long ago Germany leaders decided definitely what they wanted, began preparations, and when that

preparation had been thoroughly made, set to work to accomplish it at any cost. In a sense then, it might be said that the leaders have had "vision". They see their goal.

While it is customary to lay the blame for the present crisis at the door of Hitler, we must not forget the enthusiastic support that is being given him by the German people everywhere. He is called a dictator. He is such to the subjugated peoples. But to the German people, he is "our Fuehrer", our leader.

Hitler has been able to satisfy the pent up emotions and starved passions of a proud people. Deep emotion is the driving force of human nature. The most compelling emotions are fear and love. Hitler has been able to muster both of these in support of his policies. Germany remembers the tragic conditions of the early twenties, and fears a return of a national calamity. It is because the people have so recently tasted of the gall of that bitterness that no price seems too great to avert it. Furthermore, there is a religious fervor that centers around the fuerher, seemingly invincible, which seems for the present to satisfy the religious needs of the Nazis. The result is that there is unity.

Conspicuous in the forces of Germany are the youth. That is not strange. Youth is full of zest and enthusiasm and adventure. Youth likes to try new things. The emotional element is strong. There is ready response to the call of a leader who seems to know what he wants and who seems able to get it.

Our Own State of Confusion

We have been disturbed by the lack of unity in our land. There is confusion. People are somewhat in a quandary, because of the various advocacies that come through the press and over radio.

The espousal of democracy and freedom does not seem to have the power of appeal that the so called "new order" seems to have. There is no surge of passion, no great fervor.

One reason for this is that American have not had a taste of the subservience of another type of government. We do not appreciate our liberty because we have known nothing else.

Furthermore, we are aware that problems exist even in a democracy. They are problems of wages, employment, wealth and agriculture. Our generation has suffered considerable disillusionment. It has indulged freely in material sensations, particularly since the World War, and have become surfeited, exhausted, bored. It has found that science can render only a limited service. Science puts the finest tools in the hands of the people, but does not provide for their proper use. Some entertain the idea that we might stop scientific development until the spiritual catches up. But invention will go on. Today the inventive genius of man is concentrated on means of destruction, and little is done to place the power of restraint in the hands of the individuals who use these instruments of death.

Another cause of our confusion is the type of newspaper feature writer which is like a dog that barks at everything new it sees. The minds of these writers seem to have an antagonistic bent. They seek to find a flaw in every move of a national leader, to find the fly in the ointment. They are journalistic hecklers. They seem to have no constructive ideas. They are primarily concerned with points of difference. If there are none apparent, they warn that one would do

well to look for the bug under the chip -- that in all probability there is something rotten in Denmark, or in Washington.

There are others who look on every national policy on the basis of personal interest. They take advantage of a crisis to gain a personal advantage. I have heard of people who would go around among the prostrate bodies after a wreck and rob the victims of their valuables. There are some citizens who hold up a nation in the hour of crisis and demand special considerations.

The Need for an Adequate Basic Philosophy

It seems to me that the explanation of both situations is to be found in a principle set forth by Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher who lived and wrote in the 17th Century. He said "Selfishness is the only motive for human conduct".

Selfishness is indeed a very prevalent motive for human conduct, but it is not the best, nor is it right or safe. Such a principle makes no provision for a sense of duty. It makes a moral standard impossible -- at least a uniform standard. Man is ruled by desires and not judgment.

The mass feels, the individual thinks. Demagoguery is leadership of emotion.

Ideologies that are based on selfishness will not survive.

Philosophy Must be Rooted in Revelation

Cleverness, diplomacy, force, invention, talking will not save the world. The church is the only hope. It is the only international organization and it is built on principles of brotherhood.

True, the vision of the church is sometimes obscured by factions, social lines, weaknesses of members. Church is sometimes induced to resort to expedients to gain members and build up constituency. Some people probably ought not to be in the church.

There are many people who ought to be in. It is easy to find fault. It is difficult to build up. I have read that the Taj Mahal, a beautiful mausoleum of white marble in India, required the labor of 20,000 workmen over a period of 20 years to erect it. It could be blown to bits in a moment by a bomb.

A speaker in Hyde Park, London, was once advocating Christianity when a heckler said, "Christianity has been in the world for two thousand years, and look at the state of the world". "Yes," replied the orator without a second's hesitation, "and water has been in the world for two million years, and look at the state of your face."

The spirit of devotion to a great ideal must again possess us. We need again an "open vision".

Where Even Good Men Fail

July 28, 1935

“For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity that he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

1 Samuel 3:13

One of the sad facts of life is that many good people come with sorrow to their graves. People say, in references to such cases, that they deserve a better lot. But it seems that God has written the immutable law into the social fabric of life. It matters not how good a man may be in his own personal life, how blameless in personal conduct, his children may bring him with sorrow to his grave. The case of Eli is typical of those who fail to properly discharge their parental obligations. There is nothing that brings one in old age more satisfaction than the honorable careers of his children. There is nothing that brings sorrow more than the waywardness of one's offspring. The sooner we realize this, the better chance we have of doing something about it. The trouble is that we wait until it is too late to remedy the matter.

Glimpses of Eli

At 65. High priest and judge at Shiloh, the central place of worship. Was probably not as active as he had been. Now he had his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, associated with him in the conduct of the ceremonies of the temple. Elkanah and his wives, Peninah and Hannah (Pearl and Grace) came up annually to worship. Hannah's prayer for a son. Her vow. Eli's reproof of Hannah for an imaginary sin.

At 71. Hannah brings Samuel to the temple at Shiloh to stay. Places him in charge of Eli. Samuel was now probably six years of age. How much do you suppose had been crowded into those six years at home under Hannah's instruction? Eli was permitting much corruption and many abuses to exist under the ministry of his two sons. These sons were called “sons of Belial” (2:12), that is, they were worthless and wicked. They were not only careless and irreligious, but even vicious and scandalous. They had no reverence for the sacrifices or of the temple. They corrupted the women who had consecrated themselves to service of the temple. They would profane the sacrifices brought by the worshippers by taking more than their portion, even taking their portions before the Lord had his. They would rapaciously seize what they wanted before the sacred ceremony of heaving or waving had taken place. They took portions while raw that they might roast it themselves as they pleased.

This was the atmosphere into which Samuel came as a lad of six years. Eli rebuked his boys for their evil. But he should have dealt vigorously with them. He should have restrained them from having any part in the ceremonies of the temple. For this, the Lord sent judgment upon Eli.

At 78. Samuel as a boy of 12, has a call from Jehovah (Chap. 3). The boy has been ministering faithfully in the temple, despite the corruption that has been going on around him. In the vision that Samuel had, the words of the Lord which constitute our text were spoken. We note the submissive spirit of Eli when he learned from Samuel what the Lord had told him. "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good" (3:18).

At 93. The invasion of the Philistines. The evident defeat. The ill-advised decision to bring the ark into the battlefield. The death of Hophni and Phinehas, and the loss of the ark. The sad news brought to Eli. His acceptance of the fate that came to his sons. But he was fatally shocked at the loss of the ark.

Estimate of Eli's Character

Not a bad man. Guilty of no sin of commission. A man of piety. Amiable inoffensive. A man of exemplary conduct. Was generous and magnanimous, as was seen when he saw that he must be set aside. Seems to have been a man of fine spiritual insight, at times. Could advise Samuel regarding the voice of the Lord. He was beautifully submissive to the will of God. No word of complaint when the terrible news came. He placed the honor of God and his kingdom beyond his own most precious interests.

Dr. Whyte is of the opinion that Eli's trouble was that he was too busy to give time to the rearing of his children. This has been the fault of many a parent. They have let their absorption in many things lead them to forget their obligations to their own children.

But Dr. Chappel agrees with those who feel that weakness was the fault. He was too soft, too easy. He was a loving father, but not a good disciplinarian. The sons knew their father was soft, an easy mark. He let his emotions sway his judgment. He rebuked his sons, when he should have thrown them out.

Eli's inability to deal sternly with his sons was probably due to the fact that he knew he had failed as a father. He had not done his part when it needed to be done. Jesus and Pharisees. Jesus and money changers.

Two Types in the Same Situation

The same Eli who had failed with his own sons, seems to have succeeded in rearing well the son of another. This may have been due to one or all of several things.

1. He may have seen his mistake in the cases of his own sons, and resolved to avoid that in the case of this lad committed to his care. This is the course which events often pursue.

2. It is often easier for one to rear well another's child than it is for one to rear his own. The affections of parenthood often keep parents from doing their duty. Excellent school teachers make poor parents sometimes.

3. Probably the most important factor was what went into those first six years. Hannah had filled Samuel's mind with thoughts of his destiny. That had probably been neglected in the cases of Hophni and Phinehas. Susanna Wesley used Hannah's method.

4. There may have been a difference in heredity. We know nothing of the mother of Hophni and Phinehas. But the natural bent is important.

What Eli's Failure Involved

1. Brought sorrow to later days.
2. Brought ruin upon his church. Brought the sanctuary into contempt. Much of the woe that is coming to organized religion today is due to the misrepresentation of religion by its leaders.
3. Brought great hurt to the nation. The sons were incapable leaders. We are here to wage aggressive warfare.
When the driver goes to sleep.
Criminals in the nation today.

Our Ebenezer

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

April 7, 1929
June 27, 1948
November 14, 1954 (rewritten)

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up...and called it Ebenezer.”

1 Samuel 7:12

For a moment, let us turn back the pages of history 3,000 years. Israel had just won a great victory on the spot where they had been miserably defeated twenty years before (1 Sam. 4:1,10,11). For the time being at least, Israel had learned a lesson. They renounced their idolatrous practices, and made a solemn promise to be true to the God of their fathers. While they were assembling at Mizpeh to prepare for battle with the Philistines, their conquerors, the Philistines decided to rush upon them before they were ready. At that moment, a terrific thunderstorm broke forth, and probably an earthquake (Josephus). This produced a panic in the forces of the enemy, and they fled in disorder. The Israelites pursued them and slew a vast number of them. Samuel saw in that turn of events the hand of the Lord. So he set up a large stone in that place, and named it Ebenezer, a word that means “stone of Help”, saying, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”.

When people in any age erect huge stones, monuments, tablets, on historic spots, their purpose is to pay respect to the memory of those who had a part in the event, to give evidence of gratitude, and to perpetuate the memory of the event through succeeding generations. Not to be outdone in this matter of rearing monuments, Texas erected on the San Jacinto battle site what is said to be the tallest monument in the world (570 feet 4 inches) (“the tallest stone monument”, Texas Almanac, p. 76). This to commemorate the victory of the Texas army under Sam Houston over Santa Anna and his Mexican Army.

The Presbyterians of Rockdale have fought no battles here. We have shed no blood. But we have overcome quite a few difficulties, and done what at one time seemed to be impossible. There is no escaping the very obvious fact that Providence has smiled on us thus far, and we are grateful. We have reared a building of stone, and smiled on us thus far, and we are grateful. We have reared a building of stone, and this is our Ebenezer. As Samuel said, so do we: “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”.

It would be interesting to know how many churches there are which bear the name “Ebenezer”. There are many in our denomination. It is a good name. It has a rich significance.

Evidently, individuals may set up their Ebenezers, for you remember that in the beloved old hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”, the second stanza runs:

“Here I raise my Ebenezer,

Hither by Thy help I'm come,
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home".

How It Came To Be

Let us not now take time to recall the wishful thinking, the misgivings, the surprises, the conferences, the self denials that preceded the realization of our hope. But here it stands --

1. The Product of Close Unity of Spirit

Samuel issued the order: "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh" and they gathered together. It was a united Israel that was ready on that eventful day. For effective work, there must be unity and coordination. That is true of the human body -- every organ and limb must be able to function. That is true of the human body -- every organ and limb must be able to function. That is true of the individual soul: "Unite my heart to fear they name" (Ps. 86:11). Paul said, "This one thing I do" (Phil. 3:13). The same is true of any organization. That has been signally true of this church.

2. The Product of Dedicated Effort

Mere unity of spirit is not enough. There must be a readiness to work and to give. An outstanding characteristic of this congregation is the willing response given every request made of any member. Each says that he is willing to try. The funds that have gone into this building have not come easily, but they have come willingly. And every giver feels that he or she has an equity in this structure. It is his church: her church.

3. The Product of the Spirit of Christian Helpfulness

I do not see how we could possibly have done this without the help of our friends. I am sure we could have had a church of some kind, but it would not have been this church. "A friend in need is a friend indeed." It is our firm purpose to do our best to make those who have encouraged us by their generosity to feel that they made no mistake. To those of you who may be here today, let me say, Here it stands, a monument to your beneficence.

4. The Product of Divine Favor

This is not supplementary to the foregoing, but identical with it all. It is God who works in us both to will and to do. It is the Lord who raises up friends to a needy cause. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

To What Purpose?

As the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the land of Canaan through the divided waters of the Jordan River, twelve men, one from each tribe, were commanded to take from the bed of the river twelve large stones, and deposited on the shore, to be used as a sort of

monument to the leadership of God. Children of the future would ask their fathers, saying, “What mean ye by these stones?” This would give occasion to tell of the miraculous crossing of the river.

We might ask ourselves today, “What mean we by these stones?”

1. It stands for that which is lovely in life.

A New York minister (John Hays Holmes), some years ago (1948) preached a sermon, later published, on the “Ten Most Beautiful Words in the English Language”, chosen by himself, on a three-fold basis of the sound of the word when spoken, the meaning of the word, and the company the word has kept in the thought patterns of the race. Here are the words he chose: Love, truth, beauty, goodness, hope, peace, humanity, commonwealth, democracy, brotherhood. As I scanned the list, I thought, the church stands sponsor for every one of them. The minister named, by way of contrast, some ugly words: Hate, lust, bigotry, pride, lies, war, sin. Well, the church is definitely opposed to all of these.

So, when I look at a church building, I am reminded that there is an institution that stands for that which is lovely in life. It should in such cases be the embodiment of loveliness. In an age when utilitarian aims are dominant, it is not easy to have consideration for beauty. But there is no place where regard for beauty is more fitting than in the church. The church building should itself be a thing of beauty.

2. It stands for God and his redemptive work in the world.

A few years ago (1949), David E. Lilienthal, Chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, made a telling commencement address at Michigan State College, East Lansing. He said, “Neither the atomic weapons, nor any form of power and force, constitutes the true source of American strength. Nothing could be more misleading, nothing could be farther from reality, nothing could be more dangerous to the future security of our nation, or the peace of the world, than this myth... We are a people with faith in God, with a deep sense of stewardship to our Creator, the Father of us all; and when that is no longer strong within us, we are weak and we are lost, however heavily armed with weapons, even atomic weapons, we may be”.

He was right. I believe that with all my heart. If I did not believe it, I would be doing something else.

“It is our hope that as the years come and go, there shall come to cluster about these walls some of the hallowed memories of profound experiences. Bishop John M. Moore of the Methodist Church has described the church of his dreams.” Perhaps it is also the church of your dreams:

“This is the church of My Dreams,
A Church adequate for the task,
The church of the warm heart,
Of the open mind,
Of the adventurous spirit;
The church that cares,

That heals hurt lives,
That comforts old people,
That challenges youth:
That knows no divisions of culture or class,
No frontiers, geographical or social,
The church that inquires as well as avers,
That looks forward as well as backward.
The church of the Master,
The church of the people,
The high church, the broad church, the low church,
-- High as the ideals of Jesus,
-- Low as the humblest human;
A working church,
A worshipping church,
A winsome church;
A church that interprets the truth in terms of the truth,
That inspires courage for this life and hope for the life to come:
A church of all good men,
The church of the living God.”

(Quoted by AH Gage, in “Increasing Church Attendance”, p. 120)

The Source of Strength

Minden, LA

April 30, 1939

“And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.”

1 Samuel 7:17

Samuel was one of the finest characters of the Old Testament history. Affairs were in a deplorable state when he came on the scene of action. The people were more or less under the domination of the Philistines, who had laid waste Shiloh, taken the ark of the covenant, and thereby disrupted the religious life of the people of Israel. As a matter of fact, the religious observances of Israel had already become mere formalities. There was corruption and iniquity even among the religious leaders.

The Ark had not proven to be a very desirable acquisition for the Philistines. It brought trouble, and so they were very quick to get it off their hands. It was finally brought to Kirjath-jearim, where for 20 years it remained in the home of Abinadab.

It was apparent that if the situation was to be dealt with properly, certain things must be accomplished: The people must be aroused from their discouragement. They must be led to have more morale and unity of spirit. They needed to be brought back to the observance of the law. They needed to be brought back to the religion of their fathers, and to faith in the God of Israel rather than in the gods of the peoples of that land.

Samuel was the man for that situation. He was a man of splendid character. He had been trained in the knowledge of the law and the will of God. He had gifts of leadership and speech. He was consecrated wholly to the service of God.

So, he set about his work of welding a nation together and bringing order out of chaos. He performed several functions: He was judge, in the sense that he exercised authority as an administrator and that he directed and ordered the affairs of the people. He was a teacher, and instructed the people, especially those who assisted him in the conduct of the business in hand. He was a prophet-preacher, and stirred the people by his eloquence and force.

We have given us in one verse in this chapter (vs. 3) the substance of his preaching. His message seemed to be fourfold: (1) Return unto the Lord with all your hearts. Visible signs of religion were absent. The people had to a large extent lapsed into idolatry. The prophet-preacher Samuel called upon the people to return to the Lord with all their hearts.

(2) Put away the strange gods, Baalim and Ashtaroth, heathen divinities. This meant also surrendering observance of heathen festivals and their amusements and lusts.

(3) Prepare your hearts unto the Lord. There needed to be heart-searching and consecrations. The work of adjustment requires both effort and time.

(4) Serve him only. There can be no such thing as divided loyalty in religion. People still flirt with the idea that they can “believe in all the religions”.

The people were evidently stirred and aroused. They became enthusiastic. They gathered at Mizpeh. The Philistines did not think that looked good. So they came against the people of Israel. But they were put to flight. This resulted in the erection of the stone, Ebenezer, and the restoration of land to Israel.

Then Samuel settled down to the peaceful promotion of his work of unification and organization and indoctrination. He made a circuit as judge -- to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh. Then he would return to Ramah, his home. It was there that he was born, there he lived, and there he was buried.

The altar was the place of sacrifice and prayer. Back in patriarchal times it was customary for the men of God to build altars wherever they went. Noah and Abram and Jacob and Moses built altars for the worship of the true God. It is suggested that had the central place of worship been in operation, the altar at Ramah might have been regarded as unnecessary. But in those chaotic days, it was the necessary thing. Worship must be maintained. Prayer had a large place in the life of Samuel.

It is easy to see how it was that Samuel maintained his courage and poise and wisdom. After making his circuit, he would return to Ramah, where he had his altar.

Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, of India, wrote the words of that hymn we sometimes sing -- The first stanza runs like this:

“In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus’ side!
Earthly care can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.”

Indispensable Faith

The trouble with Israel was that the people had lost faith, lost faith in their leaders and lost faith in their God.

Nothing so disintegrates a people as loss of faith. That might in a word point out the trouble with the world today. Nations have lost faith in one another. One national leader is saying that you cannot depend on what leaders of another nation say. What they do seems to be so much at variance with what they say. Therefore we have the greatest armament race on that the world has ever seen. Alliances are being formed, but those who form them are not so sure that they will hold. How vulnerable such nations are!

Faith is so much a part of everyday life that we cannot do without it. There is the matter of driving along our highways. We move on at a rapid rate of speed, along the right side of the black line, while others are shooting past us at rapid speed. We have faith that these people will observe the rules of safety. There are a few, however, who disregard those rules to such an extent as to make us uneasy. But without faith, travel along the highways would be quite different.

Only within the past day or two, I have noticed people crossing crowded thoroughfares in cities -- pedestrians. With the change of traffic lights, the groups move forward. There may be coming down the street a car or two, at high speed, which manage to stop suddenly at the intersection. The group of pedestrians seem to be sure that the drivers will act in proper time and that the brakes will hold. The less confident of us, hold back.

Men over the country still talk about conditions. You ask a man what he thinks is the trouble with economic processes. He might reply, "Capital has no faith in the Administration".

I feel pretty sure that this loss of faith has invaded religious realms. In fact, the church seems to be suffering from a lapse of faith. I wonder what you would find if you were to take an inventory of your own religious resources. One of the pathetic things of life is that so often we do not realize our loss of faith until a crisis arises. Then it is too late.

The Indispensable Altar

The altar at Ramah was essential to the life of Samuel and also to the life of the people of Israel. For altars are essential to faith.

When a man finds that he has had disturbances in the area of religious faith, he may conclude that it is due to the fact that he has thought too much. A very simple minded woman told me not long ago that while she wanted her children to come to Sunday school, she would not be interested in the church, as she had read so much about those things she use to believe in. Poor woman! She didn't give evidence of having read much of anything. Furthermore, I suspected that the trouble was not in her reading but her living. It most often is not because we think too much about God and the Bible and the teachings of Christianity that we have trouble with our faith, but because we think too little.

The altar stands as the symbol of meditation, communion, prayer, worship. These are indispensable to true faith. Without them, life becomes frivolous, superficial, empty, aimless, shallow. We easily become the prey of superstition, popular isms and fancies. We drift off into commitments to pursuits that will for the moment at least relieve us of boredom and make us forget ourselves.

It is unfortunate when the altar is not present in our lives. Too many people have no altar -- no altar at home, no altar at church, no private altar. They never stop to reflect, never stop to pray, never stop to get their bearings.

Many of you may have heard of Frank Higgins, known a generation ago as “The Lumberjacks Sky Pilot”. A rough lumberman spoke of him as “the man who showed us our dirt and gave us the love of God for a wash”. Once a clerk in a Minnesota boarding house asked Higgins if he were not tired of his job. The Pilot was crawling into his hay-filled bunk after a thirty-mile walk through the snow. “I wouldn’t exchange my job for the best congregation in the land,” he replied. As Higgins turned over to go to sleep, the clerk said, to himself, “He has something I wish I had”.

Samuel had something I am sure the people of Israel wished they had. He at least stirred them to action and to unity and to worship. We need more Samuels today in all departments of the work of the world.

Ideals that Mar or Make Us

October 30, 1938

“We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the other nations.”
1 Samuel 8:19,20

The entire chapter is taken up with the request of Israel for a king. Samuel had been a great judge. During his judgeship, they had won victories over their enemies, the true religion had been revived, they had come to enjoy prosperity, educational institutions had been established -- the schools of the prophets. Samuel had been a great unifying influence in the nation. But he was getting too old -- probably about 70 years of age.

So a delegation waited upon Samuel and made the request for a king, like the other nations: There were reasons that seemed good and sufficient.

1. Samuel was getting old.
2. Samuel's sons would not make good rulers, as they were corrupt, and there was the possibility that they might succeed their father.
3. Other nations around had kings, and they seemed to be so stable because of that fact. The same idea seems to occur to modern democracies as they see the dictator nations gathering strength.
4. Israel saw a cloud arising in the East, the Ammonites, which must be repelled.
5. They felt that the unity which Samuel had begun should be completed.

The request was granted, for Samuel took the matter to the Lord. The Lord indicated that the request indicated the best that the nations were prepared for. A perfect government can be given to a perfect people. Democracy is for a people capable of governing themselves. Some nations are not capable of such a form of government. China was made a democracy but too soon.

It is not our purpose to deal with forms of government and their relative values. But we want to talk of one of the reasons given for the desire for a king. They wanted to be like all the other nations.

1. There is need for independence of thought and action in working out our destiny.

Some time ago, I saw an article in a popular weekly (Liberty) by Cecil B. De Mille in which he names “the ten greatest fools of history”. He named Judas, and Samson, the common soldier who slew Archimedes, George III of England, and the nonentity who conceived the idea of the Children's Crusade, and others.

There have been many in this world who seemed to their generation to be fools, but who have proven to be geniuses. Paul said, "We are fools for Christ's sake".

Edison and Columbus. The men who worked at the airplane. Morse and Watts and Hudson. The world has been blessed by a noble company of fools.

I have just been reading Eastman's short biography of Leonardo da Vinci, known best for his painting, "The Last Supper", and the "Mona Lisa". But he was not only a famous painter. He was also a sculptor, scientist, mathematician, military engineer, civil engineer, geographer, astronomer, anatomist, botanist and chemist. He lived in a world of superstition, ignorance, corruption. The education of the day consisted of acquiring knowledge secondhand. Instead Leonard learned to depend upon experience and observation. He sought great men of independent minds and learned from them. He divorced himself completely from the traditional methods. He had capacity for observation, a curiosity for more facts. He strove for perfection. His genius was reflected in the lives and works of such men as Michelangelo and Raphael, who learned much from him.

2. One's Ideals should be worthy of emulation.

We have our ideals, even though we may not be conscious of that. There are people who attract us and who furnish us with standards of life.

Guy de Maupassant's story of the "Diamond Necklace". A pretty, charming young lady married a petty clerk who drew a small salary. She suffered, feeling herself born for delicacies and luxuries, but doomed to dingy quarters. She allowed her mind to dwell on those things. She craved clothes and jewels. She wept over her lot.

One day her husband brought home an invitation to a very important social affair. She was not delighted. She had nothing to wear to such an occasion. The husband thought the dress she wore out to the theatre was nice enough. They decided to use the 400 francs saved up for a dress for her.

As the day for the ball approached, the wife became despondent. Nothing to wear with the dress. What about roses? They thought of jewels of Mrs. Forestier.

The subsequent story of how they were lost. They proved to be imitations.

3. God's standard rather than man's should be given preference.

Unwelcome, But Irrepressible, Telltales

Minden, LA

March 9, 1924

“What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

1 Samuel 15:14

Having just studied this period of Biblical history in your Sabbath school lessons, you are familiar with this incident in the life of King Saul. As someone has put it, “Saul tried to play a double game with the man of God” -- meaning Samuel. There are still some who seem to feel that if they are successful in deceiving the preacher everything will be well with them. As a matter of fact, it does not matter one way or the other whether the minister is aware of people’s inconsistencies. God is the judge and the executor. We may be sure that in the day of judgment there will be no mistrial or whitewashing. The evidence will all be there and the Judge will have all the facts.

But even the minister knows more of people’s inconsistencies than they may think. So do also the rest of one’s acquaintance. There is an old saying to the effect that “murder will out”. After we have indulged in some form of meanness, there will generally be something that will give us away. There is almost humor in the situation described in the 15th chapter of 1 Samuel. Saul came boldly forth to declare to Samuel that he had “performed the commandment of the Lord”. Then you can hear what seems to be an unusual bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle. No doubt Saul thought that he had never heard so much bleating and lowing in his life. They gave Saul away.

I do not doubt that there are many people going on with their inconsistent living, without being aware that their fellow men are beholding the telltale evidences of their wrong doing. Men may think that they are shrewdly getting by with their rascality, when as a matter of fact they are deceiving no one but themselves.

What astonishes one most of all is the apparent conviction that some have that they can deceive Almighty God.

One of the most picturesque characters in the Old Testament is Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, who was called to prophesy in the northern kingdom. Clad in rude garments such as were common among his compeers, he came into the streets of the capital city, at the time, probably, of some festival, and arose to address the large crowd which had come to worship at the holy shrine. As we imagine this scene, we can easily surmise that consternation was created when they saw this odd looking stranger arise to speak, which became intense indignation when they began to apprehend the character of his message.

So long as Amos was pronouncing doom upon other nations, there was no protest. But the indignation and fury of the people were aroused when he declared that certain doom also awaited Israel for her sins.

We can hear the people laugh in derision as they say to Amos, "Look at these crowds, who come up to worship at the sanctuary. Think of the splendor of our worship. Listen to the volume of praise that ascends to heaven. Open up the sacred chest and note the wealth of our offerings to God. No one but a fanatic, a madman, a seeker after notoriety, would say that we are not pleasing God".

To this we hear Amos respond that God says, "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings, and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols" (5:21-23).

What is the matter, Amos? Why is this not pleasing to God?

"For the reason that you are guilty of at least three grievous sins: oppression of the poor, immorality, and intemperance" (See 2:6-8). If worship is to be acceptable, 'let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream'".

The cries of the oppressed poor and the noise of their sinful revels were as the bleating of the sheep which sounded so loudly in the ear of God that prayers and praises could not be heard.

One reason why I believe the world is getting better is that there is a growing public conscience regarding the social ills of humanity. We are coming to understand that offerings and prayers and hymns do not reach to heaven so long as there are telltale evidence of our disobedience. There is no denying the fact that even Christians of our days have far to go before they conform fully to the divine standard. But the social injustices of a few decades ago are no longer tolerated in a decent community.

No one but an enemy of the church believes that the character of Eldon Parr, in "The Inside of the Cup", or that of Dr. Strong in the "Calling of Dan Mathews", represents the type of official in the church of our day. The leaders in our churches today are not perfect men and women, nor do they claim to be such. But they do not derive their income from the rent of saloons and brothels, nor from paying starvation wages, or taking advantage of the unfortunate.

However, it is not my purpose today to extol the virtues of church members. It is rather to lead church members and others to reflect upon their ways of living. Instead of trying to discover the mote in the eye of our brother, let us give attention to the beam in our own. To change the figure to that of our text, Let us be sure that there is no incriminatory bleating of sheep around our own premises before we direct attention to the suspicious evidences of another's inconsistency.

John Ruskin, in "Crown of Wild Olive", says, "We are impudent enough to call our beggings and chantings 'Divine Service'; we say 'Divine Service' will be performed at eleven o'clock'. Alas, unless we perform Divine Service in every willing act of our lives, we never perform it at all. The one Divine work -- the one ordered sacrifice -- is to do justice; and it is the last we are ever inclined to do".

We wonder sometimes if the continuous absence from the house of God is not due to a consciousness of the inconsistencies in lives.

The empty seat in the sanctuary has its telltale message. It is a message of absorption in business or pleasure. It may tell of willful neglect of religious matters. It may tell of love of the present world. It may speak of discord, or grievances held against one's brother.

Helping with the work of the church. Excuses. But there is time for other things. At the theaters and centers of amusement you can hear the bleating of the sheep.

Contributing to the support of the church. I know a man who was used to give as a reason why he could not support more liberally the Lord's work that he was so deeply in debt. "When I get out of debt," he would say, "my subscription will be larger." It was later learned that this man was in debt for investments he was making for speculative purposes, and that when he paid up one indebtedness he immediately made another.

Are you an honest man, then why this extravagant way of living? Are you a total abstainer, then why this redness of eyes and trembling hand? Are you a pure woman, then why the manner and dress that would lead one to think otherwise? Do you believe in the fatherly care of God, why worry as though there is no God? The remark of Luther's wife that God is dead.

The church at Sardis: "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).

Church dissension.

Denominational antipathies.

The Leech of the Soul

Minden, LA
Minden, LA

June 2, 1929
May 5, 1940 (rewritten)

“Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.”
1 Samuel 15:23

Robert Louis Stevenson, Scotch writer of the last half of the 19th Century, has described, in his essay on “Old Morality”, the career of a brilliant fellow undergraduate:

“Most beautiful in person, most serene and genial in disposition... a noble figure of youth, but following vanity and incredulous of good; and sure enough, somewhere on the high seas of life with his health, his hopes, his patrimony, and his self-respect, he miserably went down.”

This tragic experience, all too common, has been nowhere more conspicuously exemplified than in the life of Saul, the first king of Israel.

Recall the scene of his entrance upon the career of leadership of a great people.

It was in the little village of Mizpah in the tribe of Benjamin. A great host of people has assembled -- from Simeon in the south, from Asher and Naphtali in the extreme north, from Reuben and Gad across Jordan, and from all the tribes in between. They have come to select a king. It is a day for which the people have long waited. Samuel the prophet is presiding. He tells the people that their desire for a king would that day be complied with, although it was not a wise course.

The choice is made by lot, in three castings. In the first tribe of Benjamin is chosen; in the second, the family of the Matrites; in the third, Saul, son of Kish, is named.

As soon as Saul could be brought from the baggage where he was in hiding from embarrassment, he was presented to the people. He was a splendid specimen of manhood. He is “higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward”. There “is not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he”. He is the “glass of fashion and mould of form”, “the observed of all observers”. Even Samuel is carried away with the kingly appearance of the new king. He says, as he introduces Saul to the people, “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen that there is none like him among all the people”. And all the people shouted, “God save the king!”

Robert Browning has been regarded by some as being the greatest dramatic poet since Shakespeare. Browning wrote a famous poem about Saul. The story of Saul evidently deeply interested Browning. He puts these words into the mouth of David, who you remember came and sang to Saul during the days of his rule in Israel:

“Lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine,

And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combined --
On one head all the beauty and strength, love and rage...

.....
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them -- all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature, King Saul!"

From this occasion (the beginning of his reign) pass over a period of some 30 years. Go to Endor, a little village some 50 miles north of Mizpah. Saul is here, but no admiring throng. Only three people are with him -- two men whom he brought with him and the witch of Endor. Saul had misgivings. He has seen the host of the Philistines, his enemy. He is desperate. He has felt driven to seeking help from those whom he condemned in the days of his strength -- the wizards. He requests an interview with the departed Samuel. To the witch's surprise, as well as Saul's, Samuel came forth at the call of the woman. "Why hast thou disquieted me?" asked the prophet. Saul answers: "I am sore distressed for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth no more by prophets, nor by dreams; therefore, I have called thee, that thou mayst make known unto me what I shall do". Samuel has no comfort to offer. He tells Saul that God has rejected him as king, and that the following day will witness his defeat, the death of himself and his sons, and the ruin of his dynasty. Saul prostrates himself on the ground, for his calamity is infinitely worse than he even imagined.

It could then have been said even more fittingly of Saul than of Caesar:
"O mighty (Saul), dost thou lie so low?
Are all they conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well!"

The Repudiation at Gilgal

One will not understand the contrast in the scenes at Mizpah and Endor without a glimpse at the happenings at Gilgal, where Samuel met Saul, flushed with victory over the Amalekites. He had failed to carry out the command of God to destroy all. He had substituted his own will and desire for the will of God. He had showed himself perverse, defiant, thereby revealing his unbelief. One who was seemingly so modest when chosen king, had in so short a time become self-sufficient. Instead of carrying out the will of God, he was carrying out his own. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king".

This did not mean that Saul was immediately dethroned. He went on for some time as the apparent king. But another was soon anointed to eventually supplant him. From this time on, the course of Saul was one of decline.

That which was said to Saul at Gilgal, could be said to many, many people of our day. There are not many kings in the world, relatively speaking. But there are noble possibilities in every life. Man is called to realize those noble possibilities. If he would be obedient to the counsel of the Lord, he could be what he has been called to be. But all too often, by rejection of the Lord, men and women become absolute failures.

We might as well face the fact that the root of the trouble is sin in the heart. It is the trouble with all men.

Imperceptible in Beginning

That which brought about the downfall of Saul was present with him from the beginning. The act of sparing Agag and the best of the oxen, sheep, and other things contrary to the command of God was but the outcropping of a spirit that was present from the beginning and which gradually grew in its power and daring.

The boll weevil has been called a “billion dollar bandit”. It has cost this country millions of dollars. One may have a splendid stalk of cotton and many blooms, giving promise of rich fruitage. Bolls may form on the stalk and never open, because they harbor within an insect known as the boll weevil. I have been told that usually the eggs of the weevil are deposited in the bloom of the cotton and are there when the boll is formed. For a time the presence of the invader is not perceptible. But soon the sad fact is known. Failure is inevitable.

There are souls which are harboring the weevil of sin. At first, it is not perceptible. But eventually the presence becomes apparent.

One may have within him a leech that drains the lifeblood of his soul. Envy, jealousy, covetousness, sensuality, selfishness, pride, egotism.

Carl Sandburg has some lines as follows:

“There is a wolf in me --
There is a fox on me --
There is an ox in me --
O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie inside my ribs.”

These are not so apparent at first. Wild animals are docile in their infancy, but become vicious in their maturity. Such tendencies are evident in our natures.

Deceptive in Operation

The Greek word for sin is “hamartia”. It means a “bad shot”. The Greek attitude towards sin was that of one who simply makes a bad shot and then goes on thinking about the next shot. But sin is something that haunts one, it is irreparable. It is not something one can forget and be done with it.

It is difficult to think that gross evil exists in a setting of attractiveness. Saul was good to look at, but a sinner. Many human beings have had the same characteristics. Good qualities often divert attention from the bad.

The deceptiveness of sin is seen even in its confession. Saul acknowledged his guilt. But the spirit of true repentance was absent. A dead body may be intact and complete. So a confession. It is action which shows the genuineness of repentance. Later in life, Saul repeats this confession (26:21). There came a time when even the formal confession vanished from his lips.

A little girl was playing one day in Central Park, New York, when a great St. Bernard came bounding along and stopped at her side and barked furiously. She burst out crying, and nothing her mother could do would pacify her. "See," her mother said, "the dog has stopped his barking. Why don't you stop your crying?" The little girl looked around at the dog and still sobbing said, "Yes, mother, but the bark is still in him".

Our confessions often leave the bark still in us.

That was true of Saul.

Tragic in Result

"Be sure your sin will find you out," one of the most solemn words to be found in all the Bible.

A Miss Brickdale painted a picture about the beginning of this century entitled "Rosamond". Henry II has just visited her, clandestinely, as she works at her spinning wheel. As he leaves a red thread becomes attached to his spur. This thread becomes a clue to the justly indignant cruel Queen. Rosamond lived not long afterwards.

Benedict Arnold had excellent qualities. But his was a damaged soul. He is said to have once asked a captain what the Americans would do to him if he were captured. The captain replied: "I believe they would first cut off your lame leg which was wounded in the cause of freedom and virtue and bury it with honors of war, and afterwards hang the rest of your body on a gibbet". Remember the vacant niche on the monument at Saratoga, and the shield without a name in the assembly hall at West Point.

Aaron Burr was deeply stirred when a revival was held at Princeton. He called on the President of the institution for advice. "I have made up my mind to consider the claims of Jesus Christ. What would you advise?" he asked.

The President replied: "I would wait until the excitement of the revival is over and then I would think it out carefully". "That is exactly what I will do." He probably never gave it further serious consideration.

Let us make the prayer of David: "Search me O Lord and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting".

Where the Eyes of God are Turned

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX

May 17, 1925
July 13, 1947

“The Lord looketh on the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7

A contract is here made between outward appearance and the heart. It is here declared that it is man's custom to prefer the former, but the eyes of the Lord are turned towards the latter. A commentator observes that in his opinion there is no idolatry as extensively indulged in as that of the outward appearance. We are willing to sacrifice a great deal for the sake of appearance. We spend a great deal of time in improving the outer man, but seriously neglect the inner man. There are institutions, some of which are even called colleges, which give attention more to the outer development than the cultivation of the mind.

We soon learn that the greater values lie beneath the surface. Gold, diamonds, oil and the like are not to be discovered by beholding the outward appearance. We might think, and perhaps often do think, that one who lives in a perfect physique must have a beautiful soul. Such isn't true, as we soon discover when we become acquainted with the soul. Cleopatra was not the only person whose beauty was only skin deep.

On the other hand we go on asking, “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” Can any great soul come from unattractive surroundings? Plato is said to have compared Socrates to the earthen vessels used by the Athenian apothecaries on the outside of which were painted grotesque figures of apes and owls, but within which were to be found precious balsams. When we get to where we can realize that the greater and more desirable possession is a good heart, we have made progress in our estimates.

I have no doubt that the distinction primarily intended here is that to which we have already referred -- that between the outer and the inner man. In such a distinction, I presume that the term “heart” stands for all that one is beneath the surface -- intellect, learning, culture, ideals, stability, dependableness, and the like. But there is another distinction that is made in a closer analysis of the inner man. The scriptures make much of the distinction, and we are justified, I believe, in giving this interpretation to the passage.

The usual psychological distinction makes the term “heart” refer to the feelings and the emotions, as distinct from the intellect (the faculty of knowing) and the will (the faculty of doing). Heart is made to refer to affection, passion, sentiment.

Do you suppose it would be correct to say God had a preference for the heart in this sense? Do you think that God gives first consideration to one's affections, sentiments, feelings,

rather than to one's knowledge or one's power of will? I think so. And there is a reason. The heart is the motive power of life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

We know very well that we feel confident that it will be well with those who have the right kind of sentiments, who love the right kind of things. Why? Because we know that sentiment and affection determine courses of action.

There are times when people do go contrary to their feelings. They enter upon enterprises distasteful to them, and they very often do little in the undertaking, because their hearts are not in the work. When one begins to lose interest in the work that he is doing, it soon becomes apparent in the quality of work he is turning out.

Therefore, if this be true, we might reasonably expect that our Lord is very observant of our affections. He takes notice of that which we love, knowing that the rest will take care of itself. "The Lord looketh upon the heart."

It has been observed that Christianity differs from paganism in that it trusts emotion, while paganism distrusts it. One with only a superficial acquaintance with Christ's teachings knows that He gave great emphasis to love.

We still have occasionally distrust of religious feeling. When it is misdirected, it is difficult to control. But when rightly directed, it has power for good that is as effective. To banish the feeling because it is often misdirected, is to surrender the most priceless possession of life. One reason why we could only charge the truth with great emotion, the world would soon be in the sweep of a great revival. Remember the day of Pentecost.

The safest course is to develop thought, feeling and will with equal pace. Thus an equilibrium is preserved. When anyone of these is developed disproportionately we have an abnormal situation. The thought helps to give proper direction to feeling, and the will helps with its execution. The resultant feeling is that to which God directs his attention.

Peoples as well as individuals vary in their capacities and capabilities of feeling. Stolidness may have its value under certain conditions, but it will be noticed that those peoples who have fine intelligence charged with strong feeling are the peoples that are capable of greatest achievement.

The state of a nation depends upon its heart. We may make laws without end, but if the heart of the people is not favorable to orderliness, we will have disorder. We have lawlessness and Godlessness because of an unfavorable attitude of heart.

It is therefore perilous to neglect the development of the heart of people. I believe the nation is awaking to the fact that we are not giving enough attention to the development of the heart element in our boys and girls. No boy or girl is fitted for life who has been trained only in intellect. People should be taught to feel strongly and to have the right kind of sentiments. We should above all things awaken the spiritual life of our young people.

People who feel strongly go wrong, and when they go wrong they go far wrong. Witness the life of David. If, however, the general tendency of one's life is right, the mistake will be corrected. "I would thou wert cold or hot," said the Lord to Laodicea. "So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Because, then, it is true that the feeling makes potent all other powers and faculties of the individual. God looks on the heart. This great regulator govern of life must be right. And it is that to which our Lord directs his appeal. The work of the Holy Spirit is to give mankind the right kind of heart.

While it is true that we should be taught to feel strongly, that would be perilous unless we were taught what to feel strongly about. We do not need to be students of psychology to know that there is a scale of feelings, ranging from the low to the high. Our aim should be to practice and encourage the habit of giving preference to the higher feelings.

There is for instance the feeling associated with the satisfaction of hunger, and there is also the feeling associated with such things as truth, beauty and duty. In fact, we are told that the three sentiments which do most to dignify humanity are love of truth, sense of beauty, and sentiment of duty.

In the range of feelings, as Dr. Stalker reminds us, we have on the one hand selfish feelings, such as pride, envy, jealousy; and we have on the other such nobler sympathetic feelings as pity, benevolence, and public spirit.

A distinction made in the scriptures is contained in the injunction to set our affections on things in heaven rather than on things on the earth. When people love wealth rather than the public good, they are misdirecting their affections.

The Lord is seeking to win the hearts of men. "Son, give my the heart." It has been well said that religion should move from center in self to center in God. Knowing this, God gives attention chiefly to the heart, and operates chiefly in the realm of the heart.

Mr. Baldwin, recently prime minister of England, once declared, "There are four words of salvation for this country and for the whole world, and they are faith, hope, love and work". Faith, hope, and love are feelings that give impetus to work. And these feelings are given great prominence in the scripture. When they are rooted in Christ, they have a power to which nothing else is comparable.

It is the heart that brings into use the latent powers in one's life. Remember how love softens and refines the nature of any man or woman. If that be directed towards God, how ennobling is love. "The greatest is love."

Then let us turn on the current of feeling and illumine our dark inactive souls.

The Better Part of Valor

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX

March 16, 1924
January 16, 1938 (revised)
February 22, 1948 (rewritten)

“I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them.”

1 Samuel 17:39

Shakespeare put it into the mouth of Falstaff (Henry IV, Act V, Sc. 4, 1.121) the statement that “the better part of valor is discretion”.

Churchill says practically the same thing (Ghost: Book I, 1.233):

“Even in a hero’s heart
Discretion is the better part”.

Discreet David

This is the virtue which the lad David used when he came into the camp of the Israelites, and secured permission to go against Goliath.

You recall the scene that confronted David, who as the youngest of the eight (8) sons of Jesse had come from his father with a bushel of parched grain and 10 loaves of bread for the three oldest sons who were fighting with Saul and the Israelites against the Philistines. The Israelites and the Philistines were encamped on opposite mountain sides, and they had been in this position for some 40 days. During this time, Goliath, the hero of the camp of the Philistines, had been parading himself, he was ten (10) feet in height, and the shaft of his spear was the size of a weaver’s beam. He wanted to decide the issue by a personal encounter between himself and someone whom the Israelites might send out against him. No one would go out. The challenge remained unaccepted. David offered to take the responsibility. When he could not be dissuaded, they began to try to equip him for the undertaking. Saul attempted to place his armor upon him. But David was unaccustomed to the helmet, the coat of mail, and the sword. He found them cumbersome. “I have not proved them,” he said. He was not habituated to them. He went forth to meet the giant with his sling, an instrument which he had used with such telling effect in other encounters.

We know the story very well indeed, of how David slew the giant with the instrument in his hand that he knew how to use.

The Lure of the Untried

We are not always as wise as was David. We sometimes seem to think that something new and untried will give us luck. We take chance on the possibility of accomplishing

something unusual with new instruments. But discretion tells us that we ought not to venture out on a great undertaking relying on the unproven instruments.

In the time of crisis, let us beware of the fascination of the unfamiliar, the lure of the untried.

This is a factor with which we have to deal in every department of life.

In Government

In matters of government, we see the danger. Martin Niemoeller is a German who stands high in the estimation of good people. He has always thrown himself wholeheartedly into every task which he has accepted as his. He was famous as a U-boat commander for Germany during the first World War. Later, he became a Christian minister and pastor of a large and fashionable church in Berlin. When the Nazi movement was inaugurated, he espoused it. Later, he saw that it was not what he thought it to be. He found it demanding that the church be subservient to the government. He opposed this feature. He went to prison for it, and remained there for years. He was about to try something new, but discovered his mistake.

We are constantly facing the question as to whether we should make this change or that in government. That is true in this country. We may be too ready to sponsor changes to untried and hastily thought out ideas.

A hundred years ago this month, Karl Heinrich Marx, a German Jew, put out his "Communist Manifesto", a slender pamphlet bound in green. Little interest at the time was aroused in it. Since, the interest has grown. Today, the ideas set forth in it divide the world. The promises of Communism have been large, but it has led to a dictatorship and abridgement of freedom. Capitalistic democracy tried with success in this great land of ours. It is proven. But there are some who are trying to secure a change to the ideology of Marx. Young people in our colleges are frequently led into the espousal of this substitute for our present form of government.

In Medicine

Doctors are sometimes criticized because they are not inclined to use a remedy which has received wide publicity, some new discovery. But the teaching of experience has been that in the time of crisis, one had better stick to the tried and proven methods of treatment.

In matters of the instruments with which we work, Moses was asked "What is in thy hand?" A rod. Shangar used his oz-goad; Samson, a jawbone; Dorcas, a needle.

A high school student from Minden went down to Baton Rouge to represent his school in an athletic contest, and lost. He attributed his loss to the fact that he made the mistake of substituting a new and untried tennis racket for his own, at the last moment, because his old one had a broken string.

This is true in Personality. Be yourself, and do not imitate. Do not try to wear another's manner and habit.

In Friendships

In friendship, this should be done. There are those who play with the matter of friendship. It is a fascinating game.

Polonius' advice to his son:

“Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new hatched, unfledged comrade” (Hamlet I:3, 59f).

Efforts have been made in some states to retard the speed with which marriages are sometimes carried out by requiring an interval to occur between the issuance of the license and the performance of the marriage. This is to prevent the hasty, midnight marriages that are regretted very sorely thereafter.

In Commitments

So of our powers, talents, and training. So frequently, people change their course of life. They feel that they can do something else better than they can the thing they are trained in. Failure has come to so many. The tendency is strong to leave the familiar for the unfamiliar. Leaving the ministry, or going into the ministry, without due thought and mature judgment.

There are the great truths. People have left the truths in which they were reared for some new idea that seems to be plausible.

The quest which finds in the end that all the sages said is in the book our mothers read. People who go after the isms and fancies of the day.

Habits of sobriety and self control. Young people do not know all that has gone before. They start on courses that bring distress to themselves and to others.

In Matters of Faith

This can be best considered in relationship to particular doctrines:

God.

“Our God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal Home.”

Christ.

“To whom else can we go?”

Cross.

The centrality of the cross.
“O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee.”

What About Progressiveness

New ways must be considered and tried by experimentation. Let only the proven be tried in the crisis.

David and Jonathan

August 20, 1930

1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:14-17; 32-34; 2 Samuel 1:25-27

The friendship of Jonathan and David is one of the most remarkable and most beautiful of history.

As we review the history of it, we may say that the relationship is best seen by contemplating certain scenes:

Scene 1: David, fresh from his victory over the Philistine, Goliath, is ushered into the presence of the king, Saul. His manner attracts Saul. Their souls were knit. They made a covenant. Jonathan put his own robe upon David, and gave him his sword, bow, and girdle -- an act which among the ancients signified the highest respect and esteem. Saul is friendly.

Scene 2: Saul is decidedly unfriendly. Jonathan intercedes for David. For meanwhile Saul's jealousy has been aroused by the acclaim of the people. David had also been given the hand of Michal, Saul's daughter, in marriage. When jealousy reasserted itself and the death of David was ordered, Jonathan interceded and caused Saul to relent, and David returned to the king's court as before. But David was forced to flee again.

Scene 3: Jonathan and David meet secretly. At David's request, Jonathan promises to find out how the king feels toward David at meal and to let him know. They go out into the field and renew the covenant of friendship between them, and arrange about the signs of the arrows.

Scene 4: The shooting of the arrows telling of the anger of the king. The final parting of the friends.

Scene 5: David's lament over the death of Jonathan in the battle of Gilboa. "The Song of the Bow" (2 Samuel 1).

There was a difference between these young men, but there was a kinship of soul. They came from different stations of life.

Jonathan was the eldest son of the king, heir apparent to the throne, handsome, courageous, pride of the army, darling of the people. He had won victories for his father. He had womanly tenderness, loyalty, self-forgetfulness, and in this was David's superior. He did not have David's brilliant capacity. Jonathan stands out in noble lines when it is remembered that he knew that David was to succeed his father.

The subject of friendship has been exhaustively treated. The Greeks presented the ancient view. Cicero wrote his "De Amicitia", in which it is said that he drew heavily on the Greek, Theophrastus, for ideas. The ideals of Christianity have dispelled the halo of ancient friendships. Modern friendships have ends and motives not present in pagan society (ERE).

Classic friendships: Damon and Pythias
Achilles and Patroclus
Epaminondas and Pelopidas
Pylades and Orestes
Nesus and Euryalus
Socrates and disciples

Friendships in Old Testament:
Ruth and Naomi

Jonathan and David. No friendship on pagan soil can rival qualities displayed by these (ERE). "The best that Greece and Rome have to show of friendship pales beside this" (J.C. Shairp). "Some friendships are made by nature, some by contract, some by interest, and some by souls" (Jeremy Taylor).

Elisha and Elijah (2 Kings 3:11)
Isaiah and followers (Isaiah 8:6)

The Book of Proverbs gives some counsel regarding friendships: (ERE)

1. Prudence is required in choosing friends.
"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (13:20).
2. Friendship may prove closer and more enduring than natural relationships.
"A friend loveth at all times" (17:17).
"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (18:24).
3. Plain speaking is sometimes a duty and is better than flattery.
"Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (27:6).
4. A primary virtue in friendship is loyalty.
"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not" (27:10).
(Comp. Hamelt I:iii.62)
5. Intercourse is the life and soul of friendship.
"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man shapreneth the countenance of his friend" (27:17).

It has been charged that Christianity ignores friendship. But such is not the case. Jesus called his disciples friends. It is true that there was not there the element of equality. There was

the friendship between Paul and Timothy. Christianity has ennobled the motives and aims of friendship.

Youth is the golden period of friendship. They are easily formed and often easily broken. Friendships of youth should not be arbitrarily hindered, but wisely guided. College friendships are usually strong.

As to the number of friends, Aristotle held that a plurality of friends is neither possible nor desirable. The classical friendships were in pairs. But we can have more than one friend. The law of quality rather than quantity is the principle (ERE).

The types of friendships are (ERE):

1. Sentimental. Youth, shallow and romantic attachments. Feeling.
2. Intellectual. Congeniality of mental processes. Goethe and Schiller.
3. Religious. Not based on opinions or constitution, but on underlying religious experience. Rooted in God. Luther and Melancthon.

- 1 Friends must be friendly in deed. Must do something as well as make profession.
2. Must be unselfish. Love another as self. Jonathan.
3. Must have kindred moral qualities. Courage, emotions, generosity.
4. Must have kinship of soul. Affinity.
5. Must employ religion as basis.

The Indispensable God

Minden, LA

February 5, 1939

“But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

1 Samuel 30:6

There is no better way to discover the true nature of people than watching them act in the hour of crisis. An illustration of this is to be found in the cases of Saul, rejected King of Israel, and David, who was to be his successor. Both faced crises on the same day, or approximately so. The Philistines were pressing Saul and his army hard, and escape seemed impossible. Saul was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. In his extremity, he sought out a woman with a familiar spirit at Endor, a witch, and inquired of her the outcome of the crisis before him. On the other hand David, who had been dwelling in the land of Achish, King of Gath, after going to battle with the Philistines, was besought by the king to return to Ziklag, which place he had been given as an abiding locality. But when he came to Ziklag, David found that Amalekites had laid waste the city, taken his wives and children, and abundant spoil. David was distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him because of what had come to them. In that hour of supreme crisis, David, we are told, “encouraged himself in the Lord his God”.

This kind of thing happens every day. People experiencing the same kind of losses will resort to different kinds of means of finding satisfaction. One man finds satisfaction in expression of abuse and acts out of vindictiveness. Another finds comfort in communion with God.

The world is very much in debt to David and other of the saints of both the Old and New Testaments for their testimonies to the practical value of a belief in God. As we lie on beds of sickness and are prostrate over disappointments and losses, there are no words like the Psalms: “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”. Or, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations”. Or, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”. Or, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121).

Dr. S. L. Morris, in a published sermon, refers to the fact that it is sometimes said that the songs of David resemble somewhat the music of Beethoven. He says, “Th elatter often began on a minor key and then suddenly turning he mounted as upon the wings of an archangel and knocked at the very gate of Heaven”. Well, David often began with a cry of distress, but ended with a bounding note of triumph. For instance, there is the 13th Psalm: “How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? forever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?” But he ends the psalm by saying, “I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me”.

What We Mean By God

When a Humanist talks about God, he means the best that is in man. In the words of Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, "God is made (by Humanism) simply a name for the ethical ideal evolved by mankind, and attempts to draw its moral standards from the study of human behavior" (Forum, September, 1929). Those who follow this line of religious thought have thrown God aside.

For the life of me I cannot understand how intelligent people can look out upon this majestic universe in which we live and not believe in at least a Designer.

Some nine miles out from Pasadena, California, on the top of Mount Wilson is a famous observatory, which is said to have the biggest telescope in the world. The one to which I refer is a 100-inch wide instrument. Recently there was a likelihood of their getting a 200-inch instrument, and there was talk of a 1000-inch instrument to be installed within the next decade.

What wonders are seen by those who scan the heavens through these big instruments! No wonder these men are deeply impressed. Dr. Walter S. Adams, director of the observatory, says: "It is natural that astronomers should become humble and reverent; their work is with some of the greatest wonders of the Creator, and they better than most of us, realize the limits that have been placed on mortal man".

It has been said that our rainiest years have been invariably in periods of great "sun-spot" activity. These spots are whirls of heated gas moving across the face of the sun. Sun storms affect the earth, and also the other planets, particularly caused by disturbances in the great nebula Sagittarius, about which our sun and many others are revolving. But the Sagittarius is also revolving around some mysterious center in the Milky Way. And so the universe becomes incomprehensible.

One writer of a scientific book says, "If God should send one of his angels to look for this planet amid all the glittering hosts of stars, it would be like sending a child out to some vast desert to look for one particular grain of sand" (Quoted by H.T. Kerr, Un.Sem.Rev., April 1937, p. 211).

Some there are who look abroad and say they cannot believe because they do not see God. But that is a poor reason, for our senses are very limited in their capacities. There is sight, for instance. There are rays we cannot see at all. We cannot see the ultra-violet rays. That ray, while unseen, is powerful. No one has ever seen X-rays. So the senses of hearing, touching, smelling have great limitations. In fact, the portion of the things which register on our senses is so very small that we can be said to be only touching the very surface of things. But this is no reason for our not believing that there are not other rays, other sounds, other vibrations, other aromas. There are other ways by which we become convinced of the reality of such things.

I confess I am stirred to the very depths of my being when I reflect on the amazing stupendousness of it all. God's breath became condensed in the cold expanse of space. From that condensation came the elements of matter and their many combination, organic and inorganic. A portion of that created mass has been molded into our habitable world. We, human creatures, and other living things, are placed on this habitable world. We ride amid the stars, and circumnavigate the sun, swung by some mysterious force and held by some mysterious hand. The changes of the seasons come with unfailing regularity, and the day follows the night. We

may be 93,000,000 miles from the Sun, but by it we live and move and produce our products. Stars may be countless light years from us, but they glorify our nights like jewels nestling on blue velvet.

What a glorious environment in which to live, so immense in its proportions and so beautiful in its formations and so mysterious in its movements! I sincerely pity the man who can look out upon all this and still say that the only God he can find to worship is the best that is in man.

Well, it is not that kind of God that we think of when we stand up and say in the Apostles Creed, "I believe in God".

"God of the forest and fen,
God of the waste and the wild,
God of the heroes of men,
God of the heart of a child;

"God of the tempests and rain,
God of the doubt that began,
Born in the twilight of pain,
Deep in the heart of a man;

"God of the sun and the seed,
God of the whole and the part,
God of the great human need,
God of the penitent heart;

"God, it is thou whom we seek!
Stoop from the silence and see
Hearts that are weary and break,
Break with the longing for Thee" (Edyth Hinckley).

The God Whom Christ Revealed

It was in response to such longing on the part of God's creatures that Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal to man the nature and character of God. David had a great insight into the divine nature, and from him has come these great ideas and assurances which have comforted us as they comforted him. But it remained for our Lord to give us the fuller conception.

Jesus came saying that God is a Spirit. He so declared to the Woman of Samaria, who had the idea that God was more or less restricted to places and edifices. No idol can represent Him.

In spite of that revelation, we have since been entertaining the idea that God is a sort of superman, sitting on a throne high up in the sky, with flowing beard and scepter, occupied with writing down our deeds of wrong doing in a great book. When the astronomers explore the expanse above and talk of incomprehensible distances in the space about us, we ask one another

where God must be, then. He must be so far away he can't hear us when we pray, we begin to think.

But Jesus encouraged no such conceptions. He would have us know that God is all about us, in us, over us. He is a person, who knows, thinks, feels, understands. There is no need to cry aloud, for he knows our thoughts the instant they flash into our minds.

Jesus came saying also that God is Love. Probably here we have most trouble. We can't always see where love enters into the picture. Take the situation in David when he came back with his men to Ziklag. Saul was hunting him as an outlaw. In fact, he was beginning to despair, saying that he felt sure that Saul would eventually get him. He had taken refuge among the enemies of Israel, the Philistines. He was not wanted any too much by the Philistines. When they went out to battle, they asked him and his men to return home. But when they came back to Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had invaded the city, reduced his home to ashes, and had taken his wives and children to a nameless fate. He might have turned in bitterness to denounce the God who through his prophet had promised him the Kingdom and brought him from the peace and security of his Bethlehem home into all this unhappiness and hardship. But he did not. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

In one of his psalms, David says, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul". Then he adds, as he turned to God, "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living". As Christians since have been singing, he could have said,

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

Tolstoj, socialistic iconoclast and religious fanatic of Russia, said a good thing when he observed that "when you love a person, you do for that person what that person needs". There is something to ponder. Love needs at times to be stern. Love is frequently forced to exercise discipline. God loves us too well to allow us to have every fond desire and thereby degenerate into worthless creatures.

Our Present Need of God

Our need of vital faith in God is apparent for many reasons. I will mention two.

Faith in God furnishes the only valid basis for moral law. Dr. Vander Meulen (The Faith of Christendom, p. 41) tells of an American Tourist traveling in Europe who, when he paid the hotel keeper his bill, was asked, "Don't you want a receipt?" "Oh, no," said the American, "if God wills, I will be back in a week. You can give me a receipt then". "If God wills," smiled the hotel keeper, "do you still believe in God?" "Why yes," said the American, "don't you?" "No," said the hotel keeper, "we have given that up long ago." "Oh," replied the American, "well, on second thought, I believe I'll take a receipt."

You recall the story of Joseph, a slave in Potiphar's house in Egypt, when importuned by Potiphar's wife to do a very wrong thing. Why not? He was away from home, he was living a

slave's life. What had he to live for? Why not enjoy life as it comes? Why run the risk of encountering the vindictiveness of an infuriated woman? But he was kept from the wrong. He said, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)

In a day when standards are thrown to the winds and ideals are flouted, we need something to keep us true to the best.

Faith in God is the only adequate support in the hour of crisis. A certain president, Dr. Conant of Harvard, addressing the graduates at commencement, urged the necessity of evolving a solid philosophy of life as a means of facing the future unafraid. A man in a certain hospital, recovering from a serious and painful operation, peered at his minister through a mass of bandages and said, "Since I came to this hospital I have made a discovery that I shall not forget as long as I live. It is this: when a man comes up against the real issues of life and death, he needs something more than a philosophy of life -- he needs faith" (Bonnell: Pastoral Psychiatry, p. 92).

We read recently of a ship that was being terrifically battled by a storm at sea that was greater than any the experienced sailors had seen before. The report came back that everybody prayed. In times like that, a man needs more than a philosophy of life -- he needs faith.

We know so well the quiver that comes over the mortal frame of one who faces the necessity of undergoing an operation which may be serious. Every doctor knows that so often the balance between life and death is shifted by the peace of mind and composure.

There was a woman who had been through two operations and who then faced another very serious one. She said to her minister, "The very thought of being fixed for the operation drives me into a panic". There was a pallor on her face and her hands trembled. Her minister thought of David and what he had said: "I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). Then he said, "I think the Psalmist gives us a clue to his experience when he says a little later in the psalm, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them' (vs. 7). The woman said, 'I think I see now where my trouble has been.' When the time came, she did not have the nervousness that all had expected. She went through it all gloriously. Some weeks after, she said to her minister: 'I have never gone to bed at night after a happy day with a greater feeling of peace than was in my heart when I lay upon the operating table. God's presence was more real to me than that of the doctors and nurses. The last thought in my mind as the words of that text: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears".'

But let us now, while everything is balmy and life moves on like a song, prepare our hearts and minds for the crisis that will come. We never know how it will come. We may as well be sure that time and time again there will come the need, as it came to David, for us to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.

2 Samuel

The House of Obed-Edom

Prayer Meeting, Colonial, Dallas, TX

July 17, 1946

“So David carried it (the ark)...into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite...and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.”

2 Samuel 6:10-12

An old church officer within the memory of Dr. Chas. L. Goodell, when called upon for a prayer, would always use as one petition, “Make our homes like the house of Obed-Edom where the ark of God rested”.

We might engage for a bit in a little Bible history. It was in the days of Eli, High Priest and Judge of the people of Israel. He resided at Shiloh, a point about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, where the tabernacle was located, and in the tabernacle was placed the ark. Hannah brought little Samuel to Shiloh that he might grow up in the sacred environment. He resided in the quarters hard by the tabernacle. It was there that he received the call.

In the advanced age of Eli, there was a war between the Philistines and the people of Israel. The Israelites lost about 4,000 men. Alarmed at this, they decided to bring out the ark from the tabernacle as the symbol of the divine presence and thereby stimulate the people of Israel to new endeavors. The Philistines resolved to sell their lives dear, and fought hard, with the result that 30,000 were slain, among them the sinful sons of Eli, and worst of all, the ark of God was taken. This, you remember, was the occasion of the death of Eli, at the age of 98, 40 years of which he had judged Israel.

What was the Ark?

We might pause right at this point to ask, What was the Ark of God? It was a chest, 2 ½ cubits (3 ft. 9 in.) long; 1 ½ cubits (2 ft. 3 in.) broad; and 1 ½ cubits deep. It was made of acacia wood, overlaid inside and out of gold. The lid was solid gold, on top of which were two cherubim of gold, facing each other, and the space beneath their hovering wings was known as the mercy seat. This was the symbol of the divine presence.

Contents: The two tables of the Law given on Sinai (Deut. 10:2). There was later a golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod (Heb. 9:4).

It was placed in the Holy of Holies.

To have brought it out for such a purpose as that of trying to win a battle was a sacrilege.

The Ark among the Philistines

The ark was carried by the Philistines in triumph to Ashdod, one of their cities, where was a Temple of Dagon. The amazement of the worshippers, on the morrow, the idol was found lying on its face on the ground. They set it up. The next day, the idol was not only fallen again, but its head and hands were broken. Mice also destroyed their crops and hemorrhoids tormented their bodies.

From Ashdod, they took the ark to Gath, where the same plague broke out. They were at the point of moving it to Ekron, when the inhabitants protested.

On the advice of the priests, they decided to send the ark back in a new cart drawn by two milch kine, with a trespass offering of five golden mice and five golden emerods. If the cows of their own accord took the road to Beth-shemesh, then they would be certain that their misfortunes were due to the hostility of the God of the Israelites, otherwise it would be concluded that some chance had smitten them.

The cows took the road to Beth-shemesh. It was harvest time. The people looked up and with joy beheld the ark, for the first time in seven months. Priests were living there. They took the wood of the cart and built a fire and offered the cows as burnt offering to Jehovah. The five lords of the Philistines who had accompanied the procession returned to their country (1 Samuel 6:10-16).

Curious people of Bethshemesh approached the ark, and prying open the lid looked in to see what was in it. For this a considerable number was stricken with instant death. Messengers were then sent to Kirjath-Jearim, and the ark was sent there and placed in the house of Abinadab, and the son of Abinadab, Eleazar, was consecrated to keep it (1 Samuel 7:1,2). Kirjath-Jearim was located 11 miles west of Jerusalem. It remained in the house of Abinadab for 70 years: 20 years to the victory of Ebenezer, 40 years under Samuel and Saul, and 10 years under David.

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem

After David established his capitol at Jerusalem, he wanted to consecrate it with religious associations. So he decided to send to Kirjath-Jearim for the ark. It was placed in a new cart drawn by oxen, with Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, accompanying it. It was being escorted with great rejoicing. On reaching the threshing floor of Chidon or Nachon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark. In a moment he fell dead (2 Samuel 6:7). This filled David with alarm. The place became known as Perez-Uzzah (Disaster of Uzzah). He resolved to refrain from any other attempt to move the ark. It was carried aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.

Why was Uzzah smitten? For one thing, the process of moving was in violation of orders. It was to be carried by Levites (Num. 4:15; 7:9). David was careless here. Besides, Uzzah should have known the law. Uzzah was representative, hence his desecration was public.

There is too much steadying of the ark -- religion.

Obed-Edom received the ark. An act of courage. Recall its history. Yet he welcomed it and harbored it for three months. God is a consuming fire to those who treat him and his with irreverence.

Later, came and brought the ark to Jerusalem, with rejoicing. The 24th Psalm was probably used on the occasion.

The House of Obed-Edom

He was a levite, of the family of the Korathites. One of the family charged with the responsibility of bearing the ark. Called Gittite being a Gathite.

The ark was the symbol of God's presence. We have other symbols today. Our need to treat them with reverence.

Presence in the house of Obed-Edom was a blessing. Was a long time in the home of Abinidab, but no blessing is mentioned. One member of the family was charged with its care. The wife of mother often takes care of the religious interests of the family.

Religious mottoes on the walls do not make a religious home. It is easier to save a child than to rescue a prodigal.

The family altar is a great help to godliness. Daniel in Babylon.

Don't know whether it was in an exclusive section of the city, but it housed the ark of the Lord and that is enough to know.

Investments in Youth

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

June 8, 1941
September 9, 1956 (rewritten)

“Is the young man Absalom safe?”

2 Samuel 18:29

The other day, I was looking over a list of service club literature and one title caught my eye: “Investments in Youth”. Now, this piece of literature had to do with a service club project, that of providing scholarships, awards, and loans to select young people. That, of course, is a most commendable activity for a club to be engaged in.

I want to talk this morning about the investment of time and thought and energy and love and money in the all important enterprise of guiding the course of youth development. The returns of such investment are usually in the proportion of expenditure. Where we have delinquency, we usually find that there has been unwise, more often rather meager, investment.

It is not my purpose this morning to discuss the delinquency situation. We have always had juvenile delinquents. I doubt that we have any more today proportionately than we had fifty years ago. Those with mischief in their minds have greater resources at their command, and the newspapers provide more extended coverage of current happenings than ever before.

An Ancient Delinquent

There is one delinquent, however, whom I will discuss briefly. He lived nearly 3,000 years ago, in and around Jerusalem. He had every reason to do well in life, having superior personal qualities and unusual opportunities. But he brought sorrow and woe to himself and his father and his friends. I refer to Absalom, the third son of David, King of Israel.

Absalom was the son of a Gerushite princess, descendent of the heathen tribe which the Israelites had let remain in the land when they returned from the captivity in Egypt (Joshua 13:13). The mother, Maccaah, undoubtedly imparted some of her heathen ideas to her son. Absalom had a full sister, whom his half-brother Amnon mistreated; and apparently out of devotion to his sister he slew Amnon for the offense. Being unwilling to face his father, David, after this act of manslaughter, he fled to the highland fastness of his grandfather's court, and remained there for three years. But even after he returned to Jerusalem, his father would not see him for two years. This may have been for official reasons; for it is said that during those years, the heart of David yearned for his son, Absalom.

But Absalom became alienated from his father and he resolved to lead a revolt against his father. It might not be difficult to understand how such a thing as that could take place. During

Absalom's childhood, David was so very busy conquering his enemies and organizing his kingdom that he did not have time to give his family. Consequently, Absalom grew up in the unwholesome atmosphere of a polygamous palace. He must have been a very handsome and attractive and precocious lad. Court flatterers probably ruined him by too much attention. He probably got everything he wanted when he wanted it. He was trained in selfishness and willfulness.

For a time, he sowed undercover seeds of discontent among the subjects of his father. Then he led an open revival by having himself crowned king at Hebron. He advanced with his forces on Jerusalem; while David, heartbroken, led his smaller band across the Jordan. The forces of the two met in the forest of Ephraim, but the aged king remained at Mahanaim. He waited at the gate for the news of the battle. It was a scene that touches our hearts -- this father at the gate of the city. More anxiously concerned was he over the safety of his son than over the outcome of the battle.

Suggests Our General Solicitude

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" The question which David asked has reverberated down through the centuries. Every parent is anxious to know how his boy or his girl is getting along, whether he or she is in good health, doing well at their jobs, advancing in their studies. The concern extends to the moral well being of their children. Prayers go up for them every day in the family devotions. Some parents do not know where their boys are.

Many years ago, when I was a church secretary before entering the Seminary, a letter came from a mother living in a distant state asking Dr. Lingle, the pastor to try to locate her son from whom she had not heard for a long time. Her letters sent to the address she had were returned to her unclaimed. Dr. Lingle gave me the job of locating this young man. I went to the only address the mother gave. The boy was no longer there. Not knowing what else to do, I went to the police station and left an inquiry on a book provided for this purpose, stating that if anyone knew of the whereabouts of this young man, Dr. Lingle would appreciate having the information. A newspaper reporter came along, saw this item and made a story out of it. The next day, the young man himself called Dr. Lingle, saying that he was well and employed. Dr. Lingle urged him to sit down that very minute and write his anxious mother. He said he would do so immediately.

It is not an infrequent occurrence, when some unknown young man is killed in an automobile wreck, or found dead in some river, to have many inquiries come in from over the country for a description of the body.

But aside from this particular interest on the part of parents, there is a general solicitude felt by people generally as to the well being of the young manhood and the young womanhood of this nation, and of the world. There are many reasons why this should be so.

Some have this concern and are ready to seek the well being of youth because of their love for young people.

Others feel that an “investment in youth” of a city will assure a better place in which to live, for in the course of time the rising generation takes over the affairs of the city, and become members of our families. Perhaps the motive of self interest operates here.

I have known mothers and fathers who had the impulse to befriend every young man they came to know, because their own son had been befriended in some distant city.

Furthermore, we are “our brother’s keeper”, a divinely imposed obligation. The youth around us have a claim on our interest and encouragement. As Christians we have a special responsibility of ministering to our youth.

Basic Equipment

Someone might ask, What are the resources which a young man or a young woman needs to cope successfully with the issues of life? The young persons themselves would like to know what the requisites are.

You recall that Paul in Ephesians (6:10f) describes the armor of God which will enable one to stand: the girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, etceteras.

Youth is not safe without --

1. The undergirding of a great faith. Not a faith in things, in self, in fate, but in God. We sang today a metrical version of the 23rd Psalm: “The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want”.

2. Worthy commitments. As the psalmist said, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so”. One needs to have a church and go to it.

3. The strength of a clean life. When Lou Gehrig, a baseball player with a remarkable record, died some 16 years or more ago, Westbrook Pegler, newspaper columnist, had an article about him. Gehrig was still a young man when he died. Pegler spoke of the tributes that had been paid him by people everywhere. He “was given miles of white paper covered with the tenderest tributes for his obituary”. “There was no discount, no restraint.” What inspired all this? He was not given to showmanship. He was a frugal man. There have been other great ball players. “I find an attempt to honor Gehrig because he was a man of fine character, and this suggests that the human race must be in a rather bad way”. “Is character so rare that a good man merits such tributes merely because he has been good?” There are others who might be named. But what a power there is in a life of that type.

4. The power of worthy purpose. One needs to know where he is going, what he is trying to make of his life.

Areas of Operation

There are three principal areas in which youth receive the greater part of their training for life.

1. The Home. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, is quoted as saying, "The home is the citadel of American life. If the home is lost, all is lost."

Changing conditions have affected home life. Home life today is quite different from what it was a generation ago. We have occasion to refer often to the neglect of children by parents who go out to work. But we know that even those parents who are constantly with their children sometimes do not understand them. A little study of the changes to expect in a child's attitude as he passes from one period of life to another will be of great assistance to parents, who otherwise are perplexed at changes noted.

Absalom grew up in the wrong kind of home. David had no time for his children. Some modern fathers are like that, too.

2. The School. Time will not permit me to discuss this area of operation in the process of stabilizing the youth of our land. Since this is a time when boys and girls are taking off for college, I want to say a word about Christian higher education. Sometimes we are asked why churches maintain colleges and universities, when there are so many great state supported universities. The answer is that Christian colleges make a distinctive contribution to our way of life. We make an mistake if we let matters of curriculum, cost, and size of the institution determine the choice of the college we attend. Colleges have character as well as individuals. The character of colleges varies. The greatest factors in any college campus are not discoverable from a catalog. There are influences at work that shape a young person's whole personality. That explains why graduates of certain institutions have very noticeable qualities. I would say that in some of our institutions, the young person is not safe.

3. The Church. Upon this, I do not need to enlarge. But I do want to say this. Ever since we started our church here, I have wanted to have a thoroughgoing young people's program. I have in my ministry spent a great deal of time and effort in work with young people. But this does not qualify me to do work with young people now. Why? The mental processes, the interests, the language of young people today are different. I have seen some lame efforts of older ministers who tried to show that they were still young in spirit. It was almost pathetic. The young people thought it silly.

One motive in adding rooms to our church building is the desire to minister helpfully as a church to our youth. We had this in mind in the planning. But building alone is not sufficient. We must have adult leadership that is consecrated, dedicated, ready to give time and study to a constructive program.

There is today a clarion call to some one or more persons who would like to meet that challenge.

A fond young father, allowed to hold his first baby for the first time, made what was to him a distressing discovery: Junior had a soft spot on the top of his head. He said to his wife: "We must send for the doctor right away, our baby must have softening of the brain". "No," said the mother, "the doctor could not do anything about that. The soft spot is there to allow the brain room to grow. The bone has not completely set."

That is the real glory of youth. There is still room for the brain to grow, and opportunity for a new idea to find its way within. If it can get enough good ideas invested there, we may rest assured our youth will be safe.

Bringing Back the King

Minden, LA

July 14, 1929

“Why speak you not a word of bringing the king back?”

2 Samuel 19:10

The king here referred to was David. Absalom, his son, had just made a futile attempt to seize the throne of David. It had seemed that the time was ripe for such a venture on Absalom's part. Judah was perhaps disgruntled over the recognition given the ten tribes. David had gotten too old to worry over the minor individual complaints which a king usually had to deal with and Absalom assured each that if he were king the matter would receive attention. Absalom was a handsome fellow and won people easily. He moved about in an imposing manner.

The revolt came. David fled from the city to a place across the Jordan. In time the armies clashed, and Absalom was killed. Consternation reigned. No one seemed to know what to do. Then it was that a voice was heard saying, “Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” Such a word was spoken, and the king returned.

This is somewhat illustrative of the history of the human race. Man was established in his primitive estate, with God supreme. But there came a usurper into that happy estate and brought about an estrangement. He caused a revolt against the king. Since then the usurper has been controlling the hearts of men and women.

But on Calvary, the battle was fought out and heaven's representative, Jesus Christ, was triumphant. Satan was overcome.

In anticipation of that event, Christ established, or at any rate announced, his Kingdom. He had declared himself to be a King, and the domain of his rulership was to be his Kingdom -- which he declared to be a spiritual kingdom, beginning then, but ever growing, to which all peoples of earth might be admitted, and everlasting in duration.

Such a statement of doctrine does not coincide with the teachings of a few able Bible students of our time, like Dr. C.I. Scofield, editor of the Scofield Reference Bible, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, and others whose contributions may be found in the Sunday School Times -- exponents of what is known as the Premillenarian Doctrine. As I understand it, these brethren hold that it was the purpose of Jesus to establish his kingdom at his first advent, but as there was wide divergence of view as to the nature of the kingdom (between the Jews and Jesus). He postponed the establishment of his kingdom until his second advent. Hence the church is simply an afterthought, and has nothing to do with his Kingdom. Those who believe after this manner, feel that the world is going from bad to worse and that the only hope that we have of a better

world is the Second Advent of our Lord, who will establish a visible, earthly kingdom, and rule from the throne of David for a thousand years.

According to this view, it would seem that there is little that one can do to bring the King back.

But if Christ has already begun his Messianic reign, we can do much to bring him back to the full power of his office by bringing others into his kingdom. The King is ready to enter into his domain, which is the souls of men and women, and that which keeps Him out is the unwillingness of people to let him come in. While the usurper has been defeated he still holds sway in many, many hearts. Let us throw out the supplanter and bring back the king!

The familiar rendering of Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you," may or may not be an accurate rendering. Yet it is still true that there is within us a kingdom, people with instincts, impressions, thoughts; and enriched by latent powers, acquired skills, and constant observation. There is both good and bad there, and often the resulting life policy is made up of inconsistencies and weaknesses and futility because of the divided state of this inner kingdom. The king of this kingdom, if there be one is that being or object in control of these inner resources.

We might look upon the kingdom of the inner man very much as we would look upon our nation. Many of the ills of the nation have been attributed to the fact that so many undesirables have come in from the outside. But we so often welcome into the kingdom of the heart low ideals and unworthy thoughts. We let in the scum of the intellectual realm. Although we would be ashamed to disclose their presence, we give them ample quarters.

That there should soon develop a noticeable change of policy in one's heart might well be expected. There is a group which is ever ready to say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us". We will find that some other being has been set up as ruler.

There are many people who at some time have acknowledged Christ as King, but who have since allowed a usurper to come in and rout him from his throne. They manifest no interest in his cause, his Word, his church, his world program. It is time that something was being done by such about bringing back the king.

Over this kingdom of the heart we may place the god Mammon. The rich fool spoke of "my goods", but the goods owned him. We may make a god of pleasure and bow down to that, doing nothing that we do not want to do, and disclaiming any responsibility to God or man. We may make a god of power and bend our energies toward the acquisition of the prerogatives of a dictator.

One of the soldiers of Napoleon had a bullet enter his breast just over his heart. While they were probing for it, he cried "An inch deeper, and you'll find the emperor!" His emperor was enthroned in his heart.

Rulership over the kingdom of the heart belongs to God. Affairs are never so well administered, progress never so pronounced, and status never so generally respected as when God is Lord of life. It is a great day in any life when one can say "My Lord and my God".

God-ruled men and women have been great powers for good. There was the Apostle Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, Savonarola, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Bunyan, Moody, Isabella Thoburn. These, it is true had genius. But God can make extraordinary people out of ordinary material.

It will be recalled that before the judgment seat of Pilate, the Jews made a choice between Barabbas and Christ. A writer in the Sunday School Times this past week seems to feel that there is justification for an ancient reading of Matthew 27:17, as follows: "Whom would ye that I release unto you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ?" he says this reading was known to Origen (186-253 AD) and is to be found in a number of ancient manuscripts. It was a choice between the two Jesuses -- one who declared that his kingdom was a spiritual one, and the other who championed the forlorn hope of a national kingdom for the Jews and led the people against Caesar to secure this kingdom.

The writer referred to above goes on to remark that the choice is still being made between Jesus who is the Christ and other Jesuses. Many people profess to have made Jesus king, but the Jesus whom they profess to follow is not the Jesus of the gospels.

1. There is the Jesus of human reason. To choose him is to deny the supernatural, and follow the leadings of the "rational mind". This Jesus had no unique birth or bodily resurrection or power of working miracles.

2. There is the Jesus of sentiment. He has no stern lines. He preaches the universal brotherhood of man and the universal fatherhood of God. He represents love and mercy, to the neglect of righteousness and justice. The new birth is superfluous.

3. There is the Jesus of sociability. He is a "good fellow" and lets sinners remain at ease in his presence and makes them feel that they are not so bad after all. He maintains that all we need is a little more amiability, human sympathy, and manifestation of our native goodness.

4. There is the Jesus of social uplift. His desire is simply to make this a better world in which to live -- that and nothing more. He holds that the church errs in stressing individual salvation and the future life.

In one of the most remarkable passages of Paul's letters, the Apostle manifested a desire that the Colossians (1:15-20) have an exalted and accurate conception of Jesus. He declared that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" -- equal with respect to substance, nature, eternity; that He created all things and upholds all things; that He is head of the church and hence indispensable; that He is redeemer through His blood, and Reconciler of all things to himself. Why should not such a being be preeminent in all things?

A modern Congregational minister is quoted as making this statement: (Expositor, April 1925, p. 971) "The church to which I belong suffered a hundred year ago or more from a serious division. There were those who held the lower view of Christ's person, and to our sorrow they went from us. They took with them extensive church property and a large body of fine people

which we were loathe to lose. The oldest of our American universities openly identified itself with those who championed the lower view. The leaders of this unhappy break away were men of such caliber that it was openly predicted that in 25 years all American Christians would be unitarians. A century of effort has elapsed. The two branches of the Congregational church with the same polity, the same traditions, and which at the time of the break had an equal number of adherents, have worked side by side, facing the same problems. Today that branch of the church which clung to the higher view of Jesus has about ten times as many communicants as the other”.

Heinrich Heine, a German poet who lived a century ago, was a strange combination of conflicting elements. Though a German, his sympathies were largely with France, though an avowed adorer of Napoleon, he favored communism, though a Jew by birth, he declared himself a Christian.

This man once dreamed that he was a guest at a supper of the gods. As they drank of heavenly wine, they were content and at ease. But there came suddenly into that assembly wan figure bearing a cross and staggering under the weight of it. He threw it upon the banquet table. At the sight of it the face of the gods turned pale. One by one they vanished out of sight.

When the real Jesus enters the hall of our life interests and deposits his cross, our false ideals must vanish.

Hearing the famous oratorio “Messiah” sung well is an unforgettable experience. It was sung last year at Winona Lake. In an address, Dr. Biederwolf reminded us of the fact that in this composition, just before the famous Hallelujah chorus, there is stillness. Then the bass rolls out, “For He shall reign forever”. The Alto follows “For He shall reign forever and ever”. The tenors follow: “For He shall reign forever and ever”. The sopranos sing out “King of kings and Lord of lords”. From the four quarters of creation, as it were, there comes the question, “How long shall he reign” and they give the answer, “Forever and ever.” The whole choir with mighty volume then sings, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah”.

With such a glorious prospect, shall we not do our part in the great work of bringing the King back.

The Tonic of Tenderness

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX

January 29, 1933
December 16, 1945

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.”

2 Samuel 22:36 (also Psalm 18:35)

Taken apart from its historical and temperamental setting, this statement savors of a boastfulness that seems wanting in taste. But evidently, David’s purpose was to magnify God, not himself. To have debased himself would not have reflected the credit on his maker that he felt inclined to give.

But David could not have been unmindful of the fact that God had favored him. His enemies had been overcome. Rival aspirants to the throne had been eliminated. His kingdom was then greater than it had ever been in its history, extending from the River of Egypt to Thapsacus, and from Gaza to the Euphrates. Wealth abounded, for all subordinate nations paid tribute. He was loved by his people.

He had been elevated to this position from the position of an humble shepherd in an obscure portion of the land. He had good blood, but not even his father thought him worthy of consideration for the place of honor, for he had not called him from the fields when his sons were to pass before Samuel.

The secret of his rise to greatness is this -- God’s gentleness.

This statement seems somewhat out of place in the Old Testament where there is the usual emphasis on the severity of God. It is not out of place, for as we come to know God more fully from the New Testament we see that David was right. The character of God has not changed.

What David was saying is very little different from that which Paul said “By the grace of God I am what I am”. The grace of God is the heart of God at work in the world. Today, the grace of God is pouring into the world with the force and volume of Niagara.

The gentleness, or condescension if you prefer the marginal reading, is most evident in the earth mission and work of the Son of God. He revealed those princely qualities that drew men. Men looked at him and saw God. He redeemed man from his fallen estate. He reclaimed man from his slavery.

This quality is so foreign to man that it is difficult for man to conceive of such magnanimity -- that of God’s taking the form of man and suffering for man.

It is always a surprise for one who as a child loved the book “Alice in Wonderland”, to learn that the author, Lewis Carroll was a professor of mathematics in Oxford University, and lectured there on conic sections and the calculus.

Unwillingness to intimidate or awe is always the sign of greatness. You note with satisfaction how much at ease you feel in the presence of some people of note. I believe that such was true of Jesus.

You remember when John the Baptist came preaching, he thundered away. He stood forth in his barbaric moral splendor, and insisted on purity of life and conduct. There was no gentleness, little kindness. He was a great man, for Jesus so declared. But we cannot help comparing Jesus himself. John shouted “Ye generation of vipers”, in his initial utterance. But Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” etc., in His.

What do you think the gentleness of Jesus meant to the Samaritan “woman with threadbare affections”, “the drudge of five husbands?” His actions and words bear witness.

To the leper who said, “If thou wilt thou canst make me clean”, his gracious answer was, “I will, be thou clean”. The man in whose soul everything beautiful and adventurous had been slain by a horrible malady, was lifted to the clouds by the gentle ministry of Jesus.

There was the man with the withered hand, in the synagogue, not saying a word, but like most crippled people hiding courageously his affliction. What a day that was for him, when Jesus gave him the healing touch.

What was it that released the elements of greatness that smoldered in the bosom of a despised publican by the name of Zacchaeus? Was it not that Jesus said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down, for I must dine with you.”.

The gentle dealing of Jesus with Peter could not do other than make him great. What an immense reinforcement it is when someone understands and loves you.

On the cross hung a hard, seasoned highwayman, a criminal, whose profession was theft. At first he reviled. But soon he saw a difference in Jesus. “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom”. How gracious the response.

The silent forces of the world are the most powerful. The lack of respect is due to their unobtrusiveness. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and famines impress us. But they are as nothing as compared with the miraculous processes of life that are silently at work constructing organic substance.

Gentleness means self-control, poise, graciousness, mildness. It is the man of great heart, large sympathies, broad vision, and unceasing self-control who is the gentle man.

There are times when vent of righteous indignation is proper. Jesus turned with all his fury upon those who pretended to be something they were not. Our condemnation should be used with wise discrimination.

“Down in the human heart
Crushed by the tempter

Feelings lie buried
 That grace can restore.
Touched by a loving hand
 Wakened by kindness
Chords that are broken
 Will vibrate once more.”

The Sacredness of Sacrificial Service

Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

November 14, 1943
July 6, 1958 (rewritten)

“And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.”

2 Samuel 23:16

Our last national observance of Memorial Day (May 30, 1958) was given special significance by virtue of the fact that the bodies of two unknown soldiers -- casualties of World War II and the Korean War -- were laid to rest in the Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac from Washington, with most impressive honors. The graves of these two heroes flank the tomb of World War I's Unknown Soldier. These three, in perfect anonymity, have come to represent all who gave their lives in three great wars: 126,000 in World War I; 360,812 in World War II; and 24,386 in the Korean War. They stand as symbols of the courage and sacrifice of assorted millions who fought for America's freedoms, and they are therefore sacred to every true American.

We know very well that nobleness is shown as much by the manner in which one receives the benefits of worthy action as by the manner in which those benefits were won and bestowed. A corresponding quality of excellence is not only called for, but is inspired, by the exemplification.

Lowell wrote in one of his sonnets:

“Be noble! and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own.”

This principle seems to me to figure very conspicuously in the incident from the record of which we take our text. The incident evidently took place during the time that David, who was destined to become king of Israel, was being pursued as an outlaw by King Saul, whom he was to succeed.

The larger part of a chapter in each of two books of the Bible (see also 1 Chronicles 11) is devoted to listing the name of the “mighty men” who were associated with David during that hectic period of his life. David was in hiding in the cave of Adullam, not very far from Bethlehem, which was his native town. Near this town was a well from which David as a lad had drunk water many times. At the present, the town was in the hands of the Philistines and was defended by an armed garrison.

Probably without thinking of what might be the result, David remarked in the presence of his “almighty men”: “Oh that one would give me a drink of water of the well of Bethlehem,

which is by the gate". Evidently the three most illustrious of these men went into a huddle and decided to comply with this wish of their leader. One was Jashobeam (ja-sho-be-am), whose friends claimed for him that in one of David's raids, he himself speared 300 (800? vs. 8) men (1 Chron. 11). Another was Eleazar who, in one of the repeated encounters with the Philistines, stood firm when the Israelites fled and smote the enemy while his arm was weary and his hand clave unto his sword, the people returning from their flight only after victory to seize the spoil. The third was Shammah who, when the men around him had fled, stood his ground and defended a plot of barley, and drove off the enemy.

These were the three men who decided that if the king wanted a drink of water out of the well at the gate of Bethlehem, they would get it for him, even though there was a garrison of the Philistines in that village. We can easily imagine from their records that when these three men combined their strength, courage, and endurance, it would be very difficult to withstand them.

We are told that these men went for the water and came back with it. We are told nothing of the cost of these men to get through the guards. They must have come back battered and bleeding from the effort. For David, as he held the water in his hand, said, "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

David would not drink the water. He was unwilling to gratify a personal whim with something that cost as much as that. True, his parched throat had often been refreshed with water, drunk probably from a gourd dipper, that was drawn from that same well. He had no doubt watered his sheep at that well. How good it had tasted! He would like to see if it tasted as good now as it had then. Probably it would have been a disappointment to drink now. Nothing tastes quite as good to us in adult years as it did in the days of our youth.

One of Georgia's gifted sons was Henry W. Grady, orator and writer during the Reconstruction Days. His speech on "The New South" before the New England Society was quoted everywhere. His articles in the Atlanta Constitution were widely read and quoted. One bit of sentiment to which he gave expression was the desire to be made a boy again, to leave his office and go to his mother and have her caress him and take him in bed, that he might live over again the days that had sweet memories. He made use of those lines by Mrs. Elizabeth Akers Allen:

"Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight;
Make me a child again just for tonight."

We cannot turn back the pages of time except in imagination. Even if we could, we would find that the realization would not come up to the expectations. Each period of time and each situation has its own joys and its rewards.

There are, however, some observations that occur to our minds as we reflect on the incident in the life of David.

1. Noble Service Calls for Noble Appreciation

At first, it might seem that David was unappreciative. He poured out the water instead of drinking it. Should he not have drunk it out of gratitude? It would have been an affront had he simply poured it out on the ground. He poured it out "unto the Lord". he made a solemn libation

of the act. He brought it as an offering to God, who alone was worthy to receive such a priceless favor.

When any person allows himself to profit by the sacrificial efforts of others without realizing the sacredness of his trust, he does great violence to his own character. There are some people in the world who seem to feel that they are of such importance as to be justified in calmly letting others place their lives in jeopardy for their own selfish ends. I have heard of children who upon reaching maturity became ashamed of their parents who sacrificed all that they might have educational and cultural advantages.

It is the nobleness in those for whom the service is rendered that inspires nobleness of action and deeds of courage. The spirit of David found its reflection in the actions of his men. There is nobleness in the unwillingness to be the personal beneficiary of a costly service of this kind. If the nation, or the cause, were the beneficiary, that would be different.

We have in our nation groups no member of which will pledge allegiance to the flag of this nation or will enlist in any branch of military service, but which are ready to enjoy the freedoms which others fought to achieve and maintain, and in fact are very insistent that they be allowed the privilege of propagating their particular brand of religion or philosophy, on the ground that this is a free country.

2. Motive, and Not Wisdom, the Basis of Gratitude

Such an exploit as that done by the three mighty men should, in modern warfare, be looked upon as a breach of discipline. While men in actual combat are at times left to their own resources, there can not be an allowance of fanciful escapades. We have commando raids today. But they are carefully planned and executed under official oversight.

Devotion is not always manifested in consideration of tangible returns. There are some things that cannot be done in accordance with purely business principles. There are unseen values that cannot be computed in commercial terms. When Mary of Bethany poured out her priceless ointment on the feet of the Master, Judas criticized the act as a most unwise and wasteful performance. Such was not the way the Lord regarded it. It may have been an extravagance, but the motive behind it was what counted. You have had things done for you that seemed to manifest poor judgment, but knowing the spirit that prompted the generosity, you valued the favors more because of their very extravagance.

Deadly diseases have been conquered because there were people who were willing to offer themselves as subjects of experimentation designed to yield data for scientific conclusions. We have reason to be eternally grateful to these servants of humanity.

3. Christ's Sacrifice Should be Sacred to Every Christian

Familiar to all is the story of man's estrangement from God and the condemnation that rested upon him. The justice of God demanded satisfaction. But the mercy of God provided a way of escape. Satisfaction was provided in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". Paul was ever grateful to one "who loved me and gave himself for me".

In the case of Christ, there was no question of wisdom in the action. There was no other way. There was in the act of Christ the combination of the highest wisdom and the truest motive.

The Devil tempted Jesus to seek his own ends and avoid the cross. But he would not yield to that.

Being the recipients of this unspeakable gift, we should never fail to manifest our gratitude. One way of doing this is to hold sacred every celebration of the Lord's Supper. The earnest request of our Lord is, "Do this in remembrance of me".

But of course that is not enough. As one of the great hymns expresses it:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Marks of ingratitude are seen in the casualness of our church attendance, in our sensitiveness to financial appeals for the support of the church, in our readiness to make excuse for evading responsibility, in our desecration of the Christian Sabbath, in the half-hearted way in which we adhere to the Christian way of life, in our neglect of the Bible, and in our lack of concern for the salvation of those who are out of Christ.

The Books of Kings 1 and 2

1 Kings

Did Solomon Make the Wisest Choice?

Colonial, Dallas, TX

February 2, 1947

1 Kings 3:4-15; 2 Chron. 1:3-12

The assembly at Gibson, 6 miles north of Jerusalem. There was no temple in Jerusalem at that time. There was an effort to establish unity of the kingdom. 1,000 burnt offerings. Only a small part of each -- the fat and innards -- was burnt, the rest was used for food for the great multitude. It must have been a most impressive occasion.

Solomon retired with his mind elevated by the religious fervor of the occasion. The greatness of his task burdened his soul. The dream.

Note the consideration before him that influenced his choice: (1) The memory of what God had done for his father (1 Kings 3:6). (2) It was God who had called him to the position of king. (3) His youth and inexperience (vs. 7). (4) The greatness of the work to be done (vs. 8).

His choice was for practical wisdom, sagacity, clearness of judgment. It was a good choice. Wisdom is better than riches or fame. The understanding heart is a valuable possession - - certainly for a ruler.

The Lord commends Solomon. It was an unusual attitude to take. We must remember that God's commendation is based on a relative consideration. People today are making the choice of these three options: Fame, wealth, wisdom. They are devoting their lives to the pursuit of the preferred end. But of the three, unexpectedly, wisdom is best.

It must be remembered that there was an element of morality in the wisdom that Solomon preferred. It was not mere knowledge to be used apart from moral obligation.

But Solomon did not choose the best. It had been better had he chosen a clean heart and a right spirit. Recall the prayer of his father, David: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me". He could have chosen a life of deep devotion to God, as had Isaiah, Paul, and others. Solomon's subsequent life shows that he did not choose the best.

Note the promise which God made to Solomon (recorded in the account in Kings) (1 Kings 3:14): "And if thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days". Solomon did not comply with the

requirements. Consequently, he died ten years younger than his father was when he died. He was 60 years of age.

Solomon was a disappointment. (1) He remained unhappy despite his wisdom. He wrote: "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (Ecc. 1:8). He tried to be happy. It was his chief aim. Only he who loses his life shall find it. The only way to happiness is to forget about it. To be absorbed in Christ is the life abundant.

(2) He became essentially selfish. His people were secondary in his regard. He became a despot, with glory as the all important aim.

(3) He manifested a high degree of sensuality. He thought to show his greatness by the assembling of a "mob of queens and concubines" (Geikie).

(4) He disregarded the well being of his people by burdening them with taxes, that he might build magnificent buildings -- not only the Temple, but palaces for himself and his queens and courtiers. Conduits, pools, vineyards, gardens must be provided. Pomp and splendor must be provided. It all established a precedent for the whole nation. It all ultimately brought about the division of the nation.

(5) His ritualistic religion became dead.

(6) His commerce brought in demoralizing factors.

The good may be enemy of the best. Holiness is far above wisdom. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever."

Today, there are those who feel that if they choose a high plane of life and seek knowledge and light, that they are choosing the best. The best is a wholehearted devotion to the cause of Christ.

"O Master, let me walk with Thee."

Extraordinary gifts may exist apart from personal enjoyment of Divine grace.

Solomon comprehended natural science, political sagacity. He was an acute philosopher, and a wise, judicious king.

Solomon later did some foolish and mistaken things. He was not gifted in divine wisdom in spiritual things.

He was famous as a composer of proverbs and songs. He is said to have produced 3,000 pithy observations. He produced 1,005 songs. He was the father of wisdom writing.

Solomon carried cosmopolitanism to excess in his marriages. It resulted in the introduction of foreign religions. Solomon's own heart became alienated from his God (1 Kings 11:4).

He fostered the spirit of worldly pride.

It could not be said of Solomon as it was said of David that he was a man after God's own Heart.

Preventing Retrogression

Minden, LA
Minden, LA

May 6, 1923
February 5, 1933

“And Solomon said, ‘...I am but a little child...Give they servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?’”

1 Kings 3:6f

“And the King (Rehoboam) answered to the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke.’”

1 Kings 12:13f

In these words, we are given glimpses of two men. They are father and son. Each is beginning his reign over God’s chosen people.

In Solomon, we find an humble, lovable, discreet follower of the God of Israel. He had an exalted conception of his office, and an intense desire to render a maximum degree of service to the people over whom he ruled. He did not feel self-sufficient. He rather felt dependent upon God.

But in Rehoboam, the son, we find an entirely different type of person. We find a swollen-headed, unattractive, rash follower of a heathen divinity, if any one at all. He had a contempt for the people over whom he ruled, and regarded them as being servants of him, rather himself as being their servant. Arrogant in his self-sufficiency, he declared his purpose to increase their burdens and to force them to bear them.

This contrast in these ancient men would not be of much interest, and certainly not of sufficient value to justify our consideration in a time so valuable as this, were it not pathetically true that the same contrast so frequently appears in our own day. When the son or daughter is of a little finer type than the father or the mother, we have the feeling that such ought to be the case, since sons and daughters may profit by the experiences and counsel of fathers and mothers, and using these as stepping stones may mount to higher levels than were possible to those who went before.

It is the fact that situation is so frequently the reverse that troubles us. It is the retrogression, not the progression, that forebodes evil. It is the Rehoboam type which is the peril of our times.

There are people who seem to be fundamentally opposed to the existing order of things, whatever be the character of that existing order. We are frequently appalled at the recklessness of some propagandists of modern times. They are apparently ready to tear down with one sweep that which required a century or more to construct.

One reason why the world progresses no more rapidly is the fact that the new generation does not always profit by the experience of former generations. Experience seems to be the only method by which some of us arrive at knowledge. Therefore, one generation often retrogrades until it can learn for itself what previous generations have already found out.

“Old men for counsel, young men for action.” It is because young men like Rehoboam forsake the counsel of the old men, whose wisdom is the fruit of ripe experience, that havoc is wrought such as that which befell Israel.

We may become so accustomed to the existence of certain factors in our midst that all conscious appreciation of their value has been lost sight of. We have to be deprived of them before we know fully their significance.

Rehoboam and discretion. The God who made Israel great. It is often not until we lose our mothers that we realize how large a place they fill in our lives.

A generation may be just as forgetful. There is perhaps no other agency to which modern civilization owes more than it does to the church, and yet some people take delight, it seems, in heaping abuse upon the church. There are those who say they believe in Jesus Christ, but as for the church they have no words of kindness. The idea in their minds seems to be that the church has served its purpose.

Let us not forget that the church is the organization ordained of God and the Lord Jesus to establish his kingdom. Let us not forget the history of the church, which, though grievously marred in places by unworthy and even ignoble policy and act, is great and glorious. It is easy enough to imagine the chaos that would result from a complete withdrawal of this great institution from society.

Not only so, but men disparage even Christianity. It was declared, and it may be still declared by some, that Christianity failed absolutely in 1914. Many voluntary obituaries were given out, full of dismay, sarcasm, scorn, and abuse.

But we know now that instead of showing the impotency of the Christian religion, the events of 1914 rather revealed the indispensableness of real Christianity. Clearly was it shown that the spirit of Christ is essential to the well being of people.

It is difficult, in giving emphasis to the abuse of a principle, not to over emphasize it. In advocacy of conservatism, I do not wish to appear to say that the thing which has been must always continue to be. I am not blind to the possibility that one generation through its own experience may work out a far better result than any previously achieved.

There are times when we must break away from the established order. When we have outgrown a garment we ought to discard it. The ceremonial law given through Moses was good enough in its day. It was a schoolmaster to bring the race to Christ. But Jesus came teaching a “more excellent way”.

In the infancy of a civilization, we may speak, feel, and think as children. But upon reaching maturity we ought to put away childish things.

The greater danger, however, is the one which I am warning against today, namely, that after a civilization has reached maturity by a long and tedious process, there should be a returning again to the irresponsible and heedless speech and action of childhood.

It would possibly be easier to name the cause of this tendency to retrogression than it would be to suggest a remedy. The cause is not doubt the perversity of the human heart. The type of which we have been speaking can be explained by the principle of reversion to type. Nothing short of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ can release man from the bondage and subjection of the sin that is in the heart.

It is little wonder that Rehoboam had no knowledge of Jehovah. Think of his domestic surroundings. His mother was the daughter of the king of Ammon and the worshipper of heathen gods. That she must have been the sole counselor of his youth can be easily imagined when one remembers that Solomon numbered his wives by the hundred. Therefore, Rehoboam was certainly not taught to revere God. There was hardly a chance that the boy would ever come to know anything about the God of Israel.

Moreover, the deteriorating character of his own father was not one worthy of emulation.

In fact, the home from which Rehoboam came was just the kind to produce the kind of man that Rehoboam was.

In Proverbs, Solomon has a parable. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it and received instruction" (24:30-32).

Surely, no field was ever more thoroughly infested with thorns than the family of the wisest king of Israel.

We cannot be too often reminded that the key to social peace and happiness is the home. If we are ever to stem the tide of retrogression we must make positively Christian that institution which is so basic in our social life.

We need there a definite religious policy and program. We are inclined today to go after other gods. Science, Law and Education. It was a wise policy espoused by the apostle who counseled against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

We need there diligent instruction in the truths discovered by previous experience. God made it imperative that the people of Israel should teach their children in the history of his dealings with them. The fact that there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph was a reflection on his father.

We need also a training that will accustom the young to restriction, the observance of rules, obedience to law, and submission to control.

We need, furthermore, exemplary conduct on the part of the parents -- a thing which Rehoboam did not have.

Classic is the story of the statue that stood in the market place of an Italian city. A ragged, uncombed little girl came repeatedly to look at it, and with each coming got a new idea with reference to her own personal appearance. As she gradually appropriated these for her own use, she was completely transformed in her own personal presence.

Great is the power of example.

The temple of Solomon was famous for its glory and perfection. But the greatest temples are not made of wood and stone. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God". Solomon was far more successful with the use of tangible material than with spiritual.

"Souls are built as temples are --
Based on truth's eternal law,
Ever fair things finds its place,
Every hard thing lends a grace,
Every hand may make or mar".

Susan Coolidge

No Vision, No Victory
(previously: The Worth of Intention)

Minden, LA	October 15, 1922
Minden, LA	March 17, 1929
Minden, LA	March 1, 1936
Minden, LA	January 10, 1943 (rewritten)
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	August 1, 1943 (rewritten)
Prayer Meeting, Colonial, Dallas, TX	January 8, 1947
First Presbyterian, Mart, TX	August 7, 1949
First Presbyterian Church, Temple, TX	August 14, 1949
First Presbyterian, Marlin, TX	August 28, 1949
First Southern, Austin, TX	September 4, 1949
Rockdale Presbyterian, Rockdale, TX	July 12, 1953

“And it was in the heart of David my father...”

1 Kings 8:17

It is our custom to speak in terms of reproach of people who have good intentions. But here we have commendation of one who had a great intention, and who was never able to carry out that intention.

This statement is a part of the recorded address of King Solomon, delivered on the day of the dedication of his famous temple -- one of the wonders of that age. It is not difficult to imagine that scene. Solomon was standing in the center with an admiring throng all around. It was then that Solomon took occasion to say to the people something like this: “One thing we must not forget on this happy occasion: If it had not been for my father David, we would not be rejoicing as we are today. This was all in the heart of David. This temple was his dream.”

This statement of Solomon’s was correct. The Scriptures tell us that one day David was sitting in his house of cedars, but he was not happy. He was disturbed by the fact that he lived in a handsome home, while the ark of the Lord, which symbolized the presence of Jehovah, was housed in curtains. That did not seem to him to represent the true spirit of the people in their relationship to their God. He declared to Nathan the prophet that he would build a house to Almighty God. Nathan, following the impulse of his own feeling in the matter, said to David, “Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee.” But that night, God instructed Nathan to inform David that while his dream was a most commendable one, he would not be able to carry it out for the reason that he was a man of blood. The hand that wields the sword is not steady enough for the peace treaty. Cooler brains, more mature judgment, less feverish hands are needed.

David took his disappointment graciously. He was assured that his son Solomon would build the temple. He therefore began to accumulate the necessary force and materials. Plans were drawn, treasures were accumulated, masons were brought from Phoenicia, and such materials as cedars, iron, and so forth. The people were then enlisted to support the undertaking.

David in his charge to Solomon to build the Temple (recorded in 1 Chronicles 22) reminds him of what he had accumulated in the way of materials for the structure. Cedar trees had been brought from Phoenicia. Iron and brass in great abundance. 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver, to which he had contributed personally 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver. Masons were collected from Phoenicia to hew square stones, for the Hebrews were not skilled in architecture and the related branches. Solomon added much material to this rich store, but what a magnificent beginning David had made.

1. Sincere Intent has Merit of Achievement

“..thou didst well that it was in thine heart” (1 Kings 8:18). We have abundant justification to hold that David received credit in the eyes of God for the erection of the Temple. This principle runs all the way through the Scripture. It was David himself who declared to his men after the battle with the Amalekites, that “as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike” (1 Samuel 30:24). Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount taught that the intent of the heart constitutes sin as truly as the overt act.

It is aspiration that saves men. The grace of God puts something into the heart of man that is not there naturally -- a desire to be upright and holy, to be Christ-like and God-fearing. It is the upward look, the aspiring slant,, which constitutes the difference between the redeemed and the unredeemed. The original urges are sin-shackled, and Christ released them.

There are men today all round us who are potentially as great heroes as any in the air or on land or sea. Because of the technicality of age or physical deficiency or family responsibility, they must remain behind. Some are unhappy because they have been denied the privilege of taking their places along with their fellows. But in the final reckoning, at the bar of God, these will share with those who fought.

Religion is not moral achievement, is not education in ethical principles. Smug righteousness was a characteristic of the Pharisees. Jesus declared that publicans and sinners entered the Kingdom before them. There are people who struggle, love, aspire, but fall, go under. But with all their faults, they may be preferable to the ethically exact. This is not condoning of wrong doing. We are not to continue in sin that grace may abound.

But in the economy of God, if it is in a man's heart to do something, either good or bad, he had that to his credit or discredit. David had a temple to his credit, although he never built it.

2. The Secret of Achievement is a Large Plan

Our failures are often due to small plans rather than to impossible plans. It is certain that we will do nothing of importance without a plan.

It is better to aim at impossible goals than not to aim at all. There is value in the entertainment of great ideals, perfect standards of life. The author of Hebrews suggests: "Let us go on unto perfection" (6:1). We may know that perfection is impossible. But it is worth striving for. The greatest accomplishment will result. Think of the self-satisfied statement of the fool who said, "Soul, take thine ease".

In these crucial days, there has been much comment on the idealism of the man-of-the-hour twenty five years ago: Woodrow Wilson. Ray Stannard Baker, in his *Life and Letters of Woodrow Wilson*, pictures Wilson as a man of dreams. It was while he was a young professor at Bryn Mawr (PA) that he outlined a plan for a stupendous work on Politics and Government, comprehensive beyond anything yet produced in the world. It was to be a *Novum Organum* of statecraft. It would run into an indefinite number of volumes. It was on July 10, 1885, that he wrote Horace Scudder, one of the editors of the *Atlantic Monthly*, rather fully about the undertaking. It was to be the great book of his life. He kept thinking of this throughout his life. But a thousand necessities of life and love and ambition -- directing a university, leading a state, shaping the destinies of a great nation in the time of a great crisis -- all delayed the beginning of the work. But he was constantly thinking of it and talking about it. It was known in the family conversation as the "P.O.P." -- the Philosophy of Politics. Dr. Axon remembers the work familiarly referred to in the family conversations as, "When father comes to writing the P.O.P.". He once thought he would be ready for the work at 45; but he then looked forward to 50. At 50, he was in the desperate struggle at Princeton. In the sad days at the White House, Dr. Axson, his brother-in-law, was attempting to comfort him, after the death of the first Mrs. Wilson. "You will write that great book of the Philosophy of Politics." "Not a great book," responded Wilson. "The longer I think of the subject, the shorter the book I want to write." "In the broken days after his retirement from the Presidency," writes Baker, "the old vision flared up again. He will yet write the great book! The *Novem Organum* of Politics! When he closed his tired eyes the last time, the magnum opus was still unpenning" (*Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, by R.S. Baker, I:271-274).

Mr. Wilson also had a dream of a situation at Princeton in which a great graduate school would become the center of the university life. He got the great graduate school, but he did not realize his dream as to location.

He had a dream of a League of Nations. Some are saying now that he should have accepted the Lodge-Borah reservations. He could not compromise. There are those who believe that the world must yet come to Wilson's dream if a permanent peace is ever to be established in the world. A friend of mine said the other day that Wilson was a half-century ahead of his time. But if and when it is ever a reality, it can be said that long ago, it was in the heart of Woodrow Wilson, an American President, that such should be established.

It may have been unfortunate that Mr. Wilson made the effort to work out the peace after the first world war by going personally to Europe. He had so eloquently expressed the hope of mankind in defining the purpose of the war. We went to the peace table with his famous Fourteen Points, nearly all of which were nullified, circumvented, or realized only in part. As a great idealist he battled the selfish demands of over 50 independent sovereign states. The principal participants were the 79 year old French Statesman, George Clemenceau, Premier of England, sent to Paris to defend British interests, to hang the Kaiser, and make Germany pay for the war. The Treaty of Versailles was a compromise at home that was vital to the realization of his great

dreams. We now know that the world would have fared better, and so would we in this country, had Mr. Wilson been able to realize his dream.

David was ahead of his time. He had a vision that he could not realize. It was not suited to an age of war and bloodshed. It was for an age of peace to achieve. That might be true of the time in which we live. There are those who are saying that we ought not to try to work out the bases of a permanent peace in less than ten years. The secret of the achievement is the large plan.

One would gather from the Scriptures that God would have us make our plans large, particularly as concerns the furtherance of his Kingdom. We are familiar with the Scriptural statement: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you". But one of the fathers of the church (according to Glover: Saturday Papers, p. 54) renders this saying of Jesus in this manner: "Ask for the big things and the little things shall be added unto you". Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the big things -- "Thy Kingdom come". William Carey had the idea when he said "Expect great things from God: attempt great things for God".

Dr. Boreham (Home of the Echoes, p. 136) relates that he was once passing a classroom window and hear the question, "What range of mountains had Napoleon to cross in order to commence his campaign in the peninsular?" -- referring to Spain and Portugal. One pupil must have mistakenly answered "Alps", for he heard the teacher say "Alps, Alps! Indeed. You must have Alps upon the brain". Well, says Dr. Boreham, "every man should have an Alp or two tucked away among the convolutions of his brain". It makes a difference. It helps one to live in close touch with the great heights or broad expanses. "I love to hear a Scotsman pray", he says (p. 139). "As soon as you close your eyes, you are among the beetling crags and rugged ranges. A Scotsman appeals at once to all that is majestic, all that is terrible, all that is awe-inspiring in the divine character. As the prayer proceeds, you find yourself gazing towards heights that make you tremble, and glancing down into the chasms that compel shudder. You are among the mountains all the time".

Let us not forget that the secret of achievement in the temporal or spiritual world is a large plan.

3. Present Achievement May be Rooted in Past Dreams

That was preeminently true in the case of the Temple of Solomon. Solomon admitted as much. It was David's dream, but Solomon's realization.

The brethren of Joseph called him "the dreamer". We recall that those brethren were later forced to seek the aid of that dreamer. When the father of Joseph died in Egypt, Joseph took his body back to the land of his fathers. When Joseph himself was about to die, he made the children of Israel promise that when they went back to Canaan they would take his body with them. It was a long time before that dream was realized.

When writing the life of any person of distinction, you look confidently to the records of the forebears. Every man's achievement is rooted in the past. Some people very foolishly consider themselves deserving of credit for their successes, which were doubtless made possible by foundations laid by those who went before.

During the time that Wendell Wilkie was making such a strenuous campaign for the presidency, there was much talk of his boundless energy. The fact was brought out that the secret of his vigor was the industry of both father and mother. After having lived a very busy life, the father was bed-ridden. But he was heard to be reciting at 5:30 in the morning these lines:

“Shall we let ants and birds and bees
Be wise while we our moments waste?
Let us be up and doing
And to our duty haste.”

Such inspirational lines took the place of an alarm clock in the Wilkie household. The ideals of sons everywhere are reflections of the dreams of the parents who have gone before.

There was a Methodist preacher in England by the name of George Macdonald. He may have been a Scotsman, with “Alps on the brain”. He never made a name for himself. He had four daughters. As wives and mothers they proved how rich was their heritage. One of the girls married Sir Edward Burns-Jones, great painter of distinction. Another married Sir Edward J. Poynter, another great painter. The third married J.L. Kipling; and her son Rudyard described her as “the wittiest woman in India”. The fourth lived to see her son, Stanley Baldwin, twice premier of England.

This reminds us of the famous Soong family of China, one member of which, Madame Changkai Shek, was a recent visitor to our country.

4. The Whole Calls for Dedication to the Glory of God

Solomon dedicated the temple to God. We should dedicate every worthy achievement to the glory of God and not to self glory.

That means that dreams must be worthy. There are dreams of empire and personal glory and totalitarian might which can end only in disappointment. Our dreams must be in accord with the will of God.

I noticed in a Dallas paper last week that a young man ended his own life in a local hotel. He left a note saying, in the words of Henley --

“I am the captain of my soul,
I am the master of my fate.”

But the thing that struck me was the fact that the name his mother gave him as he came to her, a little bit of squirming humanity, was “Spurgeon”. Spurgeon was one of the great men of God of the past generation. Did that not signify the dream of that mother for her boy?

I am wondering now if there is not some boy or girl here today who lacks much yet of fulfilling the dream of a mother or father. You will never be all that they dreamed for you

without being a Christian, a member of the church. As you build on that, and come to the realization of the best you have, you can say to commending friends, “It was in the heart of my mother, or my father...”

Accommodating Religion to Expediency

Minden, LA
Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX

September 17, 1933
May 9, 1945

“Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king too counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship the one, even unto Dan. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month that he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

1 Kings 12:25-33

Jeroboam was the son of a widow of Ephraim, the strongest tribe of the northern kingdom. He was an industrial young man and attracted the attention of King Solomon by his industry during the building operations in Jerusalem. Solomon honored him by placing him over the work assigned to the house of Joseph. In rather dramatic fashion, he was told by the prophet Ahijah that he would eventually be king of ten of the tribes, and that if he would remain true to God and walk in His ways, God would bless him. Solomon heard of this and sought to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt. Upon the death of Solomon, he returned, and led in the presentation of the request to Rehoboam. The secession followed the refusal of Rehoboam. In order to completely alienate the people from Jerusalem, Jeroboam set up two golden calves and declared in the words of Aaron (Ex. 32:4) that these were the gods who had brought them out of Egypt. Furthermore, Jeroboam appointed priests of the lowest people. He changed the feast day from the 7th month to the 8th month.

The result was the punishment of Jeroboam by the death of his only son, and the elimination of his family from the royal lineage.

There is some discussion as to what connections the calf-worship had: whether it was of Egyptian origin, where live bulls were worshipped, or of Syrian origin where images were sometimes worshipped. Commentators are divided. It seems reasonable that Jeroboam, during his sojourn in Egypt, became familiar with the bull worship, and decided that this would be a good substitute for the people he was leading in revolt. He recalled Hebrew history, and the

words of Aaron. These images might have been the winged bull. He placed one at Dan in the extreme north and one at Bethel in the southern extremity, in sight of Jerusalem.

Individuals practice this adaptation of religion to suit their desires. “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God”. We have been amazed at the zeal that some people have in establishing atheism.

There are people who object seriously to a proclamation of the sinfulness of the race.

If you look behind much of the unbelief (or professed belief) of people, you will find a life that is not what it ought to be.

People who are said to have “lost their faith” first lost their moral.

The Uses of Adversity

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

April 30, 1939
June 16, 1948
October 21, 1956 (rewritten)

“It came to pass that Shishak, king of Egypt...took away the treasures of the king’s house; all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And King Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields.”

1 Kings 14:25-27

In Shakespeare’s “As You Like It”, the old duke, who is living the life of an exile in the forest of Arden, with two or three of his loyal lords, comments on his lot as a sojourner in the open where the winter’s wind bites and blows. He says:

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

Our attention is directed today to the record of a king of ancient Judah who was undergoing adversity. We may be sure that this king was not reflecting on his experiences in quite so philosophical a manner. It is unfortunate that he was not. But let us get the setting of our text.

This king of Judah was Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, with whose reign was associated magnificence and wealth. Solomon’s reign might be called Israel’s golden age. The petty kingdoms from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean paid him tribute. His was a court of splendor, with attendants richly appareled, and furnishings rare and costly. At every hand there were sparkling evidences of wealth. The king’s house as well as the Temple was richly adorned. We are told that David, the father of Solomon had collected gold and silver for the Temple to the fabulously estimated extent of \$1, 570,536,000 worth of gold, and \$986,490,000 worth of silver.

Among other costly articles associated with the royal pomp were golden shields borne by the guards who accompanied the king to the Temple, and who formed a part of the retinue of the king.

To all this, Rehoboam, son of Solomon, became heir, as his father successor to the throne of Israel. His first error was failure to follow the advice of the older statesmen and lessen the burden of taxation. He thereby lost ten tribes. Furthermore, he did not “set himself to seek the Lord,” influenced largely by his mother, who was an Ammonitish woman with a heathen background. He had other domestic influences that were not good. The people of Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. The time had come for discipline at the hands of the Lord.

In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judah and entered Jerusalem and stripped it of its wealth -- "he took away everything," including the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

This was stern discipline. It was a costly lesson. The princes humbled themselves and God did not let the king of Egypt destroy the people. It is doubtful whether king Rehoboam was able to mend his ways to any great extent. He was bent on preserving the formalities of his royal state. He had brazen shields made to take the place of the gold ones that Shishak had appropriated.

Life a Matter of Continual Adjustment

The necessity which Rehoboam faced after Shishak helped himself to his treasures is typical. Whether we bring these crises upon ourselves or not, we know that conditions change. We have times of prosperity and we have times of drought and loss. Times change. As one gets older, he finds himself more and more unable to become adjusted to the new situations. It is then that we are said to be "old fashioned", "behind the time", "antiquated".

Forty years ago, friends told the Kelly brothers, who operated a big livery business in a day when horse-drawn cabs were extensively used, that they had better begin to consider substitution of motor-driven vehicles if they wished to hold the patronage they then had. One of the members of the firm expressed the opinion that there would be horse-drawn vehicles in use long after the motorcar fad had been forgotten. They never changed. Means of transportation did, in Shreveport and elsewhere.

There is nothing in creation that does not change. "Change and decay in all around I see". Even the "eternal" hills are constantly changing. We are constantly noting the changes that take place in one another. They are sometimes for better, and sometimes for worse. We may say to a friend, "You haven't changed a bit"; but we know that he has, necessarily.

When we take time to sit down and think about it, we are struck with the difference between our lives as we planned them and our lives as we have actually lived them. We are tempted even to say that nothing has ever turned out as we planned it. The world is full of people who are living far from their dreams.

God's Way with Us

The occasion of adjustment may be providential. It may be God's way of saving us from perversities, and giving us another chance.

Jeremiah tells us that he was sent by the Lord to the house of the potter to learn a truth which he was to convey to the people (Ch. 18). He saw the potter at work with clay on the wheel. When the first design was marred in the making, the potter set to work to make it into another vessel". The message which the prophet took to Israel was "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel". He could have borne this message to

Israel in Rehoboam's day. The potter was trying to remake Judah which had become marred by sin.

The immediate issue that brought about the division of the kingdom of Israel was taxation, required to support royal splendor. Years before, the prophet Samuel speaking for the Lord, when the people of Israel demanded a king like other nations, warned them that the demands of a king on them would be heavy (1 Samuel 8:10f). But the people refused to listen to Samuel. They secured a king.

Even further back, at the dawn of human history, man was placed in the Garden of Eden. It was an ideal state. But man marred the state by his sin. Divine discipline became necessary. But another chance was provided through a Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Whether man is better as the result of this Providential intervention, depends on what man does about the new opportunity that has been provided for him.

Outcome of Circumstance Depends on Us

We think of three courses that Rehoboam could have taken after the disciplinary visit of Shishak. It must have been a heartrending experience for the people of Judah to see their sacred treasures carried off by an invader. Nothing like this had ever been experienced by that generation. What could Rehoboam do?

1. He could have given up and quit trying.

He could have asked, What's the use? The ten tribes have been lost to the kingdom. The treasures of the Temple and the royal palace have been taken away. The glory of the kingdom of Solomon's day has now faded. Why go on?

Being told of the threat of Queen Jezebel, the prophet Elijah decides to get away from it all. He gets clear out of the country, sits under a juniper tree and whines over his lot in life. The Lord said to Elijah, "What doest thou here?"

Anybody can resign. There is a tendency to feel that there is more or less cleverness in the act of resigning. Now, I am sure that there are times when people ought to resign. But the motive in so doing should not be that of running away from a bad situation.

You read occasionally of some person who has decided that the best way out of a bad situation is suicide.

2. He could go on as he has been, preserving in appearance at least the status quo.

True, the wealth of the kingdom has been seriously depleted. There can be no glittering shields of gold to glamorize state occasions. But what of it? Some bronze shields can be made and put to use. This is evidently what Rehoboam decided to do. He tried to keep a bold front.

We see a lot of that in the world. There is the pride of poverty, the pompous parades of paltry imitations. The struggle to keep up appearances.

Jesus, in his famous denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees of his day, declared that they cleansed the outside of the cup, while the inside was full of extortion and rapacity. He declared that they were like “whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:25-28). Paul spoke of those who have “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5).

3. He could resolve that he and his people will profit by the experience and remove the causes of the trouble.

We have no record that he and his people will profit by the experience and remove the causes of the trouble.

We have no record that Rehoboam followed this course. That was left for his grandson, Asa, to do. It was Asa who took away the foreign altars and high places, and other instruments of idolatry, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandments (2 Chronicles 14:2f).

Rehoboam could have saved his reign from failure had he made proper use of his adversity. But he was probably too much entangled with heathen factors.

Paul could have asked concerning his “thorn in the flesh”. Why did this happen to me? He resolved to make the most of it. Robert Louis Stevenson spent a large portion of his life in bed, while his body was racked with pain. But in spite of it, he wrote some of our best known and most loved books.

A certain prophet of Crete, Paul said (Titus 1:12) once declared, “all Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and idle gluttons”. Titus, one of Paul’s co-workers, was sent to Crete to begin his ministry. Awful place for a young man to begin his ministry. But Titus made good. Recent excavations in Crete reveal stately churches where the people worshiped God, and over the door we find the name “St. Titus”.

Barrie has a play entitled “Dear Brutus”. A group of people in an English home were convinced that if things had been different in their lives they would have been happy. The host makes possible for each his supposedly vanished opportunity. One was given another woman as a life companion, the butler was made a financier, a sculptor was made a painter. But the husband found that he preferred the former wife; the butler, now financier, became lazy and vulgar; the sculptor as painter was without inspiration. Barrie closes his play with a quotation from Shakespeare:

“The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.”

Through Adversity to Victory

It was not Joseph's preference that he should be sold as a slave in Egypt. But he made the most of his lot. He became a savior of his race by his faithfulness.

It was not Paul's preference that he should be sent as a prisoner to Rome. He was anxious to go to Rome, but not as a prisoner. He was able to say, however, "I would have you know that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel".

It was in the year that king Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord, "high and lifted up". Isaiah had put his hope in Uzziah. That hope was blasted by the death of the king. But that death brought about a vision of God.

It is possible that the experiences through which we pass unwillingly can be made the source of special blessing.

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves."

Drying Brooks: Disaster or Blessing?

Minden, LA

September 16, 1934

“And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up.”

1 Kings 17:7

King Ahab of Israel, under the sway of his heathen wife, Jezebel, had introduced Baal worship into Israel, and built two gorgeous temples to Baal -- one at Samaria, and another at Jezebel. There 850 priests, and a corresponding number of lower attendants, appointed to conduct the rites of the religion. Jehovah worshippers were relentlessly persecuted, so that it seemed that there were none who followed Jehovah.

At least, Elijah, prophet of Jehovah, mountaineer, half-Arab, and Ishmaelite, thought he was the only man in the kingdom remaining true to Jehovah. There were others he did not know about. Clad in his mantle of sheepskin, with flowing beard and long hair hanging down his back, he suddenly appeared before Ahab and told him that there would not be rain for years, which meant also that there would be famine in the land.

Then Elijah was sent to dwell in a region no doubt familiar to him -- in the depths of some wady of the Brook Cherith, flowing doubtless into the Jordan. There he was fed by the ravens, and there he drank from the brook. But soon the brook began to dry up. It was getting weaker and weaker and weaker every day, for there were no rains to replenish the source of supply. Elijah doubtless began to think about the situation. Something must sooner or later be done about this, he thought. But he was there by God's command, and in God's own time the deliverance would come. So he waited, and the order came to go to Zarapath, where he found a widow, whose brook, so to speak, was drying up. He had a ministry there to perform.

Life Full of Drying Brooks

Certainly here is a figure that we are well in position to appreciate, people of the middle West have been in even better position to understand the situation than have we. Streams which have never been known to be dry ceased flowing. It was an awful experience to see the crops in which hope had been placed wither away.

But that is no less harrowing than the experiences through which people have passed for the last three or four years, and through which people here and there, and everywhere, are passing at any time.

There have been and are drying brooks in the business world. Trade falling off. Competition keen. Physician sees practice leaving him. A lawyer finds clientele diminishing.

It may be a matter of health, or the growing incapacity of age. Some Britisher has written an essay on “The Tragedy of the First Gray Hair”.

Friendships, too, are subject to decline. Before we realize it, the flow of soul has ceased.

I have seen families in homes happy in the enjoyment of mutual fellowship and love finally become separated. Father and mother drop out and the children scatter.

The situations of which I am thinking are those which come in the course of human events, and which cannot be helped. They are realities which we face. Elijah was told to go to Cherith. That was God's place for him. Yet the brook began to dry up. So in the course of our lives, we find ourselves in circumstances that are not promising, to say the least

The Feeling of Failure

When we face such situations as this, we become discouraged. This was not what we expected. We are depressed. We feel that we have failed. We lose heart, have a hard time going.

There is no indication here the Elijah had any such feelings at Cherith. We do know, however, that Elijah was subject to such feelings. For, some time later he was under a juniper tree in the wilderness of southern Palestine and requested for himself that he might die, saying "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life for I am not better than my fathers".

Certain things must be kept in mind, however, if we are to cope with life's experiences and make the most of life. We must be sure to keep our outlook on life true to the teachings of the Bible.

God Rules in Human Affairs

The prophet Jeremiah said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23).

"There's a divinity that shapes our end,
Rough hew them how we will."

There is a providence that governs the course of human events, not arbitrarily, but with the best of reason and wisdom. Man thinks he lives best by his own sagacity, contrivance, foresight. But our wisdom lies in willingly yielding to the direction of a sovereign God.

God's rulership is also apparent from the fact that the course of human events is usually so different from that which one intended. Many are the disappointments of life. One of the most frequent observations one makes is that he never thought in his early days that his life would take the course it has taken. Place in which he lives. Person whom he marries. One man's institution succeeds and another fails, due to circumstances beyond his control. Even successful men fail to get what they most want -- happiness. A class issues from our high school, all seemingly bent on a course of uprightness and honor. But in the course of human events how different the courses of human destiny.

It is apparent also that the duration of life is not under man's control. Death comes at unexpected times, frustrating the intentions of man.

While this is true, we are refreshed by the thought that the God in whose hands rest our destinies, is a God of love. It is the happiness and well being of His creatures that He most desires. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things."

Confidently Grasping the Hand of God

It was in connection with that universal interest of humanity -- food and drink -- that Jesus counseled, "Be not anxious". The unrest of the world is upset over the question of the stomach. Jesus simply says that when the brook begins to dry up, grasp more firmly the hand of God. It is easier to worry. It seems to be more prudent, but it's not. For mere worrying does not help. It hinders. As long as we are worrying we are living in the future, not the present. The task of the present is ours.

Much is said in the Bible about patience. Patience is a mere resignation, not mere downcast eyes and clasped hands, not mere pious acquiescence. It is rather brave, strong, resistful, but not aggressive, endurance. It is "breasting the blows of circumstance". It has the idea of stability.

The root of patience is faith in God and in the ultimate triumph of the right.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job", said James (5:11). Job was a good man, and happy, and prosperous. He had seven sons and three daughters, 3,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 she-asses, and a very great household. The Sabeans took his oxen and asses and slew his servants; fire of God fell on his sheep and killed them and the servants; a great wind blew down a building on his sons; the Chaldeans carried away his camels and slew his servants. Job himself was smitten with sore boils from sole to crown. His wife urged, "Curse God and die". Yet Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him". Surely his brook was about dry. But the better day came. He was given 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, 1,000 she-asses, seven sons and three daughters, and many years of life.

I was interested last week in reading a life of our President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He has always been a man of great energy and vitality, loving outdoor life, tennis, golf, swimming, sailing. He completed a magnificent period of service as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson Administration, ending in 1920, in which year he ran for the Vice Presidency with Cox for President, in a hopeless race. The next year, he was stricken with a disease that most frequently attacks children -- infantile paralysis, at the age of 39 years. Lower limbs were left paralyzed. For three tedious years, progress in the recovery of the use of his legs was negligible. It looked as if his brook was running dry -- at least to his friends, but not to himself. He refused to be defeated by his affliction. The story of Warm Springs experiment, and the recovery to the point where he can walk with a cane is all too familiar to the American people. Since that tragic event, he has been twice elected governor of New York, and President of these United States. While his impairment is undoubtedly an inconvenience, it has not impaired his health. It has really made him an appealing figure, touched with gallantry and determination. He has been a great inspiration to the work of combating the ravages of an awful disease. He has inspired others to battle for recovery and to relegate to unimportance permanent mechanical impairments.

How much more helpful is a life like that than those that give up under the grind of life, feeling that they have been tricked, cheated, duped. They feel that their gorgeous cloud palaces should have been something else than mere banks of clammy mist. Cynicism set in. Life has beaten them. Only ashes left, cold, black, dead. The gallantries and self-sacrifices of life, say they, are foolish.

God will gradually unfold his plans. We need but to watch and wait.

I think now of the disciples of our Lord after the crucifixion. True, the Lord has risen and some had seen him. But things had not turned out as they hoped. So much had happened that they were dazed. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," said one (Luke 24:21). The disciples began to slink back to Galilee, facing the taunts of the villagers. The dream had vanished, the bubble had burst, hopes were dead, the unpoetic realities of life were facing them. The brook had about run dry. Jesus had said something about going to Galilee. But they could not find him. He was not on the streets of Cana or Capernaum or Nazareth. He was not in the synagogue. He was not on the lakeshore. Seven of them were out on the lakeside, among them Peter. They felt again the lure of the lake, the pull of the soft path of the water, bracing tang of the sea, the music of the flap of the sail. Nothing left now but to go back to the common humdrum of life, hauling net, cold nights, fishy smells. So Peter boldly declared, "I go a fishing". The others said, "We also go with thee". It is a sad day when our ideals fail us. Peter remembered the Judgment Hall scene. They fished all night and caught nothing. What a blessing! Jesus appeared. The draught. 153 fish. Then followed the great renewal of allegiance.

When caught in the fell swoop of invidious circumstance, and the brook seems about to run dry,

"Be content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold,
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold."

Making Up One's Mind Religiously

Minden, LA

October 15, 1939

“How long halt ye between two opinions?”

1 Kings 18:21

It was one of the most dramatic events of all history when it was to be decided whether Baal or Jehovah was supreme. This took place on Mount Carmel during the reign of Ahab, King of Israel, and the prophetic ministry of Elijah. For 3½ years, no rain had fallen in Israel. The streams were dry. There were few running springs. The sheep and cattle had died. The earth lay cracked and parched and barren.

The prophet Elijah had been moving among the people and had seen the suffering that was everywhere. He prayed earnestly for rain, and the result was that Jehovah gave promise of relief.

Meeting Ahab by appointment, he commanded him to summon at once the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Ashtaroah (the groves were pillars set up to represent Jezebel's goddess, Venus). Ahab obeyed, and the prophets of the heathen divinities came in their white robes and peaked turbans, royally groomed, suave, urbane, erudite. There were 850 of them. They must have been most impressive on that occasion. By way of marked contrast stood the lone prophet of Jehovah, Elijah. He was probably in rough sheepskin thrown as a mantle over his shoulder, his long hair either streaming down his back or blown by the wind.

The test of fire proposed by Elijah was unanticipated by the prophets of Baal. They could prepare in advance no deceit or trickery. But Elijah gave them every advantage. They began in the morning to seek a consumption of their offering, they continued on until noon, and then until evening. They cut themselves with their weapons. They hoped to impress their God and the people with their fanatic leaping and gashing, their tortures and their pains. But the offering remained unconsumed.

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, it was apparent that no answer would come to the prayers of the prophets of Baal. So Elijah said “Come near to me”. He took twelve stones and built an altar where an altar to Jehovah had been broken down. He caused a trench to be dug about it, then prepared the offering and laid it on the altar. He had poured upon it twelve jars of water, filling the trench. He then poured out his heart in prayer. The answer came. The offering was consumed. The people said “The Lord, he is God.” There they slew the prophets of Baal.

When the prophet faced that impressive gathering of leaders and people, he confronted them with the issue. They had been trying to worship Jehovah and Baal, and were dividing their interests and allegiance. This was an impossible procedure. They must make up their minds religiously.

Sooner or later, each one of us has to face that question. We find ourselves where the people of Israel were. We have to decide whether we are going to serve God or be a pagan,

whether we are going to commit ourselves to self-restraint, idealism, spiritual values, or to indulgence, realism, material values.

1. Our Minds Need Making Up Religiously

(a) There are rival bids for the favor of mankind.

This has been true since the days of Eden. The forces of evil and the forces of righteousness are arrayed against one another. Man is asked to choose between the visible and material and the invisible and spiritual. The issue is ever before mankind. There is no doubt about the issue being acute in this day in which we are living.

It looks at times as if Satan were in control of society, fixing its standards, laws, customs, and determining who should be admitted and who excluded. He seems to say to a young girl, "If you expect to enter my world of society, you must lay aside your idealism, self-restraint, and those funny notions of virtue that your antiquated parents have filled your mind with. Otherwise you will be a wallflower, laughed at, passed by. You must dress as I say, smoke and drink."

Satan, furthermore, has considerable sway in business. He tells a young man that he cannot be absolutely honest, truthful, square, and succeed in business. He is told that he cannot be a railroad man, lawyer, doctor, merchant, or teacher, and be a Christian at the same time.

Moreover, it looks at times as if Satan were in control of politics. The corruption that seems to exist in political circles leads one to all but despair of ever having clean government. But so long as we, the electorate, are led by consideration of self-interest to put men of known dishonesty into office, we need expect nothing better than that which we are getting.

The mind of man is the area in which these forces fight out their battles. Unfortunately, that area is by nature favorable to the forces of evil, and the forces of righteousness, to achieve a victory, must be in the position of a foreign invader.

(b) Man's mind is so constituted that it can entertain both.

Everyone who has reflected on his own inconsistencies is aware of the fact that he not infrequently has to diametrically opposite desires. There are people who are puzzles to us. At one time they are desirous of doing good, and at another they become very indulgent. We say that we cannot understand them. They are probably like ourselves, unless we have done something about our own inconsistencies.

We have what is called an unconscious mind, from which we call up ideas and feelings that we use in controlling our conscious action. In that unconscious mind, there is both evil and good. At one time, the evil may be asserting itself and at another the good may be dominant. But the momentarily dormant side of our nature is there nevertheless. As someone has said, the half of the moon which is invisible still exerts its influence on the tides.

Let no man fool himself into thinking that he hates the indulgences that have proven such a detriment to him. It seems as if human nature craves a spree of some sort. Some, as the primitive, find it in a wild orgy like the war dance; others in a big cry; others in temper displays; others in a drunken debauch. When people say that they can't help doing such things, they are mistaken. They do it, any one of them, because they like it. When someone says she can't keep from giving way to temper, she is mistaken. She finds pleasure in the feeling. The man who says he cannot quit drinking is mistaken. He can quit when he quits liking the sensation which whiskey gives.

(c) Man's mind is not made up so long as this condition prevails.

So long as man is giving entertainment to these rival factors in life, he is in the position of the people of Israel, who were trying to serve God and righteousness and also Baal and unrighteousness. They are "halting between two opinions". Elijah called upon the people to make up their minds. We must do the same thing.

2. An unmade up mind is in serious danger.

The people of Israel were described as "halting between two opinions". They were hesitating, limping, swaying. At one time, one opinion seemed good; at another time, the other opinion seemed good.

People have been failures in life because they could never make up their minds to forego some things they liked.

Christ was once passing along the way, when a man voluntarily exclaimed "I will follow thee, lord, but..." The impulse to follow Christ was immediately followed by a desire to do something else. Jesus compared this man to a plowman who having set his hand to the plow looks back.

Peter was in a state of weakness when he could not make up his mind whether to stay with his Lord on the night of the betrayal, or run with the other disciples. It brought about his fall and humiliation.

So many are making failures of their Christian living. They are not growing spiritually. It is because they have not made up their minds to commit themselves whole-heartedly to Christ. The lure of gold or sinful pleasure has bewitched some into forgetfulness of the eternal.

There is always the danger of degeneration, decay, alienation of interest in church, religion, and even righteousness, when we begin to play with ideas that are not right.

3. We cannot make up our minds unaided.

(a) We need to have the desire to make up our minds. So many people are perfectly content to go on as they are. They will not have any different desire unless they are moved upon by the Spirit of God.

(b) We need assistance in carrying out our desires. Paul said that he could not do what he wanted to do: “For what I would that I do not; but what I hate that I do”.

A book agent came to sell one of the combination farmer-merchant-bankers of southeast Arkansas a set of books on scientific agriculture. The old man thumbed through them. “No, I don’t want to buy them.” “You ought to buy them, sir. If you had these books you could farm twice as good as you do now.” “Son,” he replied, “I don’t farm half as good as I know how now” (Jonathan Daniels).

(c) We need to get the right perspective. By seeing ourselves, first just as we are. Then seeing Himself, as he was.

The Persistence of Faith

Minden, LA
Colonial, Dallas, TX

January 13, 1935
September 21, 1947

“There is nothing.” “Go again seven times.”

1 Kings 18:43

Science is indeed wonderful. It has made an invaluable contribution to the material advancement and mental enlightenment of the world. Wonderful discoveries and inventions are giving man greater and greater control over the forces of nature. There are many things that man knows today with some degree of finality. Upon those scientists may speak authority. Scientists form their theories with the finality that they speak of something that can be demonstrated. Men of greatest learning will admit that even those conclusions that seem most secure and final may any day be upset by new discoveries.

We have been told often that faith begins where sight ends. Faith deals with factors that are beyond the realm of science. It is possible that scientists speculate about factors that lie behind those with which they deal. This speculation may or may not, according to the course pursued by the individual mind, harmonize with the principles of faith. So, a scientist may be a devout Christian or he may not.

The fact that a man has faith should not mean that he cannot inquire about the known factors that seem to bear upon his beliefs. The harmony of facts with his beliefs will give him infinite satisfaction. Some hesitate to inquire into these matters for fear their faith may be upset. But true faith has nothing to fear from acquaintance with facts. The more strongly one is rooted in knowledge, the happier one is in his faith.

However, let it be said that supporting proof is not always available. It is a weak faith that will not exist without proof. The Thomases of the world have done much towards the production of Christian evidences. But there are times when evidences are scant. The greater blessing is for those “who have not seen and yet believe”.

In this connection, we are reminded of Elijah on Carmel after the decision of the people had been made in favor of a return to Jehovah. The rain had been promised. Elijah knew it was coming. But the servant could see no signs of it yet.

The Test on Carmel

It will be recalled that Ahab, a weak king of Israel, came under the domination of his heathen wife, Jezebel, and led the people of Israel away from Jehovah to the worship of Baal. The worship involved very base practices on the part of the people.

Because of this, Elijah, the rugged prophet of God, told Ahab that there would be no rain or dew for years. This was probably laughed at by the king. But the prophecy soon proved to be true. The ground was swept clean of all vegetation. The streams and pools were dry. The prophet got entirely out of the country, and the king sought for him everywhere. The king found it hard to find water and grass on which to sustain the horses and mules of the royal stables.

Obadiah, Ahab's servant, but a true follower of Jehovah, was sent in search of water and pasture. While out he met Elijah, whom he recognized. "Go tell thy lord that Elijah is here," said Elijah. Notice that the prophet sends for the king, and that he came, humbled by the experience of famine through which he had passed. As they met, Ahab said, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" To which Elijah replied that it was not he, but Ahab who was the troubler of Israel, and he told him how he was a troubler. We have the tendency to blame others for our own wrongs. One may blame the doctor for telling us that what has come upon us is due to our own indiscretions.

"Now send and gather unto me at Carmel all Israel and the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of the Jezebel Venus," commanded Elijah. We are not told whether Ahab knew the nature of the test to be submitted. He was perhaps desperate, and willing to do anything to bring relief.

Elijah submitted the fire test. Was not Baal a sun god? He gave the priests of Baal all the advantage. They arranged their altar and the sacrifice. They cried out, "Baal, hear us". They began in the morning and even at noon, when the sun was in the height of its power, nothing had happened. Then Elijah began to prod them some. They then began their wild, frantic pagan dance, even cutting themselves, while the king and the people stood by intensely anxious. But at 3:00 PM nothing had happened.

Then the picturesque figure of Elijah -- clad in sheepskin, with long beard flowing in the breeze -- came forward and quietly arranged -- rearranged -- an altar which Jezebel had had destroyed. On it he placed the offering, the wood, and the twelve jars of water. He made his prayer, and the fire descended and consumed the whole. Then the people fell on their faces, and they said, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God". The people then made quick work of the prophets who had been misguiding them these years. They were slain down at the brook Kishon. Robespierre perished on the same scaffold to which he had sent some of France's best.

The Praying Prophet

Immediately, Elijah said to the king: "Get some refreshment and get home for there is sound of abundance of rain". What ears some people have. No rain for years. Who could now say that he heard rain. There was not a cloud in the sky. Elijah's ear was more keenly adjusted than was Ahab's, or anyone else's of that day.

S.D. Gordon says that once he went on invitation of a friend to hear Walter Damrosch lead his famous New York Symphony Orchestra. The next day, out walking, the friend asked Mr. Gordon, "Wasn't that oboe wonderful?" Mr. Gordon says that he had a dim recollection of having heard that word "oboe" before, and thought it must be a musical instrument of some sort. But he heard no oboe the night before, although he had thoroughly enjoyed the evening's program. The friend, however, was hearing things that he did not hear, or knew he heard.

So Elijah confidently and vigorously declared to Ahab, "There is the sound of abundance of rain".

While Ahab went to eat and to drink, Elijah went up near the top of Carmel. This simple statement reveals much of the two characters.

That is a scene worth visualizing. Having achieved a victory for Jehovah -- clear proof that one with God is a majority -- he goes up to commune with his maker. This tall, sun-crowned, bronzed prophet of God -- abrupt in appearance, intense in action, rugged in character, imperious in utterance -- now bent before his maker. He had swayed the thousands and braved the king, yet bowed before God. There is no mention of a prayer. The man was the prayer.

Elijah had his servant with him. Tradition has it that the servant was the son of the widow Zarahabath whom Elijah raised from the dead. To this servant, Elijah said, "Go now and look toward the sea". He knew what he was to look for. "There is nothing." "Go again," said Elijah. Perhaps he said, "You are looking for too large a cloud". "There is nothing." "Go again, you did not look carefully enough." "There is nothing." "Go again, it takes time for clouds to gather." "There is nothing." "Go again, go up to the highest point that you may see farther over the horizon." "There is nothing." And so it went on seven times.

Finally, the servant came back saying that there was a cloud no larger than a man's hand. Send servants to tell Ahab to hurry home or else the rain will overtake him. Elijah ran before the chariot of Ahab for 16 miles, to Jezreel.

Faith and Evidence

Faith in some particular event not dependent upon evidence. But there is where we fall down. We say glibly, "There is no use praying for rain while the wind is in the East".

It is difficult to maintain faith in the ultimate triumph of right when there is no indication that conditions will be better. It is a surrender of faith to employ unholy means of effecting a termination of evil. To fall into line with the forces of evil is a surrender of faith. To say that since one can't overcome the enemy, we might as well join them, is cowardly and unworthy.

Paul standing on board the doomed ship, said to all the passengers: "Be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be so as it hath been spoken unto me". It was because Paul believed God that he had faith in the immediate outcome of that dangerous situation. God's promises are better than the signs. We are so busy looking for signs, when we would do better to fix our faith on God.

In 1930, an inquiry called the "Laymen's Missionary Inquiry" was inaugurated, said to have been supported by laymen of seven denominations, and conducted by a Commission of 15 members. The report was published in 1932. The purpose was to revalue the mission enterprise -- look for signs to justify the faith of the church in the cause. The signs were not lacking. But the missionary enterprise is not motivated by signs, but by the command and promise of God.

This helps us to understand Browning's statement, put into the mouth of one of his characters.

"God's in his heaven, All's right with the world."

In Paul's great doxology, recorded in Ephesians 3:20, we have what S.D. Gordon calls "six degrees of the superlative". God is able to do (1) what we ask, (2) what we think, whether we ask it or not, (3) all we ask or think, (4) above all we may ask or think, (5) abundantly above all, and (6) exceeding abundantly above all.

Belief in a God with that power will enable us to be reconciled to life as we encounter it from day to day.

The Delayed Answer

It is easy for us to confuse delays with denials. God accomplishes his purpose in his own good time. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

Elijah heard the rain, even though there was not a cloud in the sky.

There have been many long waits in life. Noah 120 years, Abraham waited long for Isaac to come. Joseph languished 13 years in prison. Moses was 40 years in the desert, and that many more in the wilderness. Paul was three years in Arabia.

Importance of Perseverance

Jacob was returning from his long sojourn away from his native land. He heard that Esau was still angry with him and was coming to meet him. He sent over his forces, while he remained behind to pray. He wrestled with angels all night. "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me."

The Greeks and the Persians and Marathon. 100,000 Persians and 10,000 Greeks. The Greeks broke the ranks of the Persians, who fled to their boats. The Greeks followed them and held on with their hands until the Persians cut them off. They then held on with their teeth until the Persians cut their heads off.

The Walls of Jericho fell after the seventh day and the seventh round on that seventh day. Naaman washed in Jordan seven times.

The Suffering Hero Complex

September 17, 1941
September 15, 1946

“And he (Elijah) came and sat under a juniper tree: and requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

1 Kings 19:4

Elijah must have been a man of impulse and impetuosity. Such men rise to heights on occasion, and they easily collapse. Elijah went magnificently through one crisis. It was such a triumph as he had dreamed of as he lived the life of a refugee. Now that this was realized, he found new dangers facing him. His life was threatened by the queen. He was not prepared for this. He felt very much alone. No one seemed to be there to fight with him. None rallied to his standard. He felt sorry for himself.

This story always interests us because it is so characteristically human. We know that the world is full of people who feel sorry for themselves. No doubt there are some here tonight who belong in this class. Maybe all of us get under juniper trees occasionally. Some seem to live there.

Some of our members right now no doubt feel very much abused because no one has been to see them lately, or was sick and no one concerned himself about them. Maybe someone is hurt because no one gave him a special invitation to the picnic last night. Maybe some newcomer to Minden is sitting down, teary eyed, because no people in Minden have concerned themselves about her.

The world seems to be against them. They entertain self-compassion, and regard themselves as martyrs. They pin crepe on their sleeves, so to speak. The martyr complex -- even sensible people have this at times.

This is generally on trivial matters. A petty inconvenience. Husband went off without kissing his wife goodbye. A wife does not seem as glad to see a returning husband.

This is a Form of Daydreaming

One writer says that daydreaming may be of two kinds: (1) The conquering Hero Daydreamer, who imagines himself or herself the essence of bravery, beauty, strength, humor, athletic prowess. (2) The Suffering Hero Daydreamer. In either case, one works himself into a feeling of self-importance.

In the case of the suffering hero daydreamer, he imagines reasons for his being abused. It is because others are jealous. A wife will decide that a husband is doing as he does because he is

afraid she will outdo him. A man imagines that he is kept from lecturing because the person in control is afraid of being outshone.

This type of daydreamer also imagines that he is getting a lot of sympathy, has become the object of attention. He proceeds to make his case more plausible by putting another in the wrong, by misinterpreting his acts, misconstruing his words, reading an evil purpose into an innocent remark. There is no use in arguing with one who has adopted this policy.

The great harm done by this habit, apart from making the person himself miserable, is that it does violence to that person's character. It leads them to be dishonest in their misinterpretations. It stirs up ugly moods of envy, revenge, and hate. It drives other people sometimes to desperation.

The Cause of This Habit

The motive behind it fundamentally is selfishness. It is due to the desire to be regarded as important. One such has usually been spoiled as a child. There has been too much catering to their vanity. People of this kind are usually determined that such shall be perpetuated. They will wreck almost anything to accomplish this end. Self is at the center of their universe.

But such people labor under a delusion. They may secure some attention and feel that they are getting the homage they crave, whereas a matter of fact they are filling the minds of people with disgust.

The martyr complex is unnecessary and unprofitable.

The people who have the respect of others are those who stand up to life.

What We Need to Do

We need to be more Christian. The mind of Christ. Though the country turned on him, there was no indication of self-pity. To the women who wept for him as he was led out for crucifixion, he said "Weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and your children".

We need to have more of the spirit of our forefathers. The early settlers were made of sterner stuff. We need some of their iron in our blood. They could take it.

Rembrandt was a Dutch painter of the 17th Century. He is noted for a picture which he painted of himself. At first one might not be so favorably impressed with the idea that a great painter should choose to paint himself. It is a very popular painting, and it is because of the circumstances under which he painted it that some people like it most. His wife had died suddenly. He later became bankrupt. His so called friends left him. He moved into an attic and continued to work, even with poor paint materials. It was then that he painted his own portrait. There is no expression on his face that shows arrogance, self-pity, or resignation.

We need to remember that life is tested by reverses. We cannot always win. Defeats must come. Life is like a ship tested by the storms at sea, or a tree tested by the winds.

Paul, at Ephesus, wrote the Corinthians that he was not going to get to come to them as soon as he had hoped for the reason that a great opportunity was opening up there and it was going to be hard work. As he expressed it, “A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries”. There is a weight of meaning in the word “and”. Probably we have said “but”. It is the difference between the man with vital religion and the man with a dead faith.

The Christian takes comfort in the fact that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). That does not mean that religion is an escape when “we can’t take it”. It means that religion is a refuge that enables us to stand up to any experience.

God said, “When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee” (Is. 43:2). God does not promise to get us around trouble always, but he does promise to see us through it.

Christianity helps us to make our difficulties creative. Paul wrote the Philippians, “My bonds and suffering have really tended to advance the gospel”.

There is a great work going on in hospitals over the land today among those who have been maimed in battle.

Cecil, paralyzed by a bomb.

Every Man Winning His Man

Minden, LA	October 31, 1926
Belcher, LA	July 2, 1929
Alexandria, LA	March 8, 1932
Natchitoches, LA	November 1, 1932
Bastrop, LA	December 6, 1932
Alabama Church, LA	August 1, 1934
Bossier City, LA	July 13, 1936
Winnfield, LA	May 25, 1937
Tallulah, LA	October 26, 1937
Springhill, LA	August 26, 1939
Cedar Grove Church, Shreveport, LA	July 15, 1942
Haynesville, LA (USA Church)	May 2, 1943
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	January 16, 1944
Presbyterian Church, Irving, TX	March 6, 1945
Presbyterian Church, Duncan, OK	June 5, 1945
Grand Avenue Church, Sherman, TX	March 13, 1946
Streetman, TX	October 13, 1948
Turnersville, TX	July 25, 1950
Bartlett, TX	November 24, 1950
Westminster, Waco, TX	July 20, 1952
Ballinger, TX	March 10, 1953
Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX	February 21, 1954

“They slew every man his man.”

1 Kings 20:20

Following the dramatic settlement of the religious issue of the Kingdom of Israel on Mount Carmel, in which Elijah was the commanding figure, and in which the foreign prophets of Melkart, the god of the Sidonians, imported by Queen Jezebel were slain, the nation was in a rather weakened condition. King Ahab evidently had ability, but he was dominated by his wife who was born to dominate, an energetic, passionate, self-willed, determined person. Ahab had encountered Elijah, prophet of God, another strong person. So, when Benhadad II, king of Syria, a powerful monarch descended on him with 32 tribal kings associated with him, and commanding an immense army, Ahab was too weak to resist. Drought and famine and religious persecution had broken the spirit of large districts. When Benhadad came to the capital city of Samaria, he demanded all the silver and the gold, royal harem, and the king's children, and Ahab said “You can have them”. Benhadad became bolder and proposed terms to which the people could not submit. A nameless prophet of God came and heartened the king with assurance that he would be victorious. The king was evidently skeptical. “Who is going to accomplish this?” he asked. “The young armor bearers of the princes,” replied the prophet. When these young

men were numbered, it was found that there were 232 of them. A follow-up army of 7,000 was also mustered.

While the overconfident king and his generals drank in their tents at the noon hour, these young men went out, the army following. As the records put it: "They slew every man his man". The enemy was so disconcerted by this bold attack that it was put to flight, and the army pursued under the leadership of the king.

That expression, "They slew every man his man," has rather intrigued me. Here was a situation into which the Lord evidently stepped and outlined a procedure which would rid his people of an enemy. The people on Carmel had pledged their loyalty to Him anew. He would make potent their efforts in an uneven struggle. The city followed the plan and was victorious.

Israel was the church in the Old Dispensation. It was engaged in warfare. The New Testament church is looked upon as an army. Paul compared the career of a Christian to that of a soldier. But he did not think of our warfare as one involving the shedding of blood. It is not against the flesh that we are to fight. It is against principalities and powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness. The church of today is to take the Word of God, which is a sharp, two-edged sword, and overcome the enemies of righteousness. We are to slay enemies by making friends of them.

1. There is a definite mission to which the Church is divinely committed.

It is expressed in the Great Commission given by our Lord just before he ascended. It is the duty of the church to evangelize the world. The fact that this has not been done in these 1900 years is not to our credit. We have been busy, but not with the main business. Too much of our time has been taken up with non-essentials.

I remember reading an article in the Christian Observer, or the Presbyterian of the South, written by Dr. Walter L. Lingle. It had a title, "Setting Grasshoppers". The article and the title was suggested by the remark made by a friend of his to the effect that if he had a bird dog that got to setting grasshoppers, he would shoot the dog; and yet, said this friend, we have members of the Church, preachers and elders and leaders generally who are spending their time in pointing out things of negligible value.

The church is an organization for production, a team for a gigantic struggle, an army for conquest. The product, the goals, the objective are established. That which does not help the church achieve those ends is out of place.

There has been always the tendency to detour into the bypaths religiously. People swing either to the right by making religion intricate and unintelligible; or to the left by making it superficial and unsatisfying. In Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees imposed "heavy burdens" (Matt. 23:4), ceremonial observances and details of moral duty. Jesus emphasized the simplicity of religion. But the Christian Church has come to be loaded down with what one man calls "baggage" (Potter: "Can a Man be a Christian Today?") Simple worship has been replaced by an intricate and gorgeous liturgy in some quarters. Some have made Christianity a philosophy, not a mere way of life. Some preaching never touches life where the average human moves. But all this is no reason why we should digress to the left and introduce other features merely for their popular appeal.

A church can become weighted down with organization. We can become so concerned about the machinery that we lose sight of the purpose of the machinery. This leads me to make my second observation that in the effort to fulfill the purpose for which it exists,

2. There is need for Division of Responsibility.

The work of evangelism is not the duty of the preacher alone. It is the responsibility of every member of the church. There may have been a time when the preacher could farm all the weak and on Sunday preach to the satisfaction of the congregation to which he ministered. That time has passed. The modern pastor is not only expected to preach and teach among a much more intelligent membership than ever before in the history of this country, but he is to be a pastor, organizer, builder, money raiser, community leader.

Moses made the mistake of trying to do too much -- of trying to do all the judging among the people. But the wise old priest of Midian, Jethro, saw the mistake and advised Moses wisely to divide the responsibility. "To every man his work" (Mk. 13:34).

That definite assignment of responsibility should be in keeping with the main objective of the church -- that of winning men and women for the Kingdom. Many church members are willing enough to be given an assignment, but they want to have something easy to do. Most church members shy off from being given the assignment of talking to others about their relationship to Christ and the Church. It could be that they are content to be merely "setting grasshoppers".

3. Some Evangelistic Responsibilities are peculiarly our own.

"They slew every man HIS man." I do not know that there was a previous assignment of person to person in the surprise attack. It was evidently well planned. In football, players are responsible for certain opponents in the various formations. In offensive play, the failure of one man to eliminate his man may cause the play to fail. In the wisdom of God, peculiar responsibilities have been given us which we cannot evade without hurt to both ourselves and the Kingdom.

Scattered over our Synod are a number of Andrew Clubs, made up of persons who agree to become familiar with the procedures of Visitation Evangelism and engage in the practice of them. This, you know, has the Biblical background of the example set by Andrew who, when he found Christ, went and brought his brother Simon Peter to Him (John 1:41).

We had a little incident in Minden, Louisiana about 25 years ago (Sept. 1927) which has lived in my mind ever since. We had in that city a district judge, who as a child had attended the Presbyterian Sunday school, but who had never united with the church. In fact, he had not attended church for years, and he was a slave to drink. It was about to wreck his career. One day, two of our elders became concerned about this judge, and decided then and there to go and talk to him about Christ and the Church. They found him in his office, looking out of the window. They told him why they had come. He said he had been wishing for someone to talk

to. The interview ended with a definite promise by the judge to come into the church. "But," he said, "I am not coming alone. I want to work up a class to come in with me. I will let you know when I am ready." In a very short time after that interview, the judge called one of the elders who had interviewed him and said he was ready. The following Sunday, the Session met during Sunday school. The judge was present to be received by profession of faith; his wife, who was an inactive member of another church; his young lady daughter, who came in by profession; a man and his wife (McCrarys) who came in by profession; another man who came in by statement; and this man's wife who came in by letter from a church elsewhere. There all seven of them were, six were brought in by a man who was not yet himself a member of the church. It could have been that there was no one else in that city who could have accomplished that. This judge considered these as his responsibility, and he went after them.

We would have much better record if we placed a stronger emphasis on this main objective of the church.

4. Way By Which Each May Perform His Task.

(1) There is the educational process. Teachers who fill little minds with truths of the gospel are contributing immeasurably to the progress of the Kingdom.

E. Stanley Jones says ("How to be a Transformed Person", p. 142) that when he was flying across the Atlantic at an altitude of 20,000 feet, he saw huge icebergs floating below. He recalled that only one-eighth of the iceberg is above the surface. He recalled also that G. Stanley Hall says that our minds are like icebergs in that respect, seven-eighths below the level of consciousness. He quotes Dr. Chas. Mayo as declaring to a medical association in Chicago that 75% of human action is controlled by the unconscious, and 25% by conscious thought. How fortunate it is when a person's subconscious mind is stored with great truths planted there by parents and teachers. One may err through diversion of conscious thought, but there is the subconscious to deal with ultimately. "When he is old, he will not depart from it."

I suspect that the most of us came into the church as a result of the educational method, basically. For that reason, we feel that the Sunday school is an indispensable factor in the work of the church.

It was once thought a smart thing to say that one lets his child grow up and decide for himself in matters of religion. But that same individual does not let his child grow up without his first having decided matters of knowledge and faith in other fields for him. Such a policy in a parent is born of a lack of conviction about such things. If we have firm convictions ourselves, we want our children to share in them. When one makes a decision to be a Christian when he has no background of religious training, think of that seven-eighths of subconscious mind that must be adjusted.

(2) There is the mass evangelism process. Results can be achieved by enlistment of principles of crowd psychology that cannot be achieved any other way. The church is deeply indebted to such evangelists as John Wesley, George Whitefield, Chas. G. Finney, Sam Jones, Billy Sunday, Kagawa, and now Billy Graham. Probably the greatest of them all was Dwight L. Moody.

But along with the mass appeal there has always gone the personal touch. Having an evangelist come to your church does not relieve you and me of a peculiar responsibility that each of us has. We have still the responsibility of winning our man.

This is illustrated in the life and work of Mr. Moody himself.

Dwight L. Moody was born in Northfield, MA. He was the eighth of nine children, and his father died when he was only four. His education was meager. At about the age of 17, he was working in Boston in a shoe store and attending church and Sunday school. The teacher's name was Edward Kimball. Mr. Kimball felt that what he was doing for young Moody was not sufficient, and so he resolved to go down and speak to him about his relationship to Jesus Christ. He hesitated at the door, wondering if he should go in during the hours of work. But he decided to make the venture, and found Moody wrapping a pair of shoes in the back part of the store. The effort of Mr. Kimball was timely, and Moody then and there became a Christian.

Soon after this, Moody left Boston for Chicago to try his fortune as a business man. He was desirous, however, of doing some sort of religious work. He did not feel that his educational advantages had been sufficient to justify his preaching or teaching, he decided to rent a pew in Plymouth Church and fill it each Sunday. He later rented another, and still another, and yet another. He was soon filling four or five pews each Sunday. This was not enough to satisfy him, so he began drumming up pupils for a mission Sunday school, and finally built up a school of over 1,500. Mr. Moody was not the superintendent, neither was he a teacher. He was simply the promoter.

There was a class of girls in that Sunday school, taught by a man whose health failed so completely that the doctors informed him that he had but a few weeks in which to live. This teacher came to Mr. Moody in great distress, saying that he was leaving to find a more congenial atmosphere with the hope that he might prolong his life, but that he regretted leaving without bringing one of them into full relationship with Jesus Christ. Mr. Moody suggested that they get a carriage and go to see them that very afternoon. As they went from house to house, they met with most cordial reception as the teacher told the girls of his deep desire. The result was that in ten days everyone of them were professing Christians. Before the teacher left, they all had a prayer meeting together. It was such a memorable one that as Mr. Moody left the meeting, he prayed, "O Lord, let me die rather than lose the blessing I have received tonight".

For the first time, the power and joy of persuasive evangelism were seen by young Moody. It was a Sunday school teacher that led him to Christ, and it was another Sunday school teacher that taught him the joy of this kind of service. He resolved to give his entire time to Christian work. He finally developed into a great evangelist -- probably the greatest this country has ever produced.

It was while Mr. Moody was conducting a mission in Worcester, MA that a young man tarried after the services to speak to him. He gave his name as Kimball.

"What!" said Mr. Moody, "are you the son of Mr. Edward Kimball of Boston? What is your name?"

"Henry."

"I am glad to see you. Henry, are you a Christian?"

"No, sir, I do not think I am."

"How old are you?"

"I am seventeen."

“Henry, when I was just 17, and you were a little baby in the crib, your father came to me and put his hand on my shoulder and asked me to be a Christian, and he was the only man that ever came to me and talked to me because he loved my soul; and now I want you, my boy, to be a Christian. Henry, don’t you want to be a Christian?”

“Yes, sir. I think I do.”

It was there that young Kimball became a follower of Jesus Christ.

(3) There is the Visitation Evangelism process. This is an organized and systematic method of reaching every man, woman, and child with the Christian invitation with a view to winning them for Christ and the Church. This is regarded as preeminently the New Testament method. It is a simple plan, and gives the layman an opportunity to do his part. This method is gaining more and more favor in most of our churches.

Colonial Church in Dallas was going along fairly well, but with the additions to membership barely offsetting the loss by removal or death. There was the growing feeling that it was futile to try to put new life into a church in that situation. The question of moving had been brought up constantly. When the Presbyterian Churches of Dallas decided to have Dr. H.H. Thompson come and personally conduct a citywide visitation evangelism campaign, Colonial agreed to go in with it. We compiled our prospect list, selected our teams, and made the canvass. One of the most active deacons in the church was very unhappy over the thought of his going out to do this. He said, “Mr. O’Kelley, I’ll do anything you want me to do in the church but that. I simply cannot do that kind of thing.” But we did. He went out and brought back a signed card. He was thrilled. And so were we all as we saw that large company of people coming in on the day appointed. We had no time for a sermon that day. That church has probably had many other such events since. But coming after the lean war years, it was unforgettable.

We have a church in Austin known as Hyde Park Church. It was organized in 1910. But after being in existence 38 years it had in 1948 just 65 members. The Rev. John Mueller came to that church as a pastor on January 1, 1949. After he had been there a short while, I was driving into Austin on a Thursday evening and I noticed a light on in the church. I decided to go by to pass the time of day. Some of the men were there waiting to start out on a visitation assignment. They told me that they came to the church every Thursday night and went out to invite men and women to be Christians and members of the church. By that method, since then, this church has added nearly 200 members, and even with its losses has tripled in membership.

In 1950, the Wilshire Church in Austin reported 46 members. It added 50 more members in the years following and 118 the year following. In April, it reported a membership of 206. Which means that in two years, the membership was quadrupled. How? By the visitation process.

When we get to the point where the whole church is at work, each in his own way, extending his neighbor the invitation for which his neighbor has long been waiting, the possibilities are unlimited. Every man winning his man.

God of the Whole of Life

Minden, LA

November 1, 1931

“And there came a man of God and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver this great multitude into thine hands, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

1 Kings 20:28

In the last years of the reign of Ahab, King of Israel, Benhadad II, king of Syria, with seat of his kingdom at Damascus, now the most powerful king west of the Euphrates, heading a confederacy of some 32 kings, came into Israel and laid siege to the city of Samaria. He had an immense army, with horses and chariots. He exacted tribute, which Ahab weakly agreed to give. Then he became arrogant and demanded more -- the wives and children of the royal household, and in fact the privilege of plundering the entire city. Then, at the instigation of the elders of the land, Ahab declined.

Benhadad then boasted that when he got through with Samaria there would not be dust enough left to furnish each of the men he had with him a handful. Ahab's reply, “Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast as he that taketh it off”. Hearing this, the drinking Benhadad called for battle array.

About that time, a prophet of God came to Ahab, and assured him of triumph. It would seem as if God, now that the people had declared for him at Carmel, was desirous of giving evidence of his favor and love. Ahab was told to order the battle. He sent out his young princes, numbering 232, at noon, while the Syrians were in a drunken stupor in their tents in the heat of the day. The Syrians were so sure of the battle that they did not attach significance to the advance of these young men. But as they came, they slew every man his man, and then followed the 7,000 others held in reserve. The Syrians were completely routed, and the drunken king barely escaped.

The king of Israel was told by the prophet to strengthen himself, as the king of Syria would return as soon as the rainy season was over. The servants came to Benhadad and attributed their defeat to two things, neither of which was their drunken debauchery. One cause, they suggested, was the inefficiency of the kings. Replace the kings with real war men -- captains, not ornaments. The other cause, which was seemingly the most important in their minds, was that God was a god of the hills, and hence they had made a mistake in fighting in the hills. This could be avoided in the future by pitching battle in the plain. These remarks commended themselves to the Benhadad, and so he ordered preparations.

This time, he brought his army in to the famous plain of Aesdrelon, near the town of Aphek. Many battles have been fought there since the days of Joshua. Israel had had some time to prepare. But when they went out to give battle, their little armies looked like two little flocks of kids on the plain.

After being pitched against each other for seven days, the battle took place. Israel slew of the Syrians 100,000 in one day, and when the rest fled to Aphek to make a last stand on the old wall, the wall collapsed and killed 27,000 more. Benhadad was captured.

It would seem, from the setting of this incident, that God was establishing the fact that the God whom the Israelites had declared for was no heathen divinity -- no mere mountain, local, or national deity. He is a God of the whole earth, yea of the universe. The heathen have a god for every region, hill, stream, tree. It is the difference between superstition and true religion.

Not Only an Ancient Difficulty

We feel that we have advanced a long way in our conception of God, but when we come to weigh our estimates and be candid with ourselves, we are self-convicted of casting reproach on God for the unworthy estimate we have of him.

1. We make Him subject to the fickleness of fate. We claim to have the leadership of an infinite God, and yet we go on paying our homage to the number 13, to Friday, and to the moon. We knock on wood to appease some deity. Some would not carry a rabbit's foot or a buckeye, but they would not sit down to dinner with 13 at the table.

2. We conceived of His being a tribal God. We think of his favoring the courageous Swiss and the Scotch, but we remember that he must also have fought with the Hollanders. During the World War, we talked as though God were favorable to our particular side and that he had little to do with the enemy.

3. We departmentalize God in our lives. We think of him in the "ups" of life, but cannot see Him in the "downs" of life.

We think of God in connection with the Church, and the Sabbath, nbut leave him out of the picture in business and the six days of the week.

The Communion table is God's table, and we think of meeting him there, but what of the dinner table in our own homes. Do we think of Him then?

Youth seems favorable to God, and the weakness of old age might lead to the thought that God is deserting one. The psalmist prayed: "Cast me not off in the time of old age". Again: "I have been young but now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread".

The supreme moments of inspiration seem to bring God near. "It is good to be here," said Peter. In the moments of depression, he may not seem so near but he may be there.

Life and health seem to imply the presence of God, but God is in the hour of death as well. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow..."

There are the bleak hills of duty. They suggest God. But why not have God in the time of pleasure? Is it because we do not think he would sanction of pleasure?

"Lord of all being, throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Center and soul of every sphere,

Yet to each loving heart how near.

Our midnight is thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are thine."

-- O.W. Holmes

The Price of Religious Pottering

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX

February 26, 1928
May 26, 1935 (rewritten)
June 17, 1945
November 8, 1953 (rewritten)

“And so thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.”

1 Kings 20:40

These words are part of a make believe story told by one of the prophets to Ahab, king of Israel. The occasion was this: Benhadad, king of Syria, was a mighty warrior with many allies. He invaded Israel with vast armies twice in the days of Ahab, king of Israel. With the help of the Lord, the forces of Israel put to flight the invaders on both occasions. In the second instance, the confused Syrians fled to Aphek behind the walls of which they planned to make a stand. But an earthquake came and toppled the walls and buried 27,000 men in the ruins. Benhadad, on the advice of his immediate attendants, decided to throw himself on the mercy of King Ahab. It was a good strategy from Benhadad’s point of view. Ahab received him kindly, called him “brother”, and invited him to take a place in his chariot with him. Grateful for this unexpected clemency, Benhadad promised to return to the king of Israel all the towns his father, Benhadad I had taken from the Israelites and to permit his subjects to have quarter in the Syrian capital, Damascus. Benhadad II was permitted to return to his own land.

On Ahab’s journey home, he was met by a man who had been wounded and who wore a headband. The wounds the man bore, however, were those which he had forced a man to inflict on him for this purpose. The man related this story to the king: “I was taking part in the recent battle, when a man brought a prisoner to me and said, ‘Keep this man. If he should get away from you, then it will be your life for his, or else you will have to pay a talent of silver (about \$2,000); ‘and as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone’.” Ahab said, “You must pay the penalty”. The man then removed his headband, which had been a disguise, and the king recognized him the man as one of the prophets. His name is not given. Some think it was Micaiah. Ahab also saw the point of the make believe story. He, Ahab, had spared a man whom the Lord had given into his hands, and as a consequence would himself pay a penalty.

The disguised prophet told a human interest story, simple, one that could have happened, that doubtless has happened over and over again in the battles of the centuries. Failure to keep one’s mind on his business has always been responsible for sorrow and suffering. Sometimes the consequences are tragic. The prophet’s statement contains a lot of food for thought. It might stir the consciences of some of us, as it did that of Ahab.

We are reminded here of the peril of pottering. We potter when we busy ourselves with trifles, labor with little purpose, energy or effect. It is easy to become absorbed in something that is less important than something that is a special trust. The fault of substituting our own pleasure

for that of those to whom we stand obligated is a common one. The greater fault of disregarding the responsibilities given us by God is well nigh universal.

While we were living in Minden, LA, there was a man by the name of Howard, who made entry into some of the Minden homes at hours when visitors were not expected and got away with considerable loot. He was arrested in Shreveport, and was held there by request of the Minden authorities, because the latter thought the Minden jail would not long detain such an elusive prisoner. But Mr. Howard persuaded one of the Shreveport officers to take him out of town to some spot where he would locate some buried loot. The officer came back without the prisoner, saying that while he was engaged in doing something, the prisoner was gone. Needless to say, there was a wave of indignation that spread over the section of the state in which this occurred. It was put down as a pure case of carelessness. But we are as careless in even more important matters.

That word "busy" is a very modern word. It is used to cover a great many alibis. People feel that just to say "I'm busy" is enough. But it is not. We may be busy and yet not be busy about the most important matters. Jesus told of people who would not come to the marriage feast because they were busy. Others would not follow him because they had business matters to attend to -- a field to look over or oxen to try out.

The Christian has certain trusts committed to his keeping and it is the duty of the Christian to give proper consideration to the demands of those trusts. He must have a true sense of values and not be faithless through neglect.

1. The Christian as Citizen

In a democracy like ours, the individual has a distinct responsibility. It is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people". We are being constantly reminded of the urgency of exercising our rights and discharging our duties as responsible citizens.

There is always the danger of being swayed by propaganda and emotionalism of the crowd. There are periods when our nation becomes engulfed in a tidal wave of agitation. There are times of lassitude and indifference. We need citizens with a perpetual sense of trusteeship. We cannot always consult our own pleasure and convenience in the discharge of our public obligations. Neither can we consult our own personal advantage in the measures we support.

Nero is said to have sent ships to Alexandria while Rome was famishing, not to bring grain, but sand for his arena.

The charter of our civil rights are written in blood. History is the story of man's confined, hampered, oppressed spirit struggling, battling, dying to be free. But we may be guilty of dereliction to duty because we let our interests as a nation be centered on trivialities, while unworthy officials deliver our rights into the hands of those who would exploit us for their own enrichment and preferment.

Let us not forget that democracy has its competitors. There is national socialism, called also nazism, the rule of race; fascism, the rule of the elite; and communism, theoretically the rule of the proletariat mass.

It will be recalled that at one time, we were in a death grapple with Nazism and Fascism as represented by Hitler and Mussolini. While so engaged, the Communists launched in this country the greatest spy system that the world has ever seen. Now we are engaged in a very militant crusade against this evil that has crept in while we were busy with something else. What we need to be on our guard against is the entrance of another evil while we are centering our attention on communism.

An irresponsible wholesale denunciation of all person who, out of a love for their country, point to certain deficiencies in our national life as they see it could easily constitute a threat to freedom of thought in this country.

As citizens, we have a responsibility. We can be busy here and there and find that a cherished possession has gotten away from us.

2. The Christian as a Church Member

To the church has been committed the great responsibility of advancing the Kingdom of God in the world. It was given a message and told to deliver it. But there is danger that the church will be busy about every other thing but that for which it primarily exists.

We place emphasis in church activity on a number of things other than the delivery of the message of salvation. Believe it or not, it is not always an easy thing to get some Presbyterian churches interested in evangelistic campaign.

You recall the parable of the tares which Jesus told. Tares have been sown in the church. Someone has observed that the prayer of the church is, "Now I lay me down to sleep". "While men slept, an enemy has sown tares." That has been true in the church of all ages. There are the tares of contention, indifference, vain show, misplaced emphasis.

In my ministry, I have seen opportunities for church advancement come and go. It is easy to feel that because an effort is going along very well at present it will continue on without much effort. We can still fail in our effort here. We have been busy; our time has been taken up with various things; but can we be sure that our early dreams will be realized?

To do a creditable job here, we Presbyterians are going to have to do some sacrificial giving. We can test our interest in the undertaking by the degree of willingness with which we give our money to its support. Presbyterians have been quite proud of their record in giving, although there are smaller bodies that far outstrip us in the extent of per capita giving. That is the way they build churches and grow as they do.

There are agencies that try to use the church to further their enterprises. In years of financial stringency, numerous plans are tried by which to coax a few dollars out of reluctant pockets. Some of the methods we hear of are decidedly questionable, such as bingo parties. The

argument of those churches that employ that method is that the end justifies the means. This practice was one obstacle in the effort of the governor of Louisiana to eliminate gambling institutions from the state.

Presbyterians of Louisiana have been embarrassed by a constantly recurring declaration that the First Presbyterian Church, about a century and a half ago, erected a building largely by a lottery. The famous Louisiana lottery was chartered in 1868 and became a powerful institution in the country. It was outlawed in 1898 and finally eliminated in 1907. The consciences of good people were not as well informed on these matters as they are today. There was a church in New Orleans to which on Theodore Clapp, a Yale graduate, came as pastor. The church owed a debt of \$45,000 on it. It was decided that they would pay some \$25,000 of that by means of a lottery, which they did. But certain members who did not like Dr. Clapp's ideas seceded, and with others, formed what is now the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. The old building paid for in large measure by lottery was destroyed by fire.

A far more creditable method of raising money for the church is by a tithing program on the part of the members. The point to which I am speaking is that we can be putting our money into everything other than the thing which will bring us eternal satisfaction.

This is just as true of time and effort as regards the church. We need to take stock of our engagements. Are we letting the church get away from us because we simply do not find time to give it? We always find time to do the thing we want most to do.

3. The Christian as a Parent

The other evening, a reporter in Boston, MA on Morgan Beatty's program, spoke of the great concern being felt in that great self-styled center of culture, because of its juvenile problem. The offenders in Boston, like those in numerous other cities, so often come from good homes -- that is, comfortable and prominent.

Since the arrest of the two murderers of the kidnapped child in Missouri, reporters have been digging back into the family histories of Carl Austin Hall and Bonnie Brown Heady. It is found that they came from what is regarded as a normal type of home. In neither case was the family below the level of respectability -- quite the reverse. But in each case, somewhere along the line of development, there were influences which directed the course downward. It is easy to imagine that when ideals were taking shape, somebody responsible was interested in something else.

One cannot do everything. Some things must be allowed to pass. We need to be sure that the thing which absorbs our attention is not the less important thing. Let's stop and ask ourselves as parents, What is the big thing in my life? If I realize my big ambition and my child makes a failure of life through my neglect, what will it matter?

Every thinking parent has been disturbed by reflection on the terrific impact of modern propaganda. Your child's way of life will be determined, not by your dream for him, but by Hollywood and the comics. The mother who sends her children off to the movies, without

knowing what is being shown there, so that she can have opportunity to do something else, is taking a tremendous risk.

One of our prominent ministers (Dr. C. T. Caldwell) now in retirement, with time to give attention to radio and television (at 85), said the other day, rather seriously, "For the first time in my life, I am an authority on beer, cigarettes and detergents". Adults have a background of counteracting knowledge and experience, but children have not.

Have you as a parent made it a point to make the religious side of life as attractive as the sordid? Remember, one never drifts upward. The natural trend is always downward. It takes serious effort to instill right principles.

As parents, while we are busy here and there, our children may get away from us -- or at least the way of life we wish they would follow.

4. The Christian as a Person

An immortal soul has been committed to the care of every person. That is our first charge.

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

Many of the great religious leaders of the world became Christians early. Jonathan Edwards thought he became a Christian at 7 years; Matthew Henry at 11; Isaac Watts at 9. Gladstone said his conscious religious life began at four. We can set no age that is universally acceptable. But we can be so busy with this and that, until we neglect this important matter, and sooner or later lose the inclination to be a Christian at all.

When once we have made our profession, that is not enough. There is need for constant cultivation. The enemy sows tares in the minds of Christians. One lets the least provocation keep him from church. Eternal things are soon forgotten.

Here we have one of the most disturbing thoughts one can have -- the possibility that one can through oversight, let something of vital importance get beyond the possibility of recall.

"Rise up, O men of God, have done with lesser things,
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings."

Unholy Traffic

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

April 23, 1939
May 26, 1946

“And he (Naboth) answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.”

1 Kings 21:6

In the little city of Jezreel, located on an eminence in a beautiful stretch of land in the northern part of Palestine, there lived in ancient times a man by the name of Naboth. We know little about him, but what we do know sheds luster on his name.

It not infrequently happens that we go on our way unmindful of the very existence of some particular individual until some event involving courage or heroism or honor brings them into prominence. In this brief glimpse we have disclosed qualities of character which have gone unrecognized save by the few who may have been in close relationship to that individual. Crises more often reveal the man than develop him.

We have such a case in Naboth, of Jezreel. He lived quietly and contentedly on the estate of his fathers, now his. It was no doubt a beautiful tract of land, laying hard by the palace of Ahab, the king of Israel. The central capital of Israel was Samaria, but Ahab and his wife Jezebel maintained a summer palace at Jezreel. There the king relaxed and doubtless hunted.

One day, while walking around looking things over, it occurred to him that he ought to have more park space about the palace. The vineyard of Naboth would make a valuable addition to the estate. He saw where he could beautify the grounds and make out of it a pleasant garden. There was doubtless a most attractive view of the stretch of land towards the Jordan to be had from the vineyard slopes of Naboth's property. So the king made up his mind to secure the property.

He made Naboth a proposition, either to give him a better vineyard in exchange for his, or to pay him the money.

Naboth could have said, “Now is my opportunity. This is the time for a killing, for a big financial swoop.” He could have said, “If the king wants this place sufficiently in earnest to pay my price, he can get it”. But apparently without either looking at another piece of property or discussing the price, Naboth told the king promptly that the property was not for sale.

There were reasons why he was unwilling to sell the king his property. In the first place, it was against the Mosaic law for him to sell (Lev. 25:35f; Num. 36:7f). The families of the twelve tribes had been settled on designated pieces of property. All belonged to God, and the land was held in trust by the succeeding generations. There was to be no bartering. Should a family because of some financial difficulty be forced to sell the property, they would always

have a right to redeem it; and besides in the Jubilee year it would automatically come back to the descendants anyway.

In the second place, Naboth did not want to sell it. There was to him a sacredness about the place. There were far reaching memories which could not be disregarded. He had gotten this place from his fathers, and he was intending to pass it on to his sons.

So, he told the king that the place was not for sale at any price.

The rest of the story is not of special importance for our purpose this morning. Suffice it to add that Ahab acted like a spoilt child. He went into his palace and threw a fit of bad temper. His wife Jezebel, who was no doubt as anxious to have this property as the king, proposed that she would get the property for him. So she perpetuated a four-fold crime to secure it -- forgery, false witnessing, perjury and murder. She used the king's name, secured false accusation against Naboth and his sons, and had them killed. She then delivered to her husband the vineyard. But he had Elijah to face later, and the grim consequences of his unprincipled covetousness.

Thomas Carlyle, Scottish historian and essayist of the last century, wrote an excellent "History of Frederick the Great", King of Prussia in the 18th Century, in which he related an incident that was in some respects similar to that associated with Naboth.

Frederick erected the royal palace at Potsdam, known as San Souci (sān-sōō-sē), and found that there was a mill which interfered with the view from the windows of his palace. Annoyed, he sent to ask the owner how much he would take for the mill. The owner replied that it was not for sale. Frederick, angered, commanded that it be pulled down. "The king may do this," said the miller, "but there are laws in Prussia". He immediately commenced proceedings against the monarch, the result of which was that the court instructed the monarch to rebuild the mill and to pay in addition, a compensation. The king was mortified, but was magnanimous. "I am glad," he said, "to find that just laws and upright judges exist in my kingdom."

Years later, a descendant of the miller succeeded to the possession of the mill, and he came upon pecuniary difficulties. He wrote to Frederick William, the King of Prussia, reminding him of the earlier incident and stating that if His Majesty now entertained a similar desire to obtain possession of the property, he would be willing under the circumstances to sell to him.

The king immediately wrote with his own hand a letter saying, "I cannot allow you to sell the mill...I lament to hear that you are in circumstances of embarrassment, and therefore send you \$6,000 to arrange your affairs, in the hope that this sum will be sufficient for the purpose. Consider me your affectionate neighbor. Frederick William."

It is possible that not one of us will ever be placed in exactly the same situation as that of Naboth, with a vineyard hard by the palace of a king, or of a miller with a mill obstructing the view of an emperor. But we do possess certain priceless treasures which we may have temptation to part with for a temporary advantage. We have inherited national and personal privileges and ideals and religious prerogatives which are trusts. They ought not to be for sale, and yet we find that people do sell them.

Consider, first, our national ideals and privileges. We talk much about being a free people, with the right to vote an opinion on the policies of a nation. We prize the right to speak freely, and the privilege of rising to position of leadership by the voluntary consent of the people.

But sometimes you will find a man who will sell his vote for some personal advantage, if not for money. The right of franchise is priceless. It should never be for sale. It is something that has been inherited. Whether we have been born into the situation or have found it advantageous to come under the favored circumstances provided by its principles of government, the obligation is the same. That person who uses the privileges of the nation as a means to furthering his own ends when those ends are hurtful to the institution, is a traitor who has trafficked in holy things.

A recent biographer of John Hay, American statesman and diplomat who came to prominence during the Civil War and continued a factor during the rest of the century, was forced to write of him: "His party loyalty which resembled that of a highly cultivated churchman for his church kept him a silent spectator to the betrayal of principles in which he believed" (quoted by Luccock: Acts I, p. 106).

We have had and are having some sad demonstrations of faithlessness on the part of citizens. There are men in public life today who could have been really great men. But all that they have done has been to hold on by selling out.

There are also Religious trusts which we may be called upon to sell. We have all no doubt been trained in the practice of religious principles. We know how deeply rooted our social life is in religion. We know how much we are dependent upon religion to furnish those qualities of character so necessary to the foundation of the nation. Yet we have the temptation to sell these to the world for some advantage that is merely temporary.

For instance, there is the Sabbath Day and its privileges. It is a trust, yet there are some who will sell it for gain or pleasure. There are many Christian people who will aid and support those who would confiscate the Christian Sabbath. We cannot settle a question of this sort on purely a personal basis. A man will say, "I do not see that it does me any harm to do this or that on Sunday". He might even argue that he gets good out of it. Naboth might have argued that he could get a fancy price for his vineyard, but he would be selling a trust. If what I do on the Sabbath tends to destroy its observance, I am selling a trust for some personal advantage.

We might speak of other instances.

There are also personal principles which we are daily called upon to sacrifice. There are the principles of chastity, honesty, honor, dependability. Here is a man who carries out a shady business deal and in so doing sells himself for a few dollars. You wonder that he is able to hold up his head after doing that.

Here is another man who is traitor to all that is holy in his position as a father. He sells out for some temporary advantage.

It distresses one soul to see a young girl selling the priceless possession of personality for a temporary popularity. She becomes cheap and disgusting.

Ships that Never Sail

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

March 21, 1937
October 19, 1947

“Jehoshaphat made ships of tarshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.”

1 Kings 22:48

Jehoshaphat was the son of Asa. He began to reign in Jerusalem in the 4th year of the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. He began to reign at the age of 35 and reigned 25 years.

He attempted to maintain the religious prestige of the nation. He went further in his reforms than his father. He was personally righteous, but did not do all that he would like to have done. He also made some mistakes. He left the high places, and he took a wife for his eldest son from among the daughters of Ahab.

He labored to promote peace; and he was anxious about the morality of his people.

He sought to advance the commercial enterprises of his nation, and it is in that connection that the statement of our text is made.

Futile Attempt at Commerce

Jehoshaphat wanted to reestablish the maritime trade with Ophir which had been such a lucrative enterprise in the days of Solomon.

Ophir has been hard to locate. It was a region celebrated for its gold. Hiram and Solomon sent a navy from Ezion-Geber for the gold and brought back much besides. The route was by way of the Red Sea, and must have taken as long as three years for a trip due to the character of the winds and the time spent in ports. Three locations have been made of Ophir -- Africa, near Madagascar; India, and Southeast Asia. The latter is thought to be correct by Davis Dictionary.

Ezion-Geber was a town on the Red Sea, at the northern end of the Gulf of Akaba, in the confines of Edom.

By “ships of tarshish”, strong sea-going ships were meant. Originally it meant ships used in trade with Tarshish. But it came to mean a ship of first rate magnitude.

The ships were wrecked in harbor. They never got out to sea. They may have been badly built. The Jewish sailors may have had imperfect knowledge of the sea, of the rig and management of ships. It may have been divine judgment for idolatrous alliance (2 Chronicles 20:36,37).

A Frequent Experience

There are other ships destined for the sea that never make a voyage. They are not downed in battle, nor shattered by storm at sea. They are broken in port.

There are people who must be content never to make a venture for God. Others are satisfied to lie in harbor. Satisfied with security, cheap praise, comfortable religion. No giving of self for Christ's sake.

Philip of Spain had a great loss in 1588. But he commanded thanks to be given that the loss was no more serious. He used singular mercy in relieving the distressed soldiers and sailors. Man proposes that God disposes (Prov. 16:9).
"It is the Lord, let him do what seem Him good."

Such may be due to poor construction, or to providential intervention. Falling to pieces from disuse.

Borden of Yale. Destruction of children at New London.
Henry Warren of Cambridge: Yale, Pali Manuscripts (Reader's Digest 2/37; p. 2).

There was an English poet of melancholy temperament by the name of Thomas Gray (1716-71). He wrote many things, but one poem for which he is famous. The churchyard at Stoke Pogis, and its environs, furnished the setting for the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", which begins, as you recall --

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day..."

The closing lines of the poem express a thought that is all too common among us:

"Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time did n'er unroll:
Chill penury repress'd during their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Our veteran hospitals are peopled with young men who in the beginning of their lives were rendered incapable of doing what they had prepared themselves to do.

In the ordinary course of life, young people soon after graduation pass away.

Some train for one type of career and then take up another.

Parents will not give their daughters a full education because they say they will get married, and all that will be to no purpose. I knew of one father who regretted that his daughter

wanted to go to a great Eastern university for higher education because he feared she would not want to marry.

This utilitarian aspect of dreams and plans and preparation is the greatest foe to achievement. Such ventures are their own reward.

It isn't whether we win or lose, but how did we play the game.

There is also the element of the eternal to consider. The outcome of our plans do not matter with God. What are the intentions?

You remember the battle of Ziglag (1 Samuel 30). As David and his army pursued the Amalekites, there were 200 who could not follow. They tarried with the baggage so that the others could move more rapidly. When they brought back the spoil, the fighters thought the 200 should not have a share. But David said that such would not be the case. "As his sage is that goeth down to battle, so shall his share be that tarrieth by the baggage: they shall share alike."

The Noblest Heritage

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

November 1, 1931
September 5, 1954 (rewritten)

“Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you. And Elisha said, I pray you, let me inherit a double portion of your spirit....Now when the sons of the prophet who were at Jericho saw him over against them, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha” (RSV).

2 Kings 2:9,15

Elijah was one of the most picturesque, in fact the most wonderful, characters of Old Testament history. Born probably in Galilee, he was a dweller of Gilead across Jordan. His dress was odd -- a garment of camel's hair, bound by a leather girdle. That, you recall was also the clothing which John the Baptist wore centuries later. Elijah was a prophet in the days of Ahab, wicked king of Israel, and of Jezebel, his even more wicked wife. At the risk of his life, he was called upon to reprove the king. It was Elijah who stood on Mount Carmel and called the people to decide whether they would serve God or Baal. There were many stirring events in the life of this great prophet. But the time came when he must let another take his place. Elisha, a young man, was chosen prophet in his stead.

It is understandable that young Elisha should want to be with Elijah as much as possible while the old prophet was around. The two were at a place called Gilgal, when Elijah decided that he would like to make a sort of farewell tour of certain points, where there were schools of the prophets (theological seminaries, so to speak). One was at Bethel, about 8 miles away. Elijah said to Elisha, “You stay here in Gilgal, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel”. Elisha said, “I am going with you”. And he went. The young theological students at Bethel seemed to be aware of what was about to take place, and asked Elisha if he knew about it. Elisha said, “Yes, I know, say no more about it”.

At Bethel, Elijah said to Elisha, you stay here, for the Lord is sending me to Jericho (some 15 miles further on). But again Elisha said, “I am going with you”. When they reached Jericho, the theological students accosted Elisha and said, “Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from you?” Elisha said, “Yes, I know, but say no more about it”.

At Jericho, Elijah again said to Elisha, “You stay here in Jericho, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan”. Really Elijah's face was set towards his old home across the Jordan. Elisha again said, “I am going with you”. So interested were 50 sons of the prophets of Jericho, in what was about to take place, that they climbed the white limestone mountains near Jericho to look out over the valley of the Jordan and watch the two prophets as they went across the Jordan together. That must have been an impressive sight.

Why did Elijah so constantly insist that Elisha remain behind? Elijah loved solitude and in these last hours he may have preferred to be alone. It may have been that he did not want to have an onlooker in the sacred hour of his glorification. It may have been that he was subjecting Elisha to a test. Perhaps he did not understand Elisha who was quite different in temperament. At any rate, Elisha was unrelenting. He evidently had a sense of inadequacy for the tremendous responsibility that would soon rest upon him.

The Parting Request

After the two had passed over Jordan, Elijah said to Elisha, "What can I do for you before I am taken away from you?" Whether so intended or not, this was a real test of Elisha. We are measured by our choices.

What, in a moment like that, would you choose? Well, as a matter of fact, we are choosing every day, if we only realized it; and the choices of many are not so worthy.

One of the famous choices of history was that of Solomon, then a young man, just coming into his kingdom. His request of the Lord was, "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people" (1 Kings 3:9).

Back in 1837, on June 20, at dawn, Lord Melbourne, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, apprised the 18 year old Princess Victoria that her uncle, William IV, had just died and that she was now queen of the realm. He then opened the Bible and read the young queen the story of Solomon's choice (Purvis: The God of the Lucky, p. 235).

From the page of the divine record, we may bring forth many examples, good and bad, of choices made. Adam made a choice that cost him Eden. Lot chose Sodom for its wealth and lost all. Joseph chose purity and uprightness in Egypt and became prime minister. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasure of a sinful court of the Pharaohs. Achan was too much dazzled by the wedge of gold. Joshua declared that for him and his house, they would serve the Lord. In the New Testament days there were choosing men -- the rich young ruler, Demas, Pilate, Agrippa, Felix, Matthew, Peter, Zacchaeus, and the rest.

And so, Elisha made his request. And what was it? "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". Let us note here that Elisha was not asking for twice as much as Elijah had. He was merely asking for the double portion which was the eldest son's part according to the Mosaic law of inheritance (Deut. 21:17).

As Elisha thought of the task that he had before him, he felt that what he needed and craved above everything else was the old prophet's master passion, his fidelity to God, his zeal for goodness and truth. The more tranquil Elisha wanted the mighty spirit that he had seen surge through the rugged, shaggy frame of his spiritual father.

"You have asked a hard thing," said Elijah. That was to come from a Higher Power, whose favor would be signified by permission to see the translation of the old prophet. Elisha was so favored. The mantle of the old prophet fell into his hands with it. Elisha returned to take

up his work. When he came across Jordan to the waiting and watching sons of the prophets at Jericho, they exclaimed, for they saw it, "The spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha".

The Profits of Perpetuated Spirits

We cannot always have the presence of certain great men, but we can perpetuate their spirits. It is the most valuable thing that good men can pass on to their successors.

That nation is to be envied which places a premium on the spiritual heritage which has come down to its notable leaders.

One of the most pathetic examples of national decadence today is France. Few countries have rolls of illustrious men and women that equal that of France. To establish the charge that there has been a serious decline in the character of the people, we need but to compare the situations at the time of the two World Wars. Some of us still remember the thrilling reports that came to us of the Battle of Verdun, the hero of which was Marshal Petain (pa-tan). "They shall not pass," was the battle cry. The Germans did not pass.

Following that war, fratricidal strife sprang up in political life, various political parties seeking the fruits of office to the utter disregard of the welfare of the state. Dissension prevented the modernizing of the army. When the Second World War came, she was at the mercy of Germany. Marshal Petain, hero of Verdun, surrendered for France 296 days after the declaration of war.

There seems to be at work in France today the same dissension that proved her downfall in 1940. Defeated in Indo-China, and now unwilling to work united for the preservation of her national integrity. We wonder where is the spirit of her great leaders of the past.

We would do well in this country to preserve the records of the lives of the men who have made our nation what it is.

Thomas Alva Edison died in 1931, leaving quite a personal fortune, over which there were some family differences. He left innumerable inventions and discoveries. But the greatest legacy that Edison left us is his spirit -- the spirit of the endless quest and patient experimentation.

Too often, in our desire to profit by the lives of other people, we let our attention be diverted to matters of minor importance -- style of dress, mannerisms, method of work, eccentricities. Better is it to let their spirits shine out through our own individualities.

Ever since the world began, companions have "gone across Jordan", as it were, together, and one returned in the spirit and power of the other.

Timothy, constant companion of Paul, and most certainly the witness of Paul's triumphant passing in the city of Rome, returned to Ephesus to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, heard the Apostle John preach and returned to Smyrna to fill a martyr's grave. Augustine, greatest of the Latin Fathers of the Christian Church, lived in the spirit of his devout mother, Monica.

John Wycliffe (1320-1384) died poorly in worldly goods, but rich in holy thought and work. He was once professor of divinity at Oxford University. He conceived the idea of giving the Bible to the people in the language they knew -- English. He died a natural death, but 45

years after he was buried, his body was dug up by order of the Council of Constance, burned, and its ashes thrown into a nearby brook. Fuller, English divine, says of this: "Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into the Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, and they into the main ocean. Thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblems of his doctrine, which now is dispersed over the world". How the spirits of great men live on!

John Knox (1505-1572) caught the spirit of John Calvin, at Geneva. Fired with that spirit, Knox returned to Scotland and brought about a complete change of religion there in one year. He became supreme after Mary Stuart left. The story is told that the French Ambassador to Scotland complained to the Town Council that Knox, while preaching at Saint Giles, had denounced the King of France. The Council's only comment was, "Very likely. We cannot prevent him from denouncing us."

The spirit of the Geneva reformer lived on and became the inspiration of several historical movements, notably the establishment of the Dutch Republic, the Puritan uprising in England, the Huguenot movement in France, and the American Revolution.

We have often to speak of the hardihood of the pioneers who settled this great western country. Texas justly claims her share, and more. Last Thursday night, after I had referred to the part played by a covered wagon in bringing Presbyterianism to Texas, one of the men in our church asked me if I had read a recent article in Reader's Digest about Tabitha Brown. I had not then, but I have since. It is a condensation of a story that in 1846, when she was 66 years old, having raised a family herself by teaching school, she decided to join her son, and numerous others, on a 2,000 mile trek to Oregon. They tried to dissuade her, but without success. It took many months to make the trip, full of hardships and hazards. It was her indomitable optimism that kept them all going. Even when others were ready to give up, when the men were too weak to raise their muskets to shoot game for food, when ox teams were dying with thirst, nothing could stop Tabitha, not even her own physical infirmities. Finally they arrived in Salem on Christmas Day. Immediately she set to work making a living for herself and a brother-in-law, 11 years her senior, who had come along. She began teaching again. The school grew. It was given the name of Tualatin Academy. What a rich heritage that institution must have had!

A Two-Fold Objective

In view then of the tremendous significance of a spiritual inheritance, there are two ways by which we may perpetuate this wholesome factor:

1. We may seek this heritage for ourselves.

It is a great thing to know good and useful men and women.

A Persian fable says, One day
A wanderer found a lump of clay
So redolent with sweet perfume,
Its odor scented all the room.
"Who art thou!" was his quick demand.

“Art thou some gem from Samarcand,
Or spikenard in this rude disguise,
Or costly merchandise?”

“Nay, I am but a lump of clay.”
“Then whence this wondrous sweetness -- say?”
“Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.”

The Synod of North Carolina, some years ago, decided to do away with the presentation of memorials of deceased ministers and churchmen who had given years of service to the cause. Dr. Lingle, writing in the Christian Observer, said that he thought this a mistake. I agree. We need the stimulus of these reminders.

We sometimes wonder just who is really dominating the spirit of our national life -- movie heroes and stars, or illustrious statesmen, scholars, ministers. Let us exercise care as to the type of character under whose sway we place ourselves.

2. We may perchance be able to have a spirit worth passing on.

Boys have a right to look to their fathers for guidance and inspiration. What should be his greatest ambition with reference to them? It seems to me that no parent could receive a higher testimony to his success in life than that of having his son say, “Father, the inheritance which I would most of all have you leave me is an endowment of your spirit”.

Our noblest estate is ennobling spirit. Too many parents want their children to have everything, and they do in some case provide it -- that is, all but the thing those children need most of all, and that is, a true Christian spirit.

The Great Defect and its Remedy

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

March 17, 1940
June 22, 1958 (rewritten)

“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper.”

2 Kings 5:1

This mention of Syria today immediately brings to mind the tensions that exist in the Middle East. As one of the nations comprising the United Arab Republic of which Gamel Abdel Nasser, of Egypt, is the moving spirit, Syria is a threat to the peace and security of the neighboring nations, one of which is Israel.

That was true 2,800 years ago (850 BC). The capital of ancient Syria was Damascus, and the capital of ancient Israel was Samaria. It was customary for Syria to make predatory raids on different parts of Israel, and on one such raid a little Israelite maid was brought in as captive, and made a servant in the household of Naaman, the great captain of the host of the king of Syria. This man Naaman was an honorable man, a successful warrior, having given deliverance to Syria, a mighty man in valor. He was very highly esteemed by the king, Benhadad. But he was the victim of that dread disease, leprosy. He evidently had won favor of the little captive maid who served as servant in his house. It was she who said to Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in her country who would cure her husband of his leprosy if he would go to him. Word of this came to the king, who told Naaman to go. By him, the king sent a letter to the king of Israel, Jehoram, asking him to heal his captain of his leprosy, offering a gift of 10 talents of silver, 6,000 pieces of gold, and 10 festal garments. Jehoram was incensed. He rent his clothes. “Am I God,” he said. “He seeks a quarrel.”

When Elisha, the prophet, heard of this he sent for Naaman. Naaman came with his retinue -- horses, chariots, men, and rich gifts. He was bent on making an impression. He stood at Elisha's door expecting much ceremony to be engaged in. Elisha sent his servant, Gehazi, to tell Naaman to go wash seven times in the River Jordan, some 20 miles away. Naaman was furious. “I thought he would come out to me, stand, call on his God, stroke the place with his hand. Are not the clear, limpid streams of Damascus better than the muddy, turbulent Jordan?” He turned away in a rage. But his attendants interceded. They reasoned that if the prophet had commanded him to do some great thing, he would have done it. Why not try this? He must remember that he is in a great predicament.

Naaman obeyed. He was healed. He returned to give thanks and to offer his gifts. Elisha refused the gifts. Naaman asked for enough dirt of God's land with which to erect an altar in his land that he might worship the God of Israel.

This story, which has to do with a physical infirmity and its cure, has an analogy in the spiritual realm.

1. There is a defect in even the best of men.

Naaman was an admirable person, but he was a leper.

On the Presbyterian church site in Minden, LA, there are some very stately oak trees. One of them stood in the center of the property. When we built the new church building back in the late 20s, we insisted that the architect lay out plans that would enable us to save that tree. This he did. But not long after we occupied the building, a tree expert came and looked out this tree and told us to our surprise that its trunk was hollow. It looked beautiful and strong and imposing. But its heart was gone. This we found to be true when we had it cut down as a matter of safety.

Gamaliel Bradford, an American writer of a number of biographical volumes produced in 1923 a collection of character sketches under the title of "Damaged Souls".

One of the sketches was about Aaron Burr, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, and son of a president of Princeton; a man who gained considerable military distinction, a lawyer said to have never lost a case in which he was engaged alone, at one time Vice President of the United States, and tie-candidate for the office of President of the United States. He is said to have loved all humanity, and the people were drawn to him. He was "adept in the art of molding and kneading the souls of men". But, his name stands discredited in the annals of the nation. Why? To quote Mr. Bradford, "he murdered his rival, conspired against the country, deserted his followers, robbed his friends, and made a plaything of female virtue".

Another is about John Randolph of Virginia, a statesman who lived in revolutionary days. Bouldin says of him that he was "the most remarkable character this country has produced". He was a congressman, US Senator, and special envoy to Russia. It is said of him that he was courageous, honest, sincere, a true patriot, that he had magnificent and exhaustless energy and initiative. He had always a clear, cool mind. He was one of the most startling and effective speakers that American politics has ever known. Yet, his career was blighted by temper and nerves. He had a "constant, irritable sensitiveness that stung right and left". He was bitter in word and manner, relentless, savage, pursuing. In his hour of death, he was surrounded by only his slaves and strangers.

In an election year, a favorite tactic for the opposition is to dig up some unsavory act in the past record of a candidate or office holder and flaunt that, embellished and deplored before the voting public. It often happens that those who are most highly vocal in heaping criticism upon others are themselves most vulnerable. If the full record of any man's life were to be laid bare, there would be some embarrassing disclosures. We are reminded of those familiar lines --

"There is 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."

The fact remains, however, that before the bar of Almighty God, we all stand condemned. The Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Jesus said that he had come into the world to seek and to save men. He was the fulfillment of that saying of Isaiah: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (53:6).

I have read that in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York there is a famous statue by Barnard showing two figures emerging from a central block of pure white marble, one spiritual and refined and the other animal, base, bestial. The two are struggling for the mastery over each other. It represents the struggle between good and evil that goes on in the heart of every person.

Paul has described this struggle in Romans: “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (7:19-23).

2. There is a Remedy that is Available to All.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

There is an old gospel hymn, familiar to all, which seems to sum up much of the Scripture teaching concerning the remedy for sin:

“Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There’s mercy with the Lord;
He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His word.”

Surely, some have said in every age, it cannot be as simple as that. They have insisted that some meritorious gift, or labor, or penance is essential. The church has at times been inclined to attach saving quality to “works”. Luther, in the 16th Century, on a trip to Rome, was engaged in an act of penance -- that of climbing the steps leading to the vestibule of St. Peter’s Church, when there passed through his mind the words which Paul quoted from Habakkuk (2:4), “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). He became convinced that pilgrimages, alms, donations of money had no sin-mastering merit. The simple requirement was faith in a Savior.

You recall that Naaman felt that his station justified special consideration on the part of the prophet. What the prophet sent word for him to do did not seem to be in keeping with his station. He was prepared to purchase special service with shekels, talents and festal garments galore. What the prophet told him to do seemed intolerably commonplace. Furthermore, he was told that he could keep his gifts.

The offense of the cross has never ceased. Men would jump at the idea of doing some heroic deed. But the simplicity of belief in the Cross is commonplace. Sinners dislike the plan

of self abandonment, self denial, humility. Man's chief barrier is his own disposition. He wants to choose his own means.

In spite of the fact that it has been widely criticized, there is merit in that couplet from the hymn "Jesus, Lover of My Soul":

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

As Dr. Robert E. Speer used to say, we can say that once in our Christian experience, and that is when we first come to Christ. There is nothing we can bring them. After that, however, Christ expects us to bring something -- consistent Christian living and service.

The simplicity of the remedy is its glory. It is available to every one. "Whosoever." Certain medical remedies are very expensive. The process of recovery from some illnesses involves extended medical attention and prolonged hospitalization. Not every person is able to avail himself of therapy of this kind. But the grace of God is a free gift.

3. The Natural Expression of a Redeemed Soul is Grateful Acknowledgement.

Naaman did his best to show his appreciation. He offered the rich gifts he had brought, but Elijah refused them. He asked for some dirt from the soil of God's country to carry back to Damascus upon which to erect an altar to God. This was evidence of Naaman's imperfect comprehension of the God he had come to know through a healing experience. Naaman informed Elisha that it would be his duty to support the king when he went into the House of Rimmon to worship, but that he hoped the Lord would pardon this compromise on the ground of the necessity of his position. Elisha said "Go in peace". We hear no more of Naaman and his testimony to his new faith. It could be that his compromises made his testimony ineffective.

In the words of the psalmist, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (107:2). Secret discipleship leads to compromises. A Christian should break with his former worldly associations, and let the world know where he stands. If Naaman had gone all the way in his espousal of the religion of Jehovah, he could have been a power in that nation.

It is illuminating to study history with a view to determining how many of those whose memory is loved and honored were Christians. Wm. E. Gladstone, Prime Minister of Great Britain, told Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage, an American Minister, that he knew 60 of the master minds of Great Britain and that all but three of them were Christians.

When I was a regular reader of the Sunday School Times, I enjoyed the articles of Wm. A. Ridgway. He published a booklet entitled, "Why They Got There", in which he tells of the great men of the business world of his day and before, and of their Christian witness. He mentions such men as Heinz, of 57 Varieties; both Proctor and Gamble, of Ivory Soap fame; Huyler, the candy man; Louis Swift, of Swift of Colgate and Co.; A. A. Hyde, of Mentholatum Co., and numerous others. These men were founders of their respective enterprises. Others have since carried on the various businesses.

"What if I say
That Jesus Christ is Lord divine;

Yet fellow-pilgrims can behold
Naught of the Master's love in me,
No grace of kindly sympathy?

.....

We are saved by faith, yet faith is one
With life, like daylight and the sun.
Unless they flower in our deeds,
Dead, empty husks are all the creeds.
To call Christ, Lord, but strive not to obey,
Belies the homage that with words I pay.”

-- Maud Frazier Jackson
(In Christ in the Poetry Today)

The Ability to See It Through

Minden, LA	January 27, 1929
Belcher, LA (SS)	July 7, 1929
Natchitoches, LA (SS)	November 6, 1932
Bastrop Young People, Bastrop, LA	December 11, 1932
Minden, LA	January 18, 1942
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	October 31, 1943
Wilshire Church, Austin, TX	February 5, 1950
Presbyterian Church, Lott, TX	February 4, 1951
Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX	April 11, 1954 (rewritten)

“The king of Israel...smote thrice and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times.”

2 Kings 13:18-19

The other morning at the breakfast table, Mrs. O’Kelley and I were reading a devotional meditation which contained this statement: “Someone has said that this is success: ‘To be able to carry money without spending it. To be able to bear an injustice without retaliating. To be able to do one’s duty even when one is not watched. To be able to keep at the job until it is finished. To be able to make use of criticism without letting it get you down’.”

That one about being able “to keep at the job until it is finished” reminded me of another article which I read in the Presbyterian Survey (April, 1954, p. 32), the title of which is “Are You a Finisher?”, by Calvin T. Ryan. He says there are two classes of people: those who start enthusiastically but cool off and quit, and those who stay through to the finish. He quotes a football coach as saying that one of his players, so far as he could recall, was never pulled out from under the pile -- he was satisfied to merely pile on top.

Behind Mr. Ryan’s article was one which he read in the Spring of 1953 in Fortune Magazine, the title of which was “How to Be an Employee”. That writer said, “Ours has become a society of employees. A hundred years ago or so, only one out of every five Americans at work was employed, i.e., worked for someone else. Today, only one out of five is working for himself.” He went on to say that the best jobs go ultimately to the finishers. A greater premium is attached to stick-to-it-iveness than to know-how.

The Elisha-Joash Incident

Now, this is by no means a new idea. It is as old as the Bible itself. We have abundant reason to believe that not only human employers, but the Lord Himself, places a premium on stick-to-it-iveness, if one is sticking to the right thing.

Joash, young kid of the northern Kingdom of Israel, heard that the venerable old prophet Elisha did not have many days left in this life, and he was disturbed. Elisha had given stability to the nation, and his departure was certain to be a blow to the country. The strong army of the Syrians was harassing the nation, and Israel's military power was weak. So, Joash came to the bedside of the ailing Elisha, and wept, exclaiming, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof". Thus, he greeted the prophet as the guardian and deliverer of the nation. This young king did not subscribe to Elisha's religious views, since he was a worshipper of the calves at Bethel and Dan. But he had a profound respect for the prophet. He doubtless told the prophet on this visit that he was concerned about the outcome of the struggle with the Syrians. Elisha said to the king, "Take some arrows in hand, open the window on the east side, and shoot". This he did. Elisha said, "That is the Lord's arrow of victory over Syria". Then said the prophet, "Take the arrows and strike the ground with them". Probably by this time, the young king was beginning to think that such procedure was beneath the dignity of a man of his position. But anyhow, he smote three times and quit. But all of us sometimes lose sight of the fact that it is in the little things that we reveal our true selves. The prophet was really angry with the young king, who had apparently been so concerned about the future of his nation. "You should have struck five or six times," the prophet told him, which would have been a clear indication that he was going to do a finished job.

The world is full of three-blow men, but there is a noticeable shortage of six-blow men -- men with the ability to see an undertaking through to thorough completion.

A Divine Attribute

Paul in writing the Philippians said that he was "confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

We Presbyterians have a doctrine called "the final perseverance of the saints" which has been battled over quite extensively. It is one of the so-called "five points of Calvinism". We hold that when one has once had an experience of regeneration by the grace of God he will not fall away from the state of grace. We do not claim that Christians may not fall away from attainments in grace. There is no denial of backsliding, but we do deny total apostasy. We hold that a saint may fall down, but never out. The reason for this perseverance in a state of grace is the faithfulness of God and not of man. We base our teaching on our belief in the fact that once God begins, he finishes.

We cite the cases of David, who became involved in the affair with Bathsheba and Uriah. But he returned with deep penitence. Peter denied his Lord most vehemently, but was used magnificently in the promotion of the early church.

Our Lord in his great intercessory prayer, uttered on the night of His betrayal, said to the Father: "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do", and on the cross, he could say, "It is finished".

A Christian Virtue

From the Bible, we note that God expects his people to have the same steadfastness, within the bounds of human limitations.

Jesus had much to say about persistence in prayer. You remember that Jesus told the story of the widow in a certain city who was continually coming to the judge to ask that she be vindicated against her adversary. The judge was not interested in the case, but because the woman kept on bothering him, he did something about it.

One of Paul's familiar injunctions is, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Again, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

There are many failures in the world because certain individuals seem to lack the final punch to put over their efforts. Teams have been known to bring the ball to the five-yard line of the opposing team and then to quit trying. Some students study their textbooks just enough to get by, and then quit. You have known of people who will start a good movement and get tired, and then unload it. Probably all of us have started the new year with good resolutions, but soon gave up trying to keep them. Some start out in the Christian Life, and before they have gone very far are back in the old rut again. Some manifest some enthusiasm about starting a new church, but when the effort begins to call for a little self-sacrifice they lose interest.

This may have something for us all to think about in our Rockdale situation. I have done a lot of preaching of this principle in my ministry. I have counseled young ministers to keep plugging along even when the situation gets discouraging. There is one trouble about preaching this kind of thing -- sooner or later, you may have to practice what you preach. I made up my mind that I could not with a clear conscience ask you people to keep on keeping on, while I went off to a comparatively easy situation. I have come here and urged you to join in the effort to establish a Presbyterian Church in Rockdale. You seem determined to finish the undertaking. You are six-stroke Christians, not just three-stroke. Since you have expressed a wish to have me continue, I will be with you. Now, if we will all stand together, and resolve that we will forget personal interests to do a good job, we will have a very happy and profitable experience here.

To succeed in life, we need certain essentials.

1. A Definite and Worthy Objective.

A lot of people are just living, but to no purpose. They do not know what they are living for. Columbus had a goal. We will never get anywhere if we let the attractions of each day interfere with our fixed purpose. The church has too often been the interest we gave time and money to if we had any of either left over after all other major interests were taken care of.

Napoleon is quoted as saying, "he that steers right on will gain the port".

In my boyhood days, we had a mustang pony named "Fanny". When she was well-fed, she was at times frisky. When we hitched her to a buggy or a plow, we had to use a blind bridle, which restricted her range of vision; otherwise, she saw too many things along the way that

diverted her attention. Clothes on a line, fluttering in the breeze would make her shy off the road. A scarecrow in a field would scare her more than the crow.

I sometimes think it might not be a bad idea if we could devise for ourselves a sort of blind bridle. As it is, we see too many things that divert our attention from the main purpose in living. What we do should fit into that main objective. You know the difference between a brush pile and a tree. In the case of the tree, the limbs are integrated.

If we have a definite and worthy objective, we are concerned more about what we do than we are about what we do not do. Dr. Spurgeon, the great London preacher, was once the guest of a man who discoursed on his virtues, which happened to be of the negative variety. He so exasperated the preacher that he exclaimed, "Man, you are simply a bunch of negatives. You don't drink; you don't smoke, you don't gamble, you don't swear; what in the name of Goodness do you do?"

2. A Deep and Sincere Earnestness.

Evidently, that was the trouble with the young king who came to the prophet. It has been suggested that the king thought that about three victories would be sufficient. He did not want to be put down as a fanatic. It is said that we have people in this country who would certainly not want Russia to take over this country, but they see no reason why we should be making all this fuss about communists being in the framework of our national life.

I knew a certain man of prominence whom drink was wrecking. He would see that it was getting him. He would start out on an effort to overcome it. But I have heard him say that he did not intend to be a temperance fanatic. So he kept liquor around in case he should ever have a cold, or feel down and out. Well, liquor eventually killed him. His three-stroke policy was not sufficient.

Have you ever been impressed by the extent to which failures in life come in middle age? There are parents who raise families and seemingly observe carefully the ways of right living, and then rather late in life let themselves down and lose out. Solomon was a man of that type. He made a very fine beginning. We love the story of his wise choice. But his later years were a disappointment.

We have good starters in the church, but poor stayers. They become slack-handed, half-hearted, indifferent.

3. An Abundance of Patience.

"Ye have need of patience", says the author of Hebrews; who also says, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (10:36; 12:1). James says: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (1:4). "Ye have heard," he said, "of the patience of Job" (5:11).

The papers each day bring us items of news that show the inability of some people to see life through. Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith". Joshua never

saw the walls of Jericho fall until he had gone around the walls of the city the seventh time on the seventh day.

You have manifested much patience thus far. We must continue on. The call to services is going out to every one of us. We can all find something to do, whether we are called on or not.

“There comes an hour of sadness
 With the setting of the sun,
For not the sins committed,
 But the things I have not done.

I ought to have been stronger,
 But the crisis found me weak;
And now I am regretting
 The word I did not speak.

I see an arm outstretched,
 And vain its empty grasp;
And I must still remember
 The hand I did not clasp.

A great cause lacking helpers
 Was weak because unheard;
I might have been its champion,
 But I did not say a word.

Attacked by stupid malice,
 I heard a man maligned;
I stood in cowardly silence
 And did not speak my mind.

And so as night is falling,
 How bitterly I rue
The words I have not spoken,
 The things I did not do.”

Being a True Mother

Minden, LA

May 10, 1936

“His (Hezekiah’s) mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zachariah”.

2 Kings 18:2

Whenever you find a noble son descending from an unworthy father, you may put it down that a good woman has been doing her part somewhere.

In the records of the kings of Judah, you find it said that Ahaz “did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God”, but that he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen...and he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places” (2 Kings 16:2-4).

But reading on we find that Ahaz had a son by the name of Hezekiah, who succeeded his father to the throne at the age of 25. He began by repairing and cleansing the temple, by celebrating a Passover to which he invited not only the 2 tribes of Judah, but also the ten tribes of Israel. He removed the high places and destroyed the brazen serpent that had now become a source of temptation. When the land was invaded by the Assyrians, he placed his trust in the Lord and witnessed the disaster that the Lord visited upon the invaders. Truly, Hezekiah was one of the great kings of Judah.

How did it come about that such an unworthy father was followed by such a great son? We have the explanation in the simple statement that constitutes our text: “His mother’s name was Abi (or Abijah, 2 Chron. 29:1) the daughter of Zachariah”. We are told no more. While we would like to have had more information, we are told enough. We can easily see that from the godly home of Zachariah (whoever he may have been), went this noble young woman to be the wife of a profligate prince. There is an atmosphere of idolatry and vice, she reared that son of hers, and instilled in his mind clear cut ideals and standards of life. She taught him to trust in God to such an extent that when the letter from Sennacherib came, he laid it out before the Lord, and besought the Lord to save the nation from the hand of the arrogant invader. Behind all that lay the faith of a Godly mother.

While Moses received great credit for the choice he made, preferring to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, it must never be forgotten that while he was the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, the woman who actually reared him was his mother, Jochabed. There is where the credit is due.

Samuel was a great judge and prophet in Israel. But we do not understand Samuel, growing up as he did in the midst of profligacy even in the sacred precincts of the house of God, until we have an introduction to his mother, Hannah.

In commanding Timothy, Paul was not neglectful to give due credit to two women -- Grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice -- for Timothy’s qualifications for the work into which he had entered.

In fact, so multitudinous are the instances in which mothers deserve the credit for worthiness in the lives of their children that it has come to be a generally accepted fact that if a man or woman amounts to anything at all, it is because of a good mother. The well-known statement of John Quincy Adams has been generally accepted as axiomatic: "All that I am my mother made me". Lincoln echoed the sentiment when he said, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother".

Much Sentiment About Motherhood

The idea that mothers should receive due appreciation for the wonderful contributions which they make to the world has gained great favor in our land. The idea of setting aside a day in which to pay respects to those who gave us life and guide our early developments has spread over the nation. Even though it may be overdone in some quarters and even though it be commercialized in others, it is a beautiful custom that we do not want to ignore.

By ordinance of the Creator, there is a natural tie that exists between mother and child. Each sees in the other qualities that no one else sees. A child sees in a mother, however lacking in some qualities she may seem to be in the eyes of outsiders, a splendid character that merits love and honor. The qualities are actually there, when that mother relates herself to the child of her bosom. A child detects the sympathy, the tenderness, and the love of true motherhood. And on the other hand, the mother sees qualities in the child which no one else can see -- even though that child eventually becomes a gangster.

Women who were selfish and hard and cold have been praised by their children as being the opposite. No doubt they were just the opposite to the children. The children saw a side to their mother that others did not see.

Princess Alice (daughter of Queen Victoria) had a little boy sick with diphtheria. Doctors warned the mother against inhaling the breath of the child. She stood by the bed. She smoothed his fevered brow with her hand. The touch seemed to bring back the child's consciousness. Then she nestled him in her lap. Throwing his arms around her, he whispered, "Kiss me, mother". The mother-love was stronger than discretion. She kissed the child, but it was death to her. It is because we see this in our mothers that we love them so.

So we understand the emotions that provoked such extravagant statements as that of Coleridge:

"A mother is a mother still
The holiest thing alive:

Or that of another poet, who wrote --

"No painter's brush, nor poet's pen
In justice to her fame,
Has ever reached half high enough
To write a mother's name."

Certain Pertinent Observations

The mere fact of being a mother does not in itself justify the sentiments that have such wide usage on Mother's Day. It is only the mother who has attempted to discharge the duties which her station involve who merits the love and esteem of the world, even of her own children. Some mothers have been very unmotherly in their conduct. I knew a mother who failed to discharge her duties, but who was most insistent that she be given the courtesies that are due true mothers.

Furthermore, many mothers have gotten so much joy out of the station they have filled that they have expressed themselves as feeling that much of that sentiment expressed on Mother's Day is beside the point. Their happiness has been so complete that it has not occurred to them that there has been any sacrifice involved. To have deprived them of the privilege of being mothers would have been to them a source of distress.

Then, too, we must not forget that some of the greatest mothers in the world are not physically mothers. They have taken the full responsibility of motherhood and molded character and shaped life in magnificent fashion. So, today, we do not honor motherhood for the mere reason that by that means the race is perpetuated, but for the larger reason that women have discharged the full obligation which their stations have involved. We honor today the world's true mothers.

Modern Hindrances to Mothers

Performing the duty of mother today has difficulties that were unknown to Jochebed, and Hannah, and Abijah, and Eunice, and Susanna Wesley, and other famous mothers -- even our own mothers. Probably, they had difficulties that are unknown to our modern mothers. Occasionally, we note efforts to bring back conditions that prevailed in other days, but these do not seem to get very far.

1. There is less activity at home. Less cooking is done at home, less sewing, fewer chores, less gardening, less caring for pigs, chickens, cows, and horses, laundering. You are born now in a sanitarium and die there. Mothers had a great deal of this kind of thing to do in the old fashioned home. She had a busy time of it. The children were called upon to help. The description in Proverbs 31 suits the old fashioned home life. These activities are done outside the home, and if the modern mother is to remain at home it is likely that she will have to find other activities or eat the bread of idleness.

2. Mothers are finding interests more and more outside the home. With the shifting of the employment spoken of above from the home to outside agencies women have gone out too. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the women of the United States are engaged in work outside the home. It is said that 50% of the women of England are so employed. Women do things today that their mothers would never have thought of doing. They go places, say things, see things, not possible to their mothers.

There is a decided effort on the part of some rulers to get the women back into their homes. In Germany, the plan is to give work to men, and to require girls to serve for a time as maids in the households of the country. In Italy, large families are encouraged, in fact Mussolini offers a bounty to prolific mothers. Schools and railroads are beginning to give preference to men. But these movements will probably not amount to very much.

But no mother can go outside her home without having divided interests. She has responsibilities to her children that she cannot delegate. Her difficulty is being able to discharge the duties of her dual relationship.

Dr. Chappell tells of having read an article by a woman editorial writer of ability, who had become a wife and mother. Recently she had been offered a place on the staff of a leading paper at a larger salary than she had ever received. But she refused it because she believed that her children were of more value to her than her career. When her boy rushes in after school he shouts when entering the door, "Mother". "I hurry," she says, "to find what he wants. He speaks as if he had some most important matter on hand. But his answer to my inquiry is 'I just wanted to know if you were there'."

3. Another of the modern hindrances to the full discharge of a mother's responsibility is the ease with which the marriage tie is severed. The children are the sufferers in divorce proceedings. Parents who are thinking merely of themselves forget the hurt they are doing their children when they bring about a situation that practically ruins their lives. I do not see how some children can ever have much love and respect for their foolish mothers.

Modern Mothers as Better Mothers

While there are hindrances today, there are also advantages. The problem that confronts the modern mother is that of making her new status work to advantage in the discharge of her responsibility.

1. The Modern Mother should be a more capable guide and counselor. Her education is greater, her observation wider, her experience more varied. She is able to share the life of the world with her sons and daughters. There is nothing from which she is excluded.

2. The true modern mother is a stronger individual. Her temptations have been more and by means of them she will have built up a stronger character. True, some will have fallen by the wayside who might under other conditions have been kept on their feet. There are great perils involved in the freedom that women have today. But there are also decided advantages to the mothers who use them aright.

3. The modern conscientious mother is a more capable mother for the reason that she is schooled in the art of child rearing. She raises her baby by the book. She employs psychological laws in the training of its mind. She knows what she wants to do, and is ever on the alert to know better how to do it.

So the true modern mother is a greater mother, and a false modern mother is a worse mother, because of her freedom. How vital to the performance of her duty is the agency of the Christian religion. It will give her strength to move unharmed amid the temptations that beset

men and women alike on every hand. It will guide her in the development of her own life. It will furnish her with an agency by means of which the heart of her own child can be fortified against the evils of the world, and will furnish her with ideals to instill in the heart of the child.

The heart of a Mother is a heart of love. The heart of God is a heart of love. How compatible ought God and mothers to be. In fact, Thackeray said, "Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of children". That can continue to be true only as mothers reveal the love that is in the heart of God.

"There are many kinds of love, as many kinds of light,
And every kind of love makes a glory in the night.
There is a love that stirs the heart, and love that gives it rest;
But the love that leads life upward is the noblest and the best."

Nehushtan: or A Good Thing Improperly Used

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

March 11, 1931
May 4, 1947 (rewritten)

“He (Hezekiah) break in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel had burned incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan.”

2 Kings 18:4

Do you remember the story of the conversation which Jesus had with Nicodemus? There is no saying of our Lord that has a deeper place in the memories of Bible readers than the statement, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

Familiar, too, is the incident to which that statement of Jesus refers. The people of Israel were on the famous journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan, under the leadership of Moses. In fact, they had come to the southern border and were about to make a circuit to the east side of Jordan. They were about to pass into the wilderness of Moab. Despite the evidence of God’s care of them through the years of their pilgrimage, the people began to grumble. They spoke against God and against Moses. They did not like the diet they were getting.

There are always grumblers, and for the most part they are not people who have given much thought to the problem involved. It does not require any talent or brains to be a good grumbler. We grumble at taxes, at the city administration, the government, at the church, at the school. I knew a man in Louisiana who sent several children to the public school. He never paid one dime in taxes. His children got their education without any cost to him. Textbooks were even furnished. But this father grumbled because the books issued his children were soiled. The most exacting people in the church are those who render the least support, as a rule.

E. S. Richardson, a friend of mine in Minden, told me one morning that he had spent the night with a throbbing tooth, and that he had proposed as he came to town that he would knock the breath out of any man who, after sleeping soundly all night, complained at the way he felt.

God, at any rate, was not inclined to be tolerant of such unreasonable grumblers. Poisonous snakes were permitted to go among the people and bite them. Some died. Moses prayed for the people. The Lord told Moses to make a serpent of brass and put on a standard in the camp so that any one might look at it and be healed if he had been bitten. The people very naturally treasured an object that had been such a benefaction.

They carried this sacred relic with them on their further journey, and on into the land of promise. They laid it away. We do not hear much of it any more. But some 5,000 years later, we find the people of Israel burning incense to this brazen serpent.

Hezekiah’s Wise Radicalism

The young king Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah, and he set about instituting some reforms in the religious life of the nation. He noticed that the people were burning incense to this brazen serpent. It was made an idol of. It had ceased to be the reminder of the grace of God and had become the object of worship itself. You can imagine how much courage it took for the young king to seize it in his righteous indignation and destroy it, calling it Nehushtan, a piece of brass. Some people might have been horrified. They may have regarded him as a vandal. But he showed that he was not afraid of the "brazen thing".

In the history of the people of Israel, the Lord at times encouraged the preservation of objects which would remind them of God's care. There was the pot of manna and Aaron's rod, placed in the Ark of the Covenant. As the people passed through the bed of the Jordan over into the land of Canaan, they were told to take stones from the river bed and set them up at Gilgal as a reminder of God's assistance in making the crossing. So this brazen serpent might have been a beautiful and perpetual reminder of God's deliverance. But it had become a hindrance, a fetish, an object of superstition. And so, they put to bad use a good thing.

The Existence of Taboos

You have heard of a "taboo". It comes from a Polynesian word, spelled slightly differently, "tabu". It means something sacred, set apart by religious custom. Frequently, the respect for a taboo is enforced by very serious penalties. Students have made a study of the taboos of primitive people of the world, and they have found many. Great was the veneration held for certain taboos. It was maintained by some that the gods inflicted the penalty; whereas it no doubt was due to sheer fright that death came to the person invading the sacred precincts.

The brazen serpent had become a taboo among the people of Israel. But such abuses and lapses are not limited to primitive peoples. It has been the tendency among civilized peoples to do the same thing. Such developments have taken place among Christian people and been sanctioned by the church.

Idolatry in Christian Circles

The veneration of relics has long been a practice in the Roman Catholic Church. It was against this that the reformers so strongly protested.

There is for instance the cross of Christ. It is reasonably certain that there is not now a single piece of the cross on which our Lord was crucified. If there really were such a piece, we can easily imagine the extent to which it would be idolized. There are many pieces of wood which are said to be pieces of the cross, enough in fact to build a house. These pieces are worshipped. They are said to possess supernatural power.

But even where the pieces of the actual cross are not available, people have taken the design and made it an object of worship, of fetish, of talisman, amulet. The cross was worn by the crusaders as a charm against the weapons of the infidels.

In like manner also the sign of the cross is used. It was at one time the well nigh universal custom among Christians to make use of it in warding off danger. By this sign St.

Martin, Bishop of Tours in the 4th Century, was supposed to have deflected a tree that was falling upon him. St. Columban, Irish missionary, 543-615, is said to have used it in opening locks and bolts. By it Barnardinus of Sienna is said to have held off a storm until he finished a sermon. By it Benedict is said to have shattered a cup of poison (Page: Jesus or Christianity, p. 165).

It is said that there are 56 fingers of St. Peter the Dominican in European churches; 12 heads of John the Baptist; 70 veils of the Virgin Mary (Idem, p. 167).

The Bible has ever been used in the same way. It has been made the object of superstitious veneration. People have worn miniature gospels as charms around their necks. At the time of the World Wars, soldiers thought that having a testament would prevent harm. Reading the Bible, without thought, is thought to placate deity. Preserving the Bible as a sacred treasure is like looking at a telescope, while reading it intelligently is like looking through a telescope.

The sacraments of the church have also been abused in this manner. The rite of baptism is but an initiatory rite with no intrinsic merit. Some have maintained that the administration of the rite brings eternal blessing. It has been claimed that the rite has insured victory in a duel.

In the Lord's Supper, the elements are but symbols. Yet they have been given far more significance than the Lord ever intended. The bread is said to be the very body of our Lord. "At times, the church has been reluctant to give the Eucharist to a criminal on the gallows lest the Body of Christ should suffer hanging" (Page, op. cit. p. 166).

I saw recently in the Dallas Morning News the picture of a good woman kneeling to kiss the ring of a cardinal.

We can today make a fetish of a custom. The Pharisee was proud of the fact that "I give tithes of all I possess".

Causes of the Custom

I suppose that many factors contribute to this tendency among us to have superstitious attitudes.

Man has the natural religious tendency. When that is not properly guided it tends to idolatry.

There are two basic causes: (1) Ignorance, and (2) thoughtlessness.

Ignorance in matters of religion is prevalent among otherwise intelligent people. Some do not care to make a study of the matter. They want to delegate responsibility to some institution which will prescribe a rule to be followed.

"My people doth not consider," was one of the accusations made by the Lord through Isaiah.

We need to keep our religious practices vital by learning more and more about the gospel and thinking more carefully about why we do as we do.

Prayer and Holy Purpose

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

November 11, 1945

“And Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.”
2 Kings 19:14

These words state the way a good man met a very trying situation in his career. He was a great king, who tried to do right. He was a Godly man, and the Lord blessed him with a prosperous reign.

But there is no assurance that good men will be delivered from perils. There are times when it seems that good people have more trials than others. The difference in people is most easily seen when the clouds gather and the ill winds begin to beat upon them. Difficulties are encountered by good people even in good enterprises -- enterprises that do not involve self-interest.

When a group of good people start out to make Christianity effective in the social structure of the nation, they encounter stubborn opposition. While we may talk about the woes of intemperance, impurity, group prejudice. But when we come to fight against saloons, unclean movies, and the Negro question, we find trouble.

It was during the reign of King Hezekiah (in the 6th year) that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, took Samaria (the northern kingdom of Israel) and carried the people away into captivity, never to be heard of again. In the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, began an invasion of the cities of Judah. Hezekiah tried for a time an appeasement policy. He tried to avoid the issue by paying tribute (300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold). But finally, the issue was drawn, when Rabshakeh, Tartan and Rabsharis came and in remarks that were contemptuous and boastful, demanded surrender. They employed tactics that were pursued in the recent war -- that of appealing to the people over the heads of their representatives, promising them habitation in a fruitful land.

The king (Hezekiah) was disturbed. He had reason to be. He sent to Isaiah the prophet and asked for his prayers. Isaiah assured him that God would be with him. Then Rabshakeh sent another of his defiant letters, saying that just as the gods of other cities had not delivered them, so the God of Judah would not be able to deliver Jerusalem. Then it was that Hezekiah went to the house of God and spread the letter out before him.

It was a remarkable prayer that the king made. He recognizes Jehovah as the supreme ruler of all that he has made. The fact that other nations have failed was due to their idolatry. Now, he urged, come and vindicate His lordship by delivering his people from the hands of the enemies of righteousness.

Isaiah sent word to the King that his prayer would be answered in time. It did result in the destruction of the Assyrian hosts. Sennacherib departed, only to be put to death at the hands of two of his sons.

Prayer for a Good Cause

It might have been argued at the time that Hezekiah might have spent his time to better advantage getting his defenses built up and his army equipped. Was he not trying to do the right thing? Was he not zealously maintaining the worship of the true God by uprooting all traces of heathenism? Could he not have been sure that the Lord would bless him?

Hezekiah's life was joined to God. Theirs was a partnership, so to speak. He brought the communication he had received to a meeting of the "board", so to speak. The "head" of the institution was being "apprised" of the situation. Hezekiah's act was one eminently befitting his station. It was a natural thing for him to do.

He said in effect, "Lord, you have a vital interest in this situation. Your name is being dishonored. Your people are being harassed. Your cause is in danger. Release your mighty power against your foes and ours".

It is proper that we should enlist the help of God in the furtherance of every great cause -- even those which are solely for the glory of God and the advancement of righteousness. This puts us in position to be the channels through which God can carry out his will.

Prayer in such a situation helps us to keep right. By our fellowship with God and by our contemplation of his qualities of character, we come to get and keep the right spirit. It is easy to let an alien motive enter our efforts in a good cause. We can let self intrude. We may employ the motives of worldly ambition. Prayer keeps us true to the best.

When we lay a matter before God, we then go forth and do our best with the assurance that whatever takes place, even when that is not according to our own idea of what is best, will really be for the best in the long run. That gives us confidence and courage.

As Applied to the Recent War

While the recent war was in progress, we did a lot of praying. We felt that our cause was just. We could not see how God would permit such defiant, Godless leaders to triumph over the friends of Christianity, even though they be imperfect in so many respects. But nevertheless we prayed.

The fact that we prayed, as the President asked us to pray, did not keep us from feeling that we ought to do our best to make our prayers come true. Never before was our nation so solidly committed to a task so gigantic as this was. The two factors went together. There was confidence that God would bless these massive efforts. Prayer helped us to keep the right spirit (Perhaps I should say that served to improve our spirit.). We felt that even though the battle were lost, the right would ultimately prevail as God willed it.

We came through magnificently. And many people have been thanking God for the help He gave. Probably a great many have neglected that. It may be that some have felt that now that their boys are safe, relatively so, they do not need to pray.

As Applied to the World Order

But ominous clouds hover around the horizon. We are having troubles at home and troubles abroad.

November 11 has been set aside as World Order Sunday. In a message to the church by our Assembly's Permanent Committee on Social and Moral Welfare, we are reminded of what Gen. Douglas MacArthur said at the time of the Japanese surrender: "A new era is upon us...men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted...Military alliance, balances of power, leagues of nations in turn have failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructibility of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door."

We worked out a United Nations' Charter. The apparent failure of the recent London conference of foreign ministers gives reason for grave concern. The trouble is not all abroad. There are grave deficiencies in our own land. We need to pray God to guide us and strengthen us. The suffering of the world is incomprehensible. Many, many thousands of people over the world will die of hunger and cold in the coming months. These people will be desperate.

Honorable Joseph C. Grew, while acting Secretary of State, said in a service held last Summer in Washington Cathedral: "Let us pray in our churches and in our homes, today and in the days to come, for our representatives and the representatives of many peoples as they embark...upon the great undertaking which can, with God's help, deliver mankind from the scourge of war. And as we pray let us be of good courage and high hope, remembering Christ's words: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

In other words, let us lay this whole matter out before the Lord.

As Applied to Our Church

I do not need to remind you again that as a local congregation we are facing a situation that is calling for the best that we have to give -- of time, talent, money.

No church, even, should enter upon any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessing of Deity. It may be that we have given our time to the employment of our own resources, and have not besought enough the guidance and help of God.

Although we have given much time and thought to the plans, and have worked out what seem to be good projects, it will be necessary to have more than that. In fact, we can fail utterly. We may fail. If we do, it will be due chiefly to the fact that we have not made this a matter of prayer.

We ought here and now to make a covenant among ourselves that we are going to pray every day and in every place for the revival of true religion in Colonial Church that will assure the success of all our efforts.

There was a prayer that the psalmist made (Ps. 85:6) "Wilt thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in thee". That is a prayer we need to make over and over again. How we need it! That would solve our church attendance problem, our ingathering of souls, our Sunday school teacher problem, our prayer meeting problem, our financial problem.

Let us then lay this matter before the Lord.

As Applied to Individual Needs

There is not a person who does not at some time face trying situations. There is a loneliness about such experiences.

In "The Christ of the Indian Road", E. Stanley Jones tells of his own experience when about to face educated Hindus in the presentation of Christ. He did not feel that he was fitted intellectually or physically for the strain. He says, "I saw that unless I got help from somewhere I would have to give up my missionary work, go back to America, and go to work on a farm to try to get back my health. At that time I was in Lucknow. While in prayer, a Voice seemed to say, 'Are you yourself ready for this work to which I called you?' I replied, 'No, Lord, I am done for. I have reached the end of my rope.' The Voice replied, 'If you will turn that over to me and not worry about it, I will take care of it'. I quickly answered, 'Lord, I close the bargain right here.' A great peace settled into my heart and pervaded me. I knew it was done!...For days after that, I hardly knew I had a body. I went through the days, working all day and far into the night, and came down to bedtime wondering why in the world I should ever go to bed at all, for there was not the slightest trace of tiredness of any kind...I seemed to have tapped new Life for body, mind and spirit. Life was on a permanent higher level. I have done nothing but take it" (pp. 19-20).

Such is the experience of all who enter upon work that has the sanction of God. When we face the crises of life, there is no recourse equal to that of prayer.

The trouble with us is that we wait until we get into a critical situation before we ever pray. Those who have a reasonable right to an answer to prayer are those who lay their plans in prayer, and keep them true through prayer. They can never fail.

The Books of Chronicles 1 and 2
The Book of Ezra
The Book of Nehemiah
The Book of Esther

1 Chronicles

The Reign of Josiah

2 Kings 22:1-23:30; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27

In order to understand the history during the reign of Josiah, we must recall some of the past history of Judah. The kings immediately preceding Josiah were Hezekiah (727-695), Manasseh (695-641), Amon (641-639).

Isaiah prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, and had considerable influence in the affairs of the time. For a time, at least, the prophet and his co-laborers seemed to have the greater influence.

When Manasseh ascended the throne, there was a reaction of a violent popular character against the policies advocated by these religious leaders. One occasion of this was Hezekiah's effort to abolish rural sanctuaries and to make the temple at Jerusalem the center of national worship. When Manasseh began to rule, the old idolatries reappeared, the alters to the Baalim were restored, adoration of the sun and stars was resumed, and children were made to pass through the fire. There were other debasing rites. There was a general persecution of the disciples of the prophets. Isaiah is supposed to have been murdered under the reign of Manasseh.

Under Amon, who reigned only a brief period, the suffering of the faithful Jews continued.

Josiah's elevation to the throne brought hope to the better element of the kingdom. This young man had enjoyed better guardianship in his childhood than had his parents and grandparents. He was 8 years of age when he became king. Naturally, the old conditions continued until Josiah was old enough to carry through his worthy aims.

The actual reform began in the 18th year of Josiah's reign. But preparations had been going on for some time. Preparations for repairs on the temple had been made, builders employed, and money brought by the people.

The occasion of the reformation was the finding in the temple of the book of the Law. When the temple had become the center of idolatry, the book had either been thrown among the rubbish or had been hidden away by some devoted priest. At any rate, it was found when the temple was being repaired by Hilkiah the high priest.

It is thought that this may have been the whole pentateuch. It might have been merely a part of the Book of Deuteronomy, especially chapters 28, 29 and 30.

Josiah made inquiry regarding the reliability of these prophetic condemnations, not of Zephaniah, who may have been too young, or of Jeremiah, who may have been at Anthoth, but

of Huldah, probably a widow, who dwelt in "the college" -- that is, a suburb of Jerusalem. He learned from her that they were true and certain, but that he would not witness their visitation.

Josiah then had the words read publicly, and there was a general covenant to obey the commandment of the Law. There then followed a general cleansing of the land of its idolatry.

The reforms were, in general --

1. Centralization of worship,
2. Prohibition of worship of heavenly bodies,
3. Abolition of high places, obelisks,
4. Celebration of Passover in Jerusalem,

The reform of Josiah, as recorded in 2 Kings 23, were as follows:

1. The vessels in the temple consecrated to idolatrous worship were brought in the valley Kidron and burned and their ashes carried to Bethel.

2. (vs. 5) He caused the idolatrous priests to cease their operations.

3. (vs. 6) He brought out the grove -- the mystical tree placed in the temple of Manasseh, removed by him after his conversion, and replaced by his son, Amon. Josiah had it taken to Kidron and burned and the metal about it ground to powder, and the ashes scattered on the graves of the children of the people -- those that had been sacrificed (2 Chr. 34:4).

4. He broke down the houses of the Sodomites, the tents or booths of young women who were devoted to the services of Asherah, for which they made embroidered hangings, and in which they gave themselves to unbridled revelry and lust.

5. (vs. 8) He brought in the priests who had been betrayed into the folly of officiating on high places, and presenting to God such sacrifices as were presented unto them. Temple worship had been abolished during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. The priests had been abolished during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. The priests had been worshipping the true God but in a manner not prescribed by the Law (Deut. 12:11). These priests were brought to Jerusalem, debarred from service of the temple, but allowed revenues from the temple, and were the lame and disabled of the priesthood (J.F. & B.).

6. Topheth. Toph means drum. It is supposed that the cries of children terrified from being made to pass through the fire in that place of idolatry were drowned out by the sound of that instrument (J.F. & B.).

7. (vs. 11) Horses were sacrificed to the Sun by sun worshippers from the supposed idea that the sun was drawn by horses. These horses may also have been used in the sacred processions to carry the images of the Sun, or for worshippers to ride in every morning to welcome his rise. The kings and officers had proceeded each morning from the East Gate at the Sun's appearing (J.F. & B.).

8. (vs. 12) Altars were reared on tops of the flat roofs by worshippers of the hosts of heaven. Ahaz had reared such altars, and Manasseh had erected some on a portion of the roof of the temple.

9. (vs. 13) The high places that Solomon had built were torn down (1 Kings 11:7). To Ashtoreth of the Midonians, to Chemosh of the Moabites, and to Milcom (Molech) of the Ammonites. There were three summits to the to the Mount of Olives, the central one called the mount of corruption, because of the presence of idol temples there.

10. (vs. 14) He tore down every monument to idolatry, and scattered the bones of the dead over the places, thus making the places unclean.

11. (vs. 15-20) Josiah even invaded the region of the kingdom of Israel, destroying altars and temples of high places. He put priests to death and ransacked the sepulchres of idolatrous priests and scattered their bones on the altars before destroying them. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy made 325 years before Josiah's birth, in which his name was expressly mentioned (1 Kings 13:2).

12. (vs. 21-23) The Passover was attended also by the remnant of Israel left by the Assyrians (2 Chr. 35:1-19).

The acquiescence of the people in the reformation was achieved by power of the royal will. The hearts of the people were desirous of a return to the idolatrous worship which they had just had (vs. 26f).

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Josiah was killed in battle with the Egyptians led by Pharaoh Necho, in the plain of Esdraelon. Judah, during the time of Manasseh became a vassal of the Assyrians, and Josiah thought himself bound to support the interests of the Assyrians, although the people had a strong leaning toward alliance with Egypt. Necho had no desire to engage battle with Judah. The outcome made Judah helpless. It greatly injured the hopes of the rising prophetic party.

The Answered Prayer of Jabez

January 9, 1938

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested” (1 Chronicles 4:10).

Three are nine chapters in the book of 1 Chronicles which constitute a Hill of Difficulty for the persevering through-the-Bible reader, provided he has gotten that far. If you have read your Bible through, you remember those chapters. They are made up of a series of genealogies, beginning with creation and running to the time of the return from Babylonian exile, with an appended list of the families in Jerusalem before the exile (Chapter 9).

Tradition has it, and there is no objection to it, that Sara wrote the Books of Chronicles, from 450 to 435 BC. Those books constitute a sort of “Court Journal”, a record of historic events of importance. Originally there was but one book. The Septuagint translators divided the book into two parts. Jerome followed that division in his Latin Vulgate.

There are really four parts to Chronicles; and the first part is made up of these nine chapters of genealogies.

But here in the very midst of this desert of what is to the casual reader but empty names you find this oasis, this interesting digression, this brief but significant record concerning one of the men whose name appears in the list. Here is a blossom, as it were, on the family tree of Israel. At least one of these names stands out in bold relief. We know nothing more of the man that that which is recorded here. But what we do know about him is worth our thought and emulation.

Jabez the Man

The name Jabez means “he causes sorrow”. There was a reason for his having been so named. His mother gave him that name at his birth, because she bore him with sorrow. But whatever sorrow she may have experienced at his birth, she was caused none as to the consequence of his course in life, his character, and his spirit. The sorrow which some sons cause their mothers is so often far greater, even as much as a hundred times over, after they have become mature and settled in their ways of life.

When Jabez became a man, his name could well have been changed, for it was no longer applicable. He rather caused Joy, certainly to his mother and his friends.

Jabez was one of the chiefs of Judah. It is said that he was “more honorable than his brethren”. Jewish writers affirm that Jabez was an eminent doctor in the law, and consequently drew scribes about him in such numbers that a town was named for him (1 Chronicles 2:55).

He seems to have had the spirit of young Solomon when about to enter upon the duties of his office as King of Israel. He felt the need of help, help that could come only from on High. So Solomon prayed for help. So did Jabez.

The Prayer’s Spiritual Qualities

As we read over this prayer, there are certain qualities that manifest themselves. (1) It was addressed definitely to the God of Israel. Not to departed ancestors, not to mythological creatures, not to some spirit.

“I thank whatever gods there be,
For my unconquerable soul.”

Jabez prayed to a person God, the God of Israel. He may not have had an altogether faultless conception of God. Neither have we today. He may have had anthropomorphic conceptions. But what of it?

(2) He was humble in his approach. That is apparent in the very words of the prayer. None of the self-righteousness of the Pharisee to whom Jesus referred. Compare Jacob. Genesis 28:20.

(3) He was deeply in earnest. “Oh that thou wouldest bless me.” Perfunctoriness in prayer is all too common. We cannot expect much from such effort. Jesus taught that we must be in earnest.

The Content of the Prayer

(1) “Bless me”, grant a personal blessing. As one awakes in the morning, how he would like to have a sense of the empowering of God for the work of the day. There is an indescribable sense of renewed strength that comes from the consciousness of the favor of a beneficent God.

(2) “Enlarge my Coast”. Give success to my undertaking. What was that undertaking? No one knows. It could have been the expulsion of the Canaanites which was a task assigned his people by God. Jabez wished to do that task. He wished to extend his borders to the limits designated by God.

No man should enter upon any great and important undertaking without invoking the blessing of Almighty God. He should ask for success in his new business, safety on his journey, happiness in his new residence.

Enlarging one’s coast might mean the expansion of one’s horizon, extension of the limits of one’s influence, release from the restrictions of sin and circumstance.

(3) “That thine hand might be with me”. That is, to preserve from danger. He wanted nothing without God. Americans ought to reflect on this. We have gotten much of a material character, but are losing God.

Jabez had no intention of "Dropping the Pilot".

Some years ago, Clarence Darrow in addressing an audience of Negroes in a church in Harlem, with a number of Negro ministers on the platform, said --

"You are too blooming pious. The sooner you people find out that you can't depend on David and the Lord, but get busy yourselves, the better off you will be. If the Lord was going to do anything for you, he would have done it long ago."

There was a laugh from the crowd, but the ministers frowned. And well they might. The trouble has been that too many members of the human race have adopted just such tactics as those advocated by Darrow that progress has been retarded so decidedly.

(4) "That Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." Reference here is evidently to the sorrow which his own name suggested. He remembered his mother's experience. It could also have had reference to the evil of sin generally. Both bring grief.

God's Answer

We are told that God answered his prayer. Which means that God bestowed upon him his benediction, he gave success to his undertakings, he preserved him from danger, he delivered him from grief, he exalted him to honor and position.

Yesterday I read in O.O. McIntyre's column that "in the office of Kenneth Collins, a large department store executive, hangs a framed quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "'What will you have?' quoth God. 'Take it and pay for it.' Anyone applying this lesson can throw away his 'You Can' books and plow through the world to triumph."

This all leaves one with questions as to what both Emerson and McIntyre mean.

We pay our homage to the Go-getter in our day: We honor the man --

"Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

"Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mold a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne."

Life has two sides -- the active and the contemplative, the effort and the prayer.

Let us not forget --

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Therefore let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day,
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer?"

A Sense of Honor and Religious Privilege **Religious Honor**

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Rockdale Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX

July 5, 1925
September 10, 1944
August 29, 1954 (rewritten)

“I will not...offer burnt offering without cost.”

1 Chronicles 21:24

The motive of an action which in itself is non-moral determines whether that action is right or wrong. Taking a census is not in itself evil. But if one be taken to gratify pride or to put over an ill-advised taxing program, it is wrong. This was true in the case of King David's numbering of the people of Israel from Dan to Beersheba. It evidently revealed a lack of faith in God. The motive is not clearly stated, but we know the Lord disapproved of it. Joab, David's commander-in-chief, protested against it, but David's will prevailed, and the numbering was done, imperfectly however.

The punishment administered was a weakening of the strength in which David evidently was taking pride. Three things were submitted for David's choice: Three years of famine in the land; three months devastation by the foes of the nation; or three days' pestilence at the hands of the angel of the Lord. David chose the last named because he had rather be in the hands of the Lord than in the hands of man. 70,000 men were lost to the nation.

When the angel came to Jerusalem, he found David and the elders in sackcloth deeply penitent over what had been done. David pleaded that it was he who gave the order and that he and his family should take all the consequences, not the people.

The angel commanded David to go to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite and erect an altar and make an offering. He obeyed. When he came to Ornan's place, Ornan did obeisance. When he heard the request of David, Ornan said "Take the place. It is yours. Furthermore, I will give you oxen for burnt offerings and wheat for a cereal offering, and wood for the fires". But David said, "No, I will buy it. It will not be my offering if I take your offer. I will not offer burnt offerings which cost me nothing". So David bought the ground and paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold for it, which was no doubt a good price, and he there offered his burnt and peace offerings.

It is a matter of interest that the site of this altar later became the location of Solomon's temple -- Mount Moriah. There is now a large rock on the site, covered by a dome.

1. David accepted full responsibility for his misdeed.

He said to God, "Was it not I who gave the command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I

pray thee O Lord my God, be against me and against my father's house; but let not the plague be upon thy people".

You recall that when the children of Israel, just out of bondage in Egypt, were encamped at Sinai, Moses was on the mountaintop getting the law from Jehovah. The people became impatient and induced Aaron to make them a golden calf, which they worshipped. When Moses returned and called them to account, no one would accept responsibility. But it brought death and sorrow to many souls.

Probably one of the worst sorrows one can have is that which comes from the realization that others have suffered as the result of one's misconduct. In David's case there were 70,000 men who paid the price.

I have seen the statement that in Missouri there is an inscription on a grave marker to this effect: "Sacred to the memory of Willie Lear; he took my place". With this is associated a story that during the Civil War a company of bushwhackers condemned to be shot, was already standing in line, when a young boy rushed up and insisted on taking the place of one of the men. "He has a family, and will be greatly missed. No one will miss me," he said. The lad pulled the condemned man away and took his place in time to receive the shots of the firing squad.

Whether you and I are aware of any ill we have brought to others or not, we do know that the sin of mankind nailed Christ to the Cross. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

2. David repented and sought forgiveness.

This incident took place towards the close of David's eventful reign. Under the able leadership which he provided, the Hebrew kingdom had become one of the kingdoms of the world. He had provided a capital for his nation, with palace. He had conquered the nations on the frontier of the realm. He had brought prosperity to the nation. He evidently felt quite proud and strong. He may have contemplated foreign conquests, a project not favored by the captains of the host.

John Rushkin, English essayist (1819-1900), wrote: "In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes". In this connection we also think of what Ben Franklin said: "After crosses and losses, men grow humbler and wiser".

One would have thought that by the time he came to this stage of his eventful career, David would have been quite humble. But he was very human, and was constantly in need of forgiveness.

Being the prominent person that he was, David's mistakes had greater significance. The consequences were vast. But let us not think that our wrongdoing is inconsequential because we have less prominent stations in life. All of us need to repent and constantly seek forgiveness.

3. David insisted that his offerings should not be without cost to himself.

You recall that David lived in the period in which the Mosaic laws were in effect. Offerings were required, some of them bloody sacrifices, typical of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God yet to be made on Calvary. There were several offerings specified, two of which were the Burnt Offering (in which an animal was sacrificed) and the Meat (Cereal RSV) Offering (in which flour and a few other ingredients were used). The two offerings generally went together. These offerings were expressive of “perpetual obligation to complete, sanctified, self-surrender to Jehovah” (Kurtz) and dedicated to him of the best of his gifts, flour being the staff of life.

You can then easily understand David’s reaction to the offer made by Ornan, the owner of the threshing floor to which David had come to make the sacrifices expected. This site was on top of Mount Moriah, already made memorable by the incident in which Abraham showed a willingness to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. When Ornan saw David approaching he did obeisance. He offered to give David the animal for the Burnt Offering and the wheat for the Cereal Offering, but David declined. “No,” said David, “I will buy it for the full price; I will not...offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing”. So David bought the oxen and the wood for the fire for 50 shekels of silver, and bought the site for 600 shekels of gold. The offering was accepted. So David said, “Here shall be the house of the Lord God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel”. Later King Solomon’s temple was erected there.

Thus we are reminded that religion is a very personal thing. One’s responsibility cannot be unloaded on other shoulders. One member of the family cannot take care of the religious needs of all the rest. It is not sufficient for us that our prayers be said by the minister, our praises sung by the choir, our giving done by the willing few, and study of the Word of God be done by our teachers.

In one of Charles Dickens’ novels, “Bleak House”, there is a character by the name of Harold Skimpole, an intelligent and interesting conversationalist, always agreeable, but averse to dealing with the petty details of everyday life. He let others worry about his affairs, and held that they were all the better off for showing him the kindnesses, and that he was better off for having the kindnesses shown him, and hence that there was profit all the way round. It is conceivable that there could be some like that in a church.

There is a hymn which begins, “Am I a soldier of the Cross?” and which has this stanza:

“Must I be carried to the skies
on flowery beds of ease
While others fought to win the prize
and sailed through bloody seas?”

That hymn was left out of the book we use. I am sure it was not because the compilers thought Presbyterians need no longer to ask themselves that question.

Written large in the economy of God is the law “returns are proportionate to investment”. One cannot have spiritual enlargement without cost, just as one cannot have mental expansion without application. There are deficiencies in each of us which can be corrected only by constant vigilance and determination. “Work out your own salvation”, said Paul.

The cause of Christ in the world cannot be promoted in ease and languor. Zeal that is ephemeral and feeble never established truth. The cost must be paid, not grudgingly, not in ostentation and for display, not in the spirit of self-righteousness, but out of love of Christ; as a privilege and not a duty.

Love never asks, “How little can I get by on”, but “How much can I give”?

4. The benefits of such fidelity are reflex in nature.

Meeting fully and promptly and cheerfully the obligations of spiritual privilege results in enrichment of soul. Spiritual enlargement cannot be picked up on any bargain counter. We get what we pay for in time, energy, thought, resources and devotion.

Last week, Mrs. O’Kelley was engaged in discarding a lot of correspondence now out of date, relative to Women’s Work in the Synod, and she tore off the last lines of a circular letter sent out by one of the officers, and laid it on my desk, because of a certain quotation she inserted. It was that: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give”.

If we only give what we will not miss, we are cheating ourselves. There is no indictment in the Word of God against the man or woman who cannot give largely. The indictment is against the person who does not give according to ability. We have time, ability, energy and skill to give. The extent of our use of these for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind will determine the quality of our own soul.

The Greeks did not have the Word of God to teach them. Their gods were very imperfect beings. But they seem in a measure to have grasped the law of reflex benefit from altruistic service. Hercules (Heracles) was one of the greatest of their legendary heroes, a man of superhuman strength. He was impetuous and brutal from childhood. He was given the assignment of performing twelve great labors by Eurystheus, such as slaying the Nemean lion, killing the water snake of Lerna, etc.. He patiently submitted to the unreasonable demands made upon him, with the result that he came out of it a nobler soul, deemed worthy of immortality by the gods, and fit to occupy a place among them. This was the Greek method of teaching that ideal manhood is achieved only through difficulty and discipline.

This suggests a question: In our religion, just what value is there in penance, in fasting, in repeating certain prayers, in pilgrimages, in self-inflicted torture. You remember that Luther had been troubled in soul, and on a visit to Rome, was ascending the “santa scala” on his knees as a meritorious performance, when it came to him that “the just shall live by faith”. Jesus took the Pharisees to task for their emphasis on external observances as a meritorious performance. Fasting as a voluntary spiritual exercise, accompanied by earnest prayer, is a means of grace. It is not by mechanical performances of imposed ritual that the soul is enriched.

There is no easy way to the riches of true religion. Jesus was tempted by the Devil to take the easy course. Jesus chose the way of Calvary. He would make no offering to the Father that cost him nothing.

There is a very strange statement regarding Jesus in the Bible. “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10). What can that mean? Did the suffering of Christ “soften and unfold the human life of the Redeemer, that the Divine nature might become more manifest and active”? (Speaker’s Bible).

To follow the principle laid down by David and exemplified so magnificently by our Lord, we must love disinterestedly and trust God profoundly.

2 Chronicles

Our Hands and God's Strength

First Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX

August 22, 1954

“Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak: For your work shall be rewarded.”
2 Chronicles 15:7

Asa was one of the kings of Judah that started out well. In fact he had a long reign, and perhaps the greater part of it was commendable. He began by cleaning out various immoral practices and idolatrous indulgences that his predecessors had permitted to exist. It was not an easy thing to do. The people held on to some of their cherished heathen ceremonies. After 15 years of struggling with these evils, he doubtless became somewhat weary. His courage was beginning to fail him.

It was then that the prophet Azariah came to the king and said, “The Lord is with you while you are with him....Take courage; do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (RSV). With that encouragement, King Asa went on and completed his religious reformation.

Here we are at the tail end of a long hot Summer. For several weeks now we have gone along at a sort of coasting gait. That is probably about the best way to take a season of that kind. The danger we face is that of finding it so pleasant to coast that we can't bring ourselves to put forth any serious effort again. Since it will not be long before activities will assume normal proportions in school and business, we church members should begin to shake ourselves and get ready for serious action.

We need constantly to remind ourselves that we have been marvelously helped in our enterprise here. We have been recipients of donations and contributions from friends without our organization to a degree that is most unusual. Up to the present, the assistance received from the outside surpasses the total contributed within the membership. We are very grateful for the encouragement our friends have given us. You remember the gospel song, “Count your many blessings, name them one by one”. That is a good thing to do. But it would be silly to count on an indefinite continuance of those blessings. Fairy godmothers, and I suppose godfathers too, have a way of deciding that they have done enough for one certain beneficiary.

In a church which we once served there was a woman with many abilities, one of them being the mastery of the art of baking very tasty bread. She always baked on Saturdays. In fact, she belonged to the old school element that believed no work should be put off until Sunday that could be done on Saturday. So she baked bread every Saturday and regularly included our family in the calculations. We got so accustomed to receiving that fresh loaf of tasty homemade

bread every Saturday that when it stopped coming (as all such gratuities of that kind must eventually do), we discovered just how spoiled we had become. The United States has been sending some bread to hungry people over the world, and it looks as if they are of the opinion that this beneficence should go on indefinitely.

The time has come for us to justify the faith that our friends seem to have had in us. As soon as possible, we want to get out on our own, paying our own way and even joining the congregations that support the benevolent causes of the church.

In deciding what to do with a challenge of this kind, there are certain observations that should be kept in mind:

1. Any undertaking worthy of our best effort must be a venture of faith.

We sometimes wonder at the appeal which gambling has to the average human being. Edmund Burke, noted English statesman, friend of America in the days of the Revolution, said, "Gaming (gambling) is a principle inherent in human nature". But his American contemporary, George Washington said in a letter to Bushrod Washington (1783): "It (gaming) is the child of avarice, the brother of iniquity, and the father of mischief". Both, I suppose, could be true.

A human being thrills at the challenge of a risk. The sensation one has in such a moment is profound and sacred. There is an exaltation of spirit that one experiences as he commits himself to a hazardous enterprise. To squander this on trivialities, from self-centered motives -- horseracing, cards, games -- is to debase a principle that underlies progress and character development.

Life is made up of risks. David Crockett, one of the heroes of the Alamo, is famous for his statement: "Be sure you're right, then go ahead". The trouble is that we cannot always be sure we are right. If we wait to be sure, it may be too late. We run risks when we choose a life work, start a business, establish a home, bring children into the world. Donald Hankey said that even "religion is betting your life that there is a God".

The tragedy of life is not that all die, but that so many fail really to live. It has been said that the thing which moves mankind forward is not perfect balance but glorious immoderation -- the excessiveness of people who see things so clearly that they are willing to live for it, even die for it.

I had occasion recently to dig into the records of the establishment of Presbyterianism in Texas. The first Presbyterian minister to locate in Texas was Hugh Wilson, who came originally from North Carolina, but who at the time he had to the call to go to Texas was located near Memphis, TN. Texas at the time was a republic. It was a wild country, with many Indians, much wild life, and diseases. It was in 1838 that Wilson loaded his household goods and his family, including five daughters, in a covered wagon and set out for Texas. He entered at San Augustine, where he organized the first Presbyterian church in Texas, which he called Bethel. He was a scholar, a graduate of Princeton College and Seminary. His classmates in some instances took comfortable pulpits, but he faced the hazards of a vast unsettled country, and became known as the Father of Presbyterianism in Texas.

The Kremlin's dream of a revolutionary world order seems to be thrilling the imagination of millions. Perhaps it is the stupendousness of it. It is within the scope of Western potential to present an even more exciting challenge -- involving the worth of morality and the value of human personality. Perhaps we have lost the thrill.

What we do here in Rockdale in the next months and years will depend on the degree to which we can present a challenge that will command the interest of our constituency to the point that they will be willing to make a supreme venture of faith. May God deliver us from the ignominy of settling down, content with what has already been done.

2. Making such a venture of faith calls for a measure of self-assurance.

Emerson wrote, "Self-trust is the essence of heroism". Sometimes the only difference in men is that some believe they can do certain things; and others are not sure enough to try. There are successful men in the world who owe their achievements to some individuals behind the scenes who said to them, "You can do it". King Asa made a name for himself as reformer in Judah, but much of the credit should go to the prophet Azariah who came to him and said, "Take courage, do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded". That church is doomed to mediocrity which has within its fold any appreciable element which takes the heart out of its leadership.

But let this be said: Self-confidence can also be a snare. I knew an alcoholic who pooh-poohed the suggestion that he secure the help of one who had conquered his thirst for drink, because he said he could overcome his weakness himself. He never did.

Our self-confidence should be tempered with wisdom, judgment, human sympathy, and a sense of mission. Otherwise one may be a presumptuous fool.

Music lovers are acquainted with at least one composition of the Italian composer, Rossini -- "The Barber of Seville". It is quite popular, and I am sure it will live on. I have read that Beethoven said that Rossini had in him the making of a great musician, only if he had been well flogged as a boy, but that he had been spoiled by his facility of composition. He composed 17 operas by the time he was 23 years of age.

Milton revealed flashing genius from youth, but his great works came after blindness darkened his world.

Could it possibly be that we as a church have come thus far without serious cost or sacrifice? It is the person who has never known suffering who is most afraid of it. It is the individual who has never made a real sacrifice for any cause who is last inclined to ever make one. His philosophy of life is, "Don't stick your neck out", "Don't go out on a limb".

3. God-confidence is the secret of all self-assurance.

I suppose you can take a correspondence course on how to develop self-confidence. But I am sure that the rules given do not touch the crucial situations that stir us to our depths.

Paul said, "I can do all things," but added "through Christ who strengtheneth me". The Psalmist said (Psalm 112) "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord....He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord".

Dr. Sockman observes that some evil tidings are not as bad as they seem at first. He quotes Bill Nye, a humorist of the past generation, as saying, "Classical music is better than it sounds". So with some of life's unwelcome experiences.

I once knew a man who had been a most successful merchant -- wholesale grocer. He went security for another man in a business venture that failed. As a result, the grocer was sold out by the creditors of the other man. The accumulations of a lifetime were swept away. He was able to keep his home. He had to start all over again. People who knew this man before the blow came and after it testified that he had been spiritually enriched by that experience. Under his leadership, during his last years, the spirit of the Presbyterian Churches in North Louisiana underwent a complete transformation.

We come back constantly to the two points in the sermon of William Carey before he set out for India; "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God". If what we do is His will, we cannot fail. "Your works shall be rewarded."

The Bane of Pride

Minden, LA
Minden, LA

February 24, 1924
June 7, 1931

“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted p to his destruction.”

2 Chronicles 26:16

Such are the words which the pathetic close to a most brilliant career is described. It is always pathetic to see a man of lofty principle, high aspiration, and bountiful resources mar a useful life by becoming self-absorbed, self-sufficient, and self-infatuated. Such was true of the great king by the study of whose fatal mistake we hope to profit today.

Uzziah was a great king. Becoming sovereign at the early age of 16, he reigned 52 years in the Kingdom of Judah. He was able to free himself from the partial domination of the king of Israel. He recognized his army and made it more efficient. He strengthened his fortifications, and improved his implements of war. He was victorious over Philistine, Arab, Amonite. Surrounding nations courted his favor. He gave his attention to improving the facilities for agriculture in his land. In the words of the Chronicler, Uzziah’s “name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped until he was strong”.

Then comes the pathetic declaration, “And when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction”. Being elated over his prosperity and being persuaded that there was no privilege which might not be his, he took it upon himself to go into the holy place and offer incense -- a duty which only priests were allowed to perform. As a punishment for his presumptuous deed, Uzziah was made a leper, and that meant his undoing, for he never recovered. He was forced to take Jothan his son as his associate in governing the nation.

Uzziah might have gone down to his grave with his name unsoiled by the record of a grievous sin had he not in the hour of prosperity lost his poise of mind and judgment. Pride was the cause of his fall.

But the experience of this man was not unlike that of others. In the words of another, “Pride thrust proud Nebuchadnezzar out of men’s society, proud Saul out of his kingdom, proud Adam out of Paradise, proud Haman out of court, proud Lucifer out of heaven” (Henry Smith). More modern examples might be given. In fact, it is evident on every side, operating in the lives of people we know and love.

What Pride Is

It is the exalted feeling which one may have after contemplating the superiority which he thinks he has over some or all of his fellows. There are undoubtedly times when one cannot help

discovering that he has some advantage over some other individual. It would be mere pretense to deny that one, under such circumstances, hasn't this consciousness. But it is only when one becomes lifted up over his superiority that he has pride.

A man may know that he is stronger physically than another. But that does not necessarily involve pride. It is the bully who through pride likes to have others recognize his superiority.

There is a wide difference among rich people. Some are unspoiled by their money. Others affect a very superior air.

One cannot have this feeling without betraying it. It affects one's whole being. It goes to the very source from which one's acts and words spring and tinges these with repulsive hue.

The feeling is revealed in vanity, insolence, haughtiness, selfishness. The manifestation sometimes reaches the point where it becomes unbearable.

Not being satisfied with simply feeling the exaltation, the proud are anxious to make others painfully conscious of their inferiority. Hence the gaudy display of wealth, conspicuous parade of beauty, extreme advertisement of ability. Such is the pride of life.

"Pride" is sometimes used in another sense, to refer to the inclination and desire to attain excellence in character and conduct, to place oneself above that which is defiling and degrading, to make the most of one's personal assets. That is not pride, but self-respect. Pride flaunts any excellence, supposed or real, in the face of others less favored.

When climbing a stairway, it makes some people dizzy to look down. So in life, when we stop to look down in the onward progress, we are liable to become dizzy with pride.

Who Are Most Susceptible?

He who excels is most susceptible. Uzziah was humble until he became strong. For this reason, misfortune may be a blessing. The failure to win may be far better than success.

Along with success, God may send a counteracting influence. Only a great soul can see this and thank God for it. Paul and the thorn in the flesh. "By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch."

It is not infrequently true that it is disastrous for one to succeed in life. They regard themselves as self-made men. There are no such persons. God has given them the very talents and traits of character by means of which their success has been attained. Paul said, "I am what I am by the grace of God".

The ability and opportunity to acquire wealth are God given. They might have been given to another as well as to you. Inheritance, ancestors, nationalities, racial characteristics, and era of existence are all God given.

Paradoxically, there are people who are proud of their humility. They never lose opportunity to parade it. But humility ceases to be such when it provokes pride in us. It is said that Diogenes, the celebrated Greek philosopher, while in attendance upon the festival at Olympia, saw some young men arrayed in magnificent apparel, and exclaimed, "This is pride".

Later, he saw some Lacedaemians clad in mean and sordid dress, and recognizing the same vanity in another form said, "And this is also pride".

Why Resist It?

1. Because it leads to sinful conduct. Uzziah was guilty of a presumptuous act. He rushed in where angels fear to tread.

The proud speak ill advisedly. The Pharisee praying in the temple: "I thank Thee that I am not as other men".

Heartless acts. Mistreatment of the needy.

2. Because it is displeasing to God and man. "The Lord shall cut off...the tongue that speaketh proud things". "Him that hath a high outlook and a proud heart will I not suffer." "The proud He knoweth afar off." Solomon says that there are "six things which God doth hate, yea seven are abomination to him", and the first that he mentions is a "proud look".

Pride reveals an absence of love. Since love is required for the fulfilling of the requirements of God, we know that pride is offensive to God. Paul tells us "charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Herewith have outward conduct and inward disposition.

3. Pride results in destruction. This naturally follows from the fact that God is displeased with it.

Besides, a man is in danger when he looks downward rather than upward.

A great writer has likened pride to a vulture which flies with its head turned downward in search of carrion upon which to feed, while it becomes as repulsive as its food. But humility is compared to the eagle which soars aloft and is unconscious of its lofty position because its eyes are fastened on the sun (Dr. Dabney).

The church which in Revelation provoked the greatest condemnation from the lips of our Lord was the church which had said, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing".

The Chinese nation once felt that it had the wisdom of the world. It then shut itself in. Today it is regarded as a backward nation.

Paul: "Forgetting those things which are behind".

Christ the true example of humility.

Building That Abides

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

January 30, 1938
March 10, 1946 (revised)
October 17, 1954 (rewritten)

“He (Jotham) built the high gate of the house of the Lord.”

2 Chronicles 27:3

There are some famous epitaphs: Charles Kingsley’s wife placed this one on his tomb: “Amavimus, amamus, amabimus”. On that of John Richard Green, English historian, “He died learning”. There is a monument in the Somme, where several battles were fought in both world wars. On it are these words: “Tell England, ye who pass this monument, we died for her, and here we rest content”.

This reminds me of an article written in the Atlanta Constitution at the close of the last war (December, 1945) by a US Marine, Lt. Harold Martin, in which he maintained that the boys buried in the far away cemeteries on the islands of the Pacific where their battles were fought, were just where they would really like to stay -- by the side of their buddies. Beautiful spot they were -- on Guadalcanal, the Marshalls, Okinawa, Tarawa, and Iwo Jima. The great stretches of white crosses were interspersed with dozens of rough-hewn stones that the men who lived sat down to carve, when the fighting was over, in memory of their buddies. The carving was sometimes rude, and the inscriptions were simple. They ran like these: “God Bless Bill”, “In Memory of a Swell Buddy. May God forever let him rest in peace”, “Joe, your buddies will never forget you”, “George -- a grand guy”, “Here lies Monty, a Good Marine” (Reader’s Digest, March 1946, p. 77).

What Was Said of Jotham

Our text today is a statement about Jotham, king of Judah. He was the son of Uzziah, the great king who reigned nearly half a century. Uzziah made the mistake of usurping the priestly office and intruding into the Temple. He was cursed because of it. But when he died, Isaiah felt keenly the loss. It was in that year that Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up”.

Jotham did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He did not make the mistake of intruding, as his father had done, but he failed to tear down the high places on which the people offered sacrifices to the gods. There was one thing that he did which seems to stand out in his record: He built (embellished) the high gate of the Temple. The people lived corruptly, but not because of the king’s example. He did that which was right.

Jotham was a builder. He fortified Jerusalem, erected forts in the forests, and strengthened the hill country. He was shrewd, practical, and brave in war. He was devout at all times. He left the kingdom strong, rich, and well organized. He reigned but 12 years alone, and died at the early age of 41 years.

It is to his credit that he built the high gate of the house of God. This would seem to indicate his reverence for the Temple, his cheerful willingness to labor and sacrifice for the improvement of the House, and his desire to make that house attractive to others.

Greatness in National Leadership

The people of any nation are fortunate if they have a heritage of great leadership. In America, we like to think of the high quality of the founders of this nation. While they established a great commonwealth, they were very desirous of building “the high gate” of the house of God. The foundations were laid in the days of the Puritans and the Pilgrims.

One of the names signed to the Declaration of Independence is that of a Presbyterian minister by the name of John Witherspoon, a Scotsman, who did not come to America until he was 46 years of age. He came to assume the presidency of Princeton, after having distinguished himself as a minister and defender of the faith in Scotland. He was elected to the Continental Congress and became most zealous for independence. He stood by Washington throughout the hard struggle. Woodrow Wilson, in writing an appreciation of his famous predecessor at Princeton, said that Witherspoon was the greatest president Princeton ever had. He was a man who “built the high gate”.

Some intimations have come to us that Winston Churchill may at any time step down as leader in Great Britain. This reminds us of a statement made by Mark Sullivan on the occasion of a visit to this country by Churchill shortly after the close of the last war. He said: “We have seen greatness in our time”, and adds that we do not have to turn to Gibbon or Plutarch to find heroic characters. “Before our living eyes is grandeur of action and stature of personality unsurpassed in history”. The fall of France in 1940 created the occasion for this greatness to emerge. It was then that Churchill made a famous utterance:

“And now it has come to us to stand alone in the breach... Bearing ourselves humbly before God, but conscious that we serve an unfolding purpose, we are ready to defend our native land. We are fighting by ourselves alone, but we are not fighting for ourselves alone. Here is this strong city of refuge, we await undismayed the impending assault... We shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, ‘This was our finest hour’.”

Those words were spoken in 1940. Then on May 8, 1945, he said: “Yesterday morning at 2:41 AM, General Jodl, the representative of the German high command, signed the act of unconditional surrender. The German war is therefore at an end... God save the king”.

Sullivan called attention to the fact that Shakespeare, writing a play about an English king who fought a battle two centuries before, and imagining what the king might have said to his troops, produced what is regarded by some as the most lofty battle cry in literature:

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!

Or close the wall up with our English dead!
...Imitate the action of the tiger:
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood.”

Here was a man of letters merely imagining what a leader would say, or had said. But the other words were actual in a real situation.

By way of contrast, I think of Karl Marx (1818-1883) founder of Communism as we know it today, son of a highly respected Jewish lawyer of Germany. Though a man of modest means, he provided his son with the best education to be had in Germany. Karl spent his father's money very freely. In fact, he never made a living himself, but rather lived off of others who had means. He was a parasite. He declared that there is no God, and that religion is an opiate. He had a distorted view of life. He has become the means of enslaving hundreds of millions of people. He sought rather to tear down the gates to the house of God.

Recent issues of the New York Times report that the Russian authorities have inaugurated the most vicious fight against religion in the Soviet Union in 25 years. It quotes the Soviet Commissar of Education as saying:

“We hate Christians. Even the best of them must be regarded as our worst enemies. They preach love to one's neighbor and pity, which is contrary to our principles. Christian love is a hindrance to the development of the revolution. Down with the love of one's neighbor! What we want is hatred. We must know how to hate, for only at this price can we conquer the universe...Our task is to destroy all kinds of religion, all kinds of morality” (Christian Observer, 9/22/1954).

Strengthening the Indispensable

The last issue of the Christian Observer (October 6, 1954) had an article about the Milan Cathedral, one of the largest and most magnificent in all Europe. This cathedral was the chief glory of that city of over 1,000,000 people. It is built of brick overlaid with pure white marble which gleams in both the sunlight and the moonlight. This massive building with its endless succession of towering spires is said to present a delicateness that is unbelievable. It was the work of many masters, begun in 1386 and finished under Napoleon Bonaparte (and by his orders) probably in 1813. It was over 425 years in building. So, it is a matter of historic record that Napoleon finished the Milan Cathedral. Like Jotham, he embellished the house of God.

But along with that record is another rather ironical one: Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of the “Last Supper”, which was housed near the Cathedral, was done irreparable damage due to the fact that horses of Napoleon's army were housed in the same room with the painting. That, however, is attributed to the ignorance of the soldiers more to any intended slight on the part of Napoleon himself.

Now, by comparison with some cathedral, our modest structure here might be unimpressive in the eyes of some. But it has an eloquent message of composite effort, loving ministries, and endless prayers. If cathedrals required centuries to be built, we can hardly expect to complete fulfillment of our dreams in a matter of months. But already there is a list of spontaneous donations of property, money, services, equipment and skills, that is most

impressive. Of each of these donors, it can be said, He helped to build the high gate of the house of the Lord. He helped to embellish the sacred symbol of divine presence in our midst. And glory be, the end is not yet. I doubt that one has begrudged a dollar he put into it. Rather the common regret is that one did not have more dollars to contribute.

In my boyhood days in Conyers, Georgia, the Presbyterians were trying hard to build a new church building, and they finally succeeded. It was built of Stone Mountain granite and will stand for centuries. There was an elder of that church by the name of Dwight Green, who gave very generously of his limited means. He probably surpassed all others in the amount of his gifts. He was suddenly stricken and he never was able to work again. What he had in the way of resources was soon used up in the effort to overcome his infirmity. He sat in his house of many, many months. He said that the thing that gave him the most happiness in those days of inactivity was the thought that the money he put in the new church was saved.

On several tombs over the world are to be found these words:

“That I spend, that I had;
That I gave, that I have;
That I left, that I lost.”

Certainly is that true if one has given to the house of the Lord.

The Folly of Futility

So many people in the world are content to live futile lives. That futility may not be due to misdirected effort so much as to no effort at all. Thomas Gray, in a very beautiful poem, the “Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard”, has rather glorified the careers of those who, though potentially great, never wandered from “the cool, sequestered vale of life, far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife”, nor ceased to keep “the noiseless tenor of their way”. “Let not ambition mock their useful toil,” says Gray:

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

These people about whom Gray was writing were the “rude forefathers of the hamlet”, doubtless simple folk, who reared families, made honest livings, had good fellowship apart from the vain pursuit of empty and fleeting preferments.

All of us are familiar with the biography of Solomon Grundy: “Solomon Grundy born on Monday, Christened on Tuesday, married on Wednesday, taken ill on Thursday, worse on Friday, died on Saturday, buried on Sunday. That was the end of Solomon Grundy.”

“‘The Epigrams of Oscar Wilde’,” just off the press, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of a very brilliant, but morally deficient, Irish author and dramatist, contains this quotation from one of his chief prose works, “The Picture of Dorian Gray”:

“Nowadays, people know the price of everything, and the value of nothing.”

Probably you and I are not ready to make any audible confessions of guilt in this respect. I haven't lived in Rockdale long enough to notice any special lack of balance in personal appreciation of values. But in other fields in which I have labored, I have known families to spend far more in one weekend pleasure jaunt than they gave the church in a whole year, although they were members of the church and were expecting the church to provide the equipment, the ministry, the attractiveness that will merit their consideration.

Is It Ever Too Late To Be Mended?

January 15, 1939
September 27, 1942

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.”

2 Chronicles 33:12

The stories of the lives of the kings of Israel and Judah have been very valuable as lessons to people of all periods. Those kings revealed so much of human tendencies, and the records show the ways in which God dealt with these men.

Let us tonight dip over into the midst of the Old Testament and take the case of Manasseh, one of the last of the kings of Judah, before the captivity.

Manasseh's father was the good king Hezekiah, under whose reign Judah had risen in strength and prosperity. He banished idolatry, restored the worship of the temple. Although he had seen the fall of Samaria, north of him, he led his own kingdom through the storm. He pushed back the Philistines and discontinued paying tribute to Assyria. He died after a reign of 29 years.

Hezekiah had no grown up son to follow him. He did have a lad of only 12 years to succeed him. His name was Manasseh, and he fell into the hands of the aristocratic heathen party, whom Hezekiah had repressed. This group exercised a baneful influence over the young lad. Heathenism was fashionable in the high society circles of Jerusalem. Manasseh's mother may have been a member of one of the aristocratic families of Jerusalem.

Hephzibah, the mother, may have reigned as regent for a time. But soon the old friends and counselors of Hezekiah were removed, and a new order was established: This new government sought foreign relationships. Idolatry had the prestige of splendid success. Their Jehovah worship seemed so commonplace in comparison.

The Outrages of Manasseh

Under the prompting of his new advisers, Manasseh became a monster of irreligion. He was as far as he could have gone from the ways of his godly father. Judah never had a worse king. He restored what they called “high places” -- elevated spots selected as shrines for the worship of false divinities. He introduced for the first time in the history of Israel the Assyrian worship of the “host of heaven” -- the five planets. Now Manasseh was restoring that. Altars were erected to Baal and Ashtaroah even in the temple of Jehovah. The king himself observed “times” and used enchantments and practiced witchcraft. He dealt with wizards and

necromancers, affecting to consult the dead. There seems to have been a morbid craze for a knowledge of the secrets of foreign religions. The simplicity of the old faith seemed too commonplace. Once more the hideous image of Moloch, the god of the Ammonites, was set up in the Valley of Hinnom, and the king led the way by consecrating his own children by fire to this gruesome idol. The night air in Jerusalem was filled with the din of immoral carousals and hideous noises of frantic crowds. The ark was displaced. The sacred books were destroyed, so completely that when a copy was discovered 50 years later it was the occasion of wonder and amazement. The Sabbath was polluted. The name of Jehovah was erased. Star worship became popular. Among the prophets only a few remained true to Jehovah. Numbers of the priests went over to the service of heathen divinities.

However, the voice of the prophets was not entirely hushed. The faithful ones bore their testimony against the deeds. They warned. They predicted judgment. They said, "Jerusalem shall be wiped as a man wipeth a dish, and its people shall be delivered into the hands of their enemies" (2 Kings 21:13,14). As one might expect, such rebukes as that were not tolerated. Tradition has it that Isaiah, the aged prophet who had known Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, was among those who were victims of the young king's zeal. It is said that he was sawn asunder. Other faithful servants of Jehovah were slain in such numbers that the streets of Jerusalem ran with blood. This was a purge with a vengeance.

The Punishment

The territory of Judah was invaded by the Assyrians. The captains of Esarhaddon took Jerusalem, carried Manasseh away captive. He was sent in chains to the Euphrates for judgment. For some reason he was treated with unusual sternness. His feet were bound with fetters, and his hands with manacles, and a ring, with a cord attached was passed through his lips or his nostril, and he was led as a beast. He lay in prison at Babylon.

His Repentance

When this experience came to him, Manasseh was nearly sixty (60) years old. He had reigned about 47 years. There was no prospect before him. Nothing but a shameful and violent death seemed to await him. He must have been in that state of humiliation for some time. The gods in which he had trusted had been important. His father's God Jehovah had delivered him out of the hands of Sennacherib. He saw his sins. He humbled himself before the God of his fathers. God enabled him to return to Jerusalem, but he was a different man.

He set about rectifying the mistakes of his part. Persecution was stayed. The idols were removed from Jerusalem. The altars were restored to the temple. The high places were left, but consecrated to worship of Jehovah. There was a healthier feeling. But the change was at best but partial. The evil he had done had gone too deep to be so easily eradicated. The recollection of his evil life, his slaughter of innocent people, could never be brushed aside. His name was abhorred. When he died he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own garden.

Lessons From This Life

1. The Sin of Manasseh was against clear light. Reared in Godly home, his father was faithful to his God.

The worst of sinners seem to come from Godly homes. There is a reason why this is true. Ingersoll. The deep inner unrest of those who go wrong from godly homes. Conscience ever reminding.

2. Manasseh had repeated warnings and remonstrances. Unnamed prophets. One may have been the 86 year old Isaiah, who appealed to him in the name of his father.

God never lets anyone go without some obstacle. When a man goes over one obstacle, God places another. The story of Balaam.

3. The way of the transgressor is hard. Some often laugh at such statements. Captivity is the end of the road of sin. It has its bitterness.

4. It is never too late to be mended. (A slight change in the title of Chas. Reade's book). Manasseh repents. Adversity either drives us further away or softens us. Manasseh not a likely case for repentance. We can never tell what will take place.

Story shows: (1) Capacity of the soul for sin. (2) Capacity of the soul for salvation. (3) God can save unto the uttermost.

“Let the wicked forsake his way.”

Charles Reade, English writer (1814-1884) has a novel entitled “It Is Never Too Late to Mend”. It is a story of crime and its discovery. A man condemned for theft, suffers hardship in prison, and is deported to Australia, where he and another discover gold and become rich. They return to England, and it is found that the theft was committed by another.

The story does not have a bearing on the subject tonight. But the title is suggestive.

Our text refers to a man who had spent his life in wickedness, and finally, at an advanced age came to himself and tried to undo much that he had done. It is often too late to undo what you have done, but it is never too late to repent and turn from one's evil way. While there is life there is hope.

Yesterday, I bought me a “White Book of US Foreign Policy”, which I have not read carefully yet. But however good the case may be so far as Japan is concerned, I am sure that we will find that we have not been always blameless in our career as a nation.

When Prohibition was repealed, December 5, 1933, there was a promise that we would not have the saloon again. What we have is worse. It is debauched American womanhood. The fact that it is made so easily available to our soldiers is one of the most deplorable facts in the present unhappy situation. With all of our restrictions, there seems to be little on the sale of liquor. I am sure that as a nation we will have occasion to regret this.

America's first contact with Japan was on July 8, 1853, when Commodore Perry, with four warships, came into Yedo Harbor and demanded that Japan take her place among nations. This came a few years later, but reluctantly.

When Japan's doors were open, we sent her our materialistic conceptions and our vices. Japanese students came to this country and to other countries and became educated in our ways. I have seen figures regarding the religious status of the students of one of Japan's great universities -- Tokyo University: 5,000 students, 1,500 of whom are atheists, 3,000 agnostics.

In 1924, we passed what is known as the Japanese exclusion act, which is probably at the bottom of the feeling that is now given expression in this war.

America, however, cooperated with Japan in the war on China, by supplying oil, airplanes, trucks, guns, rubber, scrap iron. Japan's arsenal today came in large measure from the United States.

As a people, we have come more and more to disregard the Sabbath. Japan struck on the Sabbath. Of the 428 liquor licenses in Oahu, over ½ were held by Japanese. They could easily have advised the armed forces of Japan that the Americans have the habit of Saturday night carousals and late sleeping on Sunday morning.

The Book of Ezra

Accepting the Help of the Enemy

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

February 14, 1945

“The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin...came to Zerubbabel...and said, Let us build with you...But Zerubbabel...and the rest said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto the Lord God of Israel.”

Ezra 4: 1-5

Without attempting at all to be sensational, I want to use a local incident as the occasion to talk on what I believe to be a fundamental principle in our Christian code of ethics.

All of us read about the reports about the gifts offered by local liquor interests to three institutions that were putting on drives for funds: S.M.U., Baylor Hospital, and St. Paul's. As I recall, these interests offered S.M.U. a donation of \$30,000; Baylor, \$25,000; and St. Paul's, \$10,000. Baylor Hospital turned down the offer first, then the same action was taken by S.M.U.. St. Paul's Hospital accepted the amount offered it.

That was generally considered a closed incident. But along comes Dr. Marshall Steel, of Highland Park Methodist Church, located on the University Campus, and says that he questions the wisdom of refusing the donation, since it puts the church in the embarrassing position of approving the businesses of others whose gifts were received and accepted. He does not see, he says, that it will hinder in any way the church's opposition to the liquor traffic.

The Proposal of the Samaritans

The people of Judah had been in captivity some 70 years, when Cyrus, just come to power in Babylon, gave permission for them to return to Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, 42,360 Jews, attended by 7,337 servants, returned. Jeshua, Haggai, and Zechariah were probably also in the party.

First, the Altar of Burnt-sacrifice was set up on its ancient site.

In a few months, the foundations of the new temple were being laid when the Samaritans came and said, “Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither”. Now the Samaritans of that day were for the most part heathens, having been brought in by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, son of Sennacherib. Esarhaddon succeeded to the throne after his father had been killed in a revolution. He ruled over Assyria 681-686 BC. The people were brought in from Babylon, Cuthah, and other points west. You note that they called themselves Dinaites,

Apharsathchites, etc. (4:9). We find from 2 Kings 17:29-33 that they worshiped Jehovah as one of a number of gods. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods" (2 Kings 17:33). Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest unanimously declined the offer.

The Samaritans then set about trying to weaken the hands of those who built. They hired counselors to frustrate their purposes. They wrote false accusations of King Artaxerxes, and finally caused the work to cease by order of the king. There was no further work done for 14 years. It was finally resumed by order from Darius.

Evaluation of the Proposal

It looked good on the face of it. They seemed ready to help in a good cause. There was outwardly no gain sought for themselves. The reason they gave was commendable -- they worshipped the same God. At that time the destitute Jews were very much in need of assistance. There were doubtless some who hesitated to turn down such a request.

On the other hand, these Samaritans were not Israelites, either by descent or sympathy. They did not worship Jehovah as He would be worshipped. It was seen from their subsequent conduct that they really did not have the glory of God at heart, since they did all they could to keep the temple from going up. Evidently, they sought the prestige of being connected with the temple. Perhaps they thought that Jehovah would bless them for their deeds.

The rejection was prompt, unanimous, and positive. They declined the request on the ground that they were carrying out the command of God and Cyrus.

Evidently, this was a clever approach on the part of the Devil. He makes his advances in just a manner.

The Modern Instance Similar

The Baptists, the Methodists and the Catholics set out to build additions to their institutions. The only justification that Christian Church has in maintaining schools and hospitals is to further Christian faith and conduct, and to minister to man's well being in the name of Christ.

As they set to work, there comes a group of people who are engaged in a business of which Christian people for the most part strongly disapprove saying, "Let us build with you". They say in effect, "We believe in education as you do; we believe in hospitals as you do". Let us build together. We have certain sums of money which we would like to contribute to your enterprises."

The Baptists first decline the \$25,000 offered for Baylor Hospital; then the Methodists decline the \$30,000 offered Southern Methodist University; but the Catholics accept the \$10,000 offered St. Paul's Hospital.

The act of the Methodists has been generally commended. But now here comes Dr. Steel, who serves a church on the campus of the university, saying that he questions the wisdom of the authorities in rejecting the offer. He maintains that the church has no right to judge motives. By rejecting this gift and accepting others, the church, he says, is put in the position of saying that one business is all wrong, while other enterprises whose gifts were accepted are all right.

The Dallas Morning News on Monday discussed the episode editorially. It observed that people who philosophize in the field of ethical conduct judge the merit of a deed on two grounds: One is the intent, and the other is the utilitarian value. It has been said that the Catholic Church usually holds that the end justifies the means. The Protestant view is that the motive must be right in all worthy deeds. Dr. Steel takes the position that the church cannot set itself up as the judge of intent.

Some Judgment Must be Made

We turn to the incident at Jerusalem. Did Zerubbabel do wrong in judging the intent of the Samaritans. Some may say yes. Certainly they did from the standpoint of expediency. They were delayed 14 years in the work of rebuilding the temple. But the evils that the Israelites had suffered in the past had been due to their admission of the heathen of the land into their institutional life. Do you suppose that the Samaritans would not have wanted to put some of their gods in the Temple which they had helped to build?

When Peter came into Samaria, after Philip had preached there and made converts, he found in the company of baptized believers one Simon the sorcerer. As the result of prayer, these believers received the Holy Spirit. Simon came to Peter asking for this gift, offering money. Peter told him in no uncertain terms that he was not even a Christian. He judged Simon's motive.

The weakness of the church today is the spinelessness of our leaders in maintaining a high degree of Christian conduct.

One of the means by which Huey P. Long acquired power in the state of Louisiana was by making large deposits of state funds in small banks over the state. This was apparently a great favor. The banks would invest a portion of it, for that is the only way by which a bank can make money. Then, Long would call for the money, and the bank would not be in position right at the time to make the payment. I knew of one bank whose president absolutely refused to receive a deposit of this kind, for he knew that Long had no love for him or his bank, and he knew too what he was doing in other parts of the state.

When Christian institutions, and particularly the Church, place themselves under obligation to a business that is unfriendly to them, they run a great risk.

Evidence of Insincerity

This money was offered by the retail liquor dealers of Dallas, a business of which the Methodist and Baptist churches do not approve. It was given in the name of the liquor business. There was no room for doubt as to the nature of the fund. Had individuals as such made the contributions, there might have been a question as to the source of the money, since a man may have other sources of income than the liquor business. This money was made in the name of a business that is not favored by the church. To accept the gift under such circumstances is to show clearly that the receivers knew where it came from.

The gift came at a time when the issue is acute between the church and the business making the gift. Through window cards they have recently shown that they fear another election during the current year. An offering of this sort at just this time would be very suspicious.

Much publicity was given the donation. It was generally known that the gifts had been made. For the church to accept the contributions would have been an acknowledgment of insincerity on the part of these churches in their fight against the saloon.

Taking a position regarding an evil that is flagrant and generally in the minds of the people does not mean at all that other evils not mentioned are declared right.

Every parent knows that in rearing a child, it is best not to see some things. But when attention is called to a departure from the right, disposition must be made of the case. Evils are too numerous for the church to deal with each. Besides it is a complicated problem. But a stand must be taken somewhere.

Other Instances

In a letter to the daily press, I saw recently a reference to a familiar incident connected it is said with Sam Jones, the famous evangelist of the past generation. Sam Jones was always unpredictable. He gained great notoriety by this means. He is said to have told a man who asked him if he were going to accept the contribution of a saloon keeper that he certainly would, for the money had been long enough in the service of the devil.

We undoubtedly lose by making a concession to evil. J.B. Snell maintained that R. McRaney had great influence with a group of men in a fishing clubhouse because he would hold stakes while the men played poker. As a matter of fact he lost out entirely.

I have seen the statement that about 85,000,000 gallons of alcoholic drinks were consumed (through legal channels) in 1944. This does not include the bootleg consumption, of which there is a great amount. This means that the per-capita consumption is over 13 gallons. Many of us do not drink at all, so many people are consuming much more than 13 gallons.

The state received in revenue from the sale of legal liquor in 1944 \$12,706,296. This in a year that it was said to be scarce.

In addition, millions of gallons were consumed in the military bases of the state.

While people may differ on the question of how to regulate the evil, Christian people are agreed that it is a great evil. We look with much concern to the day when it becomes more plentiful. I am not sure that such moves as that of our local dealers in buying off opposition is in preparation for the great consumption that we are certain to have in the near future.

Nehemiah

People of a Willing Mind Building the Church

Minden, LA	March 13, 1938
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	November 5, 1944
Clifton, TX	January 9, 1949
Hyde Park, Austin, TX	March 20, 1949
Wilshire Blvd., R.E. Lee School, Austin, TX	November 6, 1949
Killeen, TX	March 11, 1951
Westminster, Waco, TX	June 1, 1952
Rockdale, TX	February 9, 1953

“So built we the wall...for the people had a mind to work.”

Nehemiah 4:6

It is a great day for any cause when a man or woman, with resources of one character or another at command, sees a great need, realizes that resources are in hand with which to meet that need, and sets about trying to meet the need with the resources in hand.

This is exactly what took place at the court of Artaxerxes, at Shushan, some 445 years before Christ, when Nehemiah, a Jew, filling the highly responsible position of cup-bearer to the king, became concerned about conditions in Jerusalem, many hundreds of miles away.

You recall that after the captivity in Babylon, the Jews were allowed to return. About 538 BC, a large company of some 42,000 went back under the leadership of Zerubbabel. They laid the foundation of the new Temple, and eventually, under the stimulation of Haggai, 20 years later, completed the Temple. But the walls of the City of Jerusalem were not rebuilt. Forty years more passed, and Ezra led back a second band of the exiles. Still the wall was not rebuilt.

Communication was slow in those days. News could not be radical across that expanse as it can be today. Nehemiah at Shushan had to wait for someone to come back to get information about how things were going at Jerusalem. Hanani came and told him that the people were suffering reproach and that the walls were down.

He secured permission of the king to form an escort and go himself to Jerusalem to see what could be done. He made the long trip. Arrived safely. Without saying anything about his purpose, he looked over the city, in the dead hours of night. Having made up his mind that the thing must be done, he threw out the challenge to the rulers. “Ye see the distress...come, and let us build up the wall.” They said, “Let us rise up and build” (2:17,18).

Here we see a magnificent project, seemingly impossible, at which the enemies (Sanballat and Tobiah) laughed, now conceived as something that can be done. In the declaration in the text, we see the project referred to as an achieved reality. In between these two significant stages in the work of restoration, there is much that ought to interest and inspire us.

How the Wall Was Built

We are told how the task was accomplished in the 3rd chapter, which does not at first perusal make interesting reading. You will recall that this is the chapter in which we are told where each person and his helpers were assigned work on the wall. Special mention is made of the gates -- sheep gate, fish gate, old gate, valley gate, dung gate, fountain gate, water gate, horse gate, east gate, and prison gate. Gates were most important, and special care should be exercised in their construction.

The record bears out the assertion of Nehemiah that the people had a mind to work. Eliashib, the high priest, the priests and the Levites worked on the project, as well as the Nethenim, a servile and subject class. In the list we also find rulers of cities, sons of apothecaries and goldsmiths. The daughters of Shallum, ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, also worked. Inhabitants of the villages nearby came in and worked -- men of Jericho, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zanoah, and men of the plain. All were ready to put their hands to the task -- with the exception of one group. That exception was noted. The inhabitants of Tekoa worked, "but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord (vs. 5).

We find people like the nobles of Tekoa who are either too proud or too selfish, or too lazy to do their work. The trouble about having people like that in an organization is that you not only do not have the value of their services, but have instead a hurtful influence. People will say, If the higher-ups do not feel any responsibility, why should we?

Evidently, these men did not have much influence. The work went on in spite of them. "The people had a mind to work."

We notice, too, that each worker has his own work to do. Generally, the families worked over against the place of his abode. That was true in the city, and it was true also without the city, in the villages round about. In a project as vast as that which Nehemiah directed, naturally there would be variety of assignments -- gates, doors, locks, bars, walls, towers. Whether the other men were doing their tasks aright was not the concern of any worker. His responsibility was to see that he did his task well. With everyone doing this, the whole was completed.

There is the classic story of the man who went into the quarries where men were shaping stones. He asked one man what he was doing, and he replied "Just hacking the stones". He asked another, who replied, "Making \$5 a day". He asked the question of a third man, and the reply was, "I am helping to build a cathedral".

Basil Mathews, well known English writer, has observed that as one visits the cathedrals constructed in the Middle Ages, one is struck with the graceful lines of their structure. They were conceived by nameless architects and erected by hosts of unremembered workers. However, one notices on each great stone (as in the case of Furness Abbey) certain markings -- an arrow, cross, circle, intersecting angles, etc. These were the marks of the masons who labored -- men who took pride in their work, even though it was to be merged into a gigantic whole.

Such has been the history of God's establishment of his peculiar people in the world. Moses achieved the liberation of the people, Joshua led them in conquest of Canaan, David unified and enlarged the nation, Solomon added magnificence, fame and peace.

In the early Christian church, there was variety -- men and women, teachers, preachers, evangelists, elders, deacons, apostles. Apollos the eloquent, Paul the scholar, Dorcas the deft handed, John the mystic, Luke the historian.

In the church of today, there is need for every talent if rightly directed. "Every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Corinthians 7:7). It is a great thing when the 5-talented men and women turn their energies to the advancement of the Kingdom. It was a great day when John Milton turned the wealth of his massive poetic genius to produce the incomparable "Paradise Lost". It was another great day when Leonardo da Vinci marshaled his artistic genius and gave the world "The Last Supper".

Johann Sebastian Bach has been called the "Father of Modern Music". Master of the organ, composer of music in many forms. But he was at his best in setting forth religious themes. It was a great day when this great master released his genius to give a musical portrait of Mathew's account of the Passion of our Lord in Jerusalem -- "St. Mathew's Passion".

It is because the work goes on through the consecration of talent both great and small, each doing his own task, that we can be sure that the words of Christ are true: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

The Challenge of Our Day

It would be easy for us to get where the dwellers of Jerusalem were when Nehemiah came to them. They were discouraged. They were saying that the task could not be done.

Surely the walls of the kingdom today seem broken down. Paganism runs rampant over the earth. Dictators drunk with power are like Sanballat and Tobiah challenging the right of the representatives of the Kingdom to build up the walls. Religion is flouted, spurned, or made subservient to material aims.

Spreading the gospel of the Prince of Peace seems to face insurmountable odds. But the trouble is not without the ranks of the Christian army, but within them.

John Wesley is quoted as having said, "If I had 300 men who feared nothing but God, hated nothing but sin, and were determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified, I would set the world on fire".

It makes us think of a remark which Daniel Webster made at Bunker Hill. You remember that the first pitched battle of the Revolution was fought at Bunker Hill (now within the limits of Greater Boston) on June 17, 1775. The Americans under Gen. Prescott held the Hill with some 1,500 men, and General William Howe attempted to dislodge them with 2,500 men. They made three charges up the hill before they were able to occupy it, and then only because the Americans had exhausted their power and had to fight with stones and staves and the butts of their guns.

Fifty (50) years after that memorable battle, the corner stone of a monument was laid there -- a monument to the 449 gallant souls who laid down their lives in that memorable battle.

The monument is a granite obelisk, 221 feet high. When the cornerstone was laid, the greatest orator of the day, Daniel Webster delivered an oration thought by some to be the best of his career.

There was a vast concourse of people at Bunker Hill in 1825 when that cornerstone was laid. They crowded hard on the speaker's platform. Webster urged the people to stand back, lest the pressure break down the platform at peril of life and limb. The answer was "It is impossible". "Impossible!" thundered the mighty orator, "nothing is impossible at Bunker Hill!"

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The Outcome Depends on Us

We need today the spirit of the people of Jerusalem in the crisis. There must be a readiness to do one's part.

Paracelsus (1493-1541) was a Swiss physician and naturalist. He made some important contributions to his profession. He discovered hydrogen and introduced many chemical remedies for disease. He was arrogant and intemperate, it is said. But he is known for a remark by this effect --

"I can devote myself,
I have a life to give."

Too often it is put, "I can enjoy myself, I have a life to live". There is a vast difference.

God so loved...he gave. "The difficulty about unselfish love is that it so often makes persons to whom it is extended selfish" (Basil Mathews). One should be careful to give as well as receive.

Characteristics of the Willing Mind

1. Consecration: By consecration, we mean whole-hearted commitment to the undertaking. This is not the attitude of all who are connected with the work of the church.

There are some who are indifferent. They are in the church because they regard it as the "ark of safety". The church means nothing to them except the advantage they can derive from its ministers. To some, as Dr. Chappell states it, the church is a nursing home dishing out soothing syrup to people who are engaged in looking at their own tongues and feeling their own pulses.

There are the lukewarm. They have a patronizing air about them. They enjoy cheap jokes about the church. They like to indulge in a little cynicism, and appear to be quite familiar with the shortcomings of church people. They seldom do anything for the church and when they do they have an exaggerated idea of the value of what they have done.

There are the consecrated members who are ready to have the Lord use them when and how he pleases. They are not going around with their feelings on their coat sleeves, nor are they always bent on having their own way. These are the people who "have in mind to work".

The first need then is consecration.

2. Concentration: Some have the willing mind, but it does not operate in the right direction. Much work done in the name of the church is lost motion. Its connection with the Kingdom of God is too remote.

There is a structure going up across the street. I have been told that it is for a branch post office. I haven't no reliable information on that. But, for the sake of an illustration, let us suppose that it is to be a branch post office. The contractor being ready to begin, asks for laborers. Someone might suggest that it would be a good idea if a few meetings were held in which the wisdom of the project could be discussed, the value of post offices generally, or the values of the buildings in general, or how the brick is made of which the structure is to be built. Another might suggest that it would be good to have some social fellowship among the workers and that someone serve coffee while the men are enjoying this fellowship. Another might suggest that there should be organization among the workers, and that meetings of these organizations be held, and that effort should be made to have good attendance at the meetings of the organization. Another might suggest that it would be a good thing to have a publicity committee to let people know about the project, so that there would be no doubt about what the undertaking is for. But the contractor would doubtless say that while all this is good, what he is concerned about is getting the bricks laid and the building erected.

There is much activity about the average church. But so little of it is directed towards the actual building of the church. We build the church when we bring people to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, when we persuade them to accept him as Savior and the Lord, and live according to his laws.

No church is building unless there is a constant stream of new members coming in. We need concentration on the main function of the church. That is the responsibility of every member of the church. Everything else is secondary.

3. Continuation: We have many occasional starters, not so many stayers. Spasmodic effort is not sufficient. A building is erected by laying one brick after another, day after day, year after year.

It is being said that Germany is counting strong on the war-weariness of the Allied armies as a means of saving herself from complete capitulation. People get tired of striving and quit when a little more would complete the job. Others have a personal grievance and withdraw. There is a shallow emotional instability that ruins the usefulness of too many people in the church.

Jesus said, "I will build my church," but it is to be on a "rock", not on temperamental sand.

On the evening before his crucifixion, Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room. He said to them: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luke 22:28). The continuers are the inheritors of the Kingdom.

Predicament in the Presbytery

As I go about over the Presbytery of Central Texas, I see conditions that cannot be other than distressing. I see churches that have been in existence a long time that are no further along than they were decades ago. In fact, there are some that are far worse off than they were. The buildings have become dilapidated, and there are signs of neglect. The people are reconciled to things as they are. They are in a rut. They are unable to change their patterns of activity which

have long since become outmoded. They can never think of any thing new to do. "The walls are down."

In some of our churches, there sit members, like the people of the valley around the Old Man of the Mountain, waiting for some notable one to come who bears the features of the Great Stone Face. They think it may be Mr. Gathergold, or Old Blood and Thunder, or Old Stony Phiz, or the poet sublime. But right among them are leaders who will be able to do all that they want done.

The purpose of the clinics which we have been holding is to hold up enterprises to which those who constitute the church might address themselves. We need a new enlistment of willing spirits, and a division of responsibility. We listen to sermons, feel stimulated, but go out and do nothing about it. The sermon is not enough.

Never before has it been so urgent that we come alive as a church. In too many instances, churches have settled down to a state of indifference. What minister want to come to a church that gives no evidence of life. He well knows that he will have the load to carry single-handed.

Put on thy strength, O Zion.

Conduct in a Crisis

Minden, LA (Day of Fasting and Prayer)
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

October 9, 1927
February 2, 1947 (rewritten)

“So we built the wall.”

Nehemiah 1:4

Nehemiah 4:6

A very simple statement. It is like Caesar’s famous declaration, “Veni, vidi, vici”, uttered according to Plutarch, after the defeat of Pharnaces. Or, like the statement of Perry, after the Victory on Lake Erie in 1813, “We have met the enemy and they are ours”. Easy, we might think. But not so easy as we might think.

Why is it that some groups and some individuals succeed in undertakings where others fail? Some explanations are usually given, such as the fact that they had certain natural advantages, were born under a lucky star, had fewer obstacles, or were endowed with special abilities.

We have been told over and over again that while these factors have some weight in a situation, achievement is more often attributive to the willingness to pay the price which achievement demands.

A Cup Bearer’s Concern

Here is the case of a man who voluntarily concerned himself about a situation from which he was physically far removed but in which he had a vital interest.

After a period of exile in Babylon, the Jews were given permission by Cyrus to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. But the majority preferred to remain in Babylon. However, in 536 BC, 42,360 people and 7,337 servants returned with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Haggai to the ruined city of Jerusalem, and began laying the foundations of the new Temple. Due to opposition, the work did not continue very long. But in 520 BC, Darius and the King reissued the decree of Cyrus, and ordered that the work be not hindered. The Temple was dedicated in 515 BC, 21 years after the return under Zerubbabel. The walls of the city were, however, not rebuilt.

In 458 BC, 78 years after the first return, there was another migration from Babylon (in the 6th year of Artaxerxes) with Ezra as the leader. 6,000 persons were in this delegation. Reforms were instituted under Ezra. But the walls were still not rebuilt.

It was in 445 BC, 13 years after Ezra’s following came to Jerusalem, that a deputation from Jerusalem came to Shushan, palace of Artaxerxes, with the sad report that conditions were not happy at Jerusalem, and mentioned the fact that the walls were down and the gates were burned. The report distressed Nehemiah, a Jew, who held an important station in the kingdom.

He decided that something must be done about the matter. He did something. His final declaration was, "So we built the wall". But there was much that took place between the realization of the need and the accomplishment of the deed.

Purpose and Procedure

There are several courses that Nehemiah might have taken under the circumstances. He could have said that he was too busy to do anything about a situation so many hundred miles away. He could have become pessimistic over the matter and concluded with some justification that there was no need to try to do anything about the matter, because there was no hope for the city. He could have said to himself that to expend effort there and spending money on the proposition was a foolish procedure, and contrary to common sense. But Nehemiah loved Jerusalem because of what it had meant to his forebears. Jerusalem was a symbol that must be preserved. It was the rallying center of a people -- his people. So, he proceeded to do something about it.

As you read the account which he has left us in the book of the Bible that bears his name, you note certain outstanding statements, which show his program of action. He "wept", fasted, prayed to God, said to the King, "Send me", he went, he viewed the walls three days, he pointed out the state of things, he organized the forces, he said to the people, "Come, let us build", he withstood discouragers by saying, "God will prosper us", "the people had a mind to work", and "So," he declared, "we built the wall".

All this simply reminds us that if we want to do something strongly enough and are willing to put forth the effort necessary, we can do it, provided of course the objective is well pleasing to God.

Disquieting Conditions Confront Us

We do not need any deputation to come and tell us that the walls of Zion are down and that the situation is a very unhappy one. Low standards of life are seemingly gaining headway, consumption of alcoholic drinks mounting, millions of children without moral and religious instruction of any kind in this Christian land, graft, gambling, juvenile delinquency, disruptions of homes, crime, international friction, poverty, radical antagonisms, seething discontent.

In the church there is lack of serious purpose. There is appalling religious illiteracy among the members. The Bible is not pondered over. Members do not attend church. The Sabbath is desecrated by church people. It is used for various purposes other than that for which it was intended. The church is handicapped in its operation because of an inadequate budget.

In the face of the situation we can easily become pessimistic. Many are so. Some are writing that there is no hope, and that we might as well accept the inevitable and make the best of things until the Lord takes a hand. Some people very strangely are calmly optimistic. They say that they think everything will be all right. Things have worked out very well in the past, and they will always do so. The best procedure is to face the facts and act courageously in the light of the best wisdom.

Prayer and Self Denial

Every great undertaking should be entered upon with an invocation of the blessing of God. We have just had a Week of Prayer and Self Denial for Foreign Missions. It was not a spectacular observance. But the uniting of the prayers of a great host of people for any enterprise brings into operation a power that cannot be withstood.

Most of the 51 nations that make up the United Nations which met in New York recently to work out an understanding among themselves for the people of the world, are Christian nations, or are recognized as such. Yet, they conducted their deliberations without the semblance of prayer. The nearest thing to it were the closing words of President Truman's speech: "May Almighty God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, guide us and sustain us as we seek to bring peace everlasting to the world. With His help we shall succeed." Catholics as well as Protestants have uttered a protest that no help was sought from One whose help is essential to peace.

We have made plans personally and collectively for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, often without prayer, except perhaps as a formality --opening or closing.

The ills of the church are spiritual and the remedy must be of a spiritual nature. We need to begin with ourselves.

We recall that Jesus, before entering upon his ministry, went into the wilderness and there fasted and prayed for 40 days. Out of that grew the custom of the church of observing Lent, as a preparation for Easter. The danger of these periods is that they degenerate into a mere formality, to be preceded by a period of indulgence, as Mardi Gras.

In the practice of fasting, we should remember that there is nothing meritorious in the act itself. It is good only as a means to an end. The Pharisee in the story of Jesus fasted twice a week. The Jews fasted on the 2nd and 5th days of the week on the strength of belief that Moses went up to Sinai on the 5th day of the week and descended on the 2nd day. They had a way of making a show of their fasting, wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on their heads.

In the 6th chapter of Matthew, we have the account of Jesus' comment on this sort of thing. The general theme of the chapter is "God Works Without Ostentation", and he discusses Almsgiving, Prayer, Fasting.

Fasting should be purely voluntary. It should come only when one is in the right frame of mind. It is not natural in a time of joy (Matt. 9:15). But distress naturally calls for fasting. A feeling of distress may be strengthened by fasting. It may help to fix attention on worship and meditation. But fasting should not be practiced when ill results would occur to health.

But we do need the spirit of self-denial, of self-sacrifice. This is a period of unparalleled selfishness.

Faith and Crisis

Is our faith strong enough and our spirit great enough? Do we believe in the Eternal God as Sovereign of the Universe? In the adequacy of the redeeming power of Christ? We must face

the overwhelming power of modern paganism, wide spread blatant materialism, shallow, cynical humanism.

There are cults today which are mere escapes: Theosophy, spiritualism, Unity, The Great I Am, Ethical Society, fortunetellers, crystal gazers, astrologers.

What Shall We Do About Sunday?

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

February 16, 1936
February 20, 1944

(The story of Nehemiah's action in connection with profanation of the Sabbath in Jerusalem.)
Nehemiah 13:15-22

Nehemiah was a Jew of the captivity. He held a responsible position in Shushan as cupbearer to the king, Artaxerxes. Hearing of conditions prevailing at Jerusalem since the return under Zerubbabel and Ezra, he secured permission to go to Jerusalem to assist in the restoration. He went with royal authority. He seems to have been a man of strength and firmness. In a short time, the walls were rebuilt, and the orderly routine of civil and religious activity restored. He remained twelve years, and leaving Eliashib, the High Priest, in charge, he returned to Shushan.

However, soon the word came to Nehemiah that matters had gotten into a bad way at Jerusalem. So after a short stay in Shushan, he returned to Jerusalem and found four principal evils: 1. Tobias, arch enemy, had been allowed to dwell in the Temple precincts. 2. The payment of the tithe had been neglected. 3. Mixed marriages had again been allowed. 4. The Sabbath was being profaned.

The Nature of the Profanation

He found labor going on. The winepresses were busy. This was going on probably outside the city. There was a lively traffic in connection with the transportation of these products from outside the city -- grain, wine, grapes, figs. Beasts of burden were loaded down with these commodities.

It may be that these things were not sold on the Sabbath. But they were being prepared for the sale on other days. Nehemiah relates that he testified against these violators on the day when they were placed on sale (13:15). It may have been that their scruples would not permit them to actually sell on the Sabbath. They did not hesitate to get things ready.

They were like the man of our day who will spend Sunday getting his stock in shape for the sale that is to begin on Monday. Traveling men spend Sunday at places of business getting lined-up for the trip of the week to follow.

There were some foreigners, heathen, men of Tyre, who actually sold their merchandise. They had dried and salted fish and all manner of wares which they sold in the city on the Sabbath. The Jews, whose scruples would not have permitted them to do business on the Sabbath, would patronize these foreign traders.

You will always find good Christian people who, as they go hither and yon on the Sabbath, will come upon attractively displayed by some Italian or Syrian -- fruit, vegetables, commodities of various sorts, and thoughtlessly give them patronage. If the Jews had not

patronized the men of Tyre on the Sabbath, they would not have found the business profitable. If the Christians of this country did not give patronage to these invaders of our day of rest, that evil would not persist.

Profaning of the Sabbath was contempt of God. The Creator by his example and by precept had made the Sabbath a day of rest. It was a law explicitly stated that no labor should be engaged in on the Sabbath except the works of necessity and mercy. Right here in the holy city, under the shadow of the Temple, this desecration was being practiced.

God's people should not lightly regard God's day. Jesus set an example by his observance of the Sabbath. It was his custom to worship each Sabbath in the synagogues. His followers should hold the day sacred. The Christian is too much inclined to project the course of his action on the level of the man who is heathen. Whatever courses others may take, it becomes Christians to hold to the sacredness of God's holy day.

Such profaning of the Day struck at the life of every divine institution. The Sabbath is necessary to the perpetuation of religion. There were other examples of desecration going on at Jerusalem. So there will always be. Let the Sabbath fall into decay, and the whole framework of the Christian religion will collapse. Voltaire, French skeptic of the 18th Century, wrote, "You can only destroy the Christian religion when you first destroy the Christian Sabbath". Unless there is a stated time for the cultivation of the soul, it will not be done.

Their profaning of the Sabbath struck at the very roots of man's well being. Jesus expressed the heart of the matter when he said, "The Sabbath is made for man". It is for mankind's good. It has been established to ennoble man's life, enrich his thought, strengthen his body, radiate his influence.

Animals are brought up out of the mines to spend a day a week in order that they might not go blind. Man needs some such withdrawal.

Sabbath is the tuning day, when rich harmonies are worked into the metal of the soul.

Modern weekends are anything else but profitable to body, mind, and soul. Just reflect on the great array of traffic accidents, drinking, drowning, crime offenses, and evils of various sorts. An ever increasing degree of invasions on the Sabbath are being made, and Christian people are falling into the procession.

Corrective Steps Taken

Nehemiah went to the nobles -- to men of influence. The leaders were blamed. "What evil is this ye do?" They may not have engaged in the traffic itself. They stood by and permitted it.

When any evil prevails in a community, each person is responsible to the extent of his influence. There are men who aspire to places of prominence in the political life of a nation, a state, and a city, who hide out when a moral issue is projected. They pass the responsibility in such matters over to some others.

Edward Thring is said to have been a model teacher who believed in collective punishment for individual offenses. "I am not going to waste words on A and B," he would say. "I hold the whole school responsible for these wrong things. Any society can put down offenses

if it chooses.” When some boy committed an offense, the boys of the department were excluded from games for a week. When any wrong was committed he would not ask, “Who did it?” But “Who was there?” He said he did not want to know who the offenders were. “They would not have done it if the rest of you had disliked it enough.” He made all the boys anxious to prevent misdemeanors.

That seemed to be the divine plan of discipline. Nehemiah reminded the nobles that their fathers had brought punishment on Israel through the same neglect.

Nehemiah then took the matter in hand himself. He shut the gates, that there be no traffic between dark on the 6th day until dark on the 7th. He put his servants at the gates to see that there were none slipping in. When the merchants established places outside the walls, and expected to sell to people who would come out and buy, Nehemiah threatened to lay hands on them. They ceased effort. Then Nehemiah put the Sabbath in the keeping of the Levites.

Thus Nehemiah threw the whole force of his authority as a civil officer behind the enforcement of the Sabbath law. He did not require participation in religious exercises. But he did insist that the rights of those who did want to be engaged in worship should not be interfered with.

It is a mere appeal to prejudice when the claim is made that the aim of Sunday laws is to make people good by law. The purpose of Sunday laws is the prevention of a comparative few from determining how the rest shall spend their Sundays. “The liberty of rest for each depends on a law of rest for all.”

Some years ago, according to Dr. Campbell (Freedom and Restraint), the barbers wished to close their shops on Sunday. There was an outcry against interference with personal liberty. A man should have the right to get a shave on Sunday if he wanted it. Those who made this plea were thinking of their own rights and not the rights of the barbers.

In Connecticut, some years ago, a movement was inaugurated by the barbers to close. All were in favor of it but one man. The result was that all kept open. A Sabbath law in such a case is the only way out.

When the operators of meat markets in Shreveport unanimously petitioned the legislature of Louisiana to pass a law requiring them to close on Sunday, there was a great protest made by some who contended that the poor man who had no refrigerator could not have meat for his Sunday dinner, for he would have to buy it on Saturday, and it might spoil before he could eat it. But the law was passed and there has been no great inconvenience, and the meat market operators have a day of rest.

There are some institutions open today, forcing a number of people to work instead of going to church or enjoying a day of rest. If they were closed, there might be a protest. But the people would soon readjust themselves and those who have to work on Sunday would have a day of rest.

Nehemiah's Prayer

It was not an easy thing for Nehemiah to do -- this Sabbath enforcement. Not the prayer: “Remember unto me this also”.

Evidently there was a reaction. Not unlikely.

Such action might appear contemptible to eyes of associates in Persia. But Nehemiah was desirous more of God's favor than man's.

There was a strong opposition party in Jerusalem. People who had grown cold in religion, married heathen wives, had worldly interests.

Probably there was evidence of ingratitude on the part of those whom Nehemiah had helped.

Let it not be forgotten that a work of this kind has its reaction. It has cost a great deal to obtain privileges which we enjoy today. Yet we surrender them so easily. Then it takes the courage of a Nehemiah to get them back again.

It is a matter of history that the Jews came to observe the Sabbath with great care. During the days of the Maccabees, they would be massacred rather than defend themselves on the Sabbath. They overdid the formal observances. That was the situation which Jesus found.

That is the peril of living by rule rather than by principle. Jesus gave no rules, but he did give principles.

Strive earnestly by example and precept to preserve the privilege of rest and fellowship and worship on the Sabbath, not only for ourselves, but for as many others as conditions of necessity and mercy will permit of.

There are two localities where one is reminded very impressively of the life and deeds of Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States and commander of the forces which defeated the English at New Orleans on January 8, 1815. One of these is the Hermitage, his residence a few miles out of Nashville, TN, now used as a historic shrine to his memory, near which is a small church building, housing an organization of which Jackson was at one time a member. At one time in Jackson's life, he was very profane. It is said that he swore with peculiar fluency, vehemence, and explosive force. But when he became a Christian, he became so with the same positiveness that was characteristic of his irreligious days. The other locality that is full of reminders of Jackson is New Orleans, where there is an equestrian statue of Jackson in Jackson Square Park. Louisiana thinks much of Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans. It has made a state legal holiday of January 8.

It is said that during the latter part of his life, General Jackson was in the habit of coming down to New Orleans to see his old friends and comrades in arms and participate in the celebration of the glorious January 8. It happened that one year, the anniversary came on a Sunday. General Plache called on the old hero and requested him to accompany the military to the battle ground on the anniversary. "I am going to church tomorrow," mildly observed the General. But the military preparations for the celebration went on. On Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, General Plache called at the St. Charles Hotel and informed the General that the military and civic processions were ready to accompany him to the scene of his glory. "General Plache," responded Old Hickory, turning upon him the glance of his kindly eye, "I told you I was going to church today". General Plache withdrew, muttering to himself, "I might have known better". The celebration was postponed until the next day. (W.W. Landrum, quoted in "1,000 Evangelistic Illustrations", Aquila Webb, p. 46).

Esther

The Book of Esther

Minden, LA (Prayer Meeting talk)

March 12, 1930

Purim is a festival of the Jews, to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from the machinations of Haman. This takes place in the month of Adar, the last month of the Jewish year. The days embraced are the 14th and the 15th. The 13th is known as the Fast of Esther, also Nicahor's day (2 Mac. 15:36).

By way of parenthesis, let me say that the Jewish year began in the Spring, about April 1, as does our church year. Adar was the 12th, or last month of that year, and hence corresponds with our March. Hence, you see that it was about the present time of year that the Jews celebrated, and perhaps still celebrate, the festival of Purim. The word "Purim" is Hebrew for "lots". The name was evidently chosen in ironical reference to the fact that Haman's lucky day, established by lot, turned out to be unlucky for him, but lucky for his enemies (See Esther 3:7).

It is interesting to read how the festival is observed, for it is still observed by the Jews. The 13th, which is regarded as the anniversary of the day of the slaughter, is a fast day, known as the Fast of Esther. On the evening of the 14th the people assemble at the synagogue. The Book of Esther is produced and read in rather dramatic fashion. When the reader pronounces the name of Haman, the congregation exclaim, "May his name be blotted out... Let the name of the ungodly perish". The children use rattles to create a noise. The names of Haman's ten sons are read in one breath to signify that they were all hanged together. When the roll is read through, the people exclaim, "Cursed be Haman; blessed be Mordecai; cursed be Zeresh, the wife of Haman; blessed be Esther; cursed be all idolaters; blessed be all Israelites, and blessed be Harbonah, who hanged Haman". After this service the people go home and eat a simple repast.

On the morning of the 15th, all resort to the synagogue again, a prayer is offered, and a passage of the law is read in which the destruction of the Amalekites is related for the Jews regard Haman as the descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. The story of Esther is again read. When the service is ended, the people return to their homes for feasting and exchange of gifts and merrymaking generally (Preachers Hom. Com.: Esther, p. 287).

There was once some uncertainty as to the identity of King Ahasuerus. No Persian king of that name was found. But scholars seem now to be agreed that the name is the Persian designation given the king known to the Greeks as Xerxes. Xerxes came to the throne of Persia a little over 50 years after the first return from captivity under Cyrus. There were a large number of Jews scattered throughout the empire still, although the temple at Jerusalem had long since been restored.

It will be remembered that the Persian Empire had suffered a decisive defeat at Marathon, near Athens, when the army of the Persians was put to flight by Greeks under Miltiades. This was during the reign of Darius, father of Xerxes. Darius was preparing to make another attempt when he died, and Xerxes attempted to carry the plans out. The results are well known to the reader of history. He had difficulties at the Hellespont, but finally he got into Greece. It was his army that destroyed the Spartans under Leonidas at Thermopylae. But at Athens, Xerxes saw his immense fleet defeated by a smaller fleet of the Greeks. He went back home, leaving his army in the hands of his generals.

Xerxes was proud and handsome, a lover of luxury, characteristically indulgent. While the war in Greece was still on, he was at home idling his time. His generals and his men were fighting, and he was feasting. It may have been that he was trying to drown the humiliation of his defeat at Salamis by revelry. At any rate he ordered a banquet in the immense hall in the famous palace at Shushan, and to it came his elaborately attired generals, rulers, nobles, magnates. The women were not allowed in this hall, but the queen was host to them elsewhere. Vashti was summoned to the presence of the lords and generals, now half-drunk. Remembering that others had been grossly insulted under such circumstances, Vashti refused to respond. Following the suggestion of Memucan, one of the seven princes who sat as advisers to the king, Ahasuerus deposed Vashti, and called for the selection of a new queen. He chose Esther, a Jewess, raised by Mordecai, her first cousin. Through Mordecai, Esther was able to save the king's life by revealing a plot against him.

But new danger arose in the form of the new Grand Vizier, Haman, an Agagite. For some reason, Mordecai refused to do him homage, which affront Haman bitterly resented. To avenge his own personal grudge and gratify the hereditary antipathy of race, he resolved to have all Jews exterminated. The king fell easily into the plot, because of the appeal to his fear and greed. Lots were drawn daily to determine a fortunate day for the massacre. The 13th of Adar was finally selected. Thus many months passed before the order was carried into execution, and this saved the Jews. Orders were sent by horse throughout the empire that on this day the Jews should be killed and their property seized.

Clothed in sackcloth, Mordecai stood in the open space before the king's gate, wailing and warning the people. Esther soon learned the reason for this, and realized that she was the hope of Israel. At a risk of life, she ventured into the king's presence. Her invitation to the king and Haman to drink wine with her was accepted. But her heart failed her, and she made another appointment for the following day.

Haman was highly elated over his seeming favor in the eyes of the queen. He had ten sons, he was Grand Vizier of the empire, but Mordecai would not bow before him. At the suggestion of Zeresh, his wife, he erected a huge pole, 70 feet high, with the intention of having the Jew impaled thereon.

When Haman approached the king with a purpose to secure his authorization of Mordecai's execution, the king asked what should be done unto the man whom the king wished to honor. Not knowing that the king had Mordecai his deliverer in mind, Haman made a suggestion such as would suit his own vanity -- royal dress, the stately procession, the proclamation of preferment. Haman was humiliated.

Then came quickly the second banquet given by Esther, where Haman was openly accused before the king of having plotted to destroy her and her race. The king was furious, and

Haman was immediately impaled on the pole that he had prepared for Mordecai, and Mordecai was raised to the position of Grand Vizier in his stead.

Furthermore the Jews were everywhere given permission to gather themselves together to defend themselves against who might attack them, and to seize the property of the attackers. On the fatal day, 75,000 of the enemies of the Jews fell throughout the empire, 500 at Susa, among whom were the ten sons of Haman. Esther was not satisfied with that and requested one more day of such destruction, and 300 more fell. Henceforth the 14 and 15 days of Adar were to be observed by Jews as days of rejoicing.

The Book of Esther has been extensively discussed by scholars. Some have claimed that it does not belong in the canon. But the Jews have always regarded the book as being as authoritative as the book of the Law. They have claimed that a special providence will always preserve the book. This high veneration on their part may be due to the spirit of patriotism.

The reasons given why this book should not be in the canon are in part as follows: (1) The ethical standards are not high. Note the spirit of revenge on the part of Esther and Mordecai. (2) There is an absence of reference in the book to any other part of the Old Testament. (3) There are no quotations from the book in the New Testament. (4) There is no reference to God in the book.

The last named is the greatest objection. The apocryphal book, "The Rest of Esther" abounds in references to God. But there are other very serious objections to the apocryphal addition.

It has been suggested that the omission was intentional, the writer being unwilling to make the characters appear more godly than they really were. There is probably no authority for Baxter's statement in "Saints Rest", that the Jews were accustomed to cast the book to the ground because the name of God was not in it. If the Jews ever did this, it was probably out of contempt for Haman.

The Almighty does not need the actual mention of his name to establish his presence in the march of human events. The power of God is visible. Dr. Best (Expositor (English) October, 1921) calls attention to several points where the hand of God is apparent:

1. The circumstances that opened the way for Esther's induction into the place of strategic importance, in preparation for a crisis.
2. Mordecai's good fortune in discovering a plot against the king.
3. The late date set by lot for carrying out the nefarious designs of Haman.
4. The fact that the conceited Grand Vizier made announcement of his purpose so far in advance.
5. The restless night spend by the king and his revived memory at the crucial moment.

In these the fact of God seems to be implied. We see the overruling wisdom of the Great unnamed.

Even the severest critic must admit that Esther has a place among the great stories of the world. It abounds in dramatic situations.

Dr. Best also sees in the book a touch of humor, even if grim at times.

1. The Grand Vizier acting like a spoiled child when one of his subordinates would not bow to him.

2. His lack of importance in his own home, where his wife seems to have been the stronger.

3. Haman's leading the despised Jew around and proclaiming him the king's favorite, while a gallows stood as a mark of his intention to have the Jew hung thereon.

4. Harbonah's evident pleasure in suggesting the gallows was already prepared for Haman.

Keeping Reality at Bay

Minden, LA
Minden, LA

March 20, 1932
November 26, 1939

“For none might enter into the king’s gate clothed in sackcloth.”

Esther 4:2

When the decree, inspired by Haman went forth, there was great distress throughout the kingdom of Ehasuerus among the Jews. The Jews, young, old, little children, women -- all were to be destroyed on the 13th day of the 12th month, and their possessions taken. Mordecai, relative of the Queen Esther, came to the king’s gate, which was the free space before the entrance to the royal palace, clad in sackcloth. Mordecai was a Jew, and wearing sackcloth was a means employed among the Jews of showing grief.

Sackcloth was hairy, made of goat’s hair. Mourners wore it, so did the prophets. In connection with the wearing of it, ashes were spread upon the head of the wearer.

No one so clad was permitted within the palace. The king did not want to see any of the grief or trouble of his subjects. It was distasteful to him. As Dr. Norrison puts it, he “kept reality at bay”. He “fortified himself against the intrusion of the uncomfortable”.

This describes the tendency of us all. We are afraid to face facts. We like to shut our eyes as a means of meeting a distressful situation. I have heard the purported habit of the ostrich discredited, but at any rate we human beings figuratively bury our heads in the sand when confronted with a grim and unpleasant situation. We do not want to look at it.

1. Physical Ills

(1) Our own personal ill. Know that something is wrong, but will not know the facts. Timely knowledge might result in a cure and extension of life.

(2) Suffering humanity. Hospitals are great institutions. But the segregation of the sick there takes them from our midst where we might have constant reminders of life’s sadness. We need to think of the sick in our sanitariums and asylums.

Removing the halt and the blind and deaf from our streets. Should we drive them off without doing something for them?

2. Economic and Social Ills

The great army of unemployed in a nation of great wealth. We need to have some way of visualizing that condition.

We have been fooling ourselves by saying that we have plenty of food in this parish. There may be, but some of it is not in the hands of all. There are needy people in our city today, and we throw the matter aside by saying they ought to have been more careful in the past.

Harm of drink. If highways had not been cleared of the wreckage of human forms strewn by alcohol, they might serve as a warning to those who might try to drive while drinking. Some erect signs along the way. The wrecks of cars might serve as a warning.

Facing the cause of these ills. Deficiency in home training. Lack of spiritual development in proportion to material progress.

3. Spiritual poverty

The revelations of the draft.

Innocent suffering among children to 3rd and 4th generations.

Only about ½ of the 53,000,000 children in the US are related to any Sunday school.

Protestant churches give an average of 24 hours a year to regular religious instruction.

Jewish hives 335; Catholic 200 hours.

Woeful ignorance of the Bible.

4. Avoid the Other Extreme

We should courageously face the truth. Jesus said to Simon, "I have somewhat to say unto thee". Simon replied, "Master, say on".

However, there are some who seem to delight to dwell in the gruesome and unpleasant. These are equally as much in error. What we want is reality.

5. Christ is Revealer

One way of dealing with a situation is to dispose of those who bring these facts to our minds. We may suppress the books containing information. The Jews killed their prophets.

Moses and Aaron were driven out from Pharaoh's presence, while Jannes and Jambres were favored.

Baal's prophets were at the table of Jezebel, while Elijah dwelt in the desert.

The dancing damsel was welcomed in the court of Herod, while John the Baptist languished in prison, and eventually lost his head.

Like the man who wanted to smash all mirrors because of the unpleasant disclosures which they made as to his personal appearance.

The Gadarene demoniac said, "Art thou come to torment us?" Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man". Jesus was crucified. We crucify Christ afresh when we reject his disclosures of our selves.

6. Facing the Fundamental Fact

The fundamental fact is sin in the world.

A man in whose home I was recently a guest said to me at the table that he liked to think of man as coming from the hands of the Creator as pure as the angels of heaven. So do we all. But we are compelled to face the fact that everyone has a blight which is hereditary -- from sin which entered the world at the beginning of recorded human history.

Everyone reveals the blight sooner or later. If the rosebush had no blight, there would certainly be some perfect roses.

If evil be not in the heart, reformation, correction, change ought to be sufficient to produce righteousness.

“The wages of sin is death”, and death comes to all, therefore all have sinned.

“By works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Romans 3:20).

“Except a man be born again.”

“There is such widespread evidence of man’s tendency to evil.

Religions of other peoples are propitiatory.

Sin is not a matter of education or imitation, because it is universal, because there is love for sin in the heart, because children removed from vicious people reveal wrong tendencies, because the greatest crimes have been committed by those who had no previous example.

7. There is Need for Courage

Courage to act in the light of knowledge. There is difference between idle sentiment about uplift and actually grappling with the evil as it is. The missionaries know the ills and yet they go back -- heat, poverty, inhumanity, insects, loneliness, ignorance, disease. Explorers who return.

Lend support to the church which fights sin with the only remedy that is adequate.

The Harm of Hamanism

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

April 22, 1945

“So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.”
Esther 7:10

The story of Haman and his fate is classic. Unfortunately, the stories of the Bible are not as familiar to people generally as they once were. The story.

I have coined the word Hamanism, to stand for evil designing and malicious planning on the part of one person against another.

1. An easy sin to fall into.

There is much envy and jealousy in the world. There are some people who arouse out antipathies. They become our pet abominations. It is easy to let our cultivated and nurtured ill will blind us to virtues. We become unbalanced on the one obsession. The very suggestion of it arouses our ire. Brooding over our grievances, we make them grow. They soon become all important. Nothing else seems to matter. We become desperate.

2. Evil designing has the disfavor of God.

It is easy to make mistakes in interpreting the law of divine retribution. It is easy to imagine the disfavor of God in current happenings, when perhaps none is there.

But there are certain sayings of the Bible that justify us in concluding that God has written the law into the universe. “With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again.” “Be sure your sin will find you out.” “Out of thine own mouths will I judge thee.”

Striking are some of the incidents of history.

Joseph sold by brethren into Egypt, later themselves brought there.
Adoni-bezek cut the thumbs and great toes from his captive kings and in turn had his cut off.

Herod, slayer of children of Bethlehem, died an agonizing death.
Pilate, Judas, Nero committed suicide.
Pharaoh drowned Hebrew children, himself was drowned.

Maximus, Roman emperor of the 3rd Century, put out eyes of thousands of Christians, died himself afterwards of a dreadful eye disease.

Valens, 4th Century of the Eastern Roman empire, who caused 80 presbyters to be sent to sea and burned on a ship, was when defeated and finding refuge in a cottage, himself burned therein.

The story of Bajazet and Tamerlane (Hom. Commentary, Esther, p. 257).

We may go to the extreme of thinking that God is all mercy. God is angry with the wicket every day. Our God is a consuming fire.

3. The injury done the conceiver is conceiving.

A man ought not to let himself ever think in those terms. There may be a grievance. But God in his own time will attend to that. Let patience have her perfect work. Curses like chickens come home to roost.

4. The necessity for cultivation of love.

Love thinketh not evil. Brotherhood.

There is a traditional story regarding Timur Beg (temoor beg) otherwise known as Tamarlane, and Bajazet I (be-ye-zed), sultan of the Turks, both who lived in the 14th Century. Both were guilty of inhuman atrocities and cold blooded massacres of prisoners. Bajazet was having things pretty much his own way in the Greek Empire and would have completely destroyed it had he not been stopped by Tamarlane. The latter made war on him in Asia Minor and took Bajazet prisoner. It is related that the victor gave the captive monarch at first a very civil reception. Entering into familiar conversation with him he said, "Now, King, tell me freely and truly what you would have done with me had I fallen into your power". The fierce and haughty Bajazet replied: "Had the gods given me the victory, I would have done enclosed you in an iron cage, and carried you about with me as a spectacle of derision to the world". Tamarlane wrathfully replied, "Then proud man, as you would have done to me, even so will I do to you". A strong iron cage was made, into which the fallen emperor was thrust; and thus exposed like a wild beast, he was carried along in the train of the conqueror. This continued for three years. Being told that he must be carried into Tartary, despairing of obtaining his freedom, he struck his head with such violence against the bars of his cage as to put an end to his wretched life (Preachers Homiletic Commen. Esther, p. 256-7).

The story of Haman: The rejection of Vashti. The choice of Esther, a Jewess, and first cousin and foster-daughter of Mordecai, who had been brought from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Race of Esther concealed. Mordecai at the king's gate, discovered and revealed the plot of two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, to lay hands on the king. The promotion of Haman above all the princes. The command to do him reverence. Mordecai's refusal. Haman's plot to destroy the Jews. Obtains the authorization. The promise of 10,000 talents into the King's treasury. The order to massacre on 13th day of the 12th month.

His acceptance. The venture. The first banquet. The second arranged for. Haman's plot against Mordecai. The gallows 75 feet high. The discovery of neglect to honor Mordecai for his service to the king. The conversation of king and Haman. The unhappy turn for Haman, who must bring Mordecai on horseback through the city and proclaim him. The warning of the wife of Haman and his wise men. The banquet. Esther's disclosure. Haman's distress. When the king hears of the high gallows, he orders Haman hanged thereon. The counter-order to save the Jews.

The Book of Job

Job

Ideal Family Life

Minden, LA
Trinity Church, Jonesville, LA (Installation)
Minden, LA

October 12, 1924
October 13, 1924
June 6, 1937

“1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Job 1:1-5

It may appear to those of you who have been with us each Sunday morning since my return that I am placing unusual emphasis on the subject of home and family. It will be recalled that on our Homecoming Day we considered the subject, “God, our Eternal Home”, and in the discussion of the theme we naturally spoke of the characteristics of a home and applied them to God. It would be difficult to discuss the “Glory of Godly Womanliness”, as we did on a later Sabbath, without making at least a passing reference to that domain in which she reigns supreme -- the home. Last Sunday, we considered the child and “The Way He Should Go”, and emphasized as strongly as we know how the fact that the responsibility rests chiefly on parents, whose failure, however, makes the need for efficient Sunday school instruction more imperative. And now it is my intention to speak on “Ideal Family Life”.

But this is not too much emphasis. The church is becoming more and more alarmed at the present tendencies in family life in this country. We know very well that this is a subject which is discussed with evident concern by others than church leaders. It is a matter of historical record that the decline in the family life of ancient civilizations was the cause of their downfall. The home is the very soul of the nation. The wealth of the world will not save a nation which has lost its soul.

National leaders today are finding it difficult to decide whether our nation should spend money on battleships or aircraft as a means of securing defense for the future. But the chief

defense of the nation is not her battleships or her Shenandoahs, but her manhood and womanhood, and these are the products of homes.

The other day, a Shreveport paper devoted a section of 20 pages to "Better Homes", having reference, of course, to the purely material side of the matter -- well-designed houses, beautifully appointed and artistically "planted". But well do we know that in spite of architecture, workmanship, imports, and shrubbery, there is much unhappiness in "better homes". While it may be due to the fact that those who are able to afford the so called "better things" become more easily the victims of publicity, a casual reader of the papers would suppose that the greater percentage of unhappiness is to be found in such circumstances.

In the building of a real home, it is the unseen factor that is most important. We are going in the wrong direction when we begin to think that the possession of material things is essential to the making of a home. These may be helpful factors, and they may be hurtful.

I believe that it is good advice when it is urged that a young couple should have at least a little cottage to themselves as soon as they can afford it.

I have read that a certain missionary, after having been in China for over a quarter of a century, came back to America; and after having lectured on the Pacific coast for a month, the editor of a great daily sent a reporter to interview the distinguished missionary. Among the questions asked the man is this: "What particular changes have you observed in America since you left five and twenty years ago?" He replied, "The greatest change I have noticed is that hotel life is taking the place of home life" (The Revival of Wonder -- McLeod, p. 141).

We know very well that the home is an old institution. The Word of God is full of examples of beautiful home life. But I believe we have none that surpasses the picture that we have in the first few verses of the Book of Job. The sufferings of Job were so great that in our minds they overshadow the more pleasant sides of the story. Being of a superstitious disposition, some might not care to take inspiration from the manner in which Job conducted his affairs, lest a similar capacity befall them. But there was nothing wrong with Job -- to that the Lord himself attested. The book deals with the problem of pain and suffering, and the Lord has used a faultless subject. The picture that we have of Job's family life is full of beauty.

As we consider the picture given us of Job's family life, there are certain characteristics which are worth attention. In this home of Job's we discover --

1. Upright, God-fearing parents: I recall that in conversation this past week about parents and children, a member of this congregation quoted a statement to the effect that a child's future is determined when its parents are chosen -- which is to a large degree true. It is a great thing to have a father who enjoys the esteem of his fellowmen and merits the commendation of Almighty God. A heritage like that is worth having.

It is said of Job that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God and turned away from evil". The Lord declared of him that "there is none like him in the earth".

We are not so sure of Job's wife, since it was she who advised her husband to "renounce God and die". Yet it is easy to sit in judgment when one does not have to pass through what she did. With possessions and children swept away in one fell swoop, and her husband made a

pitiable sight to behold, it must have been a trying ordeal for her. Even though she wavered under the terrific fire of trial, she must have been more than an ordinary mother.

Even Job was not perfect in the absolute sense, we may be sure. But he was upright in his dealings with his fellowmen. He was not swept into worldliness by his prosperity. He was morally blameless. He had a morality that was based on religion -- "the only root principle out of which a strong and abiding morality ever grows (G.C. Morgan). He was regular and devoted in his worship. He was patient in trial.

It is a wonderfully inspiring thing to any one to have one say "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith which dwelt in thy grandmother and grandfather, thy mother and father". The most of the Godly, upright people in the world come from that kind of parent.

2. Social Concord in the Family: Job's was a big family, according to modern standards, at least. There were seven sons and three daughters. Ten children make up a fairly good family. We know very well that if harmony and love prevails, a family of ten children can have a most enjoyable time. That was true of Job's children. They enjoyed each other's company. There were seven stalwart sons who were thoughtful, honest, kind, industrious, happy hearted. When one of the boys gave a feast, he invited his brothers, and they saw to it that the sisters got there.

This side of the picture is very refreshing, since we have examples in the Bible that serve as warnings. We are told that the first crime in the world was that of brother against brother. Jacob tricked his brother Esau into the transference of the birthright to him, and in turn he fostered jealousy among his sons. The children of David also lacked the filial devotion one for the other that ought to have been.

It is undoubtedly true that there is often great difference in the natures and dispositions of brothers and sisters. But that does not necessarily mean that a lack of brotherly love should exist among them. There was great difference among the apostles, but Christ was the unifying factor among them. Christ in the home can bind the family into one.

Job's children may have been rather clannish, which isn't such an objectionable thing, when not exclusive. It is deplorable when a young man is more polite to other boys' sisters than to his own, or when a girl sees nothing to admire in her own brother and everything in another girl's brother.

Each member of the Job family contributed something to the interest and pleasure of the whole. And I am sure that they had a great time teasing and mimicking one another in the best of humor. One who has been raised in a large family doesn't know how much he owes to the fact that he has been laughed out of certain habits that might have been a detriment to him all his days.

3. Plenty of Work to Do: We may be sure that with an estate such as Job had, there was much to do, and the boys were partners with the father in the work of looking after it all. It is a happy situation when a boy can be placed along by the side of his father in work.

After the conviction of young Leopold and young Loeb in Chicago for the murder of another young boy, the fathers of the boys declared that they were of the opinion that the boys had too much time on their hands. The result was that the other boys in the family were given definite responsibilities to look after. The devil still finds work for idle hands to do.

Somehow the idea once prevailed that there was something demeaning in work -- in manual labor. But now Frederick T. Martin, in the "Passing of the Idle Rich", tells us that the

prevailing sentiment is so unfavorable towards one who has nothing to do that young men who would not ordinarily have to work are hunting positions to save their right to respect of others.

4. A Degree of Comfort: Job was above average in circumstances. 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, 500 she-asses, and servants made him a great man in his time. But we know very well that one does not have to be the outstanding man of his community in point of wealth to be happy. I am sure that we agree that drudgery is a handicap, and that poverty is unfavorable to contentment and family concord. Hence the nation as well as the church are ready always to encourage the idea of thrift. But goods are not essential.

Last month, a weekly periodical carried the account of the life of a family of husband, wife, and three children on a mammoth coal barge that floated in North and East Rivers, New York. The man's employment was to watch over this and three similar barges. On this floating home, one would think that there would be little to encourage wholesome family life. Yet family worship was never neglected. On Sunday morning, they were off to the nearest church, and they always had a mite for missions. They were all clean in person and surroundings. After all, we can be happy if we are amind to be (Christian Herald, Aug. 1924, p. 655).

5. Pleasure Secondary to Religion: Even while they were at their pleasures, Job was solicitous lest they should do something thoughtlessly. Special prayer was made in their behalf. He was not blind to the possibility of his sons' doing something that was wrong.

There is a pronounced tendency to feel that religion is certainly out of place in pleasure. Dinners, picnics, and summer excursions so very often have everything else but a religious cast. God is forgotten at health resorts. The Lord's Day becomes a day of frolic. Weekend excursions are detrimental to one's spiritual life.

If there be a tendency to ask what is the use of maintaining this kind of home -- see what came to Job, let us look to the last end of his life. The Lord restored his possessions, doubled. His family was restored. His daughters were the fairest in the land, and he lived to see four generations.

Words that Gird

Minden, LA
First Presbyterian, Shreveport, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
First Presbyterian, Rockdale, TX

July 22, 1934
February 24, 1935
November 25, 1945
July 18, 1954

“Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and hast strengthened the feeble knees.”

Job 4:4

In Shakespeare’s “Hamlet”, the Prince of Denmark, while feigning madness, is reading from a book when encountered by Polonius, who asks, “What do you read, my lord?” Hamlet answers, “Words, words, words” (II:2:193). But none knew the strange power of words more than Shakespeare. William Lyon Phelps tells us that in this same play of Hamlet are to be found the six most famous words, out of the Bible, in all literature: “To be or not to be”.

We speak lightly of words. But we know that all words are not “just talk”. Words have a strange and even magic effect on us. The difference in speakers is largely a matter of the choice of words. Some are gifted with the power of picturesque speech, as when Harvey Allen writes of a character, “The problem became a rough pebble in his mental shoe” (R. Digest, 6/34 p. 82). Words may be as unintelligible as when the doctor tells us what we are sick of, or as when a waiter calls out your order in a restaurant, or as when a sporting editor writes up a baseball game. They may be as inane, idiotic (when reduced to print and read dispassionately) as college yells, “pigskin doggerel”. But we know that there is immense power in words. Hannibal: “Beyond the Alps lies Italy”. Napoleon stirring his men’s bravery before battle, Hitler fanning the flames of a new spirit of nationalism in Germany.

Putting Words to Wrong Use

It has been observed that the worst things in the world are the perversions of the best. Certainly the power of speech is one of the best things we have in the world, when rightly used. A perversion of it is one of the worst things.

When people use words to vilify, to demean, malign, traduce, without provocation, they are misusing the power of speech. We often wonder at the peculiar bent which some manifest when they take delight in creating distrust among people. Talebearers, scandalmongers, busybodies. Iago, out of hatred for Cassio and Othello, artfully uses words to arouse in Othello the most intolerable of all the torments of the mind -- jealousy, and brings on tragedy.

There are people who seem to delight in off color words, those suggestive of the low, vile, base. Others have preference for profane, irreverent, blasphemous words. They saturate their utterances with them, and little realize how contemptible they are making themselves in the estimation of their companions.

The depression brought to a close, we hope, the era of Debunkers and Belittlers, who felt called upon to poke jibes at idealism and the nobler virtues, and drag the heroes and heroines of the past in the mire. Such was the nature of Rupert Hughes' *Life of George Washington*, and Maxwell Anderson's study of Queen Elizabeth.

There are those who, when they find a hole in a garment, feel the irrepressible urge to push their fingers in to make the defect bigger. They are like those who, when they see a fault in person, program or policy, feel the urge to make it bigger rather than correct it. Even in a period of recovery in a nation, some like to take the heart out of the people, and create distrust of its leadership.

Let me say that it would be putting words to wrong uses to try to enlist support for something that does not deserve support. There are times when good men must speak out against plans and policies. Jeremiah faced such a situation, and he was accused of taking the heart out of the people. But the policy was wrong and was destined to bring woe (Jeremiah 38:4). Christ was charged with creating disloyalty to the temple and to Caesar. Paul and Silas were charged with perverting the people. There are times when we build best by tearing down that which is false.

A Man of Helpful Words

You note that the words of our text were addressed to Job, by one of his so-called comforters, while he was in the depth of his misery. Job lived in Uz, in the Syrian dessert. He was once rich, happy, surrounded by a large family. He was influential, Godly, upright. But he was bereft of all, even his health. Three friends, possibly kinsmen, worshippers of the true God, eminent for piety and religion, came to be with him in his distress. They were well meaning, but became Job's severest trial. They added to his grief by their lack of charity, erroneous conclusions, ill-advised admonitions, and unkind rebukes.

Probably the mildest of Job's accusers was Eliphaz, from Teman. He seems to have been superior to the rest in discernment and delicacy. He was the first to speak, after the comforters had come and sat with Job seven days. Job himself was the first to break the silence. He made bitter complaint, wishing that he had never been born, or had died as soon as he was born. He now longed for the grave. This utterance gave rise to the controversy that followed.

Eliphaz began by praising Job's past character and conduct. He had not been selfish even in his prosperity. He had ministered to others, imparted consolation, sought to bring others to fear God. He had instructed, strengthened, upheld by his words.

"Thy words," said Eliphaz, "have upholden him that was falling". Dr. Moffatt renders this, "Your words have kept men on their feet". What a fine thing to say of any man! Men who are down are helpless. They are beaten, whipped. They "take the count". There is possibility of victory as long as they are on their feet. Blessed is the man who keeps us on our feet! According to Eliphaz, Job had been such a man.

But Eliphaz goes further and infers that Job was no longer doing that. He is rather reproaching Job for himself being down in the dumps, for wilting under the adversity that had come upon him after he had urged others to stand up to theirs.

But Job was only temporarily down in spirit. He manifests courage and faith as he goes on. He continued to keep men on their feet by such triumphant utterances as, "I know that my Redeemer liveth", and "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him". Utterances made under such circumstances ought to put heart into any man.

The Christian's Ministry of Words

Our accountability for the use we make of the power of speech was very forcibly emphasized by Jesus when he said that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

Another has put it:

"Words are the soul's ambassadors, who go
Abroad upon their errands to and fro" (J. Howell).

The Proverb writer says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (25:11).

If we wish to keep people on their feet, there are uses to which we may put our words:

1. We may give assurance of sympathy.

The world is not as unsympathetic as it appears to be. People are slow to express the sympathy they really feel. It is not easy to do. Expressions of genuine sympathy help.

Ezekiel describes the effect which a visit to his suffering people on the banks of the Chebar had upon him. Some suppose that Ezekiel went to them with the idea that he should scold the people of Israel, but that after sitting among them for seven days and seeing their lives and circumstances, he changed the character of his message.

The great privilege of Christian people is to engage in the ministry of comfort, for by it people are enabled to stay on their feet.

Joseph, premier of Egypt, after having held aloof from his brethren who had come down to Egypt for grain, finally yielded to the prompting of his heart, and cried out to them, "Come near to me, I pray you". Joseph was lonely, even though he was next to the king in power. The language of kindness and humility is the mother tongue of the race.

In Dickens' "Oliver Twist", Nancy Sikes, mistress of Bill Sikes, said to Rose Maylie, of pure life, "Oh lady, lady, if there were more like you, there would be fewer like me".

"Do you know the world is dying,

For a little bit of love?
Everywhere we hear the sighing,
For a little bit of love.
For the love that rights the wrong
Fills the heart with hope and song,
They have waited, oh so long,
For a little bit of love.”

2. We may incite to courage.

Many a game has been won by the encouragement given on the sidelines. I read those stirring words of Paul, written to Timothy, while the Apostle was languishing in prison. The step of the executioner might come at any moment. But there is no despair in his words. He writes Timothy: “Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”. They must have kept Timothy on his feet.

Everyone of us can testify to the value of a good letter that came at the right moment. How we would thank God for those thoughtful letter writers who have helped us to keep on our feet.

3. We may help to secure and maintain a right perspective.

It was said of Sophocles that he “saw life steadily and saw it whole”. There are times when we see life in perverted form. The times seem so out of joint. We ask the question, “To be or not to be”.

Someone recently wrote about Mrs. Nobu Jo, a Japanese woman, who for years has given her life to helping those in her country who are contemplating self-destruction -- and how they need this ministry there! The desire to hurl themselves into the volcano craters has at times become epidemic. At such spots, Mrs. Jo erected large signs, reading in bold letters, “Wait a bit, Would-Be Suicides! Comr first and talk it over with Mrs. Nobu Jo”. In the past six years, 10,000 women have come to her for advice and help. She has helped them to find a way out.

A thousand years before Christ, a servant of Jehovah was perplexed over a problem (Ps. 73). Only the ungodly prosper, he thought. Cleansing one’s heart is vanity. “But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped”. Then he went to church. He hadn’t been seeing life whole. They come to church with shaky feet. Bishop Gore in one of his books says that the Christian doctrine that God is love is one of the hardest to hold to. But when the psalmist went to the sanctuary, he saw that the trouble was not with God, but himself. He was envious and jealous. But it put him back on his feet.

4. We may impart the greatest of all truth.

Jesus has been called the “Word”. They said to Jesus, “Thou has the words of eternal life”. We sing, “Wonderful words of life”.

Adjustment: “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” The man whose engine was pulling against itself. Peter following afar off. Interference on the radio.

Power: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation”. The power of this gospel is attempted to by reclaimed lives. Dr. Cuyler on John B. Gough. When he heard the thunderous applause that greeted the eloquent words of Gough, he regarded it as the echo of the tapping of a good man on the shoulder of a drunkard.

John Newton, when he saw a man carried out to execution, said, “But for the grace of God, there goes John Newton”.

Inspiration: “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

It was the custom of Livingstone to write on the flyleaf of his journals verses that appealed to him. A hymn which he wrote out in full and placed there was one which he declared in a letter, was one that would ring “in my ears as a I wander across the wide, wide wilderness”.

“Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With Gladness fills my breast”.

To the challenge of God, “Son of Man, stand on thy feet, and I will speak to thee”, many a servant of God can say, “Thy words have kept me on my feet”.

Addenda

Churchill put heart into the British people in a very precarious hour. Two days after he became Prime Minister, he said: “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat...to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime”.

Woodrow Wilson was famous for his phrases: “Watchful waiting”, “pitiless publicity”, “contemptible quitters”.

Opponents of Franklin D. Roosevelt confessed that they preferred not to listen to his persuasive speeches.

Morale is always a factor in war. Great pains have been taken by the nation to transmit mail over the face of the earth to fighting men from people at home. Ernie Pyle, writing of the Tunisian campaign, tells of the feelings of the men when they got where mail from home awaited them. Some would get as many as 75 letters, others none. One colonel, who had not heard from his wife in three months, got one letter in a deluge of mail that came in, and that was from the Goodrich Tire Co., warning him that it was his patriotic duty to conserve his tires. The letters he wanted were probably in the bottom of the ocean. But he failed to get the messages that would give him heart.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that we now face one of the greatest problems in the history of our country -- that of passing from war to peacetime living. War simply does things to

people. It does something to the boys engaged in the conflict. It does something to those at home. Our boys are coming home to make the discovery that they must be re-naturalized in their native land. Passing to civilian life is more than just finding some civilian clothes to wear, as difficult as that may be. He finds that something has happened inside of him. He does not feel as he once did. He may be rebellious, bitter. Just how marital ties formed during the war and even after the war will work out remains to be seen. It is going to require much patience, much Christian grace.

What we need now is not words of criticism, but words of understanding. These maladjustments will be worked out in time. We can help one another to get the right perspective. Help to stay out of the divorce courts. Help keeping someone's world from toppling in on them.

“President Wilson is not an expert in military or naval science. He is a school teacher occupying for a season the Presidential chair. He has been supreme commander of our army and navy, and he has done all his fighting by words. By his genius in the use of language he became the acknowledged spokesman for mankind. He towered above all generals and admirals, carrying the sword in his mouth. His words had in them higher potencies than were possessed by the mightiest of the shells, his sentences carried farther than the longest range of the guns...He smote the nations with the breath of his mouth. When the Muse of History completes her roll of the immortals of the greatest of all the wars, who knows but that at the top of the list will stand that consummate master of words -- Woodrow Wilson” (Chas. E. Jefferson in “What War Has Taught Us”, 1919, p. 131).

This Transitory Scene

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

December 29, 1935
December 30, 1945

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”

Job 7:6

William Cullen Bryant wrote, in “The Death of the Flowers”,

“The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sear.”

Such lines come to mind as pass through this period that intervenes between the climax of Christmas and the inauguration of a fresh new year.

But these oft-recurring intervals between Christmas and New Years remind us of the fleeting character of life.

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou who changest not, abide in me.”

The patriarch Job, even though his nights were long and wearisome, realized that his days were swiftly gliding by. He compared the passing to a weaver’s shuttle. In a chapter further on, he compares his life to a courier (probably on a dromedary moving at the rate of 150 miles in 24 hours): “My days are swifter than a post” (9:25). Or, to the papyrus skiff on the Nile: “They are passed away as the swift ships” (9:26). Then he compares to the swiftness with which the eagle pounces down upon its prey (9:26).

This comparison to the weaver’s shuttle interests us. Not because we have as great a first-hand acquaintance with it as did our ancestors. Old hand looms are now bought up as antiques. They have little practical value. The modern loom of our great factories has taken its place.

But someone will say, “Does the figure apply any longer? The modern shuttle moves with incredible swiftness. It has been speeded up so.” And so has life. The days are crowded, and the years move by more rapidly than in the days of the hand loom.

I am sure that the youngest member of the congregation has some idea about what the shuttle is. It is the instrument used in weaving to shoot the thread of the woof from one side of the cloth to the other between the threads of the warp.

This figure of the weaver's shuttle suggests certain thoughts that we might well keep in mind:

1. Each of us is weaving a fabric of life and character.

This is true whether we choose it or not. When we came into this world the loom was set going. It will continue going as long as we are in it.

There are some very drab patterns being woven. Some are gorgeous.

The ancients use to say, according to P.W. Boreham, that no man had the right to die until he had planted a tree, built a house, written a book, and begotten a child. That is another way of saying that no one should be content to leave the world worse off because he came into it. He should make some provision for the generations to come.

An old doctor commenting on this observation of the ancients suggested that the book which one might do well to write would be his autobiography. Life is too good, thought that physician, to allow it to pass out of sight at its conclusion. There are some lives which it might be well to have forgotten. But the exercise of writing the autobiography might have the value of enabling one to contemplate his work and warning others against the errors he has made.

Perhaps as we wind up the deeds of the year 1935, it might be well for us to look at the pattern -- inspect the product. What sort of a spectacle does it present?

One is often appalled at the extent to which his character is becoming fixed as the years fly by. We are all familiar with the old saying that old dogs cannot be taught new tricks.

Let no one fail to remember that as these mileposts fly by, he is being made -- his record is being written and his character fixed.

2. The product is being turned out rapidly.

Killing time is a form of suicide. We are striking at ourselves. These rapidly passing days and years are all needed for the work we have to do.

The greater the outlook and program of life, the more rapidly time seems to fly by. Only those who have circumscribed lives have to kill time. Time passes more slowly for children than for grown people. It passes slowly to grown people who have the interests of children.

If there should be any one who feels that time is hanging heavy on his hands, it is clearly his duty to increase his interests. Live for something worthwhile.

Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed is reported to have exclaimed, "Millions of money for an inch of time".

Jacob at 130 years felt that his days had been few (Genesis 47:9).

3. The operation may terminate at any time.

There is another meaning which some think should be given this passage of our text. Another rendering is, the web is speedily and perhaps suddenly finished from want of thread.

Procrastination is the death of the soul. Men resolve and re-resolve. There is the necessity of acting now.

What is the value of signed pledges? Some have discounted them. The people who really do things are those who pledge and fulfil.

The dangers of the day -- great toll on the highways. Prevalence of heart ailments. Sudden death.

4. We face Eternity with the fabric as we have woven it.

Jesus had much to say by way of warning to every one that he should be ready. The suddenness with which the end cometh was frequently emphasized.

There is something awful in the thought that one must face his Creator with his work, without having opportunity to get it into better shape. The great Inspector General may call for us any time.

Job asked many questions, which indicated that he had a gleam of light regarding eternity.

"If a man die shall he live again?" "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not". "For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again...But man dieth and wasteth away. Yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?"

The answer to all that is given us in Christ. "He that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

The fool in "As You Like It", says --

"It is ten o'clock.
Thus may we see,' quoth he. "How the world wags;
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;
And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,

And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot
And thereby hangs a tale.”

But in the light of Christian truth, the tale that hangs is the absolute urgency of action now. “Whatsoever thy hands findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device nor knowledge in the grave whether we go.”

If there are any wrongs to be righted, prayers to be said, sings to be stoned for, grudges to be wiped out, act now.

“Alas, that men should lightly spend
In godless mirth or prayerless toil unblest
Their brief inestimable day of proof,
Till the last golden sands run out.”

From a recent article (Reader’s Digest, Dec. 1945, p. 71), we learn that Carrie Jacobs Bond is still living, at the age of 83, in a house in Hollywood, CA, to which she has given the name “The End of the Road”. It is she who, back in 1910 wrote the song “The End of a Perfect Day”, of which millions of copies have been sold. In many respects, her biographer tells us, her life has not been without its imperfections. It has been tragic at times, and characterized by courage, perseverance, sacrifice, and industry. She once expressed herself as being ashamed of the fact that over a year had elapsed since she had written her last song. She considered that she did not have anything to show for that year.

What has the past year witnessed in your life? What will the coming year witness? We probably do not know all that the past year has meant, nor will you be able to evaluate the year that lies ahead. Being busy in the line of greatest duty is the challenge we face.

Ten years ago, the Reader’s Digest published a stirring article on the specter of sudden death in vehicles of travel, particularly the automobile. Now, an even greater hazard faces us, and the magazine is republishing the article. The crisis in traffic is brought about by poor tires, new highway drivers, worn vehicles well aged, battered roads, weakened highway control. Fatalities are mounting -- already 26% more than in 1944. The situation will most likely get worse in 1946.

An Appeal to Tradition

Minden, LA

August 12, 1934

“For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: (for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow): shall not they teach thee, and utter words out of their heart?”

Job 8:8-10

The patriarch Job was down. Wave after wave of misfortune had overtaken him. He had lost all, and now he was grievously afflicted in body. He wished that he could die. He was a pitiable object to look at. He had been brought from the peak of posterity and happiness to the depths of misfortune and misery. Why? He wondered, and so did his friends, who had heard of his troubles and had come a long way to comfort him. They were poor comfort, however. Their talk only added to his trouble. They were evidently good men, believers in the true God. They were thoughtful men, men who had given much consideration to religion and man's relationship to God. They uttered many truths, but gave them wrong application and drew from them erroneous conclusions.

One of Job's friends was Bildad the Shuhite -- direct, unfeeling, tactless. Job, crying out of his intense suffering, inferred that God was unjust to him. He wished God would let him alone. How much longer must he be tried?

Bildad impatiently asks Job how long he will continue to utter these wicked and reckless statements. God is incapable of injustice, he urged. He heartlessly referred to the loss of his children and attributed it to their sins. He told Job that if he would cease being a hypocrite and seek God in earnest while he was still alive, God would bless him. In support of his philosophy that the wicked are always punished, he suggests consideration of tradition.

“Reflect on what your fathers discovered -- men whose lives were of such length as to make ours seem but a shadow -- they will teach you how to lengthen your days,” says Bildad. These ancestors had lived hundreds of years. They ought to be bale to tell how to extend life.

What Bildad called to mind in his reflection was a quotation from some poet of other days, who asks: “Will papyrus grow high without swamp? or a reed grow tall without water? It withers in its greenness, before the rest. So will all who forget God and are hypocritical.”

A Question of the Ages

One of the great questions that have perplexed the minds of thoughtful people, and even unthoughtful people, is What shall be our attitude towards that which has come down to us from the past? What shall we do with tradition? To what extent ought we to rely on tradition for our guidance in life?

People are largely influenced by old sayings, proverbs coming down from previous generations. They feel that because a sentiment or observation has survived these years, there just be ground for reliance on it.

We soon learn from observation that an appeal to tradition may do harm as well as good. It is a mistake to take too decided a position in favor of either extreme. We are as liable to go astray by rejecting a thought because it is old, as we are by rejecting a thought because it is not old. Man has always been fallible, except when he is the mouthpiece of God. That man has said and done should not be disregarded, nor should it be implicitly received. But light increases with age and experience.

The Peril is Tradition

There is a sense in which we are dependent on what has been handed down to us for guidance in life. There is a rich store of information available for man's guidance, and one is foolish not to make the most of it.

There is a distinction made between that which has come down as a matter of record, and that which has been transmitted by mouth from mouth to ear, by one generation to another. Current sayings come under this category.

Some people put more dependence on what "they say" than on what recognized authorities affirm. In that way, tradition gains precedence over written records.

Not infrequently we come upon individuals who are governed more by traditional "remedies" than by the wisdom of the best doctors. The "old remedies" are declared to be the best. They do not come from any books, but are handed down by mother to daughter. We prophecy the weather on the basis of old adages. Many shape their conduct on old adages, despite the fact that one can usually find a proverb to suit any preferred course of action.

Take for instance the old adage:

"Early to bed and early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

This reminds us that scientific man discovered that love-lived people were early risers, and inferred that sleeping late shortened one's life. T.B. Aldrich (in Ponkapop Papers) observed that as people get older they naturally awake early, and their early rising is no credit to them and that it has nothing to do with their longevity.

Over against the adage quoted above, we recall that one to the effect that:

"Heights by great men, reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward through the night."

Some years ago, the papers recorded the visit of a reporter to a woman who had celebrated her 100th birthday. He asked her what, as she reviewed her long life, had brought her the most satisfaction. After a moment's reflection, she answered, "I guess what I et".

Some of the long-lived people among the ancestors of Job, to whom Bildad pointed him, might have been unable to give any more illuminating or inspiring thought than that. It is recorded of some of these ancient characters that they were born, lived many years, begat sons, and died.

The Hebrew while in captivity in Babylon had current among them a saying, a tradition, to the effect that "The fathers have eaten the sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2). They were trying to blame their fathers for the situation they were in. The prophet told the people not to say that any more.

Tradition in Religion

In the New Testament, we find the references to "traditions" having three different meanings: (1) Substance of teaching, as when Paul wrote the Thessalonians: "Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). (2) Oral instructions handed down but not in the Scriptures. We are told that "the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders" (Mk. 7:3). Jesus accused the Pharisees of making the word of God of none effect through their tradition (Mk. 7:13). Here was reference to a body of precepts said to be orally delivered by Moses and orally transmitted in unbroken succession to subsequent generations, which precepts were to be obeyed with equal reverence. They were later put into the Talmud. (3) The whole system of Judaism. The written as well as the unwritten heritage. Paul spoke of his zeal for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:14).

As in the old Hebrew church, so in the Christian church, there grew up an accumulation of teaching that was extra-Biblical. It was held that Christ and his apostles taught many things not committed to writing, and that these had been faithfully transmitted, and that they should be a part of the faith and practice of believers. The Church of Rome made itself the arbiter of the false and true in the traditions. In some instances, tradition has been given precedence over the written record of the Scriptures.

Consequently we have in the Church of Rome many teachings not to be found in the Scriptures. The Lord's Supper has been expanded, and the ideas of insubstantiation and sacrifice of the Mass added. The administration of extreme unction, penance, indulgences, saying prayers for the dead, etc.

The Bible Must Be Supreme

The Protestant churches have taken the position that when we begin to give credence to tradition, we get into trouble. There is no way to know what is false and what is true. Romanists hold that antiquity and universality are criteria. But that will not hold. It was believed long, long ago, universally, that the sun moved around the earth.

The Protestant position is that the Bible alone should be the source of authority, and that tradition should be made secondary to it. Else tradition will tend to do just the thing which it did in the days of Jesus, as referred to above.

It is admitted that there has been a development of thought, of theology in the church during these years. But all of this has come from the Bible. There has been a development in degree of knowledge of the Bible. The wisdom of the Bible is not systematically stated. It is being better and better understood.

The protest is made that Protestants accept their Scriptures on tradition. But such is not the case. They are accepted on external and internal evidence. Proof is established that certain men wrote who were authenticated agents of the Holy Ghost. The nature of the doctrine revealed witness to the heart and the conscience the truthfulness of them. Such is true of the Ten Commandments, for instance.

This means then that we should give the Bible first place in our thought and life. It has stood the test of the centuries.

Looking Beyond the Heights
(Easter Service)

Minden, LA

April 20, 1930

“If a man die, shall he live again?”

Job 14:14

This question is as old and as universal as humanity itself. While some have claimed to have settled the matter with the decision that they will not live again, few if any have dared to live in complete accordance with such a belief.

Mr. Ingersol, in a famous oration, declared that “we strive in vain to look beyond the heights”. But the overwhelming testimony of mankind is that such scanning of the future is not in vain.

The boundaries of life have been pushed back by telescope and microscope. Art and invention have done much to add beauty and interest and comfort to the earthly existence. Medical skill has lengthened life. But these do not satisfy.

“Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No soul that breathes with human breath
Has ever really longed for death.

‘Tis life whereof our veins are scant;
‘Tis life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller that we want.”

While I do not profess to know the reason why some will voluntarily end this earthly existence, seeing we crave life. Yet it may be true that they fear life more than death, and hope that another world cannot hold forth worse lots than that which is present.

Man finds it difficult to believe that there is no hereafter because of the testimony to the contrary, with bodies charged with pain and disease, and whose minds are sick. Some in the bloom of youth were snapped out by being forced into war.

We are told that little children toil and are not given a chance in this greedy world. There are others born into a situation that does not work for right living. No influence has been wholesome.

There are those who seemingly defy the laws of right living, and ruthlessly crush out other lives. Some ride to fame and glory over the mangled remains of those whom they were able to use for that purpose.

Can it be that there is not some means of rectification of the wrongs that come? In this maze of injustice and disorder, we are tempted to despair and ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" (Jeremiah 8:22).

There is the voice of the heart. Love thirsts for life. We are led to ask if the great loves of life are to be made the sport of death. Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan, Jesus and John.

There is in the heart of man a universal desire for continuance. Men admire the pyramids, not because they are beautiful, but because they have stood for 40 centuries. We have reverence for the scenes of historic events.

We see no beauty, have no pleasure that we do not wish to prolong and preserve. From the scene of pleasure we take a relic that its association may preserve some of the joy which was originally experienced. We rarely view a gorgeous sunset wishing that some master hand could paint it on canvas and thereby preserve it.

This desire for continuance is seen in the efforts of men to have their names immortalized by some noble attainment or some fitting memorial. Man does not want to be forgotten after he has passed away. He is thus spurred to acts of philanthropy and deeds of bravery.

But this does not satisfy. One craves an eternal existence. This desire is as broad as humanity. It is reflected in the different religions of the world.

This desire was not placed within us to harass us. Hopes were not given us which were not possible of fulfillment.

It is like the instinct of the migratory birds, which fly south in the winter and north in the summer. God gave this to the birds of the air, and made it possible of fulfillment. So does He will his human creatures. "He hath set eternity in their hearts."

There is the voice of reason. Life is too short for the full service of truth. There is an incompleteness about life. In fact, the whole of life seems to be but a period of preparation. Just when the individual seems to be best fitted by experience to accomplish something worthwhile, he is taken away.

Is it not like the products of a great factory? When you visit it, you find products in various stages of development, but the finished product is missing. There is a storehouse especially prepared for it, or a use to which it is put.

Is discipline for naught? How useless would be all this search for knowledge and skill? How profitless would be any attainment in culture or morality? Virtue in a measure is its own reward, but it may not be worthwhile if there be no eternity. Henry Ward Beecher is quoted as saying: "If there were enough of it to amount to anything, it would be a great and exceeding reward; but where it is a spark, a germ; where it is struggling for its own existence; where it bears but a few ripe fruits, the reward is hardly worth the culture" (World's Great Sermons, VI:4).

One reason why the soliloquy of Hamlet has burned its way into the minds of men is that it strikes so deep into the problem of life -- Men come to ask the question whether it is better "to be or not to be".

"Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

The reason of man revolts at the thought that all this striving after better standards is futile.

“The soul claims immortality because already it is so great, so shot through with gleams of heavenly splendor, that if its destiny were nothingness, the universe itself would be a futility and a lie” (quoted by Beldon: Religious Difficulties, p. 10).

Man argues that man’s ability to enter into fellowship with God is indicative of his everlastingness. Jesus said, “God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob” -- a God of the living not the dead. Since man is capable of becoming a real child of God, he may well hope to share eternity with Him. This is regarded by many as the supreme argument for immortality.

In addition to these bases of faith in the future life, we have the assurance of Jesus. The most comforting words of the Bible are the words of Jesus: “Let not your heart be troubled...In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you”. Here is the statement of the great preeminent person of the world. Jesus seems here to say that He would not let the world go on hoping in an immortal existence, when there was no such thing. If He would let men go on with their vain hope, He would not be worthy of the faith and confidence for which He asked. How strongly do we feel self-condemned when we let others go on laboring under a misapprehension when we know the truth? We know that they have reason to declare us unfaithful, and unworthy of their confidence. From the very character of Jesus, we might know that He would have told us of the real future if it were other than that which controlled men’s minds and hopes.

Jesus gave further assurance by his return to his disciples. While he had assured them a few days before of the truthfulness of a life after death, yet they had undergone tremendous experiences during the past days. They forsook him and fled. But he appeared in their minds, and he gave them confidence. The existence of the Christian church today is evidence of the resurrection.

I have read descriptions of the sunrise “East of Suez”. The dawn “flung the red-orbed god of the day far up the heavens in a moment that all might see its glory and be blessed and benefited thereby”. Was it something like this that Kipling had in mind in his poem “The Road to Mandalay”, when he speaks of how “the dawn came up like thunder”. Well, on this resurrection morn, the first Easter day, the dawn came up like thunder on the small Christian following of that time. It was a glorious confirmation of all that Jesus had done and said. It was assurance of the future life. “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.”

Such a faith as this means much to us in this life. It helps us over the rough places and inspires us to increased effort and more loyal service of the King. Hannibal inspired his men to endure the cold and privation of the hard march towards Rome through the mountains of France by saying “Beyond the Alps lies Italy”.

“There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,

And pleasure banish pain” (Watts).

It helps us in the time of our departure hence. Sir William Hamilton, a Scottish philosopher of the early 19th Century, lay dying, and his friend asked him about the state of his mind. His reply was “Intense expectation”.

“For though from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.”

Man's Title to Immortality

Minden, LA

October 14, 1928

“If a man die, shall he live again?”

Job 14:4

The soul of this ancient patriarch was torn by doubt and despair. While his outward adversities were great, his inward struggle was terrific. This question (our text) must have stood out conspicuously in his thoughts at this time. And so it has in the minds of many others since that day.

A generation ago, immortality was more or less taken for granted. People who did not accept the teachings of the Christian religion still held to the perpetuity of the soul. Other religions have taught the doctrine of immortality.

But the claim is made that in these latter days, there has been a tendency to question the teaching that man lives after death. The reasons given for this more recent turn of thought are: 1. The prevalence of belief in the theory of evolution, which established a low origin for man and which seems to offer insurmountable difficulties to faith in the existence of the soul. 2. The tendency in some quarters to disparage belief in the supernatural. 3. The destructive results of modern historical criticism of the Bible. 4. An emotional reaction from certain representation made of the character of the future life -- vivid and perhaps imaginative interpretations of the statements of Scripture regarding everlasting punishment, and unattractive descriptions of heaven, with harps, crowns, and nothing to do.

The most recent statement of the position of the doubter is that of Mr. Clarence Darrow in the last issue of the Forum magazine (October, 1928). The title of his article is “The Myth of the Soul”. His opinion is that “the evidence against the persistence of personal consciousness is as strong as the evidence of gravitation, and much more obvious”. He thinks the wide-spread belief in immortality an example of the credulity of man.

But over against that, we find in the Literary Digest of two weeks ago reference to the address made by Sir William Bragg, President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at a meeting of that organization recently. Sir William is the winner of a Nobel prize for his discovery of a new method of measuring electrons and atoms in crystals. Standing before 3,000 scientists gathered in St. Andrew's Hall, in Glasgow, he announced his belief that man has a soul, and said that “science is not so foolish as to throw away that in which the slowly gathered wisdom of the ages is stored”. Such scientists, says a Newark paper, “do not brush away great faiths as childish superstitions and cherished delusions”.

The doctrine of immortality belongs to the realm of faith. While there seem to be no scientific proofs in its favor, there are no scientific barriers to it.

The spiritists claim that they have demonstrated conclusively through communication with the spirits of the departed that they exist. But this claim has as yet met with little favor. The “messages” of the spirits have been too trivial, for one thing.

But the universal desire of mankind has been expressed by Tennyson:

“Ah, Christ, that it were best
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be” (Maud).

But in spite of the absence of any satisfactory evidence of disclosures from the spirit world, belief in immortality persists. And there are certain arguments offered in favor of answer in the affirmative to the question asked by the patriarch Job.

1. Argument from the character of God. The man who does not believe in the existence of God naturally does not believe in immortality. The natural product of Theism is a belief in immortality.

God must have had a purpose in the making of man. Man is the highest and noblest product of his hands. Has he made it just to exterminate it? “Why should He consign to the dust those whom he has taken into moral fellowship?” (Sheldon)

There is furthermore the justice of God. “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” asked the patriarch Abraham, as he prayed for Sodom. To many, there seems to be much injustice in the world. Innocent victims alone suffer. The volunteer is deprived of his allotted span of life, while the slacker suffers no deprivation. The guilty often go free. There must be a time when wrongs are righted.

To these may be added the goodness of God. He will not be unkind. To quote Tennyson again:

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him; Thou art just”.

When Charlotte Bronte lay on her deathbed, she looked up into the face of her husband and said, “Oh, I am going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy”.

2. There is also the argument from universal desire. Since the dawn of human life, man has longed to live on.

“It must be so -- Plato, thou reasonest well --
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?”

Prehistoric man buried his trinkets, weapons, and tools with him. Similar evidences of faith in another life have persisted until our own day. God does not send these desires “on fool’s errands”.

Furthermore, it is the human mind at its best that has insisted on the belief in the other life -- men like Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Socrates, Plato, Kant and Hegel.

3. There is also the argument from the incompleteness of life here. Man has been endowed with a noble order of faculties, with capacity for growth. But the period is inadequate for the full development of human personality. Man the animal is at his best at about 25 years, but not so with man the Person. No doubt the failing mental power of age is due to the failure of the physical power. Shall the span of the physical determine the span of the spiritual?

The famous words of Victor Hugo will be recalled: "My tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes with the twilight to open with the dawn...I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me...the thirst for infinity proves infinity".

Men like Hugo, Michael Angelo, Dante, Shakespeare and Livingstone make it easy to believe in immortality. But some have expressed difficulty concerning some inferior types of human beings, and have adopted belief in "conditional immortality" as a way out -- the annihilation of the unregenerate and unfortunate.

But even the brutish creatures, so lightly esteemed by some more favorably born today, may have greater merit in the eyes of God than their critics.

The late William James, in his book on Human Immortality, discusses the difference between the productive and transmissive function of the brain. The function of the vocal organs is to obey the mandates of the spirit behind. So it may be said that cerebral activity is not the cause of thought but the result of it. Just as the pipe organ is not the cause of music, but the musician who plays it. There is the unseen organist -- the spirit of man -- who plays life's noblest music on the "delicate gray keys" of the brain. Though the organ perish in the grave, the organist remains, ready to play another organ in ways unknown to us.

Biologists tell us that human thought uses only one lobe of the brain. If the brain produced thought, would not both hemispheres have worked? Could it not be possible that personality has used one lobe to think with and the other to control the mechanical processes of one side of the body?

As the iceberg is said to be 7/8 below the surface, so human personality may be mostly below the surface of one's knowledge of himself. Prof. Myers has suggested that an idiot may be expressing himself through a defective instrument. Some pianists of note will play only on one kind of instrument, and upon none when out of tune. Ophelia: "like jangled bells out of tune and harsh." The moron may be different in another world.

May it not be true that in another world there will be a completion of the work that has begun here? It is said that the people who are least interested in the subject of immortality are those who esteem this life lightly. Faith in this life is necessary to faith in the life to come.

4. There is the argument from analogy. It is a well established doctrine of science that matter is never destroyed. It is converted into many forms at will, but is not destroyed. So also energy is transferred or converted, but never lost. These are called the principles of the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy.

It does not seem reasonable that matter should thus persist while that which stands higher in the scale of existence should perish. The conscious, thinking, aspiring spirit of man must endure.

5. There is the argument from Christian teaching and experience. There are numerous passages in the Old Testament, particularly the psalms, that suggest a belief in immortality.

Jesus came teaching the indestructibility of the soul (Mat. 10:28). He spoke of the worth of the soul, as compared with the whole world (Mat. 16:26). He spoke of eternal life and the resurrection. He arose from the dead, and said "Because I live, ye shall live also".

The Apostle Paul spoke of being in a quandary, trying to decide whether it were better to depart and be with Christ or remain for service among his people (Phil. 1:21-24).

The Apostle had no doubt regarding the future. His hope was linked up with his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

The Apostle John wrote: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (John 14:2).

Sir James Simpson was a Scotch Physician and discoverer of anesthetics. When he lost his eldest child, he erected on her grave an obelisk, pointing heavenward. On this he had engraved the words, "Nevertheless, I live". Above the words, he placed a butterfly. Thus he revealed his faith in the idea that death is only a transition from the limitations of the chrysalis to freedom.

Our greatest assurance of immortality is linked up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why not link your life with his now?

The Thing That Matters Most

Minden, LA (Easter)
Minden

April 12, 1936
March, 1937

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Job 19:25

This is the utterance of the old patriarch Job, sitting in the midst of his grief and pain and bereavement and desolation, while so called friends aggravate his sufferings by nagging, false accusation, prodding.

One of the friends, Bildad, has just been discoursing on the sufferings that come to the wicked. The sufferings of which he speaks are more or less those which Job has been experiencing. Hence, the implication is that Job is wicked, and that he is paying the price of his wrongdoing.

Job in reply admits that he believes that his sufferings have come from God, but he denies the charge that he has been wicked in life. He confidently believes that he will be vindicated, even though he himself shall not live to see the day.

It is there that he bursts forth in this famous declaration: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at the last he will stand up upon the earth: and after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God” (A.R.V.).

Then, after having made this singular pronouncement, he sank back into the despondency of the previous hours.

What Job Meant

This utterance was made long before the time of Christ. Just how long it was before Christ, we cannot tell. The students of the Scriptures are by no means agreed as to the date. But that does not matter.

It could hardly be claimed that Job understood the words of his declaration in the fullest possible sense. Like the prophets of the old dispensation, he spake more wisely than he knew. He emitted a gleam of heavenly light that shone in his soul. He echoed a strain of the music of heaven. The breezes of the celestial heights swept across the seemingly broken strings of his great soul. The melancholy dirge is halted. The movement changes. The minors cease. Stately, resonant, full-mouthed, the strains of a battered but persistent faith sound forth: “I Know that my Redeemer liveth”.

The Hebrew for “redeemer” is “goel”, meaning “nearest of kin”. It was the duty of such a person to take up the causes of another when his services in that capacity were needed. There are traces of this custom in our life today. It has long been thought that it is the duty of the nearest of kin to defend the cause of the needy, see that wrongs are avenged properly, and acquit of false charges.

Job found consolation in the fact that though he die, yet there would be One who would act as his “goel”, vindicator. He would bear witness to his integrity.

Along with that thought, Job expressed confidence in the fact of immortality. There is a change in the Revised version from “in my flesh”, to “without my flesh”, which would seem to be more satisfactory to the original and the idea of the day. Job evidently believed in his existence as a personality after death.

The New Meaning Through Christ

The fact that gives us greatest joy in our day is that this noble declaration is echoed in the new dispensation. Jesus came into the world in accordance with the prophetic utterances. He taught and lived the gospel. He died. He was buried. Then the empty tomb was discovered. Then the disciples saw the Lord again.

“He is risen” became the common utterance of the early Christians. It is said that they greeted one another with that statement. It was the customary salutation among them.

It was the theme upon which the apostles and others preached constantly.

What they were doing in effect was echoing the statement of Job, made hundreds of years before: “I know that my Redeemer liveth”.

It was that certainty which gave the early Christians courage for the ordeals through which they had to go. That alone explains the success which the church had in establishing itself as a world factor.

I note as I read the record that there were no pilgrimages, in those days, to the shrine of our Lord. There was none of him in the tomb, and hence there was no interest in the tomb.

The tombs of the Pharaohs have been discovered with the remains of the ancient kings. But no tomb of Christ will ever be found in which lies any trace of the earthly form.

It is a source of assurance to us to recall that Paul, who was once a Pharisee of Jerusalem, a disbeliever and even zealous persecutor of the Christian believers, turned the focus of his enlightened mind on this great central fact of Christ’s history. He lived at a time when the facts could be investigated. He had access to people who would be able to provide him with information. Yet it is Paul who probably more than any other echoes the declaration of Job: “I know that my Redeemer liveth”. There is no more positive declaration of faith in that fact than the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians. “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept” (v. 20). “If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain” (v. 14).

It is but a repetition, with fuller light, of this great declaration of Job’s when the author of Hebrews says, “He ever liveth to make intercession for me” (7:25).

What It May Mean to Us

If one can reach the point where he can say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” he enjoys the possession that means everything to him.

1. It means that one has assurance of his survival beyond the grave.

Paul called the risen Christ “the first fruits of them that slept”. The first boll of cotton is zealously sought after. Its arrival is heralded abroad in the land. The first bale of cotton is bought in at a higher price than the market would justify. The first fruits are meaningful. They assure the harvest.

It has been a hard winter. The cold and snow has been unusually great. But the first opening of hyacinth, or red bud, or plum blossom fills our hearts with joy. The first fruits herald the outburst of Spring.

Jesus as the head of the race of men gives pledge that all shall be made to live again. Paul says, “As in Adam all die, so shall all in Christ be made alive”. There is solidarity in redemption as in ruin.

2. It puts endorsement on what Jesus said and did. Corroborates his teaching. All of those wonderful assurances that Jesus gave of the life to come have now great significance. What he said about the heavenly mansions, his preparing a place, his coming again, eternal life, our not fearing those who can kill only the body, his sonship, his equality with the Father. Death, he said, is but a sleep. What he said about the Kingdom of heaven has new significance. Being able to say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth”, I can also say, “I know that what he said then is true”.

3. It puts new meaning into the living of the present life. There may have been some who became so “other worldly” that they lost interest in the present life. But such people do not have the mind of Christ. For in the Judgment story, he showed very clearly that much in the other world depends on how we lived and served in the world we are now in.

If Christ be not risen, one might as well enjoy life. Preaching is vain and faith is vain. If man is but a “chance collocation of chemical elements” there is little use to achieve moral victory through desperate, sacrificial struggle. If hard wrought personality is but the flower of a day, we might as well let the weeds grow. Man cannot get away from the conviction that such a treasure is too fine a thing to be utterly transient.

Is the human race progressing? Yes, you say. What is the evidence? Man has made the laws of the universe serve him. They provide man with means of travel, his clothes, food, houses, comforts, conveniences. But these are merely external, material developments. Has man progressed personally? Is modern man superior to his predecessors? We go back to Rome and Greece of ancient days for standards of athletes; to Homer and Plato for ideals of poetry and philosophy; to Phidias for standards of art. It would seem as if the golden age of man were behind him.

The look of the Christian man is forward. He believes in the power of goodness, the survival of truth. This enables him to face great odds. Even though he die in the struggle, his Redeemer will stand at the last.

There is the belief that in that eternal kingdom will abide those who have wrought and struggled and achieved. Their works have gone with them.

“The tissue of the Life to be

We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of Destiny
We reap as we have sown.

Think ye the notes of holy song
On Milton's tuneful ear have died?
Think ye that Raphael's angel throng
Has vanished from his side?

"O no! -- We live our life again;
Or warmly touched, or coldly dim,
The pictures of the past remain --
Man's works shall follow him!"
-- Whittier

Things Wrought by Prayer

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

February 12, 1939
September 30, 1956 (rewritten)

“What profit shall we have if we pray to Him?”

Job 21:15

While this question is taken from one of the discourses of Job, it is represented as coming from the wicked who were prospering and had no time for Jehovah, nor interest in Him.

You recall the situation. Job was suffering bodily afflictions, on the heels of the loss of his family and his possessions. Three friends came to “comfort” him. They gave Job some lectures which indicated that they thought that it was Job’s sin which brought this affliction upon himself. Job insisted that such was not the case. Zephar, one of the friends, had just declared that the prosperous ungodly soon come to grief, in that their own person feels the effect, their resources are soon dissipated, and their children suffer for the sins of the parents. In reply, Job maintained that such is not the case. The ungodly are prosperous and happy, their children do well, their homes are safe, they are proud, independent and forgetful of God. They ask, “What good does it do to pray to God?” I am sure that instances could be found which support both Sophar and Job.

But there have been many good people who have asked this very question: “What profit shall we have if we pray to Him?” They ask it in quite a different spirit however. What is the use of praying? Someone will say, “Did I not pray to God in the time of a great crisis in my life, and my prayer was not answered?” Besides, doesn’t God know what we need anyway? Thus, for one reason or another, many people drift into a prayerless life. They never pray except when at church, and perhaps then they do not enter into the spirit of the act.

Others have said that it is no use to pray because God is such a great Being, creator of many solar systems like ours, peopled perhaps beyond all human computation. He can’t give attention to a solitary creature on one of his little planets. Jesus taught otherwise, however.

Dr. Buttrick quotes Roy Wallace Thomas (“We Pray Thee, Lord”, p. 41) as saying that “in our world, God can work only by the laws that he has made”. An irreverent mind might answer, says Buttrick, “How do you know?” “How does anyone know that God can work only by the laws he has made?” asks Buttrick (Prayer, p. 73).

For these and other reasons, many people have drifted into the feeling that there is no good to be gotten from prayer.

The Utilitarian Motive

The wicked, according to Job, ask, "What profit shall we have if we pray to Him?" So declare others who find that they cannot use God at will to their own advantage. In fact, the utilitarian motive plays a prominent part in the lives of most of us. What we cannot use, we declare worthless.

A friend of mine, a fox hunter, took a lady friend of the family out to look at his blooded fox hounds. He asked her if she did not think them the prettiest dogs she had ever seen. Not knowing the utilitarian value of those dogs, she frankly declared that they looked to her to be the off scouring of the earth.

Our friendships are often utilitarian. We make friends with the idea of sometimes using them, and we have little time for friends who cannot serve us.

And so, because we cannot use God -- cannot count Him among our assets -- we may ask what is the use of prayer anyhow.

True Purpose in Prayer

I have seen the statement that "prayer is not for the purpose of getting things from God, but for complete and perfect oneness with God". When we come to the point where we want God's will, not ours, to prevail, we are drawing near the true end of prayer.

Sometimes our prayers are hard and dictatorial. Resentment is felt if they are not answered as we prescribe. This is evidence of our selfishness. We need to remember that the Savior in Gethsemane prayed for a definite thing, but added, "Not my will, but thine be done". We need to remember that when we pray for the sick. We want the best answer. The Scriptures encourage us to pray for the sick (Jas. 5:14). Remarkable recoveries have taken place even after all hope has vanished.

Most people pray for one reason or another at some time. Sometimes it will be an ejaculatory utterance in an environment that is not altogether worshipful. Some people pray out of habit, begun in early years. Others pray from a sense of duty, mingled with a sort of superstition that this exercise will serve as a sort of protection against danger. Some may pray out of a desire to seem religious. Others may pray only when in trouble or sick. Some pray when facing a task that seems overwhelming. Others pray as a means of autosuggestion. Then, there are great souls who find in prayer a means of living in contact with God and thereby tap resources of strength which the rest of us do not know anything about.

But even though one's conception of prayer, and his religious life, be imperfect, that is no reason why he should not continue to pray. One blessed truth is apparent through the Scriptures, and that is that men should act on what light they have. We are told that we ought to pray and not to faint. By keeping the channels open between God and man, the blessing will eventually come. Besides, there will be growth in the conception of prayer.

Prayer Makes a Difference

Let us never forget the words of our Lord: "Everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened". Jesus taught that the relationship between God and the members of the Kingdom is that of a Father and his children. He will grant every request that is good for us. He always does something. The things we need will come.

Tennyson has King Arthur say to Sir Bedivere, as the former was about to loose his barge for the Great Unknown,

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of"...

Effect Within Us

The psalmist said, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73:28). Prayer of the right sort amounts to a companionship. We are shaped by the company we keep. I once knew a good woman (Aunt of Mrs. Tomkies) who threw a popular novel of the day aside after beginning it, because of the characters used in the book. She said she did not associate with such characters in real life, and she saw no reason why she should do so in imagination.

As Paul put it, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18) (RSV).

Prayer helps to make the presence of God real. It was Job who cried out, "Oh that I knew where I might find him" (Job 23:3). We say readily that God is everywhere, which means he is now here. It is only when we get into communication with him that his presence is made real.

There is a peace which comes from the cultivation of this sense of God's presence. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee" (Is. 26:3).

In the prayer relationship, there is an elevating and ennobling influence. The greatest need for God's operation is in our hearts. What needs most altering are men's hearts, not the laws of the universe. Men may change things, but prayer changes men.

Prayer promotes activity. Some may regard prayer as a substitute for action. Men who persist in praying find that it vitally affects their conduct. Carey prayed for the people of India. It resulted in his going there to carry the gospel. Brainerd prayed for the American Indians, and it meant his consecration to that work.

Effect Outside Us

Few people doubt that prayer cleanses and ennobles the spirit of man who prays.

"Lord what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!" (Trench)

But what about outside us? This involves what we call petitionary prayer, in which we ask God to change things. The Word of God is full of commands to pray. Surely God would not urge us to pray for things we are not to have. The statement of the Scripture is that “All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).

We look into the records of the life of Jesus for the spirit of the Father. Most the requests made of Jesus were in time of disaster or adversity. Probably nine out of ten were of this character. We find Jesus exceedingly patient with such petitioners. They prayed that eyes might be opened, that son or daughter might be healed, that the disaster of the tempest might be averted. There are people today whom it would be impossible to convince that their prayers had not wrought recovery or averted a calamity.

I am asked occasionally what I think about divine healing. Well, we cannot ignore the testimonies of those who have firsthand knowledge of healing that have come as the result of prayer. Deliverance from afflictions that seemed to be beyond cure has come through prayer. Prayers have shortened the healing time of sicknesses that would otherwise have involved a long convalescence. Prayers of this sort have ministered where medicine is impotent -- to bodily ills that are due to repression, complexes, fears, unworthy desire, and dark memories. But there are of course limitations to the effectiveness of prayers. Amputated limbs cannot be restored by prayer, and the encroachments of age cannot be stopped.

The question has been raised whether the old line churches have not neglected this thoroughly Scriptural practice of prayer for the sick privately and corporately, and have left this to some of the various sects that are making this a principle feature.

One of the methods suggested by our leaders in evangelism is what they call Prayer Evangelism. By this method, a group of Christians will have a prayer list of unconverted persons, for whose change of heart they covenant to pray each day.

When Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, known in his later years as an evangelist with an international reputation, once served a church in Philadelphia, he said that he had heard of the tremendous effectiveness of the preaching of Dr. Spurgeon in London. He decided that he would go over to London and find out if he could what the secret was. He learned that it was the custom of a number of the members of that great church to assemble in a room and pray while Dr. Spurgeon preached. Dr. Chapman came to Philadelphia and introduced that custom in his church there, with wonderful results.

You have no doubt been thinking of ways in which you can be of help in the months ahead to give new power and strength to your church here. We have been naming some of the ways in which the members can help. This morning, I want to suggest the habit of praying for your church, for the workers in it, for the children growing up in it, for the unreached people of the community.

Eliminating the Selfish Note

Our prayers are usually self-centered. We come nearer the divine ideal when we shift the center of our interests in prayer to others. Jesus was the great example in that. He prayed for those who nailed him to the cross.

In the last chapter of Job (42:10) there is the statement that “the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends”. The so called friends of Job were at times his enemies, Yet he prayed for them.

So Job learned anew that there is profit in praying to God, when praying is not done with a profit motive.

But the real profits of prayer are --

1. Mental peace. “Though wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.”
2. Deepened faith and love. Prayer strengthens that which is a prerequisite of prayer. Our prayers must reach outside ourselves.
3. A worthy perspective. We pass out of our little world into the larger regions of God’s dominion. We come to see our interests in relationship to the whole.

If prayer puts us in tune with God, it is the most useful thing in the world.

God Knows My Way

Minden, LA

November 2, 1924

“He knoweth the way that I take.”

Job 23:10

This is taken from Job’s eighth speech. In this he yearns for access to God that he might have opportunity to plead his cause. But he declares himself unable to find God. But he declares that however that may be God always knows where he is. God knows that way that he takes.

Our God is an omniscient God. We may act as though we believe that we could conceal things from God, but few if any will be willing to assert that God does not know all things. This, too, is fundamental in any view which we may have of the order of things. It is fundamental in theology. It is fundamental in worship, in living.

The Scripture abounds in statements regarding this: “All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13). “Oh Lord, thou has searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalms 139:1,2). “The very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30).

We need to regain the sense of God’s presence. Oliver Wendell Holmes, when an old man, wrote to a friend, after having just returned from church: “There is a little plant called reverence in the corner of my soul’s garden, and I like to water it once a week”.

Life assumes a different hue when we acquire the consciousness of being ever under the watchful eye of God. We never get lost in the crowd. We are never so lonely as when in a crowd composed entirely of strangers. We never get lost from God in the crowd. He does not forget us whatever way we take. There are none too insignificant for his divine consideration and watchful care. Even in the time of trouble, his eye is on us, though it may seem as if God had turned away.

Think of the comfort of that thought. There are people who have passed through the fires of affliction. There has not been a word of complaint. We wonder at the smile that never fades, and the brightness which even anguish does not bedim. Some seem even glad of their trouble. But it is because we do not see all.

There is always the assurance in the minds of those who have faith that all experiences will work out for good. Job, in the latter part of the verse from which our text is taken, says: “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”. Pure gold comes from the refiners fire.

It reminds us of what we have heard about the way in which pearls are produced. Some hurtful creature or substance enters the shell. The oyster, in withstanding the attack, produces the pearl.

We have very poor means of determining greatness. Well do we know that the man most talked about in any age is not necessarily the greatest man of that age. According to our Lord's standard, the greatest is servant of all. Men often praise self-denial but become envious of those who receive the honors. Faith in the eternal adjustment of things gives comfort. He knows the way that we take.

A group of Christian workers was recently discussing the wisdom of making appeals to young people of high school age in groups to commit themselves to the purpose of rendering full time service in the cause of Christ. In most gatherings of young people under church auspices, such appeals are made. To this, some people object. Instances have been cited in which young people have committed themselves in this matter under the strain of an emotional appeal and have later pursued a different course from that contemplated. Then, under the lash of an accusing conscience, these have been estranged from religious work entirely. Other life-service recruits, after not having been called to a specific work, when sacrifice had been made to enter it, have become resentful.

There is no doubt about the wisdom of exercising great care about circumstances of this appeal. The true nature of the call and the requirements for it should be carefully set forth.

Probably nothing more than consecration to the service of God should be urged. We should do nothing to lead any to feel that one who remains true to a domestic responsibility and discharges the duties thereof in a Christian way, is any less honored of God than one who gives all time to Christian service.

A young girl wants to go to foreign lands to teach Christ. But her widowed and aged mother needs her. She doesn't go out after publicly avowing her purpose to do so. She becomes apologetic and maybe resentful. But there is no reason why she should. He knoweth the way that she takes.

Think of the restraint of it. If the way I choose is folly, He knows it and will help me back into the right way.

A woman in Shreveport was afraid she was going to die. She made frequent request for prayers. She promised to devote time and effort to religion if she recovered. She did recover, but she apparently forgot. After two years she did unite with the church, but she rarely attended, and her service to the church was practically nothing. There may have been hindering reasons that are satisfactory to God. She may be sure that God knows the way that she has taken.

Probably you and I have in a testing time made a promise to God. If God would be merciful and spare our lives, we would serve him. Have we forgotten? "He knows."

Think of the inspiration of it. The other afternoon a group of young people's leaders were gathered on the point on top of Signal Mountain vesper service. It was a beautiful view that confronted us, in which the sun was sinking behind the mountains in the distance, and the Tennessee River took her tortuous course in the valley below.

The leader of the service was taking as his theme the words of Christ, uttered on the Mount of Olives -- the mount of ascension: "Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world".

He told a story of David Livingstone in Africa. On his journeys he once came to a dividing of the way. He felt inclined to go to the right, from a sense of duty, but dangerous tribes made

the way perilous. The left way was safer, but otherwise less satisfactory. That thought that Christ has said “Lo, I am with you always” came to mind, and he chose the right.

When a Scotch university conferred an honorary degree on him, there was not the usual “ragging” on the part of the students. He was asked what it was that enabled him to accomplish such signal achievements. He replied that it was the promise of One whom he served. “Lo, I am with you always.”

The hymn: “He knows”.

Completing Our Knowledge of God

Minden, LA

January 11, 1931

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.”

Job 42:5

This declaration of Job’s marks the culmination of his memorable experience. Job had suffered much, both in mind and body. The reality of God, his character, and his purpose had entered largely into the thought of Job and his friends as they sat in the presence of his mystery and ruin.

But Job came through triumphantly. He had come to know God fully. It was no hearsay knowledge that he had at that point. There was no doubt in his mind concerning God. “Mine eye seeth thee,” he said.

There are thousands and thousands of people today who wish they might arrive at the triumphant victory that Job had won. They would like to be as fully conscious of God as was Job.

It is also true that there are hundreds of thousands, even millions of people who have as great confidence in the existence of God as had Job.

The reason why so many people are adrift religiously is that they have not completed their knowledge of God. They stopped with mere hearsay knowledge. They did not pursue the subject to completeness.

Dr. William Adams Brown, in a new book “Pathways to Certainty”, brings out the point that there are four ways by which we may test and develop belief in God.

1. Authority

Authority, says Dr. Brown, is “the sum of convictions which we take over from others before we have had opportunity to test them”.

This is where we begin as children. We must get much of our knowledge from those in whom we have confidence.

For the average man, one’s knowledge of astronomy, chemistry, geography must be of this sort.

This is essential to all progress. Even the scientist must accept what has gone before in order to make progress.

This is probably the most convenient and most universal method of arriving at a knowledge of God. Some people readily accept an inheritance of belief. But an unthinking faith has its dangers.

The church has been authority to some. The Reformers substituted the Bible as the instrument of authority.

2. Intuition

Nathaniel was won by intuition (John 1:43-51).

This form carries complete and immediate conviction. We practice it constantly in life. Why do I trust my friend?

Our response to beauty, duty, honor is of this sort.

Intuition is the name we give “those recurrent insights which assure us of the reality of God”.

Mysticism.

Witness of the Holy Spirit.

Limitations: (1) the experience from which it is derived does not last; (2) the knowledge it brings cannot be shared.

3. Reasoning

Definition: “The process by which we infer from data which are immediately given conclusions as to the nature of some object of which we have no direct knowledge” (Brown).

The test of such knowledge is to go to the source and see for one’s self. Consult the scales to check up on weight. Try out the value of a bill. But some knowledge cannot be tested in this way by all.

Much knowledge that we have of the physical universe is of this sort: speed of light, size of the sun, construction of the atom.

Arguments for the existence of God:

1. Cosmological and teleological.
2. Ontological and moral.

4. Experiment

This differs from authority in its active character. We are here participants, not spectators.

Differs from intuition in its continuing character.

Supplements the process of reasoning by tests and application.

Process of verification.

We must have tests: trying out any theory or hypothesis.

Uses of worship, practicing the presents of God.

Service, acting on one’s idea of God.

What religion adds to ethics.

Christian missions.

Place of the prayer life.

Emancipation of Intercession

Minden, LA

November 25, 1934

“The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.”

Job 42:10

Here we have one of the fine touches in the concluding portion of the book of Job. For the complete understanding of the significance of the statement of the text, we need to have in mind the things that went before.

Job, upright, God-fearing, prosperous, happy in his congenial family, became the victim of trouble, as the outcome of a council in Heaven, where Satan had challenged the sincerity and loyalty of the patriarch. Being permitted to test the faithfulness of Job, Satan brought about the loss to Job of his possessions and his family, and finally of his health.

As if that were not enough, Job's unhappiness was increased by the coming of certain of his kinsmen in a series of talks, while Job was suffering, took him to task for his attitude, and set forth their philosophy with the hope of getting him back in right relationship with God. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar urge the idea that only the guilty suffer, and hence Job must be guilty of some secret sin of which he needs to repent before he will be well, while Job maintains his innocence. Eliphaz and Bildad speak three times, Zophar gives up after two speeches. They are not able to convince Job of his guilt, and cease.

During all this controversy, there was standing by in silence a younger man, Elihu. He had refrained from speaking because the others were older. But when they gave up, and because the others had found no answer and hence had put God in the wrong. Then in a long speech, or series of speeches, covering some five (5) chapters, Elihu sets forth his ideas, including his philosophy, which is that the righteous do sometimes suffer for the reason that God wishes to show them themselves and open their ears for instruction. “He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression.”

Job had answered each of the speeches of the others, but was not permitted to answer Elihu's. God enters here, and takes up the controversy, and speaks to Job out of the whirlwind. He evidently refers to Elihu in his opening remark: “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” God charges Elihu not with false interpretation, but with darkening counsel with words he did not understand. The theme was too great for him. God took it up. It is noticeable that there is no explanation of Job's suffering, but simply the unveiling of glory before his servant.

God unveils his glory first with reference to the inanimate universe (38:4-38). Earth, sea, daybreak, deeps. Atmospheric heaven; stellar heaven; and their government. He then unveils his glory with reference to animal creation: lion, raven, goat, wild ass, wild ox, ostrich, horse, hawk and eagle. Job because acutely conscious of his own impotence and ignorance. The facts and forces over which man has dominion were originated, not by man, but by God.

In the interlude (40:1-5), God calls upon Job to answer these questions. Job, formerly defiant to his friends, now becomes humble. “I am of small account.” He wisely resolves to maintain silence.

God speaks again out of the whirlwind, and again calls upon Job to gird up his loins like a man. God takes up the matter of his moral government of the universe, which Job had criticized, and asks (in satire) Job to assume such responsibility himself. What would he do with such monsters, lower than man, as the Behemoth (40:15-24) on land, or the Leviathan (41:1-34) in the sea? God shows Job his impotence in the realm of his commonest knowledge. What could he do in the more sublime realm of moral government?

Job's answer is stately and dignified (42:1-6). He was now under the spell of the majesty and wisdom of God. He had been talking about things he knew nothing about. He lost sight of the problem of pain in the charm of the glory of God, his divine Ruler. He had now done what Eliphaz had urged him to do (Job 22:21: "Acquaint thyself with him and be at peace.") but could not tell him how to do it. Job had acquainted himself with Him, and now lay in the dust his treasure.

God now turns to Job's would be comforters. Their intentions had been good, but their words were wrong. Job had spoken profounder truth than had they, even in his pain. They had attempted to restore Job by their philosophy, and now Job was to restore them by his prayer. They were commanded to bring 7 bullocks and 7 rams as burnt offerings to Job that he might use them in intercession for them, for (said Jehovah) "his plea will I accept".

It is here that the words of the text appear. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Job's own captivity was ended by the sacred act of intercession. His fortune was changed while he prayed.

I. The Captivity of Restricted Vision

Job was in subjection to bodily pain, domestic solitariness, mental perplexity. Having been suddenly precipitated into a condition of poverty, loneliness and suffering, he was troubled about the great problem of human suffering. There were so many things he could not understand.

The trouble with Job was that he did not "see life whole". No one sees life whole who has not a vision of God. God is not only truth, he is life. The only key we have to the meaning of life is glory of God. When that is comprehended to any appreciable degree, the other factors that usually trouble our minds fade into insignificance.

The brick-carrier at work on some cathedral might become unhappy over the aches and weariness of his daily grind until he glimpses a vision of the magnificence of the structure he is helping to erect. At work in some obscure corner, he might feel that it was all meaningless. But when lifted up to see the beauty of the conception of the architect, he forgets his discomfort in the spell of the greater vision.

This is just what took place in the case of Job. Job's problem of suffering was not solved. Instead he had a vision of God and his government of the universe. His problem then became negligible. The vision released him from his captivity. The larger one's vision the less consequential become the problems of our restricted little world.

The toil of study is negligible and inconsequential to one who has caught the vision of the glory of the lighted mind. The weariness of practice is lost sight of by one who has come to appreciate the true meaning of music. So, human pain and loss cannot hold in servitude one who has found his true relationship to the Master of the forces and movements of the universe.

Job said, "I have talked too much already. I will now keep silent" (in effect). "I uttered what I understood not." "I had heard of these by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye has seen thee. Therefore I retract and repent in dust and ashes."

II. Emancipation Completed in the Act of Intercession

It is a noticeable fact that God expects acts of expression as the seal and consummation of words of confession. It was while the lepers were going that they were healed. It was in the stretching forth of the hand that the limp arm was given life. It was during the return of the centurion that his servant was restored. It was in the effort to take up his bed that the paralytic was made whole.

While Job was making intercession for these men who had been the bane of his very existence for so long, he was emancipated.

These men were called friends of Job, and they did have good motives. But their method was not good. Hot words had passed between Job and these so called comforters. Smaller souls might have told these men to be gone, and never show those themselves in that section again. But like his Master yet to come, he prayed for those who had done him no little evil.

We often serve best our own ends when we try to help others. "The liberal soul shall be made fat". "He that watereth others shall be watered himself." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth only to poverty". Selfishness is the greatest (or one of the greatest) bars to happiness. To seek deliverance for others is often the best way to secure it for ourselves.

A man who once hated Henry Ward Beecher afterwards became his friend because he found Beecher too big to notice slights. It was said, "If you want a favor from Beecher, kick him".

Some people are great when they attack the world, but prove small when the world attacks them. It is easy to collect a vast store of resentments over the years. Sights, criticisms, insults, ingratitude, wrongs, discourtesies, hostilities, can make one extremely miserable if treasured in mind.

Stanton called Lincoln the "original gorilla", and other like names. Then Lincoln made Stanton his Secretary of War because he thought him the best man for the place. Stanton later declared him "the greatest ruler of man the world has ever seen".

Grudge-bearing is egotism. Some watch with zest for the slight. We do ourselves the greatest wrong. The Armenian girl that nursed the Turk who had killed her brother (Twelve Tests: Fosdick, p. 166). What a different world this would be if the peoples would be magnanimous.

Magnanimity should extend to those more fortunate than us. Can has many children. Envy ruins families. There was even contention among the disciples. The only remedy is to love that which surpasses us. Rejoice in the better work. Be careless about who gets the credit.

III. Magnanimity Comes from Vision of God

Littleness of nature is due to smallness of vision. People who cannot see any further than the limits of their own little world are going to be small in their interests. Trivial things are going to assume places of prime importance. Many Christians lack the vision they ought to have.

Strange as it may seem, suffering often makes us magnanimous. Job came to this through his deprivations.

But that which meant most to Job was his vision of God. It was said of Jesus on the night of the Last Passover, that knowing that he came from God and was going back to God, he took a towel and girded himself and washed his disciples' feet. Such a conception will enable a man to do many things that he might refrain from otherwise.

The story is told that Chromatius, a heathen, sought a cure from one of the early Christians who was said to have the gift of healing. As a condition, the Christian demanded that all the idols in his house should be broken. The heathen gave the keys to the Christian that he might go about his house and destroy them all. But when the Christian began to pray, he was unsuccessful. The Christian said, "There is yet an idol in your house that must be destroyed". The heathen confessed that he had one of beaten gold, of great value, which he wished to save. When it was broken the heathen was saved.

Many Christians are observant of the rules and laws of Christ, but hold on to cherished slights. The spirit of magnanimity is absent. Until that idol is taken out, we are not free. We come to the throne of grace in our own behalf. But we must come in the interest of those of whom we are jealous. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you."

When we do that in all sincerity, what a glorious freedom is ours.

The Book of Psalms
(to Psalm 48)

The Rewards of Right Living

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

October 21, 1934
September 15, 1946
April 17, 1955

“The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.”

Psalm 1:6

If you have one of the Revised Versions of the Bible, you will notice that the 150 Psalms are divided into five (5) sections or “books”. Those books consist of 41, 31, 17, and 44 psalms, respectively; each book except the last closing with a doxology. This division is not indicated in the King James Version. This compilation of psalms is said by tradition to be the work of Ezra, a scholarly Jewish priest who lived with the exiles in Babylon and who led a company of them back to Jerusalem, and established the religious materials and customs of the new period in Jewish history. Those who have studied the classification of the Psalms say that they can see some principles adhered to in the grouping. But that need not concern us at this time.

We can say this, however: Find judgment was shown in the selection of the first Psalm. We always want the “keynote” to be a good one. The First Psalm is basic, fundamental. It sets forth a truth that should be kept in mind always. It exalts righteousness. So should we all. Righteousness should be first in business and social life. In this day of faithlessness to trust, delinquency of parents as well as of youths, perjury, forgery, robbery, the need for this vital virtue is very apparent.

What is “The Way of the Righteous”?

There are some misconceptions of righteousness. Now, there are some “good” people in the world who are living on inherited spiritual capital, made available to them by forebears and close associates who were dominated by Christ and were committed to the Christian way of life. But these reservoirs soon give out unless a spiritual “shower” comes. There is such a thing as merely being “good” up to a level of decency and respectability.

The term “way” was applied to Christianity in the early days. Paul, before becoming a Christian, set out for Damascus to apprehend any belonging to the “Way” in that city (Acts 9:2). Later, he said: “I persecuted this Way to the death” (Acts 22:4 RSV). Jesus compared the course of life to a way -- either the broad way or the narrow way (Matthew 7:14). Christianity is a way of life. It is a difficult way, calling for consecration and effort.

In receiving directions through unfamiliar territory, you may be told by your informant that he will first tell you the way you do not want to go. That is just what the psalmist does in the First Psalm.

1. It is a way of certain definite refusals.

One should stay out of the “counsel of the ungodly (wicked)” -- the people who leave God out of their thinking. There are respectable people who do that. But ordinarily the term “ungodly” refers to an undesirable type of person, a wicked person. But whether respectable or disreputable, it is not the way of righteousness. Our ideas of right and wrong have their roots in belief in God.

Neither should one stand “in the way of sinners”. Too much walking in the “counsel of the ungodly” will produce a callousness to sin, and eventually our tolerance will terminate in a congeniality in the atmosphere of wrongdoing. Moses made this great refusal when he “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”.

Certainly one must not sit in the “seat of the scornful (scoffers)”. Some have a fondness for circles in which there is no thought of the world’s need. They like to sneer at this and that, laugh high motives out of court, declare that every man has his price, and accuse everyone of taking graft. It is easy to be a cynic.

2. It is a way of God’s law.

Having told us about the way we should not go, he now gives us information of a positive sort. It is a way of “delight in the law of the Lord”. That is, the man who wants to go in the “way of righteousness” reads his Bible. That is his guidebook. A guidebook does no good unless you read it. Some people are content to merely have a Bible in the house. We have heard so much of heresy that one might get the impression that it were better not to read the Bible at all than to read the right version, or to understand everything one reads in it. The greatest heresy is that of neglect.

The righteous man delights in the Law of the Lord. He sees God there. He sees himself. He sees there the ideals of life that will bring him the largest returns. He meditates on it day and night.

I was interested in hearing Rev. Mr. McClendon, our missionary to Mexico, tell about how much the Mexican likes to hear the Bible read. One reason for that is that so much of it is new to him. Perhaps we are too accustomed to having this Bible around.

The man who delights in the Bible, and meditates on it constantly, will want to do what it requires. One of the best things the church can do is to bring back a fondness for the reading of the Scriptures. If it takes a modern version of the Bible to develop that interest, by all means use it.

It is from the subconscious that our life flows. The thought that we have stored up there will inevitably find expression in life. That is true of our speech, often. Mary Roberts Rinehart, American novelist and playwright, is said to have related this story about a certain New York hostess who entertained a well-known banker who had a deformed nose. The woman was very much afraid the children would make some remark about the nose, and spent a week preceding the visit in careful and constant admonition that no mention at all be made of noses. But the

mother herself had been thinking of noses so much that it entered into her subconscious mind. At a meal, pouring coffee, she turned to the guest and said, “Mr. Blank, will you have sugar and cream in your nose?”

Well, in the same way, the evil in our thinking will come out. We can’t think evil and keep it from coming out. So, Paul says, watch your thinking: “Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8). The person who does that will not find it difficult to live a righteous life.

The Recompense of Righteousness

One of the statements of my father that I remember most is that “it always pays to do right, and it never pays to do wrong”. That is true in the sense in which he meant it. Instances might be cited in which banks were robbed and the robbers never caught. It might be claimed that in such cases it does pay to do wrong. But we still maintain that it never pays in the coin that counts.

As we read through this psalm, we note at least three rewards that come to the righteous.

1. Satisfaction

The word “blessed” means “happy”. There is an inner satisfaction that comes to the righteous man. There is no conscience pointing an accusing finger. Then ultimately you begin to see that happy state written in the countenance of the righteous.

The idea has prevailed to some extent that goodness is dull, and that wickedness is interesting. The prominence given wickedness in the news reports creates the impression that goodness does not matter. The way to get attention is by doing something wicked. When a young person starts out to “see life”, it means that he will taste of the immoral side of life. But Jesus showed that goodness is most interesting and even exciting. So great was His demonstration that we now use the date of His birth as the pivotal event of history.

I think we all understand what Solomon meant when he said, “Be not righteous over much” (Ecclesiastes 7:16). Jesus said practically the same thing with the Pharisees as illustrations. They were exasperatingly offensive with their goodness. We may be scrupulous and yet have very little religion. There is no such thing as having too much religion, or righteousness, of the proper kind. There is not very much satisfaction in a righteousness that is a burden. A caricatured goodness is not a satisfying goodness.

I am sure that there is no satisfaction in a life of evil. Man after man has taken the last walk down the corridor to the electric chair who did not intend to do that when he started out. Even those who have not been apprehended will tell you that life has become a hell.

2. Prosperity

“Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” If the word “prosperity” has come in our language to mean an abundant acquisition of material resources, it is due to our own perversion of the term. That is not promised. It may involve that, but in the eyes of God we may be prosperous whether we have anything or not.

It is said that over the door of a strong financial institution in Holland is this inscription: “The Golden Age is the Age When Gold Does Not Rule”. Life is built on larger dimensions than we usually think of it. A form of prosperity that would serve only a portion of existence would be very unsatisfactory. There are rewards greater than material satisfactions. It is not so much what a man has as what he is that determines his prosperity.

The righteous man has been compared to a “tree planted by streams of water” -- purposeful, steadfast, living, beautiful, useful, fruitful. The Japanese know how to dwarf trees in pots for us in interior decoration. Well, the deeds of unrighteousness dwarf human life. The righteous man is like a tree by the riverside; John Wannamaker, William E. Dodge, John H. Converse, Frances Willard, Jane Adams.

One of the greatest rewards that can come to a good man or woman is to see his children manifesting the value of their training.

The Glory of Age

“What is the glory of age?” I said,
“A hoard of gold and few dear friends?
When you’ve reached the day that you look ahead,
And see the place where your journey ends,
When Time has robbed you of youthful might,
What is the secret of your delight?”

And an old man smiled as he answered me;
“The glory of age isn’t gold or friends,
When we’ve reached the valley of Soon-to-be,
And note the place where the journey ends.
The glory of age, be it understood,
Is a boy out there who is making good.

“The greatest joy that can come to man,
“When his sight is dim and his hair is gray,
The greatest glory that God can plan
To cheer the lives of the old today,
When they share no more in the battle yell,
Is a boy out there who is doing well.”

-- Detroit Free Press

3. Permanence

A tree planted -- evergreen. The giant oak is compared with a China tree. He shall stand in the judgment. Let us not forget that we are daily now being submitted to the test. The issues of life determine the value of our lives.

Amos said to Israel: "Prepare to meet thy God". He would have the people know that God was likely to appear in their midst as judge and executioner at any time. It was not put off until some future day. Youth is too much inclined to feel that judgment is put off until some future day.

"God give us men. The time demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and willing hands.
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie."

Let us not forget that we will not be able to get very far in achieving a righteous life without having a new heart.

The Mighty God and a Mutinous World

Minden, LA
Ruston, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Marlin (Prayermeeting)

March 20, 1938
April 13, 1938
January 20, 1944 (rewritten)
August 2, 1950

Psalm 2

A pastor in Washington, DC relates that through the help of a friend -- Hatton W. Summers, congressman for 35 years -- he was able to be present when Secretary of State Cordell Hull made his report to a joint session of Congress and Senate on his mission to Moscow. It seems to have been a most impressive occasion, even to men accustomed to great occasions. The words of the Secretary were warmly received. While they were still lingering in the minds of those who heard, this minister and his congressman friend were strolling from the capitol, when the latter said, "People are waking up; that are finding out how small is man and great is God". Then he added, as they turned to view the capitol from the House office building, "God is the big boss. Only in the field of government do human beings now ignore this fact, and in the field of government is the one outstanding failure of this age: but people are waking up; and the Big Boss is still alive". (Rel. Digest, January, 1944, p. 95).

What this congressman said in colloquial style that is characteristically American, the psalmist said many hundred years ago in the beautiful lines of the 2nd Psalm. This has been called a Missionary Psalm, and it has been called a Messianic Psalm, a Psalm of the Kingdom. While these notes are heard in this oratorio, it is a wonderful expression of assurance that serves us well in any age. It was evidently born in a period of crisis, and hence is appreciated most thoroughly by those who confront untoward events in any age.

While we look now with a measure of confidence on a world situation that once seemed to hang perilously in the balance (and I suppose the attitude is no more clearly reflected than in the comparative slowness of the war bond sale), yet there is a danger that certain aspects of the struggle will be overlooked.

Realizing this, the Christian, after having surveyed this clamorous world, turns to the Book that has been the source of so much of his consolation in days gone by. He does not turn in vain. The Word of God is full of reassurances, and there are none any greater than Psalm 2.

A World Drama

Very evidently, the psalm was written in the light of events which took place in the days of David, King of Israel. He knew that the nations around him were plotting against him and the people of God. He found great strength and assurance in his faith in God.

We will not be able to understand the Psalm unless we note that it is highly dramatic. It is a short psalm -- about 206 words, and fewer in the Hebrew. There are only twelve verses. But the scenes shift rapidly.

The dramatis personae are: Jehovah; His Son, the Messiah; the concourse of the nations; kings and rulers of the world; and the psalmist (as chorus).

The psalm begins and ends with observations by the psalmist, and in between are three acts of this great world drama. In other words, the psalm has a prologue and an epilogue, and three acts.

In the prologue (what is said before the drama) the psalmist expresses his amazement at the futile conspiracy of nations in their defiance of God.

Act I shows the conspiracy breaking into open rebellion.

Act II portrays the withering of the rebellion under the heat of divine anger.

Act III sets forth the establishment of the King Messiah.

In the epilogue (what is said after the drama), the psalmist admonishes rulers to stand in awe of Jehovah.

This is a marvel of condensation. One finds it difficult to take the time necessary to read some modern plays and novels and biographies. They seem to be so full of meaningless conversation. The Bible cannot be equaled for compactness. The stories of Jesus, his parables, are masterpieces, with no superfluous words.

The Prologue: Vs. 1

The psalmist asks the question: "Why (wherefore) do the heathen (nations) rage (tumultuously assemble -- margin ARV), and the people (peoples) imagine (meditate) a vain thing (plot in vain -- Am. Tr.)".

"Heathen" derivatively means "dweller on the heath", one who lives in the country. Religion came first to the city dweller. A better translation of the Hebrew words used here is "nations".

This thought came to the mind of the psalmist evidently in a time of gathering armies. Jerusalem was probably threatened by some confederacy. Certain allies resolved to renounce all allegiance to Israel as vassals. One such instance is found in 2 Samuel 10, where a confederacy was formed on the part of the kings of the Ammonites and the Syrians to fight against David. They were put to flight by Joab and David.

So the psalmist reflected, "Why do the nations tumultuously assemble and plot a vain thing?"

But we cannot confine these reflections to a single event. The present experience of the psalmist was typical. What was true in that case has ever been and will ever be true. The psalm is in that sense prophetic. Now in this day, we too may reflect, and ask the question of the prologue.

You will recall that after Jesus ascended and Pentecost had come and gone, Peter and John continued to preach with power in the city of Jerusalem. After healing the man at the Beautiful Gate, the two were imprisoned. When brought before the Sanhedrin, they were admonished to refrain from preaching. In fact they were threatened, but released. When Peter and John returned to their company, the disciples lifted up their voices in prayer, in which they made use of the opening passages of this psalm. They were confident that though Herod and Pilate and the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, and made bold threatening, they would not avail. It was a vain thing (Acts 4:23f).

Act I: The Rebellion: Vv. 2,3

“The kings of the earth set themselves (rise in rebellion -- Roth) (stand up -- Am. Tr.) and the rulers (princes -- Am. Tr.) take counsel together (deliberate) against the Lord and against his anointed (Messiah) saying, Let us break their bands (bonds) asunder and cast away their cords from us”.

When the tide of Nazism and Fascism was rising in Europe, it was thought by many sincere Christians that this struggle was not religious in its significance. In fact, some looked upon the movement as a benefit to the cause of true religion. But it soon became apparent that religion was to be the battleground on which the war was to be fought. It was the Christian leaders who took the stand against the dictators and opposed and still oppose their every step, even though it took them to concentration camps and to death.

Nazism finally came out with its creed, to the effect that there is no god but the Nordic, and Hitler is his prophet. The Swastika is a cross that started to stretch out its arms to embrace the world and then broke and turned toward itself (E. Stanley Jones). Fascism makes the state supreme, and Nazism the race. “Belief in a personal God, in revelation and salvation, is superstition, not religion,” said Ernst Bergmann in his “Twenty-Five Theses of the German Religion”. What the Germans call “Positive Christianity” is nothing more than a revival of Nordic paganism.

The religion of Martin Luther would not tolerate any such procedure as that which the Nazis are committed to, and naturally they resolve to break such bands and cast such cords from them.

Incidentally, we might observe that what a race may do, individuals may do and certainly do. To have freedom to do evil, they throw off the restraints of religion. Much of the individual’s skepticism in matters of religion has its origin in moral perversity. “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

Act II: The Divine Counteraction: Vv. 4-6

“He that sitteth (is throned) in the heavens shall (will) laugh: the Lord shall (will) have them in derision (make sport of them -- Am. Tr.).

God is enthroned in the quiet dignities -- above the little arrogance of frail human creatures. The phraseology here is such as only an inspired writer could use. We are sure that there is what we call anthropomorphism here. How difficult it is to portray the feelings of the Almighty. Laughter among human beings has a varied significance. Some laughter wins us and some repels us.

God's laughter is that of a father at the rather vociferous demonstrations of insubordination on the part of an infant in its cradle. There is love behind it and also behind the measures to which one resorts to remedy the situation. God laughs at human folly in the sense that he is not disturbed by it.

"Then shall (will) he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex (trouble) them in his sore displeasure."

"Then." At long last, something must be done about it. Some disciplinary measure must be resorted to. There is something appealing about this statement. We have been inclined to think of God as a good-natured old grandfather who is indulgent. Our need is for a recognition of the sovereignty of God. That was the strength of the Puritan faith.

Isaac Watts, in 1707, wrote a hymn which the old Puritans loved to sing. Because we are so anxious to establish man's importance in the world, we have not sung it so much of late:

"Great God, how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee."

God speaks from his throne: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion".

There are four words in that statement that we need to note: "Yet" indicates that something is understood, as "you may plot, yet..." The second word is "I", which is emphatic in the Hebrew. The third is "king" (anointed). You may be revolting, but the Lord's anointed is already enthroned and ruling. The fourth word is "Zion", the name of the hill selected by David for the abode of the ark and the seat of God's visible presence. It has come to stand for the church, or the Kingdom.

Act III: Messiah Established. Vv. 7-9

Here we find a new character participating. The Son, the Anointed, here appears and begins to speak --

"I will declare (tell of -- ARV) the decree: the Lord hath said unto the divine council, the Son was invested with the kingly dignity and placed upon the throne. Paul, in Romans 1:4 says that "Jesus Christ...was declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead". The Day of resurrection was Christ's coronation day!

Continuing the promulgation of the decree, the Son quotes the Father as saying -- "Ask of me, and I shall (will) give thee the heathen (nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of (ends of) the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces (crush them -- Am. Tr.) like a potter's vessel".

The rod of iron was probably a mace, a heavy club of metal, used as a weapon to break armor. Skulls were sometimes shivered as a potter's vessel. Thus we see reflected the spirit of the age in which it was written.

The idea is that it will be a ruin of severity. John said, "Whose fan is in his hand". "For judgment am I come into this world," said Jesus.

"This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King -- let the heavens ring;
God reigns; let the earth be glad."

The Epilogue: Admonition: Vv. 10-12

"Be wise (learn wisdom -- Perowne) (Be cautious -- Am. Tr.) (Act prudently -- Roth) now therefore, O ye Kings: be instructed (take warning -- Am. Tr.) (be admonished -- Roth) ye judges (rulers) of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son (do homage to the Son) lest He (Jehovah?) be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little (for his wrath may soon be kindled -- ARV). Blessed (happy) are all they that put their trust in him (take refuge in him)".

The pages of history are filled with eloquent testimonials to the truthfulness of this great psalm.

It will be recalled, for instance, that the Roman emperors from Nero to Diocletian, for 200 years, were relentless persecutors of the followers of Jesus. Finally, a victory was won, and the Christian religion became the established religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century under Constantine.

Constantine had a half-brother by the name of Julian, who came to be known as The Apostate. This was due to his renunciation of Christianity, and his efforts to restore heathenism. But he met with poor success and is reported to have exclaimed in his last gasps, after having been wounded in battle, "Galilean thou hast conquered".

Modern powers might take note of this. According to a writer, Robert Bellaire, in *Colliers* (Nov. 20, 1943), it is the avowed purpose of the Japanese to wipe out Christianity. He had this on the authority of Colonel S. Nishihara, press spokesman for the Japanese army. This explains why there has been such extensive bombing of Christian institutions in China. According to another Japanese authority, the Japanese believe "the Chinese can never be subdued while Christians are able to preach their doctrine of faith and hope".

They are right in thinking that they can never overcome while Christianity has prevalence. It is more than preaching faith and hope. It means that the King is behind their efforts.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones in "The Choice Before Us" relates that in the Himalayas where he was writing, there was on the other side of the mountain a fight between a tiger and a wild boar that raged for hours. The boar won because he kept the mountain at his back and forced the tiger to charge head on upon the terrible tusks of the boar.

The facts of the universe are at our backs, and the power of God who controls the universe. That will assure victory. The stars in their courses fight for those who ally themselves with God.

Are you not ready to ally yourself with such a cause?

* * * * *

Dr. Maritain, French Roman Catholic Philosopher, now professor in Princeton University:

There are varieties of professed atheists: (1) Practical atheists who believe that they believe in God but who deny his existence in everything they do; (2) pseudo-atheists who believe they disbelieve in God but who in fact believe in him unconsciously because the God whom they deny is not God but something else; (3) absolute atheists who really do deny the existence of the God in whom the faithful believe.

In considering the various atheistic philosophies from the standpoint of the logical content, they may be divided into negative atheism and positive atheism. Negative atheism simply rejects the idea of God and replaces it by a simple void. Its only concern is to live a comfortable life and do as it please, without concern about changing the order of things.

Positive atheism seeks to rebuild the whole human scale of values; i.e., atheism of Nietzsche. For a century now we have had a stormy eruption of this type of atheism.

How does positive atheism start? Not from rational and speculative inquiry. It adopts these as means of defense without inquiry. Absolute atheism begins with a fundamental act of moral choice. One approaches the problem of good and evil in a free experience in which any ultimate law and end from above have been brushed aside. An act of faith in reverse. A defiance of God. This is why he is militant. He is fighting against any reappearance of transcendence in himself.

Can We Be Trusted?

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

November 11, 1934
May 15, 1955 (rewritten)

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands.”
Psalm 8:6

What the psalmist is saying in this 8th Psalm is, that human personality is the most important thing in God’s universe. At first, as he reflects on the immensity and the majesty of creation, he is inclined to place a rather small estimate on the value of human personality. But upon further reflection, he sees man’s kinship to God and man’s ability to exercise control over the forces that play around him.

The extent of man’s control over his surroundings amazed the psalmist many hundred years before Christ. What do you suppose would be his reaction to man’s achievements in this day? We think of modern transportation through space, the control of disease, the release of energy through atomic nuclear fission, the automotive development, television. These and numberless other achievements seem to give a new validation to the statement of the psalmist: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands”.

Man has been able to achieve these ends only as he has worked in harmony with the inexorable laws that govern the universe. There is no violation of the laws of nature in the achievements of man. Man has simply set those laws to work.

When the psalmist specified the direction which the dominion of man took he cited animals, sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, etc.. Early civilizations were built on utilization of beast-of-burden power, which included slave power. Now, man’s dominion has taken another turn. An industrial revolution has been ushered in and new power has been placed at the disposal of the race. Automation is the new and popular word of our time. New techniques come so frequently now that they excite only passing interest. The idea seems to prevail that anything is possible now. We have long been accustomed to robot elevators, and electric eye doors. Even more amazing are the robots that count, compute, calculate, sort, crate, can, bind. Now the dominion of man operates through machinery, efficiently, powerfully, speedily.

Essentials to the Proper Exercise of Dominion

One is almost terrified by the thought of the consequences of a malicious or even unwise use of the enormous resources now easily available to men everywhere. What is all this going to do for our democratic way of life wherein individuals are called upon to make their own decisions?

In the world struggle of today, our government stands sponsor for a type of civilization in which there are three basic principles:

1. Responsibility: An ideal democracy is one in which every citizen recognizes an obligation to handle himself and the resources at his disposal with a true sense of fidelity to the agency which made those resources available to him. In a democracy, the government is "by the people". We expect the manager of an industry to have a sense of responsibility toward the stockholders who invested him with the authority of his position. We expect the president of a university to conduct the affairs of his institution with the feeling of accountability to the Board of Trustees. So, the president of a bank. A responsible person is a sought after person. There was never a time when the individual citizen of this country needed to give more serious study to the issues before us than now. There was never a time when a cheap type of politics was more precarious.

2. Freedom: One cannot really be responsible unless he is free -- free to make mistakes, free to exercise his best judgment, free to misuse time, money and influence. If someone behind the scenes is directing the actions of a man in office, he cannot be a responsible official. There are many alternatives that call for choice on the part of people carrying responsibilities.

3. Independence: One cannot be free in the exercise of the prerogatives of his office, without being rid of a consciousness of dependency. The press, if conscientious, should be free, and so should the pulpits of our churches. We have a stronger type of government when the citizenship is not subsidized by the government. The element of self-interest warps judgments.

A Still More Important Essential

The highest type of citizen in a democracy is one who recognizes the fact that he is responsible to God first of all, and that his freedom is assured by virtue of his allegiance to Christ.

The question of who owns the resources of a nation or of the world is a question at issue in the world of our day. Under the communistic hegemony, private property has been confiscated by the state. Socialism, in some instances, holds to very much the same theory. The Fascist proponents maintained that authority at least should be vested in the competent and qualified, as the old Roman government is supposed to have illustrated.

The woes of our capitalistic form of government have come out of the feeling entertained by those who have control of wealth, that it is all theirs to do with it as they please. The rich man says, "I made this wealth, and hence it is mine. What I do with it is nobody's business but mine". As a matter of fact, such is not the case, for reasons which might be given. Nothing could be more fatal to a capitalistic order than for that to become the prevailing attitude. It is the fact that so many men of resources, both large and small, look upon their resources as trusts from Almighty God that has saved the situation for the present order of things. The vast endowments of public and philanthropic institutions, the liberal support of movements for the benefit of human health and happiness, by some of the owners of vast fortunes, have been instrumental to a very large degree in preserving the fortunes even of those who have done little of that kind of thing.

According to the Scriptures

There is no truth that the Bible emphasizes more than that man owns nothing in fee simple. The heaven and the earth are God's by right of creation.

The 24th Psalm declares, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein". Through the voice of Haggai, the Lord declares: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (2:6). God said to a shepherd people, whose wealth consisted of flocks and herds: "Every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10).

The Lord lays claim to our very bodies and soul, when he says, through Paul: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

God reminded the people who were about to enter the land of promise that it was from Him that they received the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:17,18).

Must Give an Accounting

In the parables of the Talents and of the Pounds, our Lord taught the truth that we will be called to account for the way in which we have used the resources placed in our hands.

The term "stewardship" is ordinarily associated with the idea of money. But what is money? A medium of exchange, yes. But is it really not crystallized life, time, energy, ability? We may receive it by inheritance, marriage, initiative, energy, thrift, ability. But it represents somebody's life. In handling money, you are handling life. For that reason, the money side of stewardship looms large.

We must remember, however, that much of our life is never transformed into money. Man is endowed with mind, intellect, personality. Some are devoting these to wrong ends -- books, painting, dramas, reveal that.

Everyone has influence. The more prominent and able one is the greater the influence, and hence the greater the responsibility.

Of all this and more each shall give an accounting.

Rural Life and Stewardship

You may have noticed that this is known in the church calendar as Rural Life Sunday. Several denominations are observing this. Probably you are saying, "Well, that doesn't concern me". But it does concern you and me very much. We are dependent on rural prosperity for our food, our clothing, and much of our stable citizenship.

There is no area of our national life in which changes are taking place more rapidly or more radically than in the rural sections. Modern machinery has changed everything. It is still a battle with weather conditions, drought, and pests. It is estimated that southern farmers lost \$150,000,000 as the result of the late freezes in March. Pests take 13 billion from farmers every year -- insect pests, weed pests. There are the dust storms. These men need our prayers.

Soil Stewardship

The other day, Mr. Saage appeared before the Ministers Association and talked on Soil Conservation, and asked the ministers to preach on the subject on this date. The ministers agreed.

Now, I do not have much to say about this splendid movement. It is a subject on which any person who owns or rents any land at all should be interested. The principle of stewardship applies there. The most basic resource in America is the soil. The old slogan use to be "Plow up, wear out, move on". Now, we are beginning to see that we should take certain recommended steps toward improving our land.

My father was a surveyor, and was himself the product of the farm. He showed farmers on those poor red hills of North Georgia how to terrace their farms, and lay their cotton and corn rows in such a way as to retain the moisture and prevent erosion.

We really own nothing. We occupy a place for a while, and then leave it. Our ultimate departure is of such a nature that we can take nothing with us except a record. How are we going to leave what we have? Can we be trusted to have the use of resources? We all have some possessions.

The use of property reveals the man. It also develops the man. "Money cannot buy character, but it is the material out of which character is made; money cannot buy a home, yet homes are built with money; money cannot buy a poem, yet it is through money that a poem is given a body on the printed page; money cannot buy friendship, yet possessions are the physical stuff out of which we manufacture friendship" (Morrill: "You and Yours").

No Substitute for God

Minden, LA	October 17, 1937
Minden, LA	February 1, 1942 (rewritten)
Third Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, LA	May 3, 1942
Haynesville Presbyterian Church, Haynesville, LA	March 14, 1943
First Presbyterian Church, Hillsboro, TX	March 28, 1943
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	July 18, 1943
Chapel: Goodwill Industries, Dallas, TX	August 18, 1943
Wilshire (Robert E. Lee School), Austin, TX	April 16, 1950
Maysfield Presbyterian Church, Maysfield, TX	May 14, 1950
Rockdale Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX	December 5, 1954 (rewritten)

“In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to me, ‘Flee like a bird to the mountains’.”
Psalm 11:1 (RSV)

There is a song that has been sung a long time. It is a beautiful song. In spite of the years that have intervened, I can hear voices in my childhood home singing it in the restful hours of eventide. My father loved it. He taught us to sing it:

“Flee as a bird to your mountain,
Thou who are weary of sin.
Fly to the clear, flowing fountain;
There you may wash and be clean.”

Only one thing can be said by way of criticism of that hymn, so far as I know. The idea expressed is not that to be found in the Scriptures upon which it is evidently based. True, the old King James version of the Bible leaves some question in the mind as to just what the Psalm did say. But the RSV rendering seems to settle the matter.

What the psalmist is saying is this: I take refuge in God. Don't talk to me about seeking some other refuge, like a bird scurrying to the mountains. Birds, when they discover that they are hunted, fly to the mountains to find safety. This idea is evidently in mind, for the psalmist continues: “For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart” (11:2). The psalmist proclaims that his security is in God and not some substitute which he might be inclined to seek out.

Mountain-Trusting Urge Often Strong

Frankly, we are living in a mountain-trusting world. The tendency is strong to place our trust in material resources, scientific discoveries, and social reform, and it is not until they begin to seem impotent that we come back to the God whom we have ignored. Now, undoubtedly man is expected to use the resources at hand for his own protection, when by so doing he is not evading a responsibility or manifesting a cowardly spirit.

All too often, belief in God is regarded as being all right when everything is moving along satisfactorily. But when trouble comes, the tendency is to scurry to the “mountains”. Things come to pass which confound us. We inevitably ask why. But such puzzling situations have confronted man ever since the beginning of the world. It faced the psalmist. But he declared his trust to be in God.

The implication in our text is that the psalmist’s timid but well-meaning friends were urging him to take to cover, saying no doubt that all was lost and the course of commonsense was to accept the inevitable and make the best of the situation, and play safe.

The Bible is full of ringing declarations of faith in God. Job said to his would-be comforters, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him” (Job 13:15). The Hebrews said to Nebuchadnezzar, who was about to cast them into the fiery furnace, “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us...and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king” (Daniel 3:17). The Apostle Peter, as spokesman for the rest, after they had been brought a second time before the Sanhedrin and reprimanded for their Christian teaching, said, “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). Who does not recall the roll of heroes of faith given in Hebrews 11? No age has been without examples of heroic fidelity.

Let us consider certain ways in which we may reveal a distrust of a provident God. We flee to “mountains” when --

1. We place confidence in our own resourcefulness.

A philosophy of life known as “Humanism” has been maintained in some quarters. As set forth by Dr. John H. Dietrich, who claims to have been one of the founders of it, the principles are these: Man is the highest product of the creative process; he is an end in himself and not the means for carrying out the purposes of a supreme being. Only his ideals are above and beyond him. The power to realize these ideals lies in man himself, and not in any friendly providence.

As a corollary to that philosophy, we find assertions to the effect that scientific truth is all the truth there is, and that science is all sufficient as a guide to life.

We are all but overwhelmed at the strides which science has made. I read the other day that there is a 35 ton machine at Harvard that multiplies 23 numbers by 23 numbers in 5 seconds, that calculate logarithms in 59 seconds, and works out trigonometric functions in 88 seconds.

Dr. Walter R. Dornberger, of the Bell Aircraft Corporation, a rocket expert, stated last week, before the Chicago Chapter of the Institute of Aeronautical Science, that in less than 10 years rocket propelled airliners can make possible a hop from New York to London in 1¼ hours at the rate of 8,000 mph, and from San Francisco to Sydney, Australia in 1½ hours at the rate of 11,750 mph.

While all this is truly amazing, we have the rather stern realization that faith in science will not long survive a loss of faith in man. With these instruments of power in the hands of sinful mortals, who can feel any sense of security?

We had better not rely on the mountain of Self-sufficiency.

2. When we prefer some immediate advantage to the divine purpose.

In the 73rd Psalm we have the confession of a man who was about to surrender to the standard of the Godless. He saw that they were prospering, in spite of their defiance of all religion. He began to think that it is the ungodly who prosper. Why should he be denying himself all the good things for some vague expectation that might not prove to be true? It was while he was in the sanctuary that the truth came to him. There he considered their latter end. Who has not seen tragic examples of the curse of godless prosperity?

You remember that Esau sold Jacob his birthright for a mess of pottage. Israel at Sinai could not wait for the return of Moses. They set up the golden calf to worship. It was something that they could see. That is not the last time that man has worshipped a golden calf. In fact, that may be the most popular idolatry we have. We hear talk of the “almighty dollar”. But we know that the dollar is not almighty. Without a certain quality in the people of the nation, all the gold at Fort Knox will be as nothing so far as the safety of the country is concerned.

The devil tried to induce our Lord to compromise for the sake of immediacy when he took him to the top of a high mountain and showed him the kingdom of the world. Too many good people are swayed by the appeal of immediate advantage. The idea of getting while the getting is good, even though it involves a compromise of principle, seems irresistible to many.

We should stay away from the mountain of Immediacy.

3. When we resort to self-deception in the midst of life’s tragic experiences.

Life is full of reverses. Rarely if ever does it take the course we plan. At times, it looks as if everything goes wrong. It takes a steady faith in God and his goodness to carry us through without loss.

One recourse is pessimism. “What’s the use?” is the favorite question of the pessimist. Some draw up in a shell. Some give themselves to indulgence, on the “eat-drink-and-be-merry” principle, sometimes with emphasis on the drink phase of the indulgence. It is a form of “escape”.

“Isms” provide “escape” for many people who want to run away from reality. They accept the claim that it is all in the mind, and that by thinking the right thoughts they may get rid of it all.

Henry Ward Beecher is quoted as having said, “There are fifty ways of putting out a fire, but shutting your eyes is not one of them”.

By faith in God, one can face the reality of life, without fooling himself, and come through triumphantly. The person who comes through, standing up to life, with the help of God, has a quality which the person who resorts to a false philosophy of life does not have.

Nothing is to be gained by flight to the mountain of Self-deception.

4. When we refuse to grow up spiritually.

Paul told the Corinthians that he had been feeding them as babes, with milk, so to speak, and not meat. They had not been able to take the meat. They had not grown up, they were spiritually immature, the evidences of which were their partisanship, their factionalism, their pettiness.

Calvinistic theology, the central principle of which is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, is strong meat. It calls for confidence in God and not in some human recourse. It has made great souls in the course of the world's history. But it is not for those easily swayed by upsurges of uncontrolled emotion.

Frank Parker Stockbridge, in a Redbook Magazine article (July, 1928), related that while he was dining with a friend in a restaurant, he overheard a young girl admonish her mother: "Be your age, Mother". Something had gone wrong with the table service, and the mother had staged a tantrum. The flapper daughter remarked to the embarrassed young man who was her escort, "Don't mind mother. She was raised a pet, and I don't think she will ever grow up".

Maturity is not determined by status or age. Intellectual equipment is no sign of maturity. Some scholars are childish. We have measurements for IQ, but none for spiritual capacity or spiritual quotient (SQ).

Faith in God gives poise, strength, courage. It fortifies the will, gives fresh zeal and confidence.

Flight into the mountain of Childishness is futile.

5. When we doubt the goodness and power of God.

We cannot be unaware of the fact that the situation in the world today is the occasion for much uneasiness. Almost anything can take place. We wonder that peoples cannot see the wisdom of living at peace with one another. If God is good and powerful, why does He not stop the aggressors?

A woman writing in the Christian Herald (February, 1942) relates her experience in grappling with this question. She was in her teens at the time of the First World War. She became worked up over it and asked questions. She came to doubt the goodness of God. Later, she did some serious thinking and came to have a different view. She reasoned this way:

God is infinite in his wisdom, his power, his justice, his goodness. But evil is also in the world. It is the evil in the world that causes the trouble. Someone might furnish you with the material with which to build a house: lumber, nails, glass, hardware -- all good material. But if you do not saw the material aright, and if you put it together in any old way, you will have a very unsatisfactory house. That would not be the fault of the one who gave you the material. So, she argues, is it in the matter of baking a cake. You have all good material, but if you put it together in the wrong way, you get a poor cake.

So, she argues, God does not create war. He gives the materials of life -- loyalty, devotion, ambition, acquisitiveness, adventure. He gives material things, and the powers of mind and body. Out of these we make war.

But, someone asks, why does not God keep us from using them in the wrong way? Because he has made us intelligent creatures, with power to discern, think, choose. To become responsible human beings, we need to see the folly of our ways.

Every parent knows that you can do too much for a child. I once heard of a mother who guarded very closely her son. She tried to see to it that he never did anything wrong. When he went to college, in the same town, she guided his course. When William fell in love with Mary, his mother was at first jealous, but she finally decided that she liked Mary, and she insisted that William must marry Mary. Mary lived 100 miles away. When William went to see Mary, his mother bought his ticket, planned his whole procedure. They became engaged. The wedding was to occur when he graduated from the Seminary and settled in his first pastorate. He never got a call. His mother couldn't preach his sermons for him. He was in a predicament. He became dependent on her for the rest of his life. Mary was finally led to return his engagement ring.

God could do that kind of thing for human beings, but he hasn't chosen so to do.

It is foolish to flee to some mountain of Doubt at such a time.

“Behold Your God”

Isaiah the prophet was sent to speak to the people in captivity (or was it by proxy). “Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God” (Isaiah 40:9). Perhaps the eyes of the people were on other powers.

Our eyes are fastened on Malenkov, and his associates in the Soviet government. We are wondering what they are going to do. We need to say to one another, “Behold your God”. That statement may have sounded foolish in a day when everyone was saying, “Great is Babylon the mighty”. But now, Babylon is dust.

God is at work in this world. We make a mistake if we take too soon to cover. Dr. Weatherford observes that no wise man judges a plot on the stage a few seconds after the curtain has gone up. But that is what we may do in world situations. We need the rebuke of Francis Quarles:

“My soul, sit thou a patient looker on,
Judge not the play before the play is done.
Her plot hath many changes, every day
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.”

“Then trust in God thru all thy days; Fear not for He doth hold thy hand; Tho dark thy way, still sing and praise; Sometime, sometimes, we'll understand.”

The Church and the New Day

Minden, LA
Winnsboro, Men's Meeting
First Shreveport Men's Club

December 10, 1933
December 11, 1933
December 15, 1933

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Psalm 11:3

This is a psalm in which David expresses his confidence in God. It came probably after some trying experience, such as an unexpected deliverance from the hands of Saul. Some friends may have come to him and advised him to run away from the situation. They said, "Flee as a bird to your mountain. For, lo, the wicked...made ready their arrow...that they may shoot at the upright in heart. The foundations of the start are about to be destroyed; what can a just man such as you do?" Bu the psalmist replies, "The Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold".

The subsequent history of Israel revealed the soundness of his judgment. Things were truly in a bad way at the time, but he was sure that a better day was coming. A better day did come.

How often in life have people been tempted to run away from situations as rats run from a burning ship? They would show their lack of faith in God. How happy they are afterwards to reflect that though they had the temptation, they saw it all through and lay claim to the favor of the Almighty.

Modern Foundations that Seem to Crumble

Imagine the feeling of some father of our country, some statesman who had a part in forming its framework, were he brought back to life and placed in our midst today. He would find that the name of America had lost its original significance. It once stood for an ideal -- that of a society of all races in which the lot of the common man is easier and life enriched and ennobled. It stood for democracy, for hope for oppressed classes, a bold social experiment, says James Truslow Adams. It had its roots in Christianity. But now, instead of a democracy with religious sanctions, we have an economic feudalism to which organized religion has in large measure become subservient.

We have praised our rugged individuality. We have pointed to the fact that a rail-splitter, born in a shack, may in this land of ours become its president and a world figure. We have said that every normal boy is a possible president. But now these possible presidents are having to undergo the debasing effect of receiving a dole.

Instead of the system that developed character, independence, hardihood, individuality, we have one that is ready to be carried. Every man has his hand out, whether he has to have what is given him or not. He thinks he might as well get his while others are getting theirs without thinking of the effect of such a procedure on his own character.

There has been an emphasis on property rights to the neglect of human rights. Man has justified any procedure on the basis that it will pay. We have come to think of ourselves as a nation of go-getters, bent on individual gain, regardless of how it is obtained.

James Truslow Adams, in writing about our loss in character, calls attention to the sorry spectacle we present, for instance, to advertising men. In listing the motives which exert the greatest influence on the mass of our people, they name first snobbishness, then vanity, imitation of others, fear of criticism, and desire for show.

When the vicious nature of motion pictures is condemned by the moral forces of the nation, the producers reply that they are giving the American people what they want, as indicated by patronage. What a commentary that is on our national character. What a spectacle we present to the nations, when Canada protests against our pictures, when Australia forbids them, and even Turkey declares that it wants no more of the slime of Christian America.

The most recent evidence of our decline, in my own opinion, is the returning saloon. People have said that we will not have again the old saloon of other days. But we have it, just the same. It hasn't developed its confidence and power yet. But a newly hatched serpent is a serpent, although for the time being it may be a plaything.

The Despair of Good People

David was being told that he might as well get out of it all, run away from it. He was told to go to the mountains and leave the situation to the enemies of right. For since the foundations are crumbling, what is there for a good man to do?

This sounds very modern. Magazine writers are saying that the church has lost out, that the Christian religion has failed, and that good people might as well save their breath. They might as well withdraw from the world of affairs. It will be recalled that from the 4th Century on monasticism had rapid growth in the church, the tendency on the part of the very religious to withdraw from social and secular contacts and live lives of recluses.

It rather behooves the good man to raise the question as to whether he has been true to his trust, whether the condition has not been due to his neglect. He may have misdirected his efforts, may have lacked consistency and consecration. He may have employed the wrong method. There may have been a lack of the spirit of Jesus. He may not have put first things first. A people hungry for spiritual food may have been given stones.

At any rate the psalmist was not discouraged. If his hope lay in man, even the righteous, he might have despaired. But he exclaimed, "In the Lord put I my trust" (vs. 1). Maltbie D. Babcock expressed it in that familiar hymn of his:

"This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet."

Is the Church Our Hope?

It is coming back to us with renewed force that our hope as individuals lies in the development of inner restraints. Regulation of conduct from without can serve only a temporary purpose. Until young and old can learn to practice self-control, we cannot hope to have a better world. In short, our great need is for Christian character.

As badly as we need some sort of change in our economic order, we need something else more, and that is a change in national spirit. I do not mean that we need a lot of flag waving, Independence Day oratory, and singing of the national anthem. We need the spirit of brotherhood and neighborliness. It has been observed by someone that what we need most is not social reorganization but spiritual regeneration.

Quoting James Truslow Adams again, "One thing is certain. If there is to be a regeneration of the national character it can come about only by the regeneration of each of us as individuals. It is not a matter of commitment and machinery and organization. It can come only from some subtle change in the heart of the individual".

This is saying, in the last analysis, that the only hope is in that which the church has to offer -- the gospel that can regenerate the hearts of men and women.

The church has been called a "character factory". It can be that only as it is undergirded and pervaded by the Spirit of God. The Lord must be in his Temple. So long as the Lord is there, the gates of hell cannot prevail against his church. The church triumphant cannot be a narrow church, for Jesus condemned narrowness. It cannot be a shallow church, whose members care little for religion. It cannot be a negative church, which offers nothing but prohibitions. Christ with his great affirmation and ideals must have dominion over his church. The ideal suggested by someone is "A saved soul, in a saved body, in a saved community".

Let us remember that the Christianity which the church is to proclaim is not the invention of a gifted young Jew who in a moment of exaltation dared to think of God as his father; neither is it an assembly of truth from the religions of the orient. It is a definite revelation from God chiefly through his Son, Jesus Christ. It is more than a system of ethics, more than a method of worship, more than a philosophy of life. It is the revelation of a new life founded on facts about Christ and made operative by the power of God in the human soul. The supreme thing in Christianity is not precept, but a personality.

So long as the church stands for that type of Christianity it is the hope of the world. It is the hope of the nation.

Home Missions an Expressional Essential

Long ago, the church realized that if it is to serve its purpose as a saving and conserving institution, it must advance side by side with the forces of discovery, settlement, development, achievement. In fact, it is not infrequently true that the church has preceded such advance and opened the way.

Home Missions has a romantic history in America. The first missions were to the Indians, with Roger Williams as pioneer, in 1639. John Eliot in 1649 and Francis Makemie in

1681, did great work. As civilization advanced in covered wagons, the church went too. It has been on the frontiers of our national life throughout the history of the nation.

Now the day of the frontier has about passed. We have been accustomed in more recent years to regard the mountaineers, the immigrants, congested portions of our large cities, the Mexicans, the Negroes as the fields of Home Mission endeavor. But we find our concepts on Home Missions changing. We are finding our new frontiers in industry, business, agriculture.

According to one statement, "Home Missions has as its purpose making available a well-rounded program of worship, evangelism, religious education, and community ministry, in communities where without its help such a program could not be carried out". It is to assist in the organization of churches, providing leadership for them, and increasing their efficiency.

Some have argued against the establishment of small churches, particularly in small communities. Others are pressing the abandonment of churches that give no promise of self-support. There are advocates of merging or small congregations into large ones on the basis of financial economy. We see experiments in community churches and federated churches.

But in my opinion, the small denominational church is a denominational necessity. Some will recall that a well known defender of Big Business some years ago, in justifying some of the tactics employed in achieving its ends, used the illustration of the growing of an American Beauty rose, in which process it becomes necessary to prune off the many buds. We may grow larger tomatoes by pulling off the suckers, but we see what suckers we have been economically in this nation by countenancing the elimination of the little businessman.

The same is true of the church. People are constantly talking of the waste of overchurching and the great advantage to be had in combination. There is some justification. But the elimination of our small denominational units is denominationally suicidal. Every large church was at some time a small church, for all things must have a beginning. Unless a church grows up with a community, it seldom has a place there. The records show that the increase of city churches is more by letter than by profession. Unless the denomination has the outpost church, it receives little or no support from migration.

The small church is a developer of the individual. Man is so constituted that he has to be forced to do much that he ought to do. Many frankly confess that they would not be doing church work if they were not needed to make the church go. Many times the city pastor is told of someone coming from a small church who is a splendid worker. But he is disappointed to find that in the larger church this person intends to sit down and do nothing, which would have been impossible back home.

If the church contains the salt of the earth, it must bring that salt in contact with the portion of humanity that needs its ministry. It is not only a denominational necessity, it is a national necessity.

Our Duty in this Strategic Hour

Like the psalmist of old, many have been tempted to flee as a bird to some mountain of denominational domains and rest, get away from the responsibility, just quit. I know one or two places within an hour's ride of Minden in which those responsible for the congregational activity have done just that. They have simply quit, put the lid on and sat on it.

On the other hand, like the psalmist too, there have been many who have not yielded to this temptation. They have gone on. They have accepted reductions, labored sacrificially. Their heroism has been unquestionable. They have said "Our achievements of the past shall not be lost". They will not turn their fields over to some one else with more courage and faith.

We have 574 home missionaries serving 627 churches, 278 Sunday schools, and 900 communities. He is the man who must stem the tide of national selfishness.

In the report of our Committee to the Assembly it was stated last May, that "While our own home missionaries and their families suffer for the bare necessities of life, the Southern Presbyterian Church gave more per capita to public philanthropic and welfare work than any other church in the Stewardship Council of twenty or more churches".

If our church is to render the service for which we believe she is equipped to tender in this critical hour, let us rally to our church and lend the hand that is so much needed.

"Its sound is a brand, its letter flame
I know a Name, a Name, a Name,
"Twill set these lives on fire."

What the Laymen Can Do

1. Get this great work on your hearts again. Make it the object of your thought and prayers. Let each man reflect on how he personally might make a contribution to the support of the undertaking.

Remember that the testimony of a layman is invaluable. The work of the minister is looked upon as being professional in character. Can't we have again the frequent journeys of men from one church to another bearing testimony to the value of the religion of Christ in a time of great need?

There is great danger of professionalizing religion. We are inclined to leave the work for the minister who is employed to carry on the work. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get people to do things about the church. Without the voluntary service of the rank and file of members, the church cannot possibly go on.

2. Let every layman remember the Home Mission cause in his financial contributions. There has had to be a very radical curtailment of appropriations to minister's salaries. Some have had to be cut off entirely.

Let every layman resolve to help provide an adequate support for his own church, and give something for the help of the other church that needs assistance.

3. It has been my earnest hope that we might secure for a limited period a good evangelist to go over the Presbytery and give new inspiration to the churches. This I would suggest for only a limited period. It would not involve any great expenditure. But it would give heart to the work and to those who minister in these fields.

Marshall Foch, Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces, was often quoted as saying that no battle would ever be won by an army on the defensive. During the past years, we have been content with merely holding our lines intact. We have made no advance.

“Rise up, O men of God!
The Church for you doth wait,
Her strength unequal to her task:
Rise up and make her great.”

When Sleep is not a Gentle Thing

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

April 22, 1926
April 19, 1936 (rewritten)
September 12, 1954 (rewritten)

“Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Psalm 13:3

In that famous highly imaginative poem of Coleridge’s, entitled the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, an old sailor is represented as stopping a wedding guest on his way to the wedding to relate to him a harrowing experience through which he had gone in a stranded ship. The guest was impatient to be on his way, but the old sailor held him. Among other things, the mariner told him that while he was in the midst of his horrors, he fell asleep and dreamed that rain came down to quench his burning thirst. As he reflects on that, he says --

“Oh sleep, it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven
That slid into my soul!” (Pt. V, Stanza 1)

But sleep is not always a gentle thing. Sleep may be a blessing and it may be a peril. There is the sleep of prudence, and also the sleep of folly; the sleep of forethought, and the sleep of carelessness or indifference; the sleep of life or the sleep of death.

The Perils of Physical Sleep

One of my grandfathers was a country doctor, before and after Civil War days. He rode horseback generally in making his calls, and carried his medicines in saddlebags. He was out all hours of the night. Coming home, he would relax. He could even sleep some in the saddle, while his horse brought him home. At times, he would wake up to find his horse standing at the age of his horse lot, waiting to be let in.

Automobiles will not do that for one. Just an instant of sleep while driving at an average speed will involve serious difficulty, for the sleeper and others as well. Many have slept the sleep of death while moving over the highways.

Frequently when floods are mentioned, reference is made to the famous Johnstown Flood on May 31, 1889, one of the most disastrous floods of history. More than 2,000 lives were lost, most of them while they slept. It is recorded that on that fatal night, a freight train rushed madly down the valley under full steam, with its whistle sounding a warning to sleeping people along the way, while behind it thundered a 50 foot wall of water that eventually overtook the train, submerged it, and then rushed on to work its havoc in the region beyond. It is said that at times since, many people have spent sleepless nights in that same valley when flood waters pressed hard on the South Fork Reservoir Dam.

The short psalm from which our text is taken was evidently written by a man who was being sorely tried by persecution of unrelenting enemies and who was seemingly forsaken by his God. We can easily think of David in this connection when he was hunted as an outlaw by Saul, the King. David was forced to find many hiding places -- in the wilderness, in caves, among strange peoples, all the while being haunted by the thought, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul". He did not know that he would not sometime lie down to sleep and never awake. Therefore, he prays to God to "lighten mine eyes", an idiom meaning to "recall to life, refresh". He prayed God to keep him alert, awake, alive, lest he sleep the sleep of death.

Warnings Against Spiritual Sleep

We have abundant Scriptural authority for passing from the physical to the spiritual interpretation of the text.

Jesus warned his hearers against carelessness and indifference. He compared himself to the lord of a house let out to servants while the master goes to sojourn in another country, but with the understanding that he is likely to return at any time, even at midnight. "Watch, therefore," he said, "lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:35,36).

Paul delights in the figure. He wrote the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:6) "Let us not sleep as do others," evidently referring to the indifference characteristic of certain of the Jews and the unenlightened heathen.

He warns the Ephesians against the degrading practices prevalent in heathen circles, and insists that the members of Christ must maintain a high degree of purity. They must come out of darkness into light. Then, he quotes from what was evidently a Christian hymn, for it is not found in the Old Testament scriptures: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

To the Romans, he wrote: "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep...the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:11).

Thus it is seen that "sleep" is made to refer to the apathy produced by sin, a spiritual lethargy which even believers may in a measure be still subject to. Poison remains in the system even after the source of infection has been removed. This residue causes drowsiness. So the influence of sin, even a remnant, is soporific, hypnotic, dulling.

So, we are justified in saying that just as one may be in imminent danger while living under the shadow of a great dam against which the flood waters are hurrying their fury, or just as one may be speeding along the highway while his senses are being numbed by weariness (or even carbon monoxide gas), or just as one may be heavy with sleep while a relentless enemy hovers about, so may the souls of men be so unaware of the perils that threaten as to make their situations most precarious.

There is a philosophy of life that seems to be built upon the assumption that because everything is moving along nicely for the present, it will continue so. There is never a time when we can cease being on our guard.

A Columbia University professor, Gilbert Highet, has just produced a book entitled "Man's Unconquerable Mind" (1954), in which he shows how the human mind has persisted in overcoming the forces that would exterminate mankind or at least reduce it to a state of primitive animalism. Thinkers have been the pioneers of progress -- among the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Anglo-Saxons. The Greco-Roman civilization of the early Christian era was efficient, intelligent, free; but it collapsed. Why, no one knows. But the explanation that seems most plausible, according to the author, is that men came to like wealth and enjoyment better than they liked thinking. In other words, they went mentally to sleep.

The climb out of the darkness of the Middle Ages has been slow, he says. The extent of literacy today is amazing. But is the education provided the kind needed? The author predicts that possibly by the year 2000 the entire planet will be subjected to a total tyranny more effective and ruthless than any yet experienced in our long list of horrors. It has already been started in Russia. Attempts were made in Germany under Hitler and in Italy under Mussolini. If this does come to the planet it will be due to increased mental laziness, the result of devotion to wealth and pleasures. Life will consist of a few hours of mechanical routine followed by jolly picnics and cheap amusements. He still thinks man's unconquerable mind will get him out of that catastrophe. But that is supposing that an atomic warfare leaves a remnant of mind capable of thinking.

Occasion for Concern in Our Day

Some months ago, I was a visitor in a city in which I had formerly been pastor. A doctor friend of mine, a member of the Presbyterian Church, took me aside and asked that I talk to his pastor, my successor, about his tendency to take a dark view of things. "Ask him to tell us in his sermons how good we are and not how bad we are," he pleaded. There are good reasons why I could not do as he requested. But I was reminded that Isaiah said that certain people of his day said to the prophets, "Speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions" (30:10).

Man is a sinner before Almighty God, but he does not like to be told so. He prefers to be lulled to sleep by soothing words, even though it prove to be the sleep of death.

It is certainly not difficult to paint a gloomy picture of the world of our day. Certainly any picture that portrays only the somber aspects of our life and times would be false. There are gleams of light shooting through the clouds. To be aware of the dangers that threaten has its value.

It is true that we live in a day in which people are not greatly shocked by the indecent, the immodest, the shameless. Witness the moving picture advertisements, not to speak of the moving pictures themselves.

Alarming indeed is the mounting prevalence of juvenile lawlessness. So far as these youngsters are concerned, perhaps we are waking up too late. Our concern should be for those who are just developing their attitudes and formulating their principles.

About four months ago (May 15, 1954) Dr. Willard L. Sperry, former Dean of Harvard University, passed, leaving a notable record in the field of religious education. One of his most

widely used books is entitled, "What You Owe Your Child". It has a chapter on "Moral Money in the Bank". He says that there are parents who have moral assets, whether they are aware of it or not, due to good rearing, which produce dividends of industry, honesty, loyalty; but which assets they fail to pass on to their children. They leave their children spiritually and morally impoverished. By lethargy and preoccupation, they are dooming their children to a life of tragic failure and unhappiness. They have no "moral money in the bank".

The Library of Congress recently gave out the information, at the request of a senator, that Americans are spending \$67.22 per capita on liquor, \$26.39 per capita on tobacco, and \$21.39 per capita on schools. I do not have the figures on per capita giving to churches and synagogues, but it is certain that they are far less than that to schools, which the governments force people to give. Yet it is frequently said that seldom is a young person who goes to Sunday school regularly ever caught in the toils of the law.

Automobiles, roadhouses and late hours, work their havoc. While parents are spiritually, if not physically, asleep, the devil is kidnapping their children. It all goes on so quietly, so gradually, that the full realization does not come until it is all too late. Probably we need to make the prayer, "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" for our children.

Our Need of Divine Refreshment

I call attention to the fact that this is a prayer to God which I am using as my text.

No one needs to be reminded of the difficulty one encounters in trying to shake off drowsiness. The three disciples who accompanied Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane were simple unable to keep awake while their Master prayed, although he had asked them to watch. Jesus described the situation when he said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak". This is often true with reference to our spiritual lethargy. Probably, if they had been a little more careful to pray, as Jesus charged them to do, they might have succeeded better.

As a matter of fact, it is impossible for one into whose heart the light of heaven has not come to arouse himself out of his sleep. He has no desire to be aroused. He is content to be as he is.

The Apostle Paul was once in a state of commitment to the sleep of death. But on the road to Damascus, he was lightened. The light he saw blinded his eyes physically, but opened his eyes spiritually. Goerge Matheson, the blind preacher and writer, called Paul "The Illuminated".

The vision that Paul had near Damascus never left him. He must have had it in mind when he wrote:

"If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. Seeing it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

But even those into whose hearts the light of truth has entered, because of the remnant of sin that is left, become indifferent. They need to turn ever to the light of truth. Come to God again and again. Become enlightened by the Word of God, applied by the Spirit of God.

Christ is the remedy for moral lethargy, soul sleep, conscience slumbering, spiritual drowsiness.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 ‘I am this dark world’s light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy day be bright’.
I looked to Jesus and found
 In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that Light of life I’ll walk,
 Till traveling days are done”.

-- Horatius Bonar

“Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

The God within the Shadow

Rockdale, TX

July 27, 1958

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

Psalm 14:1

In a poem entitled, “The Present Crisis,” James Russell Lowell has these familiar lines:

“Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future;
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above his own.”

According to the psalmist, the fool maintains that such is not the case. In fact, he says, “There is no God”. He acts on the assumption that this is a helter-skelter crazy, heedless world. He professes to be wise, but in reality, according to the psalmist, he is a fool.

It is worthy noting that he says that the fool says this “in his heart”. The heart is commonly called the seat of the feelings, affections, emotions of various kinds. This may be a practical atheism, rather than theoretical. It may be the kind one does not talk about, but keeps to himself.

Denial of belief in the existence of God is most often not the result of calm reasoning, but rather the consequence of unrighteous living, or impetuous snap judgment from limited observation. It seems to have been the former factor that operated in the mind of the person to whom the psalmist referred. The rest of the psalm indicates that. There are others, however, who seem to have difficulty harmonizing a belief in God with certain untoward events which seem to belie any claim to rulership on the part of a Supreme Being.

There is no gainsaying the fact that conditions in the world are bad. When have they not been bad? At times, there seems to be a veritable floodtide of evidence that the forces of righteousness are fighting a losing battle. That has been true in the past, and it seems to be true today. The mounting strength of rulers who gain their ends by treachery, assassination, and ruthless wholesale slaughter of men, women and children (for example, on the streets of Budapest in November, 1956) causes some to be cast down, as they hear the taunts of men who ask, “Where is your God?”

The Reality of God

Paul, in his letter to the Romans (1:18-20), declared that God is holding all men to strict accountability for their actions, for God has made whatever is to be known of him perfectly

plain; for ever since the world was created, his eternal power and deity have been clearly perceptible in what he has made, and that consequently they are without excuse.

There is among us what appears to be an instinctive belief that the universe has a meaning and a purpose. The further our knowledge extends, the more incredible the universe seems, with its incomprehensible distance and its equally incomprehensible littlenesses. How did this all come to be? Every effect has a cause. There must have been an external, self-existent Being to set the whole into operation. How true are the words with which the Bible begins: "In the beginning, God..."

How impossible it is to dissociate a design from a designer. There is the human organism: the eye, the ear, the lungs, the digestive system, the brain. Did you ever watch a night-blooming cereus open its gorgeous blossom and fill the room with its rare fragrance, and thereby bear a mute, but most appealing, testimony to the existence and skill of its Designer?

Malcolm J. McLeod writes that Asa Gray, a Harvard scientist, and John Muir, the Sierra Mountaineer, were once sitting around a campfire in the very heart of the Sierras. They agreed that in point of simple majesty the tree known as the Sequoia Wellingtonia leads the world. While examining one stump that showed 4,000 annual rings, the Harvard professor said to the mountaineer, "John, some master Designer has been lingering here".

Need I speak of the universe, and the vast outer space into which man hopes some day to enter and traverse? It seems to reach out into infinity. There can be no explanation of the orderly course of the planets other than that the whole is the product of a master Designer. In the words of McGirt:

"I cannot tell why silvery Mars
 Moves through the heavens at night;
I cannot reason why the stars
 Adorn the vault with light.
But what sublimity I see
Upon the mount, the hill, the lea,
It brings, my Lord, a thought of Thee."

The Character of God

Granting that we have a great First Cause, a great Designer, a great Creator, what shall we say about his nature?

In the 100th Psalm, we read: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations (vv. 4,5).

There is so much good in the world -- good which can only come from God. What a wonderful home this earth is for the human race, equipped with atmosphere, light, heat, seasons, rain, fertile soil. We think of the sunsets, the symphonies, the laughter of children, the great

personalities. The earth is stored with vast untapped resources for man's use. There is so much order and reliability in the universe, so much that brings joy and satisfaction to personal life.

God has equipped man with the capacity to enjoy the blessing with which he is surrounded. He has endowed him with a soul which finds its greatest satisfactions in fellowship with that which is boundless and eternal. I think it was Augustine who said, "Lord, thou has made us for thyself, and we are not at rest until we rest in thee".

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil in the world is the hardest in religious thought. There may be difference of opinion regarding how it got into the world. But we must recognize the fact that evil is with us. Furthermore, Christians are more aware of evil than others because they have a keener sensitivity to the matter of sin. Evil entails suffering. But not all suffering involves moral implications.

There are four kinds of suffering: Physical, which we talk most about; Mental, such as anxiety, sensitivity to criticism, fatigue; Social, a sense of failure, inferiority, unhappy marriage, feeling of not being wanted; Spiritual, the sins that haunt us, sense of guilt.

Much of the suffering we undergo is of our own making. God gave man the freedom of choice, the freedom to do wrong or to do right. Much of our sickness is brought on ourselves. We cannot blame God for our disregard of the laws of health. Even such disasters as floods, dust storms, droughts -- attributed ordinarily to Providence -- may be due to man's denudation of the land. The death toll on our highways is in large measure attributable to our defiance of the inexorable laws of nature. Have we a right to maintain that God is not good because he does not save us from the consequences of our foolhardiness?

True, there are some occurrences that we cannot attribute to man's misdeeds. There are earthquakes, tornadoes, epidemics. There are instances of suffering in individual lives that cannot be explained. At such times, there are those who protest that surely a good God would not permit such things. Oscar Wilde, an Irish author, said that there was enough suffering in London lane to show that God does not love man. There is still vast suffering among the peoples of the world.

The Mystery of Pain

That God directly causes suffering and disease is nowhere stated in the Gospels. That he permits suffering is apparent. The fact that he permits it indicates that there is benefit to be derived from it.

By the way, are we right in assuming that happiness is the supreme good in life? Can we conclude that because God does not make it his supreme concern to produce happiness he is not a good God? An enjoyable feeling may not be the best of all good things. A noble character is better than a pleasant feeling. Well do we know that suffering is necessary to training in fortitude, patience, compassion.

An earthly father is neither wise nor kind who shields his son from hardships. It has been frequently observed that the worst failures in life are the children of parents who did not want their offspring to endure what they experienced in their youth.

We cannot explain why there should be such intense and so much suffering in the world. No religion has ever been able to explain this. But our inability to explain this is no reason why we cannot trust the wisdom and goodness of God. We cannot know all, nor can we form intelligent opinions from appearances. From what we know of the character of God from other manifestations, we can be assured that when all is known there will be seen a wealth of wisdom and goodness. Christians throughout the course of the centuries have been able to turn their grim necessities into glorious gains by developing the rarest and finest of the Christian graces of the spiritual life. The kind of life which a profound trust has enabled Christians to lead is the real test of the value of a trust by means of which they became "more than conquerors".

Progress has come through pain. As one moves up in the scale of life, sensitivity increases. Increase in sensitivity means increase in capacity for pain. Pain is part of the warp and woof of life. Music, art, sympathy, character are the fruits of pain.

Job, who was a great sufferer, exclaimed, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him".

Foolish is it indeed for us to say, when confronted with something we do not understand, "There is no God".

The Friend of God

Minden Prayer Meeting, Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX

November 4, 1936
January 12, 1944

(Exposition of Psalm 15)

Circumstances under which it was written.

Perowne suggest that it is commonly supposed that the psalm was written on the occasion of the removal of the ark of the covenant from the home of Obededom to the tabernacle in Jerusalem. This is by no means certain, but it is interesting.

The ark was lost to the Hebrews many years before, when during the days of the prophet Eli, it was carried out into the battlefield to serve as a talisman when Israel was hard pressed by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:1-22). After proving to be an undesirable possession because of the damage done the god Dagon, the Philistines sent the ark back into Hebrew territory (5:1-6:11). It was first kept at Bethshemesh, where the inhabitants looked on it and were punished (6:12-20). It was then taken to Kirjath-jearim (7:1,2) where it stayed for perhaps 70 years. When an attempt was made to move it to Jerusalem, Uzzah was stricken for attempting to steady the ark, and the ark was kept for some three months at Perez-uzzah. It was then taken to Jerusalem by David, and placed in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (2 Samuel 6:12-19).

Some have felt sure that the 24th psalm was composed for this occasion. The 15th has a very similar content.

The Significance of the Psalm.

The psalm describes the perfect character that can draw near to God and abide in his presence. Neither the hypocrite nor the formalist can stand there. All mere outward service is vain.

The Gemara (part of the Talmud) says that the 613 commands of the law given on Sinai were reduced by

- David to 11 (Psalm 15) particulars.
- Isaiah to 6 (33:15)
- Michah to 3 (6:8)
- Amos (5:4) and Habakkuk (2:4) to 1.

The Structure of the Psalm

The question of the psalmist in verse 1, and his answer in other 4 verses.

The question: “Who shall abide (sojourn) in thy tabernacle (tent, pavilion)? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill (mountain)?” Undoubtedly, Zion is referred to. Note, “sojourn” (temporary); and “dwell” (permanent). How bridge the abyss between God and his creature?

He also ask the question of God. It is a great moment when man looks up to God. He reaches reality then. There can be no basic truth but God.

The answer is that which the psalmist gives under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

He gives the answer by describing the kind of man who can commune with God.

He shows what is involved: Feet, hands, heart, lips, ears, eyes, contracts property.

He describes the man by showing what he is, and also what he is not.

It is thought that the heart of the matter is given in the 2nd verse, in which three characteristics are named; and that the other verses contain instances related to these.

The three essentials are (1) spotless walk; (2) conduct regulated by God’s will; (3) truth as the habit of the heart.

He is, He is Not.

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. He is | (1) a man of whole heart and life
(2) who does the will of God
(3) who speaks the truth because he loves it. |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Luther’s comment: we have here --

The person acceptable by cleanness

The work acceptable by righteousness

The word acceptable by truth

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. He is not | (1) one who injures others by word
(2) one who injures others by deed
(3) one who injures others by listening to and propagating slander. |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. He is | (1) one who turns away from evil
(2) one who honors the good
(3) one who regards as inviolable the sanctity of an oath
(no casuist who seeks pretext to break word). |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. He is not | (1) one who loves usury
(2) one who takes bribes. |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------|

Closer Consideration

“Walketh uprightly” -- in a completely upright way, as to all parts of conduct. Not merely to a degree.

“In his heart” -- from his heart, sincerely
“Backbiteth” -- slandereth, speak hastily
“Taketh up reproach” -- spreading slander
“Usury” -- from a very meaning to bite. Gains made by wrongful loss of others.

Conclusion

No higher standard of excellence. Faith in God and spotless integrity may not be sundered.

“Shall never be moved.” Shall live in the care of God.

The Epistle of James is an expansion of this psalm.

Speaking the Truth in the Heart

On the night that Peter betrayed his Lord, it was said to him that he had a Galilean accent. It was the same as saying that he had the accent of the Galilean, Jesus. Some weeks later, he was arrested for preaching in Jerusalem. He and others were brought before the authorities. “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John...they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus”. In the first instance, Peter had the accent without the spirit, but in the latter he had the spirit of the Galilean also.

Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”. That is true only when the truth as it is in Christ reaches the heart. Just knowing the truth is not enough, neither is talking the truth enough. The truth expressed must be the expression of the heart.

Dr. Ralph Sockman has observed that it is most remarkable that Christian ideals have exerted such a wide spread influence in the world. He calls it the “miracle of history”. We see the Galilean accent in the dates on the calendar -- BC and AD, in our publicly supported schools, and institutions of public charity and relief, and Red Cross ministries. He thinks there is justification for calling ours a “Christian civilization” because the creative, energizing spirit of the Galilean is behind the ingenuity and industry of our present order. It was this which Japan appropriated so vigorously a few years ago. It was being said that Japan was taking on Christian civilization. It was the accent without the spirit, says Dr. Sockman.

There are people who are accustomed to pious phraseology, but who do not seem to have the piety that fits it.

Worketh Righteousness

John Woolman was a Quaker who lived from 1720-1772, in New Jersey. For the most of his life he was a retail businessman who had, however, standards that were thought very impractical and idealistic. He was content with a living out of his business. He put a price on his goods that would give himself a minimum of profit. He would even try to dissuade his customers from buying an article which he thought was not suitable to their needs. The result,

however, was that his business grew, because of the confidence which customers had in him and his word. Woolman was determined that he would not compromise with his conscience in making his living.

He would make journeys among the murderous Indians on the Susquehanna. His friends protested most vigorously. He said, "Love was my first notion in going...that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them".

He also made trips to Southern plantations with the hope of dissuading people from the practice of slavery. He was kindly in it and held the respect of those with whom he differed.

He kept a journal of simple records, which has been widely read and admired. Our nation needs a host of John Woolmans.

"He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

There are massive oaks on the church lot in Minden that have stood for many years. They were here when the white man came. Generations have come and gone. The oak tree cannot be grown in a hothouse, protected from chill winds. They stand when others pass out. So with characters that have met the severe tests of life. "Fair weather never made a sailor."

The Plight of the Pampered

Minden, LA

September 10, 1933

“They are inclosed in their own fat.”

Psalm 17:10

A little over a year ago, I heard Dr. Kenneth Foreman, of Davidson College, say that he thought there are sermonic possibilities in this text. I was not so much impressed with its homiletical potentialities at the time. But it has come to mind since, and perhaps we might spend a while on it with some profit.

The psalmist is here describing his enemies. He prays that the Lord would keep him “as the apple of the eye”, that He would keep him under the shadow of His wings, from the wicked that oppressed him, from his deadly enemies who compassed him about. “They are inclosed to their own fat: their mouth they speak proudly”. They seem to him to be very self-sufficient, rather saucy.

1. The prosperity of the wicked has always been a problem.

This troubled the psalmist very much at times. In that famous 73rd Psalm, he tells about how much this thing troubled him. He was envious of the wicked, and their lack of trouble, their strength, their immunity from plague. “Their eyes stand out with fatness.”

These expressions, as we visualize them in our imagination, are not so attractive, humanly or physiologically speaking. I suppose the average person would not envy any one else for his obesity. Although, I will confess to a hankering of long standing for a certain degree of corpulence, probably because certain men whom I have admired were built after those patterns. All admit that there are great liabilities in obesity. There are pulchritudinous liabilities, to say the least. A certain amount of fatty tissue is of use in the animal body, and is compatible with health. But when this begins to interfere with the discharge of any of the vital powers, it becomes morbid. I have read that Daniel Lambert, a man who lived 1770-1809, weighed 739 pounds.

I am sure that the psalmist did not envy anyone for being so fat that his eyes stood out, or because he was enclosed in his fatness. He is speaking figuratively. Animals are valued for their fatness, and this stood for prosperity. These people were surrounded by deliciousness.

In the 73rd Psalm, there is some satisfaction reached so far as the psalmist is concerned. He found that the end of it all, so far as the wicked were concerned was nothingness. He comes to the conclusion that the only true and lasting blessedness lies in fellowship with God.

2. Prosperity without spirituality is peril.

Fatness may be acquired in different ways. It may be due to different causes. It may be natural to one, through hereditary disposition. It may be due to one's habits of life, to faulty diet, to overeating, or to defective metabolism (transformation of nutritive elements into living tissues). So while one person may be healthy though large, others may not be. It depends.

Some people's prosperity may be a serious liability to them. The prosperity of people has ruined many. While they may be feeling that they are getting along so gloriously in life, they are being ruined. It takes a lot of grace to stand success.

In the song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:15) he says to Jeshurun, which is a poetic name for Israel, that he waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation".

My grandmother had a mustang pony by the name of Fanny. She bought it for a cropper, but had to take it herself. The cropper said the pony was as gentle as any horse. But my grandmother fed generously. She took pride in having her stock look well. Very soon, Fanny became capricious, tricky, hard to handle. She would cut up generally when a train passed. She gave the pony back to the cropper, who soon had her tame and gentle. He cut down on her rations.

Moses was thinking of an ox, intractable, insolent, wanton, ungovernable. The people, he said, had gotten like that because they had too much.

So frequently, the people who have little use for religion and God are those who ought to be the most religious. They have been blessed with the good things of life and yet they are so often ungrateful, proud, and even rebellious. Moses said Israel "kicked".

It is very hard to harness up the self-sufficient in any worthy effort.

3. A description applicable to most of us.

On first thought, we would say that an expression such as that of our text is not pertinent to our situation. But I wonder if it is not.

There is hardly a person here who would not admit that hard as times have been for the past few years, his lot has been much better than it was at some other times of his life. Think back over the years at the inconveniences you once had. That which we once regarded as luxuries are now considered necessities -- paved streets, telephones, automobiles, gas, running water.

In a very significant article in the August issue of Harper's, James Truslow Adams has much to say about "The Crisis in Character" which we have faced in this country. So many inventions have provided conveniences enough to take most of the disciplines out of life. The heating of houses now are self-regulating, by a thermostat, which means that the task of cutting and bringing in the wood has been eliminated. We no longer have to care for a horse, even when

idle. The car needs no attention when not in use. Instead of having to care for cows and milk, we have the milk delivered to the door. We send our children to palatial structures, to get an education. The modern educational plant is a veritable cluster of mansions. All the discipline has been taken out of life.

The Century of Progress Exposition has disclosed the fact, and it seems to have been a nationwide realization, that we have forgotten how to walk. We have been riding so long that the muscles in our ankles and limbs are not equal to the task.

We fret now at the least reverse. We hear of people rebelling against God for reverses. The trouble is not adversity, but fatness. We are spoiled. We cut up because everything is not as we want it.

Probably this is the reason why our depression has not brought people back to the church any better. They have had so much that they are rebellious.

What we need is more grace, more spirituality, more heavenly wisdom to meet life and make the most of it.

Presumptuous Sins: What Are They?

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

October 15, 1939
January 18, 1948

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.”

Psalm 19:13

There is a climax noticeable in the thought of the psalmist. (1) “Who can understand his errors?” -- sins of ignorance and infirmity, those done unintentionally and unconsciously. (2) “Cleans thou me from secret faults” -- things hidden not only from others, but from one’s own heart through nonobservance or self-deception. (3) “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins” -- those done with a high hand. (4) “Let them not have dominion over me” - - leaving man a hopeless slave to sin.

In the Mosaic law, provision was made for dealing with those who sinned in ignorance and those who sinned presumptuously (Numbers 15:27-31). If one brought the wrong kind of offering through ignorance, it was to be forgiven him. But if one should presumptuously do such a thing, he was to be cut off.

The Nature of Sin

There are several philosophical theories -- Evil is eternal and essential; that evil is simply limitation of being; that evil is simply the opposite of good to make good possible; that evil is simply a lack of the consciousness of God.

Sin is a specific evil, apparent to us as moral creatures. The sense of ought.

Sin has a relation to law. The command of one is authority.

What is that law? Some say Reason. Others, Moral Order of the universe. Others, the Regard for the happiness of the universe. Others, Regard for happiness of one’s self. The right view is that the law is the command of a rational being higher than ourselves.

What does this law demand? Complete perfection, entire conformity.

Sins may be voluntary and involuntary.

Voluntary may be sins of deliberate nature. (2) sins of spontaneous, impulsive exercise of feelings, (3) acts due to habit or disposition. The Roman theologians hold that the latter two types are not sins.

There can be no perfection in this life. There can be no merits of good works. There can be no works of supererogation -- that is, can do no more than keep the whole law.

Sins are not limited to acts of will. Want of conformity is also sin.

The story of Achan. Joshua 7. Achan's sin was presumptuous: for he, with the rest had just been rededicated to God, had just observed the Passover, had just seen demonstration of God's power in the fall of Jericho, had been warned against the thing he did. His transgression was flagrant and wilful.

Achan was found out. Achan was punished.

The smallness of the seed of the big trees of California. See Chapman's sermons: Another Mile, p. 37.

During the recent World War, there was published a book entitled, "The Ten Commandments". It was a symposium of short novels written by such distinguished writers as Thomas Mann, Rebecca West, John Erskine, Bruno Frank, and others. The subtitle to the book was, "Hitler's War Against the Moral Code".

Each writer tells a story which illustrates how in various occupied countries the result of violation of these commandments has been disastrous to the people and recoiled upon the temporary victors.

It is said that the book grew out of the astounding words of Hitler, as reported by Herman Rauschnig, who wrote the preface to the volume:

"It is not merely a question of Christianity and Judaism. We are fighting against the most ancient curse that humanity has brought upon itself. We are fighting against the perversions of our soundest instincts. Ah, the God of the deserts, that crazed, vengeful Asiatic despot with his powers to make laws! That slavekeeper's whip! That devilish, "Thou shalt, thou shalt". And that stupid, "Thou shalt not". It's got to get out of our blood, that curse from Mount Sinai! That poison with which both Jews and Christians have spoiled and soiled the free, wonderful instincts of man and lowered them to the level of dog-like fright....The day will come when I shall hold up against these commandments the table of a new law. And history will recognize our movement as the great battle for humanity's liberation, a liberation from the curse of Mount Sinai, from the dark stammering of nomads who could understand the divine only in the form of a tyrant who orders one to do the very things one doesn't like...Against the so-called ten commandments, against them we are fighting."

Thomas Mann, one of the greatest of the German refugees, represents Moses as saying, after having given the commandments to the people at Sinai, something like this:

"But woe to the man who shall arise and speak: 'They are no longer valid.' Woe to him who teaches you, 'Arise and get rid of them.' He shall be mighty and powerful, he shall sit on a golden throne, and he shall be looked upon as the wisest of all. For he knows that the inclination of the human heart is evil,

even in youth...Blood shall flow in torrents because of his black stupidity...But then the people shall hew down the monster -- inevitably, for they can do naught else. And the Lord says, I shall raise my foot and shall trample him into the mire, to the bottom of the earth shall I cast the blasphemer...That the evil may again be the earth, a vale of want, yes, but not a sty of depravity.”

(From Mims: “Great writers as Interpreters of Religion”)

We read in the papers of the second conviction of a young fellow who, after being favored with a ride by a woman, robbed her, stomped her to death, and took her car. He did not have the background that boys should have. That does not excuse him for such a crime as that.

But what crushes us is the failure of a person supposedly upright and good. Every now and then, we read that a man or a woman has left his friends horrified. Accounts in bad shape, or unfaithfulness to the sacred ties of life. I can now think of men who were respected and trusted who left friends, wife, children, clubs, to disappear in some unholy relation.

These departures do not come all suddenly without a process of preparation. The first presumptive act may have been a seeming triviality -- perhaps a slight carelessness in the handling of funds of trust.

The seed of the great trees of the western coast are very small.

You say, “Do you mean to say that you think I should pray that God would keep me back from such a moral collapse?” Well, Peter felt it unthinkable that he should ever fail his Lord. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The Psalmist Reflects on the Scriptures

Psalm 19: 7-14

Outline of the Psalm (Roth)

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| I. | The Glory of Creation | vv. 1-6 |
| II. | The Glory of the Law | vv. 7-9 |
| III. | The Worship of the God of Glory | vv. 10-14 |

Six Praises of the Law:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Law | perfect (without defect...refreshing the spirit) |
| 2. Testimony | sure (certain to be verified...gives the simple a solid basis of faith) |
| 3. Statutes | right (straight) rejoices the heart, man knows he is on the right path |
| 4. Commandments | pure (clear) enlightening the eyes |
| 5. Fear | clean (bereft of servility) enduring forever |
| 6. Judgments | true and righteous |

Excellent Example of Hebrew Parallelism:

The law, its inherent character (perfect, right), its effects (refreshes the spirit, rejoices the heart).

The Names Given the Law:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Law | Rule |
| 2. Testimony | God's witness to the truth |
| 3. Statutes | His special prescription of duty |
| 4. Commandments | His general prescription of duty |
| 5. Fear | The effect it produces |
| 6. Judgments | Judicial decisions |

Characteristics of the Law:

1. Without defect
2. Reliable
3. Straight
4. Clear
5. Clean (unselfish)
6. True

God's Word:

It is God's great treasury of truth. Treasury begins to accumulate at the time of the Exodus, or earlier.

Perfect.

“A Dependable Standard -- *The law of Jehovah is perfect* (Golden Text). After ten years of patient work, experts in London have finished what is said to be the most perfect yard stick in the world. It is made of platinum and iridium, and was designed to be used as the standard of the British government. Every year for ten years it will be examined, and if it varies by a millionth of an inch it will be rejected. The Bible is the Christian’s standard for his rule of conduct. Its principles never change. “The law of Jehovah is perfect.” -- Juniata Rohrback, Washington, D.C. From *The Expositor*”

“How Reverence the Bible? -- *And Esra the priest brought the law before the assembly* (v. 2). Phillips Brooks used to tell the story of some savages, to whom was given a sundial. So desirous were they to honor it and keep it sacred that they housed it in, and built a roof over it. Is this the way we treat the Bible? It is not too sacred for daily use. Learn to use it. Let God in on your life. -- Mrs. M. Watts, Herne Hill, London. From *The Sunday School Chronicle*”

“His Mother’s Version -- *They understood the reading* (v. 8). A Bible class teacher was telling of the various translations of the Bible and their different influences. The class was much interested, and one of the young men that evening was talking to a friend about it. “I think I prefer the King James Version for my part,” he said, “though of course the Revised is more scholarly.” His friend smiled. “I prefer my mother’s translation of the Bible myself to any other version,” he said. “Your mother’s?” cried the first young man. “Why, what do you mean, Fred?” “I mean that my mother has translated the Bible into the language of daily life for me since I was old enough to understand it. She translates it straight, too, and gives it full meaning. There has never been any obscurity about *her* version. Whatever printed version of the Bible I may study, my mother’s is always the one that clears up my difficulties.” -- Elisabeth B. Stansfield, Pasadena, California. From *The Christian Advocate*. The prize for this week is awarded to this illustration.

The Preciousness of Scriptures:

1. More to be desired than gold (Statement means more now than before the price of gold went up).
2. Sweeter than the drippings of a honeycomb

The Revealing Effects of Acquaintance with the Scriptures:

1. Who can understand his own errors?
2. Cleanse from secret sins:
 - White ants destroying the interior of wooden columns
 - Flaws in steel rails
 - Disease germs in the body
 - Samson whist not that the Lord had departed from him

People in Malachi's day saying, "Wherein have we robbed God?"
White clothes seem yellow by the side of snow
The South sea chief who saw himself in the mirror
3. The desire to be kept from sins we intend to commit. The sins that dominate us.

The Concluding Prayer (vs. 14)

One of the most beautiful prayers written.

19th Psalm

As the Christmas season draws near, we feel that our thoughts should turn in the direction of the great pivotal event of human history which it is intended to celebrate.

Do you think it strange that we should select the 19th Psalm?

This psalm has been appointed to be read on Christmas Day in the church of England. Some have wondered why. It has been suggested that it is chosen out of comparison between the natural sun and the Sun of Righteousness. The better reason is that the minds of all should consider the revelations of the glory of God, two of which are spoken of in the psalm, and the third being the revelation in Christ.

It was the heavens that proclaimed that Glory on the night of the Advent. But this was not the idea in the mind of the psalmist.

Immanuel Kant, immanent philosopher, is credited with this statement: "Two things there are that inspire wonder and constantly increasing reverence the oftener and the more they are considered -- the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me".

We have both of these spoken in this psalm.

The great hymns that have been based on this psalm are: Joseph Addison's "The Spacious Firmament on High", fittingly set to music by Haydn, "Creation". Isaac Watts' "The Heavens Declare Thy Glory, Lord" (Presbyterian Hymnal, No. 141).

Prof. Roth's outline is followed (Expositor, October, 1930, p. 32)

I. The Glory of Creation 1-6

1. The heavens bear witness to the Creator (vs. 1). The further one's knowledge advances concerning the heavens, the greater the testimony to the glory of the Creator. The word for God is "El," denoting power.

2. That witness is continuous, but inaudible, and universal (vs. 2-4). There is some difficulty in connection with verse 3. There are at least three interpretations: 1. Omit "where", which is not in the original. 2. This verse is connected with the next in this sense, "Though there is no audible voice, the sound has gone out through the whole earth". 3. There is no speech nor language in which the testimony of God in the heavens is not heard. Dr. Roth thinks the last the best.

Professor Michael Pupin, of Columbia University, in his autobiography "From Immigrant to Inventor", writes as follows:

"Fifty years ago, instructed by David's psalms, I found in the light of the stars a heavenly language which proclaims the glory of God, but I did not know how that language reached me, and I hoped that some day I might find out. That hope was in my soul when I landed at Castle Garden. Today science tells me that the stars themselves bring it to me. Each burning star is a focus of energy, of life-

giving activity, which it pours out lavishly into every direction of the energy-hungry space; it pours out the life of its own heart, in order to beget new life...The light of the stars is a part of the life-giving breath and its quickening action in my soul”.

Some think the word “line” should be “voice” in verse 4.

3. The Sun is the chief herald of God’s praise (vs. 4b-6). This is a famous description of the sun’s course through the heavens. The psalm was probably inspired by the glory of an Eastern sunrise.

II. The Glory of the Law

The name of God appearing here seven times is “Jahveh”, the God of revelation.

There are six praises of the Law:

1. Law perfect (without defect) converting the soul (refreshing the soul)
2. Testimony sure (certain to be verified) giving simple solid basis of faith
3. Statutes right (straight) rejoices heart, man knows he is on right path
4. Commandment pure (clear) enlightening the eyes
5. Fear clean (bereft of servility) enduring forever
6. Judgments true and righteous

III. The Worship of the God of Glory vs. 10-14

Vs. 10. Is it strange that one should look at the Law as this one does? Honey so pure and sweet that it runs from the honeycomb. God’s law is precious to God’s children.

Vs. 12. “Who can know and recognize his own errors of weakness and ignorance?”
“Secret faults” -- faults known only to oneself.

Vs. 13. “Presumptuous sins” -- those done on purpose. The sins which dominate a man and pervert his character. Cleansing from the former and restraint from the latter will make one upright and innocent from the great transgression.

Vs. 14. One of the most beautiful prayers written.

Seeing God in the Heavens

August 21, 1932

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.”

Psalm 19:1

It will not be very long before many eyes in American will be intent on the heavens. Total eclipse of the Sun, visible in New England will take place on August 31, 1932. The moon in its course will come between the earth and the Sun and cast a conical shadow on the earth. Since another total eclipse of the Sun will not be visible again in America until 1963, many astronomers will go to New England for the event.

This is but one of the many wonders of the heavens. Wonders equally as great or greater are going on there all the time. We have become so accustomed to them that we do not see them.

There is more of the sky in our view than anything else -- we can see little of earth, little of the sea at any one time, but much of the sky.

The sky is always with us. It keeps us from homesickness when in distant lands. The common roof makes for international goodwill.

The sky is the most beautiful thing we know of. We feel as we look at it that surely it must be the work of God. Which is more beautiful -- the sky by day or the sky by night? Cloud formations -- cities, cathedrals, snow banks, constellations moving with precision.

The Greeks and other ancients believed that the stars had influence on their lives. They thought that knowledge of the stars would guide their crop planting, and enable them to foretell weather, or to tell their own fortunes. Out of the brightest stars, they formed constellations and gave them names. They took names of gods, goddesses, mammals, birds, reptiles. Cassiopeia, Great bear, Scorpion, Orion. The modern astronomers continue to use these constellations.

“Dog Days” has nothing to do with dogs. There was the ancient belief that July heat was caused by the rising with the sun of the constellation of the Great Dog, of which the bright star Sirius is a part.

One of the more famous constellations is not visible at this season -- Orion. The brightest star of this constellation is Betelgeux, a huge red star. It is millions of millions times as large as the earth. In comparison the earth is as a dot of an i in a house, like a speck of dirt on the Rockies. The sun is a million times larger than the earth, and the star Betelgeux is 25 million times as large as the sun.

The sun is 93,000,000 miles away, and its diameter is 865,000 miles, while the earth's diameter is only 8,000 miles. The heat of the surface of the sun is 6,000 degrees C, and the interior temperature is 50,000,000 degrees C. A piece of it the size of a pea would scorch

anyone who came within 1,000 miles of it, or destroy an army if focused upon it (Macfie: Science Rediscovered God).

The moon is thought to have been formed from portions drawn from the earth -- the depths of the Pacific.

Movement, says Dr. Macfie, is a mystery. Scientists say that an object put into motion will go on forever unless acted upon by some force. What is it that keeps things moving with such precision and with such force? Man may set things in motion -- mind. Is not this symbolical of the spirit and will of God?

Think too of the blossoming of this world into the iridescent dream that it is.

“There never was an atheist astronomer” (Macfie).

Many of us are too busy to look upward. Like the animals in this. Some people never watch the moving picture of the sky. While man is worshipping, the animal eats grass.

The Hebrews were always urging people to look up. The greatness of God is symbolized in the sky. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are God's thoughts high above man's. There is no blight of sin on the sky.

The might of God is seen in the sky. Such immense worlds held in place and moved with such accuracy. Such power over great distances.

The gentleness of God: the softness of the sky.

The greatness of man in it all. “When I consider thy heavens, etc.”

Series on 23rd Psalm

- Psalm 23:1 Solace in Divine Surveillance -- Minden, LA -- October 4, 1925
Psalm 23:2 Bountiful Provision of Beneficent Providence -- Minden, LA -- October 18, 1925
Psalm 23:3 The Gracious Guidance of a Great God -- Minden, LA -- October 25, 1925
Psalm 23:4 The Antidote to Fear -- Minden, LA -- November 1, 1925
Psalm 23:5 Guests of God in an Inhospitable World -- Minden, LA -- November 8, 1925
Psalm 23:6 The Retinue of a Temple Resident -- Minden, LA -- November 15, 1925

Given as Prayermeeting Talks at Colonial, Dallas

- Psalm 23:1 October 11, 1944
Psalm 23:2 October 18, 1944
Psalm 23:3 October 25, 1944
Psalm 23:4 November 15, 1944
Psalm 23:5 November 29, 1944
Psalm 23:6 December 6, 1944

Solace in Divine Surveillance

Minden, LA
Colonial Presbyterian, Dallas, TX

October 4, 1925
October 11, 1944

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Psalm 23:1
(Read Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23-27)

The manifold character of God has been represented in terms of human pursuits. Naturally such a method has decided limitations. Conceptions of the unseen can be arrived at only through the perceptible. Infinity must be portrayed in finite terms. To the Divine, human names and human offices are ascribed.

Each office ascribed is intended to set forth a certain phase of God’s character and work. He is called Judge, since he is Arbiter in human affairs, the court of last resort, from which there is no appeal and from which none is needed since his decisions are right and just. He is called King, since He is supreme in power, the King of kings, the sovereign ruler of the universe. Being the maker of the race, he has unquestioned right to be called the Father of mankind. Preeminently, too, has he right to be called Teacher, since he has through the ages been unfolding to man the hidden mysteries of the eternal verities.

While the ancient Hebrew conceived of God in these capacities, and others of like importance, it is probably that they liked most to think of him as a Shepherd. This at least can be easily imagined, since the people of Israel had held the office in high esteem. There had always been many shepherds among the people of Israel. That was a pursuit extensively followed even in our Lord’s day.

Some of the most appealing passages in the Bible employ this figure. “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock” (Ps. 80:1). “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11). Through the mouth of Ezekiel, the prophet among an exiled people, he said, “Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out...and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day...I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord” (Ezekiel 34:11-15).

The shepherd idea was made prominent in the life of our Lord. The heavenly hallelujah chorus was sung to Shepherds on the night of our Lord’s birth. With master hand, Jesus depicted the true shepherd. He declared himself to be the good shepherd. A beautiful recognition of this office of Christ is found in Hebrews: “Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep” (13:20).

Even in this day when so many of us know little of sheep, less of shepherds, and still less of the ancient type, we see the beauty of the figure. To the old Hebrew, it must have been rich in content, illuminating in its suggestiveness, and comforting in its implications. In the bleak and tragic periods of Christian church history, it has filled the souls of suffering saints with imperturbable repose to sing, "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want". We find too that in these latter days of greater religious tolerance, when the breezes of disquietude blow and the waves of anxiety roll, the thought of the Shepherd-God brings a peace and serenity that is profound. There is an eternal tenderness about the words of David that touch magic chords on the heart strings of humanity.

That the writer of this psalm should have been other than the great shepherd king of Israel -- David -- cannot with reason be maintained. This, I believe, is freely granted. It can hardly be the work of the shepherd boy, of ruddy countenance, still engaged in the care of the flocks of his father. These words have the stamp of experience upon them. The shadows of David's life were rapidly lengthening, and they lay across the paths over which his now aged feet had brought him. He had come to know the blessedness of faith in God. That he should describe it in terms of a phase of his life that was at that time most vivid in his memory is natural. In old age, we remember best the experiences of our youth. Tired of the blandishments of society, he longed for the bliss of solitude. In memory, at least, he roamed again the hills of Bethlehem; he felt the generous rays of a kindly sun; he heard again the congenial chatter of the running brook; he went forth again in the buoyancy of youth to grapple with the lion and the bear; he provided rest, and safety, and food and drink for his dependent flocks. Then, "The Lord is my shepherd," he thought, and so he wrote.

There seems to be a desire on the part of some to depersonalize this psalm, by making it refer to the nation of Israel rather than to the author. In the words of another, this takes the "pith and glow and warmth" out of the psalm. In these modern days, we are being taught to think of the crowd as a unit. If you get the crowd right, the individual will be right. We speak of the masses and mass movements. The individual is lost in the crowd.

It is the way with finite minds to conceive of the world as made up of a few more or less important individuals and the rest. The latter is variously called the mob, the common herd, the hoi-polloi, the rabble, the horde. Only the individual who has risen above mediocrity deserves recognition. He is the "son of Mary" to be served by the nameless "sons of Martha".

Discerning the tendency among mortals to forget or ignore the individual, students of the Bible and others have maintained that the Almighty is not concerned about the units of society, since there are probably millions upon millions of worlds like ours, whose aggregate populations make up an inconceivably large host of beings. But this is really not the teaching of the Bible. Even grant that the writer of the 23rd Psalm is thinking of God as the Shepherd of the race, it is the ancient Shepherd which is thought of. It is the shepherd who dwells in intimate relation with his sheep -- who knows the name of every one and stands ready to give his life for the sheep.

In unforgettable language, Jesus impressed upon his hearers the truth that God is not too great to be mindful of the needs of the individual. What he said about the grass and the sparrow in God's oversight is as familiar to us as any other portion of the scriptures. He told of the

shepherd who calleth his own sheep by name (John 10:3). He likened God to the shepherd who might have a hundred sheep, and who would leave the ninety and nine and go in search of the one which had gone astray. It was not even intimated that any distinction was made in the members of the fold. He did not say that it was the bellwether sheep, the registered stock, the most attractive. Therefore, it is not the blue bloods, the upper tens, the celebrities that He takes notice of. There is none so insignificant as to be beneath his notice.

“But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,
Ere he found his sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert he heard its cry --
Sick and helpless and ready to die.”

It is the fact that the Lord of high Heaven will do this for the most insignificant of men that proves the greatness of mankind. “It is no use trying to prove to me the greatness of man,” says Dr. J. D. Jones, “by saying that one man wrote an Iliad, and another a Hamlet and another a Paradise Lost; that one painted a Sistine Madonna and another composed a Hallelujah Chorus and another built a St. Paul’s Cathedral. These statements bring me no assurance of my greatness” (King of Love, p. 28).

But it is enough if each one can be made to feel that the sacrifice on Calvary was for the individual. “He loved me and gave himself for me.”

If the first statement of the text is true, the second naturally follows. If the Lord is my shepherd, I shall undoubtedly not want. It may be better to render it “I cannot want”. This, says Bishop Perowne, is the keynote of the psalm.

It is observed that love alone is not sufficient to give comfort. Love may be strong, but impotent. That is so often true as a loved one is passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

But love and omnipotence is sufficient.

“My father is rich in houses and lands.
He holds the wealth of the world in his hands.”

George Muller (1805-1898) was a noted philanthropist, born in Prussia, but who went to England at the age of 23. At Bristol in 1832 he instituted several philanthropies, the best known of which is the orphanage at Ashleydown (established in 1836). It was started and maintained entirely by voluntary contributions. In 1875, it sheltered 2,000 orphans. He wrote a five volume “Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Muller”, 1837-1885.

He was once relating to a friend some of the difficulties he had to contend with in providing the orphans with food day by day, and when he had finished his friend said to him, “You seem to live from hand to mouth!” “Yes,” said Mr. Muller, “it is my mouth but God’s hand.”

The Bountiful Provision of a Beneficent Provider

Minden, LA
Colonial Presbyterian, Dallas, TX

October 18, 1925
October 18, 1944

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.”
Psalm 23:2

Those familiar lines will be recalled in which it is said that
“Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

In all probability, want is used in the sense of “require” or “need”. It certainly cannot mean that man has desire for little, for there seems to be no limit to the wants of some. Very seldom, too, is that desire for things which man really needs.

When David wrote, “I shall not want”, he must have meant that there would “be no lack of the things which I really need”. It is probably an amplification of that assuring thought that he follows with the words of our text.

A certain mother is accustomed to remark that one of her two children likes just what she ought to have in the way of food, articles rich in vitamins; while the other seems to prefer a diet that is deficient in point of nourishment. Such, more or less, is the division into which the race is separated, spiritually. The soul, like the body, needs nourishment. There are certain foods that are essential to life. Some seem to prefer these, and others seem to prefer anything else. It was to a people of perverted spiritual tastes that the prophet exclaimed, “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?”

Not infrequently one may be willing and even anxious to have the right diet, but may be unable to determine just what that is. We know that the thing for such a person to do is to place himself into the hands of one who knows. That is just what the writer of this psalm has done. “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”. Jesus, who claimed to be the “Good Shepherd”, when he saw the multitude, was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36).

David’s consolation was in the fact that he had a real Shepherd to provide his wants out of a knowledge of just what he needed, ability to furnish it, and a friendly interest that made that knowledge and ability available at all times. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

This suggests the picture of the shepherd as he leads his flock out of the fold into the open country where dwell wolves and robbers, and where the precipice and rushing torrents threaten. He knows where the best grazing places are. He is familiar with the paths that lead along side the quiet, refreshing streams. He is acquainted with the abilities of the sheep, so that when the day is done, all return to the fold unhurt by the day’s activities.

It was the Good Shepherd who said, "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:10).

There are today many disturbed, distressed, impoverished souls who might be living in the affluent splendor of verdure clad hills. Too long, already, have these chased the phantoms and fed on the husks of life. There are rich, oasis-like spots into which they might enter and find happiness and pleasantness.

Jesus once said, "I am the Bread of Life". Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me". He fed on the Bread of Life.

Green pastures are to be found in God's word. Yet some prefer the husks of the daily paper, periodicals, novels.

There are green pastures in the worship of the sanctuary. Good books. Godly conversation. Prayer.

Our Lord also furnished the Water of Life. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

There is in each of these declarations of David's a suggestion of rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters". By still waters he does not mean stagnant water, but the quiet, deep-running streams. There is rest in the music and mystery of deep waters.

"Come unto me," saith the Good Shepherd, "all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest". We are not to lie down in indolence and indifference. "Take my yoke upon you", is the command, in terms of another figure. The Good Shepherd takes his sheep, as he did the disciples, apart from the feverish tide of life to the still waters where opportunity may be afforded to plumb in a measure the depths of God's love.

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease.
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace."

Some students of this passage find in it the idea of compulsion. "He maketh me." Patience and forbearance are qualities of the good shepherd. Yet those qualities alone would not make a good shepherd. There is need at times for sternness. One who is always kind is not even kind, says an old adage.

A little child, at the close of day, is tired and sleepy, but does not know that that is the reason for an irritable disposition. Others may not know it, but the mother knows it. She says, "You are sleepy and must go to bed". The child protests that she is not sleepy and that it is too early to retire. But a kind mother makes the child to lie down for a good night's rest.

Trouble and disappointment are often themselves the most luxuriant pastures. But in these one must be made to lie down. We do not do so of our own choice. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

After a calm, candid and unprejudiced review of the past, can you not say what David said? Has not your life been spent in green pastures and beside still waters? Is it not true that your life on the whole has been good?

Some declare that this world is a “vale of tears”. This from Burns:

“O life! thou art a galling load
Along a rough, a weary road” (Despondency)

Life is spoken of as a “waste of wearisome hours” (Moore).

This pessimistic note is heard in this time also. And we confess that there is much that is sad, hard, and painful. But, honest now, is this not the exception rather than the rule? It is easier to remember the exception than it is the rule. If we were to judge by the daily papers, the country is in the grip of crime. But we know that millions are law abiding.

Did it ver seem strange to you that people who suffer most should be most ready to speak of the good time they have had? Possible it is because the pleasure is the exception and hence most easily remembered.

As David looked back over his life, it seemed good to him. Even when he was hunted as an outlaw, and probably the experience with Absalom was a rich pasture in which the Lord made him to live. Its value did not appear at the time. But as he looked back over it he could say, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters”.

“Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
Much we need Thy tender care;
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us;
For our use Thy folds prepare.”

The Gracious Guidance of a Great God

Minden, LA
Colonial Presbyterian, Dallas, TX

October 25, 1925
October 25, 1944

“He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”
Psalm 23:3

In a recent book of essays on religion, Dr. Glover, an Englishman, relates a fairly authentic story of a sculptor who lived in North Africa in about the 3rd century of the Christian era. He made statuary to adorn heathen temples. Christians became the object of his jest and ridicule. In argument, however, the Christians seemed to get the advantage over him. With some persuasion, he was induced to come to a Christian service. He was struck by the novelty of it -- the absence of altar, priest, ritual, pomp, formality. He went again, and finally became rather regular in attendance. Yet it could not be claimed that he had become a convert. On a great day, he attended the beast shows and gladiator sports in the amphitheater. To his astonishment, in response to demands from the great crowd, Christians were brought into the arena -- five men and two women. They were tied to stakes. A savage cow was turned loose, and pitched the women into the air, while the cruel passion of the spectators found its expression in yelling. A lion was called for. But a leopard was prodded in. It crouched in catlike fashion, as it slowly approached its victim, and leaped upon the back of one of the men, and the scene smote the soul of the sculptor. He reached home somehow, but for a week he could not rest. On Sunday night, he sought out the Christian meeting place, and made a profession of his religion, and was baptized. At first, he bore testimony in his shop. But a sermon on one occasion convinced him that he must give up his trade of making statues of heathen gods. Then the thought came to him, Why not a statue of Christ Himself? So, he made a statue of the Good Shepherd, with a newly found sheep on his shoulder. It was really the form of Mercury, with a new face. Some critical observer told him that he had confused the Good Shepherd in John’s gospel with the everyday ordinary shepherd in Luke’s Gospel -- that the Good Shepherd of John did not carry a sheep. “Well,” he said, “perhaps I have mixed them, but...when I carved the sheep on his shoulders, I thought of all he had done for me” (The Pilgrims, pp. 174-199).

While it is true that the Lord is represented as leading his sheep, it is not wrong to represent him as carrying his sheep. A good shepherd does anything necessary to restore the lost sheep to the fold. Having wandered away from the fold, and gotten into the bypaths, it was not equal to the task of finding its way back.

We have here represented one of the employments of Jehovah as Shepherd. “He restoreth my soul.”

Restoration

It has been suggested (J. D. Jones: The King of Love) that a great experience lies back of this statement. If it was David who wrote, as I believe, we can easily surmise just what

experience in his life he might have had in mind. It was that regrettable experience with Bathsheba, when he forsook a path that was virtuous, upright, honest and moral and entered upon one that was sensual, cruel, selfish and unscrupulous. It was an unfortunate and disastrous incident, and it left his soul scorched and shriveled. Charmed by the iridescent bubbles that float on a foul stream, people have gone on rashly and heedlessly until they found themselves hopelessly floundering in the scum and filth. Contaminating currents run through life, and the thoughtless and unwary are caught in their powerful and relentless vortexes.

It matters not whether his sheep be submerged in the stream of sensual pleasures, caught on the crags of covetousness, or bound in the brambles of unbelief. The Good Shepherd will go in search of the sheep in the hour of its distress. He saw the glory imprisoned in the heart of a despised woman of Magdala, and disclosed it. He saw the big possibilities in a little publican, and gave them public recognition. He knew that Paul, though a Pharisee and a persecutor, might be transformed into an apostle.

There has been some discussion as to whether it is correct to say that a man has a soul or that he is a soul. Without entering into the discussion, we may safely say that the soul is one's basic self. This becomes sick, and unstable and weary. The Lord reinvigorates the soul. He accelerates the throb, he revives the warmth, he generates the glow that betokens health and power.

In all probability, David had a picture in mind here. It is that of the oriental shepherd ministering to the needs of a sheep that has wandered from the fold and fared badly among the rocks and thorns. The shepherd anoints the bruise with olive oil and cedar tar, and gives the sheep a refreshing drink.

We think of Peter, once energetic and boastful, but after the crucifixion subdued and despondent. He had done the very thing that he had said so confidently that he would not do. He had denied his Lord. When the Lord said, "Go tell my disciples, and Peter", it was the Good Shepherd in search of his sheep. Undoubtedly, Peter and Thomas and the rest could say, "He restoreth my soul".

We are "frail children of dust, and feeble as frail", fainting under the heat and burden of the day. We are conscious of a lack. Our souls are suffering from a lack of the right kind of food.

Some are trying to feed their souls on a material diet. You will recall that the foolish rich man in the parable said, "Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19).

But man craves the eternal, and nothing else will satisfy him. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:2).

The Lord restores our souls, first, by transforming them. He makes them over. It is he "who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalms 103:3-5).

The means through which He works are the Word of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the work of his Providence.

Regulation

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.” The connection with the preceding declaration may not be so apparent, until we remember that restoration is not enough. It is merely the beginning of a new effort.

After rejuvenation should follow operation. After acquisition comes utilization; after rest comes work. After the mount of vision must follow the valley of service. Revival of strength calls for renewal of effort. “He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness”.

Mark tells us that Jesus “appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (3:14). He restored their souls and then led them in service.

There is no need to take time here to enforce the truth that man needs guidance if he is to walk in the path of righteousness. There is so much evil in the world, and every one is conscious, more or less, of the presence of evil in his own heart. Temptations distract and beguile the soul. Borne on by a proneness to evil, he treads the primrose path of dalliance, that leads ultimately to deep shame and rankling remorse. The pleasant and flower-strewn vistas of sinful fancy fascinate one. There is need for a restraining hand to hold one in the path of righteousness.

One cannot depend upon his conscience altogether. That God given faculty has been tampered with, and must be repaired. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 4:12).

One can neither depend upon his friends altogether. They are just as much in need of guidance. It is a case of the blind seeking the leadership of the blind.

It is the Lord who said, “I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight” (Isaiah 42:14). “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6).

After one has had a little experience with the dangers that beset the paths of life, and come to know the folly of self-sufficiency, he is led to say:

“Where he leads me I will follow...
I'll go with him al the way.”

While there may be the confession --

“I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now

Lead Thou me on.”

Provocation

The incentive which the Lord has in this is not any merit which he sees in us. It is all “for his name’s sake”.

This means, I take it, that God does this to be true to his character. He does it because it is his nature to help. God must remain true to himself.

I have seen an announcement to the effect that some one would preach on the rather sensational topic, “Was Christ a Christian?” It was intended, perhaps, to determine whether Christ lived up to his own teaching. But we know that had he not, his influence in the world would have been negligible. He was himself the embodiment of his own ideals for men.

This was not because of any studied effort on his part to conform to the standards which he had established. It was because it was the natural course for him to pursue. Jesus did what he did because he was what he was. In fact, Christianity is Christ.

In Jesus we find a revelation of God. God is the same loving, serving being that the world found Jesus to be. Therefore, he restores the souls of men and leads them in paths of righteousness because he is what he is, and because he must be true to his own character.

It might also be suggested that since it was the purpose of God to establish a kingdom upon earth, there would be none to constitute it did not God take steps to reclaim lost sheep. For all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one unto his own way...

What a great God we have then. He takes the drooping wings of the eagle, and gives them power to mount up over the storm and tempest. Strength and skill he restored to the paralyzed arm of the warrior. He imparts purity to the soul leprous with lust. He makes “a blazing beacon out of a charred brand, and a mitred priest out of a criminal” (M. R. Vincent).

Under the Gracious guidance of our great God, we can not fail to arrive at the right goal for our happiness and well being.

A year or two ago, in the mountains I attempted to conduct another along a path that would lead up to one of the points famous for the beauty of its view. I had been over the path some years before. But this time we seemed unable to find the right path. Any one we took seemed to lead off to the side and down the mountain. The blind was leading the blind.

“We know, beloved Shepherd,
The path that Thou hast trod
Leads ever out of darkness
and on and up to God.
If from that path we wander,
And far astray we roam,
O Call us, faithful Shepherd,
And bring us safely home.”

The Antidote to Fear

Minden, LA
Colonial Presbyterian, Dallas, TX

August 9, 1942 (rewritten)
November 15, 1944

“Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”.

As has been observed by others, it seems almost a sacrilege to suggest that the translation here is inaccurate. We naturally resent any change made in the words of this and other familiar and dearly loved passages of Scripture. Frankly, I do not like here the substitution of the word “Jehovah” for “The Lord”, even though I am constrained to consent to it for the sake of accuracy. And so here, it is more accurate to say “the valley of deep darkness” (margin), or as Moffatt renders it, “the glen of gloom”. There are other dark valleys besides that of the shadow of death.

A pastoral scene, familiar to David, supplies the figure. Timid sheep go boldly along the paths that lead through dark recesses and deep gorges, where beasts of prey lurk. They fear no ill. The shepherd is with them, armed with the implements of his office. The rod was a short heavy stick for purposes of defense, and the staff was a crook used to lean on, climb with, and lift the sheep with out of the mire.

David had passed through many dark and sunless ravines, in a spiritual sense. He had been hunted as an outlaw, he had had heartbreaking family troubles, and there was his own grievous sin, and the death of a wayward son. This psalm was not the product of immature age. It was no doubt the product of David’s ripe years. What a glorious triumph the psalm reveals!

This a Timely Theme

Today we are aware of dangers that threaten. Our men are being called to the colors in ever increasing numbers. Foes are arrayed against our nation and the nations that fight with her. The issues of battle are uncertain. We have entered the valley of deep darkness, and the way may lead through a great gorge before it ends. We are fearful for those we love.

We are at times uneasy lest we at home may undergo the destruction of the bombing from some air squadron.

There may be premonitions of some untoward development in our own lives -- that of reaching the dead line of unemployment, or a critical situation in business affairs.

Fear plays great havoc in life. It is a great menace. It is spoken of as “the devil of fear”. It beclouds reason, unsteadies nerves, obscures vision. The fear of an untoward event has been known to be the cause of it. It has been said that fear was the cause of the 1st World War -- one nation afraid of another. Fear breeds suspicion.

Psychologists seem to be divided in opinion as to the extent to which fear is instinctive. It seems to be native. It is a sentinel. It is useful in capacity. It is when fear becomes Chief of Staff that the damage is done.

When we are dominated by fear of hunger, cold, darkness, lightning, altitude, we have a bad master. So also when we fear the comment of others, our rivals, our competitors; when we fear sickness and death.

The result of such fear is physical disability, mental collapse, premature old age and decay. So tremendous is fear a factor in life that one soon discovers that unless he masters fear, fear will master him. The author of Hebrews speaks of those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (2:15).

Suggested Remedies

Various prescriptions have been given for this trouble. One is to make a compromise with the thing you are afraid of. Isaiah the prophet tried to awaken the people of his day to the necessity of right living and faithfulness to God, warning them that a continuance in their present course would lead inevitably to disaster. But the people replied that they had made treaties with the nations that might do them harm. Those, said Isaiah, are "covenants with Death and Hell". No covenant with death and hell is more than a scrap of paper. It is as worthless as a treaty between Japan and Russia when Japan gets ready to attack Russia. Being afraid of an antagonized evil, men enter into an agreement to let it alone or pay tribute. This is one attitude to the criminal element of the country. Anyone who enters into such a covenant will gain nothing thereby. Whatever peace of mind there may be in such a recourse rests upon a very insecure foundation. He that believeth, shall not make haste to placate every power that threatens. He will be calm. "Be still and know that I am God."

Another prescription is not to think of those things at all. Those who pursue, or try to pursue, this course say they are doing what Jesus taught when he said, "Take no thought for tomorrow". "Forget it," is the slogan of this crowd. They are the drones, loafers, idlers, sluggards. They make no preparation for the rainy day. I have heard men say that they do not let themselves think about eternity.

This is not wise. A man must sooner or later think about it, for he must eventually pass through some such experiences. Jesus did not advocate any policy of unpreparedness. It was the needless anxiety that he was cautioned against.

The Real Antidote

The real antidote to fear is the realization of a Presence. "Thou art with me."

He will be with us to teach us how to use the evil. He does not promise to avert the evil. The psalmist's faith does not lead him to say that he will meet not evil. "I will fear no evil."

God may avert an evil. I believe he often does that. It is difficult to reason in such matters, and Jesus does not give much encouragement to it. We recall the calm of the Channel at the time of the tragedy of Dunkerque, most unusual, which permitted the English to get their men home with a minimum of loss. But the fog around the Aleutian Islands has allowed the Japs to get a hold there. My father once stepped off a train at Conyers, and the train went a half mile

further and experienced a big wreck. You recall the statements of Jesus about the victims when the tower of Siloam fell.

Ministers pray for the sick, even those hopelessly sick. We pray that a new spirit of hope and courage may be given, that skill may be given the physicians, and that poise and fortitude may be given the anxious relatives.

Unhappy experiences are great helps oftimes in softening the hard and unsympathetic.

Dr. Egbert W. Smith had an article in the Christian Observer (9/9/25) in which he related an experience he had at the bedside of his brother, Dr. C. Alphonso Smith, in his last illness, weak but rational. He heard him repeating to himself those beautiful lines from Whittiers "The Eternal Goodness".

"And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore."

It was the next four lines that meant so much to the wife of President Coolidge, when in the summer of 1924, young Calvin Coolidge passed away. So many messages of sympathy came to her that she could not answer all. So she gave out for publication in a letter which closed with these words:

"Do hymns ever sing themselves over and over again to you? This is the one which has come to me most often since Calvin went home. Rather, it is a part of the last verse of a hymn:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their froned palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

"Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Guests of God in an Inhospitable World

Minden, LA
Colonial Prayer Meeting

November 29, 1944

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

Psalm 23:5

It is good form in the employment of figurative language, when once a comparison has been begun, to carry it through without change. But this rule applies more particularly to sentences. To preserve a figure through many sentences might lead to the commission of another fault -- that of overworking a figure.

During the stately and impressive progress of the psalmist through the first four verses of this psalm, the comparison of his relationship to God with that of a sheep to its shepherd has been consistently preserved. But in the fifth verse there seems to be a departure -- a change of figure. Here the Lord is seemingly compared to an oriental host. The change in figure, however, does not destroy the unity of the psalm, the central thought of which is the psalmist's trust in God.

Let it be said, however, that there are some who hold that the figure is preserved even in the 5th verse. Several years ago, it was my privilege to hear the Rev. Faddoul Moghabghab, known familiarly as “Our Syrian Guest”, in an exposition of this psalm. He was himself at one time a shepherd in Syria, and he illuminated his exposition with stories and descriptions drawn from the storehouse of his own experience as a shepherd.

He insisted most vigorously that there is no change of figure here. He said that the psalmist did not have in mind a banquet table with dishes. He maintained that he has reference to the preparation of a bit of pasture for the sheep, by going over it, and taking out the poisonous weeds. The enemies that threaten are wolves, bears, lions, eagles, snakes. When sheep became sick, the shepherd anoints their heads or their bruises with olive oil or cedar tar. He also gives them to drink out of his cup.

I confess that this interpretation was once my preference. At the time I heard this lecturer, I was refreshed by his interpretation. But subsequent reflection has caused me, even against my inclination, to admit that there must be other than pastoral scenery contemplated here.

Unmistakably, I think now, the psalmist had in mind an oriental festal occasion, with the Lord as host. It has been suggested that one memorable event in David's life must have been in his mind when he wrote this verse. It will be recalled that Absalom, the son of David, led a revolt against his father. David fled from Jerusalem and came across Jordan to Mahanaim, where he was hospitably received, and Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai prepared a feast for David and his men; and there David ate of the prepared feast with Absalom and his hosts camped in the region of Gilead nearby (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

David had been a man of war, and a great part of his life had been spent in the midst of enemies. But the Lord had been with him all the time, and had in the midst of his dangers prepared for his nourishment and protection.

It is said that the oriental stands under strong obligation to one who may be sharing his hospitality. A guest in the orient has a right to claim the protection of one of whose bounty he may be partaking. Therefore, one who may be reclining at the table prepared by the Lord has assurance of the Lord's protection from any enemies that may be nearby. David had felt the serenity that was born of this sense of security. The benefactions from God forever sung themselves in his memory. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

That this world as a whole is favorable to Godly living cannot be successfully maintained. One needs but to start out on a Christian career to find that there are a multitude of influences that are bent on circumventing his efforts. This is just the kind of world we need to be in, or else we would not be here. It is according to the law of growth that there is need for struggle and conflict. When we quit struggling, we begin to degenerate. Perfection is achieved by suffering.

Therefore, the Christian life is represented as being a fight. An armor is described for use in this warfare. Timothy is counseled to "war a good warfare" -- to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; "fight the good fight of faith". Paul in Romans vii describes the struggle that goes on within his own members.

In fact, life is a conflict from beginning to end. There is the struggle for existence. There is the fight with disease, pain, hunger, heat, cold, tempest and earthquake. There are foes among our fellows. There are the influences at work in the community. Moreover we have our passions, desires, impulses. There are the external stimuli to evil. I must not forget the hierarchy of evil spirits that infest the world -- the fallen angels. It is to these that the apostle refers when he says that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" asked the people of Israel. He did. He can and does still. All blessings come from God. We have the daily bread, and the yearly harvest. "My grace is sufficient for thee," said the Lord to Paul, while he prayed for the removal of a hurtful factor in his life. "Fear not, for I am with thee."

The Lord does not remove the hardships of the wilderness; he gives strength to endure them. He did not take away the cup of our Lord; he gave him power to drink it. He did not remove the thorn for Paul; he gave him sufficient grace to profit by it. He does not remove our temptations; he gives us the way of escape.

This lavish spread of strength and grace is accessible to those who enjoy familiar and endearing intimacy with the most High. In the words of Dr. J. J. Jowett, such relationship "changes destructive anxiety into constructive thoughtfulness", "converts a lacerating fretfulness into an energetic contentment," and "transforms an abject fear into a holy reverence".

We sometimes wonder how individuals who have the ill will of others can keep on in the discharge of their respective duties, even in the face of opposition. We freely declare that we

would have quit long ago. But we so declare because we are not fully acquainted with the whole situation. These individuals have sources of refreshment of which we are perhaps not aware. Tables are prepared in the presence of enemies.

What courage it imparts to one, when confronted by hostility, to have the heartening assurance of the support of one whose support is worthwhile.

Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis (Sermons for the Times, p. 63) relates an incident which he got from his father, who, in 1830, made a trip of exploration through the undeveloped northwest. The woods were full of wild game, and almost empty of human life. But one night they camped near a half-dozen cabins in the great woods. From one of them came a youth who asked permission to join the party. He persuaded a niece of one of the settlers to accompany him, and a hastily worked up marriage ceremony was arranged for. During the ceremony, he had an axe and a gun on one side and the girl to whom he was pledging all on the other. Dr. Hillis declares that this story took hold of his boyish imagination when his father told it to him. He followed the boy through the trackless forest, watched him clear out a space for a cabin, he "saw the hungry sea of savagery come in like waves to destroy that little island of his clearing," he heard the baying of wolves, and the whoop of Indians. The sympathy of his boyish heart went out to the lonely girl and that manly boy out in the depths of that vast forest.

Dr. Hillis then suggests that God's compassion compared with his is as the ocean compared with a drop. In life's wild jungle, where foes lie ambushed, God is present. He is host, which means that He is protector. Those who have made the Most High their habitation, shall have no evil befall them nor any plague come nigh their tent".

The guests of God are extended the full measure of hospitality. Our Lord is the ideal host.

You will recall how Christ reminded Simon, the Pharisee, of his negligence. Perceiving the critical attitude of Simon when a woman anointed the feet of Jesus, our Lord related the story of the two debtors. Then he applied it. "My head," he said, "with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my head with oil".

He makes full provision for festive rejoicing. The fellowship is complete. He gives his guests "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:3).

Moreover, God is lavish in the provision he makes for entertainment. He is a bountiful server. "My cup runneth over."

This is quite a different cup from that of which Omar sings --

"Come fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling."

I have seen the statement that the late Anatole France told a friend that "getting drunk once a month was a good way to escape the woes of the world". There is no such pessimism as that in the words of the psalmist.

The man who is fair and sane in his judgments, will come to the conclusion of the psalmist when he reflects on the good that he has had from health, human friendships and affections, comforts, amusements, studies, travels, pictures, music, unexpected blessings.

His table is spread for all: the saint and the sinner alike. There is mercy and pardon for the lost. There is grace and strength for the redeemed.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good:
Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him” (Psalm 34:8).

“And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth t triumph through us” (Luther).

The Full Cup

Minden, LA

November 24, 1929

“My cup runneth over.”

Psalm 23:5

This is expressive of David's recognition of God's bountiful provision for his creatures. There is autobiographical reference here, for David had spent much time in the presence of his enemies.

There is a magnificence about the extent of God's provision. There is nothing skimpy or niggardly about it. He does not do as many of his creatures do, both with reference to Him and to one another. He does not limit his benevolence to the necessities in the case. He does not strive merely to “get by”.

There is what might be called a prodigality in God's bestowal of blessing. He floods the earth with his sunshine and stores the earth with its wealth. There are riches yet unmeasured and unknown in the earth.

It is true that we still have poverty both in this country and in Europe. There are millions of people in the world who live on the verge of starvation. But the fault is not God's. He has stored the earth with great productive power. Man has given himself to strife instead of industry. War turns fertile fields into deserts.

God's gifts are both visible and invisible. It is usually the visible blessings that we think of first -- the fruitage of the fields, prosperity, homes, food, clothing, peace. But the greatest gifts of God are the invisible ones -- endowments of person, such as reason, intelligence, emotions, senses, personality, experience of grace. His unspeakable gift is redemption through his Son Jesus Christ.

We are likely to undervalue our blessings. Because of the lavish way in which God has bestowed his favors, we do not esteem them highly enough. In naming the things for which we are thankful, we probably do not name the most valuable thing.

I have read of a woman who declared in a testimony meeting that she was thankful for matches. It was because she could remember what it meant to have to do without them. Some others for the same reason might suggest inexpensive postage, telephones, natural gas, automobiles, radios. It was only after long months of war that peace threw a nation into a state of ecstasy. How glorious the sunshine is after days of bleak and dismal weather! How glorious the sunshine of God's forgiving love after the condemnation of an accusing conscience.

It is by many ways that God teaches us the value of his blessings. Edgar Guest, in “My Reasons for Being Thankful”, relates that some years ago a rich woman visiting in Detroit lost a very costly brooch. She said that her husband had paid \$30,000 for it. A liberal reward was offered for its return. Even though a diligent search was made, the brooch was not found. Six years later an humble, toil-worn woman entered a Detroit jewelry shop and offered a brooch to be repaired. A pearl had been lost out, and she wanted another put in, that she might give it to her daughter for a graduation present. The jeweler, after investigating, told her that it would cost

her \$2,000 to get another pearl that would match those that were in the pin. She gasped. "I thought I could get it done for two or three dollars." "These are genuine and costly pearls," said the jeweler. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "I have been wearing that pin for the past six years to hold my waist together." Further investigation revealed that this woman, a washerwoman, on her way to work found the pin on the street, though it pretty, but had no idea of its value. She saw none of the advertisements. She had been bending over the washtub with \$30,000 in jewelry on her breast. We need someone to teach us just how rich we are (Exp. Nov. 1929, p. 177).

We should be careful to express our thanks. Our lack of comprehension of values is probably responsible for our failure to offer thanks. People are thankful when they appreciate the value of their blessings. The psalmist says, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalm 107:2).

In these modern days, restraint is placed on our religious spirits. "Hosannas languish on our tongues, and our devotion dies".

The fine art of appreciation is one which we need to cultivate. While thousands will attend the Thanksgiving service on Thursday, hundreds of thousands will attend the games of the day. We talk about Thanksgiving football games, Thanksgiving dances, Thanksgiving bridge parties. There is very little thanksgiving in these pursuits.

We take for granted the conveniences, comforts, luxuries, higher privileges of education and books. Thanksgiving has become a matter of feasting, visiting, pleasure seeking.

One of the best national traditions is that of observing Thanksgiving. It has prevailed since the first Thanksgiving, observed on the Mayflower, anchored in Providence Bay, November 21, 1620.

Let us not fail to gather on Thursday to pay our respect to the God who has filled our cups to overflowing.

Retinue of a Temple Resident

Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX

December 6, 1944

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Psalm 23:6

We have now come to the last verse of this incomparable psalm. We have been considering that which lies before: the green pastures, the still waters, the leader, the paths of righteousness, the valley of the shadow of death, the prepared table, and overflowing cup. But in this verse we are led to consider the things which are behind -- the retainers, a train of attendants, following them. In like manner, those who dwell in the house of God have a retinue. I must have seen somewhere a phrase that might be used as a title: “The Retinue of a Temple Resident”.

Here the psalmist reaches the zenith. He stands now on the pinnacle. Probably, nowhere else in the Old Testament is there such expression of a serene and undisturbed repose.

The author of the 73rd Psalm says: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped” (vv. 1,2). “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord”, wrote the author of the 130th Psalm.

But here we have a triumphant and exultant declaration of faith in God, and assurance that all will be well forever.

I recall how vigorous was Dr. Sylvester Horne’s excoriation of his own countrymen who are fond of quoting two verses from Tennyson: “We reach lame hands of faith,” and “We faintly trust the larger hope”. He felt that the laments and the faintness were more conspicuous than the faith or the hope.

There is nothing of that strain here.

Retinue

We might at first wonder at the confident and even jubilant nature of the statement. Many another man has found that trailing behind him has been a long line of misdeeds. The sins of his past have been dogging his steps. He finds that he has become heir to a dark heritage.

Habits keep one in bondage. Evil habits become fixed. They are not easily thrown off. Where they have existed, there is a weakness, a predilection. The taint is there.

There is also a long line of memories, which haunt and vex. How a sin-tossed heart would like to forget.

In this respect, David might have found a vast number of sins camping on his trail. He might have found that the ghosts of those whom he had wronged were coming back to haunt him. But instead he found the goodness and mercy of God, and there was assurance that this comforting presence would be with him all the rest of his days.

“Surely”, says he; and a better translation is on the margin of the Revised Version. “Only” goodness and mercy -- no vengeance, no wrath, no grievous punishment.

This is not the irresponsible declaration born of inexperience and blind optimism. This is no rash statement of youth. We have observed before in this series that the psalm was written in the mature years of David’s life. He is here speaking out of a lifetime of knowledge and experience.

Commentators have compared these qualities and attributes to two guardian angels. They are rear guards. Instead of the grim visages of past follies, one sees the invisible angels of goodness and mercy in unwavering pursuit.

Nature is said to be inclined to blot out the trace of calamity or pestilence. Poppies soon grow on the war-torn fields of France. Instead of having these evils to plague us, the Lord likes to cover them up. “Blessed is the man whose sin is covered.”

There is an old Celtic legend that relates how a saint greeted the angel of mercy when he came to tell him that his end was near, and that he could then accompany him to the celestial city. As they went along the heavenly way, the saint became troubled by his sins of the past. “Mercy,” he said, “where did you bury my sins?” The angel replied, “I only remember that I buried them, but I forgot where” (Hom. Rev. October, 1915, p. 299).

“I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail -- cries,
The world confess its sin.
Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good” -- Whittier: The Eternal Goodness

The man or woman who has this consciousness, as he pursues his onward way, cannot help being affected in his own life; unless, perchance, he be like the unmerciful servant. The most forgiven sinner will ordinarily be the most grateful follower. That gratitude manifests itself in deeds of goodness and mercy. To the train that follows them, there is a line of kind deeds and loving ministries. “Their works do follow them.”

It has been observed that you can judge people by what follows them. While hunting opossum with the negroes as a boy, I learned to tell whether the dogs were after an opossum or a rabbit. One can tell by the character of the bark. Girls are known by the kind of boys that trail after them. In any issue before the people, watch the way the rascals are going and go in the other direction. Many a den of evil has been found by watching the kind of people that went to it. “Where the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

But the following of a good cause and a worthy man is like the luminous trail of a comet. Goodness and mercy follow him.

Residence

A man said to me yesterday that he remembers the time when going to church was a pleasure, but that it seems in these latter days to have become a duty to be gone through with.

This may be attributable to several things. It may be that we have gotten away from the spirit of true religion in our churches. It may be that other things have come in to make church attendance less essential than before. But I feel sure that the worshiper himself must place much of the blame upon himself. Our Lord at an early age manifested a love for the house of his Father, and he never gave up the habit of worship, even though the religion of his time was corrupt and dominated by a pharisaical leadership.

The house of the Lord in David's time was a tabernacle. He had a dream of something better. The Lord did not permit him to build this temple, but it was conceived by David. It would have been something without doubt in which David would have liked to have lived in all the days of his life.

But was this all that David had in mind? Why then should he say, "forever"? I have the feeling that what David contemplated was a continuance of this happy relationship for all time. Our understanding of the future is so much better than was that of David's time, and we are in danger of reading into David's words meaning that was not intended. But the God who inspired this knew how rich in meaning the passage would be to those who came later.

There is said to be a House of Mercy in Cadiz, Spain, over whose entrance is carved the words: "This is my rest; here I will dwell" (Psalm 132:14). Someone noticed that two words were omitted that are in the scripture: "for ever". The Superior, when spoken to about it, replied, "This house is the rest for the poor; but not forever".

What we have reason to believe is a picture of that eternal rest is given us in Revelation: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and he shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away tears from their eyes" (7:16:17).

"His goodness ever high,
His mercy ever free,
Shall, while I live, shall when I die,
Still follow me:
Forever shall my soul
His boundless blessings prove;
And while eternal ages roll
Adore and love." -- Thomas Roberts

Requisites for Acceptance

Dunlap Memorial	January 6, 1917 (Communion)
Minden, LA	April 3, 1921 (Communion)
Minden Prayer Meeting, Minden, LA	June 7, 1939
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	January 18, 1949 (Rewritten)

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”
Psalm 24:3-4

Few of the Psalms are more familiar or more beloved than this one. We do not know very much about its history. It was either written by David, or under his direction, for a special purpose. The “hill of the Lord” evidently referred to a sacred spot in the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has also been called the City of David, because David wrested it from the hands of the Jebusites and established it as the place of royal residence. It also became the religious center of the Jewish nation.

The tabernacle had previously been located at Shiloh, in Ephraim. In this tabernacle belonged the Ark of the Covenant, a chest $3\frac{3}{4}$ feet by $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet by $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, having two cherubim of gold mounted in its cover. This represented the presence of God. However, during the days of old Eli, the Ark was lost to the Philistines in a battle, and later returned. It found lodgment at Kirjath-Jearim, and then at the house of Obed-Edom. After an absence of about 50 years, the ark was finally brought to Jerusalem to a place which David the King had prepared for it.

There was great ceremony connected with the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem. David the King, the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring the Ark in grand procession. Organized choral singing, accompanied by various instruments, was provided for, and this psalm was composed for the occasion, it is thought. As the solemn procession moved in festal array up the approach to the city, they might have been heard to sing: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods”.

Then, from one quarter could be heard the challenge of a choir, or perhaps a single voice, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

To which answer was given from another choir, or voice: “He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully”.

Pausing, perhaps, until near the walls of the city, the remainder of the psalm was sung by choirs without and within the city: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in”.

From within the city come back the question: “Who is the King of Glory?” This is asked twice. The answer is given from without. All ends with the great declaration, “The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory”.

Our consideration today will be limited to the requisites for acceptable entrance to the presence of God, or the marks of a Godly person. Those marks might be said to be, clean hands, pure hearts, true souls, guileless lips.

1. Clean Hands

It is with the hands that we handle money. Hands are said to be soiled by ill-gotten gains or unholy expenditures. "Clean hands" are those that are free from acts of dishonesty.

We may not be able to determine just what was in the mind of the author of the psalm but we do know how the people of David's day and the days of the prophets soiled their hands. They took advantage of the defenseless, they took bribes. Graft, bribery, gambling and robbery have made lucre filthy for many centuries. And who would attempt to estimate the number of hands which it has stained? Tainted money! why the world is full of it.

There is a prevailing honesty among people. Business transactions could not be carried on as they are without it. Faith in the fundamental honesty of both merchants and customers is essential.

The part that religion plays in promoting the principle of honesty is immeasurable. Sunday after Sunday, personal righteousness is insisted upon from the hundreds of thousands of pulpits in the land. So valuable is that to a city that it is thought that the presence of such institutions should be encouraged to the extent of being exempt from taxation.

It is when the church, or representatives of the church, sound out in economic and political questions that protests are heard. Hitler and his associates were ready to give the church liberty provided it confined its attention to other-worldly matters and gave politics and economics a wide berth. Goebbels is quoted as having said: "Let the churches serve God, we serve the people".

In our own country, it is maintained by many that the church should have nothing to say on economic programs even when they are at variance with the principles of righteousness. Some of the finest of the rising generation, we are told, are alienated from the church and drawn to secular agencies because they consider the Church ineffective as a factor in building a better world.

We should be sure that the money we get is honestly gotten. Certain businesses have a very unsavory reputation because of the practice of some in circumventing the law. To mention any would be unfair, perhaps. There are plenty of instances.

A dry cleaner had in his window this statement: "We clean anything but reputations". More important is it to clean characters, for reputations may be at variance with facts.

2. Pure Hearts

The heart is regarded as having to do with the emotions, affections. A pure heart stands for unpolluted moral affections. The person that lives righteousness has a pure heart. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

We often hear the quotation, and it comes from the writings of Paul, “Unto the pure all things are pure”. The statement does not mean that anything that is essentially impure can ever be pure in the eyes of the best people. It is where there is the possibility of a two-fold interpretation that the pure chooses the pure. The impure put a bad interpretation on the matter.

It might be said that to the impure, all others are impure. They question veracity and impugn the motives of others. They are ready to maintain that every man has his price. They cannot believe that there are pure-minded women or true men.

That kind of man cannot come acceptably into the presence of God. It matters not how pious he looks or acts, his heart is not right.

One of the famous schools of England is Eton College, now over 500 years old. Founded in 1440 by Henry VI. Many famous Englishmen have come from that school, among them Gladstone and Wellington. In the chapel of that school hangs a famous picture of Sir Galahad, painted by George Fredericks Watts.

You have seen a reproduction of that painting: A young knight, standing by his milk-white charger, brow bared and head thrown back, gazing into the distance. It is the Holy Grail that he is beholding, with rapture. According to the traditions, wholly fictitious, the cup out of which Christ and the disciples drank at the time of the institution of the Lord’s Supper was used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the drops of blood that fell from the wounds of our Savior on the cross. Tradition has it that this Holy Grail was brought by Joseph or his descendants to the British Isles. According to the stories connected with the knights of King Arthur’s Round Table, each sir knight went in quest of the Holy Grail, and each saw the vision of it in proportion to his purity of soul. To some, the Grail was swathed in cloud and mist. Lancelot, whose heart was not pure, sees the grail covered, but sees it as holy wrath and fire. Only one sir knight could see it clear and radiant, and that was Sir Galahad, whose “strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure”.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. “Who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath... a pure heart.”

3. True Souls

“Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.” “Vanity”, we take it, refers to the perishing things of earth, and are substitutes for God.

There is an interesting passage in the prophecy of Habakkuk (1:16). He is describing the Chaldeans, enemies of Israel. “They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous”.

The idea is that the Chaldeans were worshipping the instrument that served them so well. Their net, so to speak, was snaring many fishes. They had not thought for the God that was making it possible for them to be victorious. God assured Habakkuk that their day would come.

There is much of the same kind of thing in our day. We Americans are not unlike the Chaldeans. We worship the dollar, as though money would save us. We think that by sending

our dollars to the nations of the world we can gain the confidence of the world and gain the preeminence that some wish.

We worship science which has brought about the revelations of the power of electricity, of air waves, and the atomic energy. We have forgotten the God who is behind all of this.

We worship social service, and maintain that by changing environment and external conditions we can change character.

Probably each of us might search his own heart. What am I putting my trust in? To many times, we see men and women, at the moment when riches flee and strength fails, grasping frantically for something that is substantial. What they say, in effect, is that they have lifted up their souls unto vanity.

4. Guileless Mouths

“Nor sworn deceitfully”. When Isaiah had a vision of God, he realized the necessity of having his lips cleansed.

Some people boast of skill in practicing deceit.

“O what a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive.”

Cause and Consequence

“This is the generation of them that seek Him.” When you find a man who does not care for these requisites, you find a man who has no time for the church and for religion. He is not at home in the congregation of good people.

Now, it is not the idea of David, nor the idea of the church, that all who have association with the church have all these requisites in their completeness. They have them as their ideal, and are ready to work towards them. We are ready to lend support to an institution that inculcates these ideals in the minds of our children.

Finding One's Way in a Befuddled World

Minden, LA
Hockaday School, Dallas, TX
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

September 9, 1934
November 11, 1945
April 28, 1946

“What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.”
Psalm 25:12

[Moffatt: “Whoever reverences the Eternal learns what is the right course to take.”]

The eternal problem of life is determining the course one's life should pursue. Too often the importance of that problem is not seen by the individual until it is too late to do very much about it.

A good friend of mine, who has had a long, busy, and successful life, said to me the other day that as one grows older it seems sometimes that he has made nothing but mistakes, and that by the time one learns what he ought to do life is about over. That is a very natural reflection, one that comes sooner or later to most of us. The futility of life as an end in itself becomes so apparent that one is convinced, aside from other considerations, that there must be a continuation of existence in which ripened powers of mind and heart may have opportunity to find full expression.

The satisfactions of life are to be found in the contemplation of well-directed effort. But one of the difficulties we encounter is that of determining in advance what will prove to be a satisfactory attainment when it has been achieved. Many unpossessed, but alluring objects, lose much of their charm after they have been grasped. In fact, they become of negligible value. A child goes through a “ten-cent” store, seeing hundreds of things he wants. But anyone of the things, once within his possession, loses its value in favor of some other unpossessed object. So with us all. Wealth, pleasures, positions, prerogatives, powers -- fade in importance as they are acquired.

Even those people who seem to others to have lived lives so thoroughly worthwhile have moments when they can't see that there is much worthy of consideration in what they have done. Jesus indicated that such would be the case in the Day of Judgment: “Lord, when saw we Thee thirsty and gave Thee drink?”

But unquestionably there is a right way, a best way, for each of us to go -- one that has the largest usefulness and the largest satisfactions. It is that way which every sane person wants to follow. We can see about us people who are seemingly going along worthwhile ways, and we can see others who seem to be making such a poor out at living. How can we avoid the mistake of going the wrong way?

We May Drift With the Current

This is the way the most of us determine the way. We let the circumstances we encounter from day to day determine our occupations and our interests. We find something to keep us busy. It may not mean anything in the ultimate total of life's accomplishments, but it kept us from being bored. Each day we do the things that seem at the time to give us most pleasure. If we have had a good time that day, it has been a perfectly grand day.

But life based on such a philosophy soon becomes the sport of the forces that move about it and becomes doomed to ultimate failure. It has been said that the three great powers that play on us all the time are (1) the power of custom and fashion, (2) the power of command (great name, position, office), and (3) the power of one life over another (the effect of one human soul's influence on another). These may be good or they may be bad in their effect on some individual life. But a life made subject to the play of these forces is like a leaf floating down a stream that ripples, and eddies and falls and sprays.

We do not need to be told again that old patterns of conduct have been discarded, conventions have been discredited, new standards are being set up. Even principles of honesty, sobriety, modesty, purity, independence are being flouted by respectable people. The thunderous noise and tinsel show of a money mad civilization demoralize us. We are dazzled by mass production, and intoxicated by speed. The parade is on! When the show is over we will try to think, but we can't amid the clamor of gayeties and the fury of haste.

But this is a poor way by which to determine one's course in life.

We Might Employ Scientific Methods

This is a fact-finding age, too. There is a mania for research, statistics, experimentation, surveys, findings. We also submit to efficiency tests and determine our IQ's. We are weighed, valued, indexed, and catalogued.

We make a survey of the field and then study our aptitudes and skills and then put ourselves into the holes we fit.

This method of life direction has its value, unquestionably. It is not unlike making a vacation trip. Before the time arrives, we get down the maps and study the possible destinations, and ways of reaching them, the courses to be traversed. Then we consider the means of transportation available, and whether it is suitable to accomplish the task in the time we have. We think too of our financial resources, our physical strength, and possible benefits. After having weighed all assembled data, we make the decision.

The trouble about this plan as a method of life direction is the impossibility of learning all we need to know about any proposed undertaking. Even with all the light available, we make mistakes. In the mass of facts, we find ourselves befuddled, confused, confounded. One not infrequently has the idea that if he did not have so much data he could decide more easily. Strange as it may seem, it not infrequently occurs to us that the more we know about everything the harder it is to arrive at a definite opinion about anything.

This is no discouragement of the plan of trying to act intelligently. We should be as familiar as possible with the facts involved in our course of life. I am merely saying that the limitation of knowledge of facts, even at best, and the limitation of human minds to properly employ their knowledge of facts to the best ends, make it essential that reliance be had on a greater Intelligence.

The Help in the Fear of the Lord

The word “fear” in the Old Testament is richer than our usage today makes it. It involves the idea of reverence. The text might be made to read that “God will teach the man who reverences Him the way he should choose”. Carlyle said, “He that has no vision of eternity has no hold of time”. “In all thy ways acknowledge him and He shall direct thy paths.” “All things work together for Good to them who love God.”

The text is saying that what man needs is some Imperial World Presence, a great Light, on which to fix his interest and by which to determine his bearings. We need the sense of some all-pervading Power, overcoming our fears, uncertainties, discouragement. Our courses are uncertain. One friend advises one thing, and another friend advises a different thing. We are never sure that what we do is right. Reverence for the Eternal will help.

There were the disciples, floundering about, mediocre, commonplace. Jesus entered their worlds. The consequence was that Simon became a Rock, John (son of thunder) became John the Beloved, Matthew the Publican became Matthew the Apostle, Magdalene the sinner became Magdalene the saint. There was an unwonted boldness, confidence, courage, power in their actions. There was a new reverence in their souls.

God gives us the very factors which serve us admirably as guides in life: Faith, hope, love. It takes a great deal of faith to hold to some principles under certain conditions. It requires courage born of faith for us to live up to our best. Without hope we cannot face discouragement, and refuse to be beaten. Like the Harvard professor, after visiting Phillip Brooks for consultation about a problem, we come to realize that what we most need is not “the solution of a problem so much as the contagion of a triumphant spirit”. Love is the support of both faith and hope, and is the greatest guide in human conduct. “The greatest of these is love.”

How it Becomes Available

By the observance of quiet times. This sounds rather out of place in these days. We all feel that we must be doing something all the time -- working, driving a car, going to movies, playing bridge, telephoning. We are afraid we will be bored. Having a day in the week that is not filled with activities of an absorbing nature is unthinkable. A quiet Sunday, devoted to worship, reflection, thought, helpful reading, is unthinkable.

College authorities are troubled over the weekend activities of the students. Quick transportation facilities make it possible for students to go far over weekends, participate in nerve-racking amusements, and return ill prepared for classes on Monday. One mother who had

one son in a university and another in a small college remonstrated with the president of the latter because the small college placed restrictions on its students that worked a terrible hardship. Why should her son miss the Friday and Saturday dances?

It were better to miss the weekend gayeties than to miss something else more vital to life. It were better to skip Sunday outings, family get-togethers, and sumptuous dinners, than some of the values which come only through observance of prayer, worship, Bible study and meditation.

(1) It is in the quiet time that we have greatest assurance of God's reality. Stars, we are told, are catalogued which have not been seen by the human eye, even through the greatest telescope. They have been located by means of photographic plate through prolonged exposure. So patience and quietness help us to have impressions gotten in no other way. The matter of God's reality is not settled by debate. It is by practicing the presence of God that this thrilling consciousness comes to us.

It was in such times that great realizations came to Abraham on the silent plains, to Moses in the solitude of the desert, to Elijah at Horeb (where the still, small Voice was heard), to David on the pastures of Bethlehem, to Amos among the sheep at Tekoa, to John the Baptist in the Wilderness, to Paul in Arabia. So did this realization come to Luther and Francis of Assisi.

(2) It is in these quiet times that we true ourselves. We correct our perspective. We reorient ourselves. We may have gotten out of plumb. We see life in its larger aspects -- figure in the Eternal significance of Time. It is said that Robert Hayden would mix his tints and carry them on Wednesdays to compare them with the Titians in Lord Stafford's gallery.

Mr. Nelson and I were returning from Montreal a few days ago, and suddenly found ourselves in a very bad stretch of road under construction. We lost time there. We concluded that we would gain time by not hurrying so fast, and by stopping occasionally to see just whether we were on the right road or not. We can be so absorbed in going that we fail to see the guides.

(3) The quiet time gives us our inspiration. We are by nature inclined to get tired, physically and mentally. There is need for recuperation, for renewal of strength. Then, too, we have the tendency to give up rather than to face opposition. By the quiet time, we may become as determined and courageous as Knox or Luther. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

We would do well then to set aside as much of the Sabbath day as possible for reverence for the Eternal. There is no place like the house of the Eternal for such participation. We need to start every week with a fresh grasp of the hand of God.

"Whoever reverences the Eternal learns what is the right course to take."

The House of God, A Beloved Habitation

Minden, LA
Minden Prayer Meeting, Minden, LA
Rockdale Presbyterian Church, Rockdale, TX

September 2, 1928
January 8, 1941
June 6, 1954 (rewritten)

“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.”
Psalm 26:8

There is nothing more beautiful in Jewish life, in the olden days, than the devotion of the people to the house of God. Some may imagine that the same devotion obtains today. But such, unfortunately, is not the case. One of the most pathetic things in our modern times is the religious breakdown of the Jewish race. 80% of the Jews in America, the most of whom are adrift religiously; but they long for something better. There now seems to be among the Jews a movement to make a new appraisal of Jesus Christ.

The psalms especially are full of expressions of fond love for the house of God. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psalm 122:1). “One thing have I desired of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” (Psalm 27:4). “How amiable are thy tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Psalm 84:1,2). “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10).

It will be recalled that the same attachment was shown by our Lord Jesus Christ, when even at the age of twelve he sought the congenial atmosphere of the Temple when he became separated from his parents. Twice did he cleanse the temple of those who desecrated it.

To me, when a boy, the statement in Psalm 84:10, quoted above, was hard to understand. Being a doorkeeper is, in the eyes of youth, a rare privilege. What would one not give in those days to be a doorkeeper. Then, for the psalmist to say that he had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of his God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness seemed to me to be an unnecessary statement. But after having gotten fuller knowledge, and learned that some doorkeepers, as for instance the tiller of a lodge, must remain outside the door and miss to some extent what is taking place within, the matter took on a different aspect. What the psalmist seemed to say is that he had rather be just outside the door in the house of his God than to be altogether within the tents of wickedness. He loved the very environment of the house of God.

This leads us to the thought in the text. The word “habitation” could mean either “the act of occupying” or “the resting place”. In other words, the psalmist may have meant that he found delight in being in the house of God, or that he loved the place where it rests. The latter seemed to be the meaning, although the former naturally follows.

It will be remembered that when it was desired to stir up popular disfavor against Jesus that they accused him of speaking of the temple in depreciating terms. It was more or less the idol of the people. "Beautiful for situation the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion" (Psalm 48:2).

I have known people, some of whom still live, over whose last resting place our text might be very fittingly placed. They have never been so happy as when in the environment of the house of God. They love the spot on which it rests, the architecture, the furnishings, the people who frequent it, the worship in it, the activities promoted by it, and most of all the true God for whom it stands.

There have been instances within my knowledge when husbands have maintained that their wives might as well move to the church, bag and baggage, and be done with it. Some wives complain that their husbands won't leave the church after service so long as there is a single other person there; and since there are several of the same turn of mind, the lingering is drawn out to interminable lengths. Each of these might say, I am sure, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth".

Great is the number of those who love the church of Jesus Christ. May the number ever increase. To them, the church's precincts are sacred. They resent the intrusion of those irreverent and discourteous persons who demand that habits and customs be adjusted to suit their wishes. The church has critics, has always had, and will always have -- until the end of time.

The thoughtful church member does not claim to be any better than others that are not in the church and who do not profess belief in Christ. I heard a Philadelphia pastor say the other day (Herbert Bieber) that when a man is born again he feels that he ought to have been born with three legs, two to walk with and one to kick himself with continuously.

But the church member does claim that he has found something that is better than anything that is to be found elsewhere. It is in the church that they have found a Savior who stands for his sins, and who brings peace and satisfaction to his heart.

These people love the house of God. Because --

1. It is a testimony.

Testimonies constitute the very heart of religion. Creeds and buildings and rituals are testimonies. The temples of worship in any community are declarations of faith.

As you move about over the country, you find yourself refreshed by the sight of church edifices, no longer, however, extensively adorned with spires and domes. It is conceivable that church buildings are erected from motives that are foreign to true religion, to gratify pride, to outshine the efforts of another religious body, and like motives. But as a rule the appearance of these buildings reveals in unmistakable fashion the faith of the people of the community. Let us never undervalue the worth of this silent testimony to the reality of our faith in God.

(a) The building should be distinctive. It naturally follows that if a building is to be a silent testimony to religious faith, it should look like a church. Functionalism has entered into every phase of life today. The utilitarian aspects of a structure are given chief consideration. The elaborately decorative type of building is no longer preferred. Costs have mounted. If for no other reason than economy, money should be spent in such a way as to get the greatest amount of good out of the expenditure. And so, the elimination of the ornate has been recognized as being sensible and in good taste.

The danger we should avoid is that of losing the distinctive witness that a “churchy” building should offer. I have seen modern churches that could, from appearances, be a school, a library, a movie theater, an auditorium.

(b) It should be beautiful. The beautiful plays a larger part in the life of us all than we may realize. It is not easy to define beauty, for the reason that our conceptions of what is beautiful vary. We observe that a thing is beautiful, but often cannot tell what it is that makes it so. So, we simply say that beauty is “the aggregate of qualities which give pleasure to sense, mind, and soul”. It is that which affords emotional delight. The effect of beauty is in a way worshipful. We can worship better in the atmosphere of the beautiful. In such a situation, it is natural for us to pray: “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us” (Psalm 90:17).

(c) It should proclaim a people’s devotion. I knew a man who single-handedly built a church -- a rather pretentious building -- and gave it to a congregation. It was known generally as Mr. Noel’s church. People generally said it was built with hard business dealings with people of limited means. It was not until the membership had had opportunity to put their money into an altered and enlarged structure that they came to feel that the church was their own. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. When it is apparent to observers that what a group of people have erected represents the sacrifice of resources, time, energy, convenience, the witness of the building has a peculiar potency.

(d) It should give evidence of faith and expectancy. The value of the witness is as great for what is not seen as for what is seen. Churches are suffering sadly today because of the lack of vision on the part of those who inaugurated the undertaking. We still see church buildings going up on little lots. As Jesus said to the blind man, whom he healed, “According to your faith, be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29). That is life. Mediocrity is the fruitage of small faith.

1. It is a power house.

A powerhouse is a place where force is generated. A church is a place where the forces which make for progress and betterment are produced. More accurate would be the designation “relay station”, for the power is generated in the spiritual realm and shunted down through the various innumerable stations known as churches. It has been said that “the dynamic of progress has its seat and center in the house of God”. Not only so, but the dynamic of salvation, peace, happiness is centered here.

It is often said, and I believe truly, that you cannot make people good by law. But that is not saying that law is not necessary as a guide for even good people in matters which affect society. If there were no law of the highway, for instance, there would be endless confusion

even among sober, well-meaning people. So in all other departments of modern social life. Ever since the days of Adam and Eve people have contended that laws interfere with personal liberty. But Adam and Eve exercised a little personal liberty and got into trouble.

One reason that the records of the Old Testament are preserved for us is that we, and also people of all ages, need to know how vital true religion is to the welfare of a nation. It has been said that a purely secular culture is a decadent culture. That has been demonstrated over and over again in the history of the nations of the world. With the rise of secularism in a nation there comes decay.

We are now concerned about the preservation of the strength of our nation. But the strength of a nation does not lie even primarily in the extent to which the Communistic subversive elements are eradicated from strategic centers. Neither does it lie in the perpetuation of the traditional custom of inscribing on our coins the motto "In God We Trust". It does not lie in the prevailing custom of standing while the "Star Spangled Banner" is played, or in pledging allegiance to the flag. Neither does it lie in a stockpile of atomic and hydrogen bombs.

Our safety lies in divine protection. The psalmist said, "Except the Lord keep the city (or nation), the watchman waketh but in vain" (127:1). The Bible is our authority for the statement that the Lord disciplines a nation that strays from paths of righteousness and godliness. Experience has shown that man cannot in his own strength conquer sin and utilize the power of heaven.

Here, then is where we get the proper concepts, the true ideals, the correct motivation, and the compelling desire for a better life and a better world. Therefore, the true patriots are those who put their money, their time, their energies into institutions of this kind.

Some years ago, there was in this country an anarchist by the name of Emma Goldman. She was not at all welcome in this country, and spent much time in jail. She was permitted to go to Russia where the views of such exponents of anarchism as Bakunin and Kropotkin have had full sway. But she is quoted as having said, after trying both situations, that she had rather be in jail in America than to be free in Russia.

Religion, instead of being the "opiate of the people", is the salvation of the nation. The powerhouse is the church.

3. It is a place of refuge.

It is here that we find rest from the strain and stress of life. It is the place to go when thanksgiving floods our souls. It is a place to go when trouble comes upon us. People sometimes stay away in time of grief, or bereavement. That is understandable, but it is the church which gives hope for the future.

In the psychological world today, we hear of "escapes", the tendency to run away from reality; and "escape mechanisms", modes of thinking by which one evades unpleasant facts or responsibilities. When a student gets hold of a term like that he overworks it. He may come out

with the assertion that religion is an “escape mechanism”. He may be right and he may be wrong, it depends.

Certain forms of religion have furnished men and women with means of escape from the grind of life. Therein is the appeal of emotionalism in religion. Once some have the exhilarating experience, they want it again. It gets them out of the drudgery and misery of monotonous existence. But it is only temporary, and there is always a subsequent letdown.

It is true that Christianity has enabled men and women to “escape” the futility of a purposeless existence. It puts meaning into life. It is an escape from the prison house of self, the anarchy of greed and hell.

“In the heart of the cyclone tearing the sky
And flinging the clouds and towers by,
Is a place of central calm:
So here, in the roar of mortal things,
I have a place where my spirit sings,
In the hollow of God’s palm” -- Edwin Markham

Then, let us remember that the church is not a philosophical society, an educational institution, a reform organization, or a place of amusement. It is a soul saving, heart renewing institution, whose efficiency depends absolutely on the blessing of Almighty God.

Why We Come Here

Having had an experience of renewing grace, we continue to come to the house of God for --

- (1) Instruction in the Scriptures;
- (2) Worship; prayer, praise, giving;

Live coals from the grate become cold when apart from the rest;

- (3) Fellowship:

Dr. Jefferson says, in *Building the Church* (p. 52), “Many city churches are made up of people who do not know one another and who do not want to know one another. Too many village churches are composed of people who know one another and are sorry that they do.”

But our psalmist did not find any such atmosphere in the House of God.

A Song of Faith, Fervidness and Fortitude

Minden, LA

November 30, 1942

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? ...Wait, I say, on the Lord.”
Psalm 27:1-14

When we find ourselves confronted by a crisis of great moment, we may also find that we have no patterns by which to shape our attitude and actions; unless we have considered how the great souls of other days faced such emergencies. What is one to do when enemies like beasts of prey spring without warning but with deadly intent: when they make false accusations and breathe out cruelty? What recourse has one when nations join in defiance of God and human rights, and kill and lay waste and enslave?

The 27th Psalm is a great passage of Scripture for any time. There is none better for a time like the present. It is filled with unforgettable phrases. Those phrases have been the stay and comfort of many people as they pass through the trials and vicissitudes of life.

It may have been that this psalm grew out of a tragic experience in the life of David, king of Israel. It may have been when he was forced to flee from the city of Jerusalem on account of the uprising caused by Absalom, his own son. He was conscious of hostile attitudes all about him. He probably did not know just who among his people were his friends. He even contemplates the possibility of being forsaken by father and mother (vs. 10). Under such circumstances, what did David do? What was his attitude?

To get the complete picture, we need the whole psalm. The psalm is like some great oratorio. But I believe they will be found to be expressive of the right attitude of true believers.

1. Confidence in God (vv. 1-3)

This movement is characterized by bold, vibrant strains. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ...Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear...”

Here we have the note of courage, fortitude, fearlessness. It is based on faith in God as Light, Salvation, Stronghold.

It is said that this is the only instance in the Old Testament when the term “light” is applied to God. Jesus used the term, declaring that he is the “light of the world”, and that his disciples were also the light of the world.

Some years ago, there was an Empire Exhibition at Johannesburg, South Africa, in which there was a great “Tower of Light”. The tower was 150 feet high, supporting a 14,000 candle-power beacon, which the engineers thought would be visible for 100 miles. Many went to see it, but none saw it. The engineers had not calculated on the Johannesburg atmosphere, which was

so free of dust, humidity, and clouds as to furnish no object to deflect the light so that it could be seen. Light hitting no object is invisible.

God's great Tower of Light in this world is Christ. That light is visible only as it is caught and deflected by the lives of men and women.

God is man's Salvation. Other religions base man's salvation on his own activity -- his knowing something, his doing something. But God is the sole author of man's salvation. There is but one response: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." This is the death-knell of humanistic religions.

God is man's Refuge, Stronghold, Strength of Life, Bulwark. As Luther wrote:

"A might fortress is our God
A bulwark never falling;
Our Helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing."

As Wesley wrote:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

This is the note that needs to be sounded today, when the world is so beset with fears: fear on land, and sea and in the air. There are fears of loss, poverty, pain, loneliness. There is even fear of life, and refusal to enter into opportunities. Fear of adverse circumstances and fear of death torment us.

The psalmist found that as he went along life's way, it was like going down the busy lane of a city with a series of traffic lights to pass. The red light changes as one approaches. Wicked enemies and foes stumble and fall. Though a host should encamp against one, or war arise, one can still be confident.

2. Mediation of the House of God

The tabernacle made God seem very near to David. When he was forced to be away from it for an extended period, he was distressed. He felt so secure while within its walls. Those walls stood for God. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

The temple which David was talking about was the one which he had constructed to house the ark. It was patterned after the tabernacle used in the wilderness. David had it in his heart to erect a great temple to Jehovah. But that privilege was to be his son's. Solomon carried out what David had planned and made some preparation for. That Temple of Solomon was the pride and glory of the Jewish people. Love for it rose almost to superstitious adoration. The life of the national revolved about it. The desire of every Jew was to see it periodically. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). "How amiable are

thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yes, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord” (Psalm 84:1,2).

This temple of Solomon was not a large building, compared to our cathedrals and modern churches. It was small in comparison with the religious buildings of that day -- in Egypt, and Assyria, and Babylon. But probably there was no building in which there was such a lavish use of gold for interior decoration.

It was a beautiful and imposing structure, and it stirred the heart of every worshipper. As he looked at it, he seemed “to behold the beauty of the Lord”.

A great many people today would do well to follow the example of David and “inquire in his temple”. Just having a church in a community will not do the work. Even having one’s name on the church roster is not enough. Religion is like a stained glass window in a church. Even the brightest days will not disclose the beauty, if seen from without. We must be inside to see. Religion means little to those who do not use God’s pavilion, his tabernacle as the retreat from the troubles that beset them.

The associated press, some years ago, carried a news item from Chicago, concerning a Mrs. Caroline M. Willets, who, having reached her 100th birthday, was asked to offer some advice about how to live long and happily. She replied that she had no advice to offer along that line. But she had one comment to offer: “When it becomes as easy to fill a church as it is to fill a football stadium, I believe it will be a better world”.

David felt that the sanctuary was essential to his very life. So he said, “I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord” (6).

3. Communion the Source of Guidance (vv. 7-12)

As one reads this psalm, he is at first struck with the change at this point in style, form, and temper. One is even inclined to feel at first that the psalmist has had a change of spirit, a lapse of faith, a collapse of confidence. We find him praying: “Hear, O Lord, have mercy upon me”, “hide not thy face from me”, “put not thy servant away in anger”, “Leave me not”, “teach me thy way”, “lead me in a plain path”, “deliver me not over unto...mine enemies”.

David is said to have been like that father with an afflicted boy who came to the disciples and then to Jesus. Jesus said unto him: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth”. Then the father cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

I am rather inclined to feel that in this portion of the psalm, the writer is cultivating the roots of his triumphant and confident faith, as expressed in the opening verses of the psalm. The man that thinks he stands should take heed lest he fall. Prayer itself is an act of faith. Why pray if one has no faith? Prayer assures oneness with God. “Sincere prayer will keep you from self-deception; and self-deception will keep you from prayer” (Buttrick).

There are conditions under which man can be confident in God, and one of them is the conviction that one has been taught the way of God, and that he is being led in a plain path.

There is a jaunty complacency that Christians would do well to avoid. The great courageous souls of the church were men of prayer. Jesus had every confidence, and yet he was much in prayer. Jackson, after a period of prayer in his tent, could go forth and stand “like a stone wall”.

Presbyterians are sometimes accused of believing that “what is to be will be”, as though there were a blind fate that governed all, God included. People who believe like that would have no reason to pray.

It is one thing for the people of our so called Christian America to say confidently that God is with us, that He is our defender and our fortress, and will not let us lose this war. It is another thing to go forth to do battle with a confidence that has come out of communion with the eternal. We should be a praying nation. Dangers beset on every hand. Each needs to pray, “Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies”.

4. The Secret of Perseverance (vv. 13,14)

The final movement is a declaration of satisfaction in such a faith. “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”.

Dr. W. A. Brown, in “Pathways to Certainty”, says: “One summer I stood just after dawn on the hill that rises above Lake Chautauqua, and watched the sun struggling to make it sway through the clouds. The lake was covered with a sea of golden mist. One was conscious of light and glow and warmth and motion. The sun remained hidden. One knew it was there. One could see its glow, one could feel its warmth; one could rejoice in the beauty of its handiwork. But the sun itself remained hidden”.

When a person lives in this high consciousness, he will not faint in the hour of distress.

Oliver Goldsmith was an Englishman of letters in the 18th Century. He had an eventful career, and was a voluminous writer. When he was but a hack-writer and was very poor he had to live in a damp, dark cellar. A blatant boor sneered at his poverty, saying, “You lodge in a basement”. Goldsmith replied: “Your soul lives in a basement”. Some whose bodies live in palaces have souls which live in basements. They never reach the heights that David reached.

How many people do you suppose have said, as they face this unhappy situation in the world today, “I do not believe I can go through with it”? They ought to meditate over this psalm. After they have had the spiritual experience of the psalmist in the preceding verses, they will come to the comfort of the last: “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the Lord”.

The Support of a Great Faith

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

May 17, 1942
May 26, 1957

“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”
Psalm 27:13

This is a great psalm. Like all great literature, it was born of deep experience. The writer of it was David, king of Israel. He was a man of profound experiences, some tragic. His own son, Absalom, led a revolt against him. He had to flee for safety. His fatherly heart was crushed. He was about to lose his grip. The fires of enthusiasm had died out of his life. He was about to ask, “What’s the use?”

Not the pathos of his situation: “The wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me”, he says. “Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies”, he prays, and adds, “for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty”. Then he breaks out into an exclamation; “What would become of me if I did not believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the Land of the living?” The incomplete sentence, which the King James translators have completed, indicates strong emotion.

David came through all right. He tells us how he did it. It was his faith in God that enabled him to endure. It was his religion that saved him. He says that if it had not been for his religion he would have gone down. He is happy over it and urges all to get hold of the same steadying power. “Wait on the Lord”, he urges. “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (14).

A Common Experience

When the waves of adversity are high and strong, every thinking person comes sooner or later to this point. Good men are often swept off their feet by the force of a temporary, but seemingly overwhelming, disaster. How comforting it is to find in the Bible that one of God’s own had such a battle and came through gloriously.

But David is not the only person who has borne such a testimony. Great and useful men in all periods of history have said the same thing. It is possible that there are persons here today who can say, “If it had not been for my faith in God, I could not have gone through with the troubles I had”.

It was my responsibility to minister to congregations during two World Wars. I was always aware that my Sunday sermons were looked to for comfort in the long waiting for the return of the soldier boys from France, or Germany, or the South Pacific. What could a young minister, with slight experience in life’s grim trials, say to the troubled spirits of fathers and mothers? There was but one message: Have faith in God. Like David, they have said since, “I

had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". Some have said that whose sons did not come back -- alive.

I recall that back in 1942, just as we were entering the Second World War, some person was quoted as saying that he believed it would be a good thing if the churches discontinued their activities for the duration that the people might have more time to help in an all out effort to win that war. Foolish talk. That was the time to keep faith at white heat. There was great importance attached to having recreation centers as a means of sustaining morale. But it was found that religion was the greatest support of morale. It kept us going even after all recreation centers were but a memory.

In desperation, persons here and there were asking, "If God is good and omnipotent, why does he not stop this terrible war?" I do not know that any one had a completely convincing answer to that question. But the observation has been made that wars are tragedies which human beings bring on themselves deliberately. Being a free moral agent, man is permitted to suffer the consequences of his own choices. But it has been observed that the grace of God is available to those who exercise faith, and that as a consequence of good results.

With the havoc of a terrible war still fresh in the minds of our people, it is little wonder that desperate efforts are now being made by our leaders to avert another, and even more devastating war.

Current Adversities and Calamities

The idea has long been entertained that pain and suffering and loss are punishments for sin. Now, there is no one who has not sinned. But let no one infer that greater suffering is caused by greater sin.

The disciples of Jesus entertained this idea. They saw a man blind from his birth and they asked Jesus who had sinned, the blind man or his parents. Jesus replied that it had been neither, "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:1-3).

We are being told today that cancer and heart ailments are most prevalent and most serious maladies. They are more prevalent than ever before. They are not thought to be the consequence of the individual's wrongdoing. They can be attributed to the way we are living. We are living too fast. We are running the human machine in ways it was not designed to run. While the individual may feel that he is suffering unjustly, he can hardly blame God for ailments which result from his keyed up manner of life.

But with faith in God, one can achieve greater heights through a battle with a vicious ailment. While Babe Didrickson Zaharias won many friends in sport circles in the days of her physical prowess, she won the heart of the nation in her courageous battle with cancer.

Fresh in the minds of us all are the recent pranks of nature -- drought, floods, tornadoes. These cannot be laid at the door of man altogether. It is true that our land is being denuded of its forests, and rapid drainage is being developed, so that moisture is not retained and rains run off quickly in flood proportions. We know, too, that the forces that cause hurricanes are, under

certain circumstances, beneficial. But even so, the tragedy remains, and there has been serious suffering and loss.

Christianity does not deny the reality of tragedy. But it takes people beyond tragedy. It assures us that God still reigns and that his mercies are sure. Our response to evil is the important thing. It brings deeper maturity to personality.

Communism is an evil. It may be a judgment on certain aspects of our western culture. We are having to think through our own religious foundations and examine our own ethics. It has given us a social and international concern. We were about to become an isolationist nation. Communism may be our "thorn in the flesh".

In the Dead Pull of Life

It is comparatively easy to keep up the formalities of religion when everything goes well. It is different when things go wrong. That is because our religion is a surface thing. It doesn't have a strong hold on us.

A Welshman by the name of Jack Jones has an autobiography, "Unfinished Journey", in which he mentions the religion of his mother, a Welsh collier's wife, who brought up a large family under severe economic conditions and difficulties. She took her children to church and Sunday school. Her creed was simple: "God is good". "With that she lived at peace with people of all creeds...on that she rested with confidence never to be shaken" (Stoddart, p. 99).

That makes us think of what Madame Chiang Kai-Shek says of her mother. There was a room on the third floor of their home in China, which was a prayer room of the mother. If anyone sought her counsel, she replied, "I must first ask God". This asking was not an affair of five ministers. She waited for God's guidance. The daughter says: "Mother prayed and left the decision in God's hands, the business worked out well".

In the present situation in China and Formosa, I am sure that it is their Christian faith that keeps the General and his wife, both Christians, hopeful of the future.

Tennyson grieving over the loss of his friend gave the world his noblest poem, "In Memoriam". Milton, blind, told of "Paradise Regained". Beethoven, deaf, produced some of his greatest music. Helen Keller became a comfort to thousands. It is said of Jesus that he was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).

There is in the world so much good, so much order and reliability, so much that brings joy and satisfaction to personal life and stability to our common life. We are sometimes very foolishly led to doubt the goodness of God because we cannot fit all the pieces into the jigsaw puzzle of life.

Another World as Essential

While some compensations are realized in this life, there are some wrongs that are never righted here. Some people never have a chance. Their latent possibilities are never realized.

Even in this life, one has to await justice, and it may never come in its fullness here. In the life to come it can be achieved.

The man who has an implicit faith in the goodness of God and the rulership of God in the affairs of men, and who believes that he is immortal here until his time comes to be ushered into the presence of God in whom he had placed his trust -- that man is known for his courage and the strength of his heart.

An astute observer (Chas. A. Ellwood: *Man's Social Destiny*) says that the American people have become worshippers of physical strength, personal beauty, intellectual power, and financial success. We see now where our gods are bringing us.

Faith in God inspires the spirit of self-sacrifice. That is essential to the maintenance of high standards. Man can confront the issues of life and death with supreme confidence when he sees more in existence than the present life. Faith in God inspires unselfish love, releases energy, inspires service, exalts the soul.

This faith is a driving force in life. Those who pass it up are fainting and falling. They lose interest in ideals. Their zest is quenched. They lack inspiration, their enthusiasm is gone.

David could have said as well as some later soul:

“So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.”

John Short, of Toronto, in a book entitled “Triumph Believing”, tells this story: A young man was seen entering a Roman Catholic Church at lunch time and to kneel before the altar for a few seconds and then depart. That was repeated daily for some time. The priest's curiosity was aroused. One day he stopped the young man and asked him what he did and why. The lad replied that his lunch hour was short. He had time for only a brief prayer. “What do you say?” asked the priest. “I say, ‘Jesus, it's Jimmie’.” The priest was deeply moved.

Sometime late, the priest was in the bedroom where Jimmie lay seriously sick. In fact, he had but a few more days to live. The priest said that he was certain that as he stood there he heard a voice saying, “Jimme, it's Jesus.”

Giving God Time

Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX

January 9, 1946

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

Psalm 27:14

The Bible is full of such injunctions as this. The best known of all is Isaiah 40:31: “They that wait upon the Lord shall...”

The meaning is that of exercising faith.

1. Waiting for divine guidance

Dr. Boreham relates that the late Dr. Jowett was once in a most pitiful perplexity and came to see Dr. Berry of Wolverhampton. “What would you do if you were in my place?” asked Jowett. “I don’t know, Jowett. I am not there, and you are not there yet. When do you have to act?” “On Friday,” Dr. Jowett replied. “Then you will find your way perfectly clear on Friday.” Sure enough, on Friday all was plain.

God and the ram in the thicket for Abraham;
Israel and the host of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. The path will open.
When the brook dried up for Elijah, the guiding voice came.

2. Waiting for light in an hour of trouble

There are those who are bereaved and who want an explanation right away, for example. The moment the blow strikes is not the time to try to explain. The thing to do is to wait.

Especially is it true of those who have lived so far apart from God that they want something said now.

3. Waiting for relief from some unhappy situation

Uncle Jap used to say that if you would wait, God took care of such situations.

Taking things in hand. Man is not given to patience.

“Let patience have her perfect work.”

God’s plans. Abraham helping God out -- Ishmael

Psalm 37:34. “Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shall see it.”

4. Waiting for adjustment of wrongs

Retaliation is forbidden. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Covered Sin

Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

June 7, 1925
March 31, 1940
December 1, 1946

“Blessed is he...whom sin is covered.”

Psalm 32:1

It is generally agreed that this psalm is closely related to the 51st Psalm. The latter is the psalm of confession. The 32nd is a psalm of gratitude. Both of these psalms are supposed to relate to the great sin in David’s life.

But so many people in every age of the world have found in them such an accurate description of their own feelings that they say and have said that these psalms might have been written expressly for them.

Augustine was probably the greatest of the Latin fathers of the Christian church. He lived in the latter part of the 4th Century, and North Africa was the scene of the greater part of his labors. His early life was one of gayety and dissipation, which brought great anxiety to his godly mother, Monica. He was converted at Milan, Italy. He was a great theologian. It is said that in his last illness, he had some of his fellow ministers to write this psalm on the wall opposite his bed, and he made it his song in the valley of the shadow of death.

There are several meanings of the word “cover”. I want to mention two of them: (1) to conceal, to hide from site; (2) to remove from remembrance, remit.

1. Some try to cover their sins by concealing them. This is the human method of covering sin.

It is said that the so called “brilliant minds” in this age of lawlessness sit down and plan a perfect crime. They intend to leave no clue. They propose to do a perfect piece of work. They will cover their tracks as they go.

It is true that some criminals are never found out. But in such cases, if we knew the inside history of the heart that perpetrated the crime, we would no doubt realize that after all their sins have not really been covered. It is not covered from themselves and their own consciences.

David may have thought he was doing a perfect piece of work when he ordered Uriah placed in the thickest of the fight, and waited to learn that he was among the casualties of the battle.

Achan may have thought that he showed great expertness in getting that wedge hidden without the knowledge of anyone.

When Jacob's sons came back with the plausible story about the wild beast and the blood-stained coat, they doubtless congratulated themselves on their resourcefulness. They had all "covered" their sins.

But sin rots its covering. The old adage has it that "murder will out". Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is a famous representation of this fact in literature.

Those of you who have read Hugo's "Les Miserables", remember how the hero, Jean Valjean, a former criminal, was pursued all of his life by a covered misdeed. In one tragic point in the story, he had gotten to be mayor, inventor, manufacturer, and was about to allow another man arrested under his name to suffer for his crime. But he could not. He confessed and they pitied him.

The story is told of an eagle which, while in search for a dinner, saw a weasel skulking in the grass. The eagle dove down and seized the weasel which had enough use of its long body to reach up under the wings of the eagle and gnaw with its sharp teeth. The eagle would not let go. An artery was cut. The wings lagged. The eagle fell to the ground. The sin we may think we have covered may do its deadly work in our hearts and lives (Hallock, #2077).

A city official was approached by the representative of a utilities company that wanted a franchise in a large city. It was implied, or stated, that for his vote a handsome remuneration would be given. The official replied that his vote was not for sale. The representative said, "Think of the money. It's the bargain of a lifetime." The official replied: "Listen, friend, no one ever yet got a bargain in sin. You tell me that all I have to do is to vote "right". Well, it isn't. I'll have to carry the consciousness of my dishonesty to the grave. I will have to pose before my wife and children as someone I know I am not. Don't tell me that it is a bargain" (Hallock: #2079).

How the youth of today need to know this. They will learn it, but the hard way. Like the little 18-year old unmarried mother who on yesterday slashed the throat of her newborn baby, which she did not want. She tried to cover her sin by committing an even more grievous one.

This method of covering one's sin will not work.

2. God's method of covering sin is to remove them from remembrance, to erase the stain.

God is able to do what man cannot do. It is the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. This is more than forgiveness. Someone has written this so as to read: "Blessed is he...of whose sins God does not think". They are blotted out.

It may have been that the writer had in mind the old scapegoat provided for in the Hebrew law. The sinner would come and lay his hands on the head of the animal and then that animal, typically bearing the sins of the sinner, would be led to the wilderness to wander. But the sinner's sins were covered.

Not only does God erase the stain, but he also gives a new heart, and clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. Then our sins are truly covered.

Some very crooked logs are sometimes carried to the sawmills. They are made straight by "slabbing". When the slabs have been sawed from the four sides, the log looks straight, but on investigation, the heart is as crooked as ever. Man's method of rectifying a crooked life is slabbing -- cutting off this heart and that. But the heart is still crooked. Only God can rectify that.

He gives us back dependable consciences. Rip Van Winkle, through indulgence, finally drifted away from his home and experienced a long sleep of 20 years length. When he awoke, he found his gun rusty and his clothes ragged. People in their absorption in the employments of the day may let their conscience become drugged to a long sleep. They become seriously impaired.

It is said that Admiral Perry while in the region of the North Pole loaded on a peculiar rock and was returning with it aboard. He found, however, that as he sailed back, the compass was not reliable. On looking for a cause, he came to find that the rock had magnetic qualities that were affecting the compass. There was nothing to do but throw it overboard (Stamm).

Rev. Dr. Archibald, of New Hampshire, tells of a hydrophobia scare that came to his town once. A mad dog came through the city, and on its way bit twelve children. The physicians had for years been making a study of the remedy for this ailment. But there had not been an occasion to use the remedy discovered. The mothers of these children came to the physicians asking if there were any remedy for this. They were told that there was such a remedy, and all that was required was that they should allow the children to be treated regularly with the remedy. Eleven of the twelve came for regular treatment and they are alive. One, a little Polish boy, without parental control, neglected to come. He died. (Expositor: 4/1925, p. 971)

When Silence is not Golden

Minden, LA
Minden, LA

May 6, 1934
May 5, 1940

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.”

Psalm 32:3

David once committed a great sin -- one that is being committed in spirit, if not in fact, every day. He coveted another man's wife, and in order to accomplish his desire, he arranged to have the husband killed in the battle lines. Men do the same thing today by process of alienation and the divorce courts. It is still sin and the worst kind of sin, even though there be no loss of life.

Nathan came to the king and brought about David's condemnation of himself through the recounting of a story. It was the story of a rich man who possessed many sheep, but who, when a visitor came by, would not take of his own flock. But he seized the one little ewe lamb possessed by a poor man and served that to his guest. “Thou art the man,” were the telling words which Nathan addressed to the king. His conscience was stirred. For a time the king did nothing about it. He made no confession of his sin. This psalm describes the inner experiences had by David during this period and afterwards. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.”

What David seems to say here is that when he kept silence, trying to hide his sin, feeling it, but not acknowledging it, his bones, the most solid part of his body became exhausted, feeble, worn out. Secret sin wore him out. It made him sick.

1. There is the inclination to hide one's sins.

There are times when we are called upon to make confession. Our reaction to such appeals is that this is a matter for ourselves alone.

People who have attended the Oxford Group “parties” where emphasis is made on the exercise of confessing one's sins one to another, the reaction is generally one of criticism. As V. C. Kitchen expresses it, they say, “They've no business to wash their dirty linen in public”. Another says, that his religion is “too sacred a thing to wear upon one's coat sleeve”.

A man usually feels that if he drinks, tells dirty stories, has an affair with some woman, it is his affair.

One of the interesting things, however, is that so many think they are getting by without anyone's knowing about their affairs; whereas it may be the common talk of the town. The wrongdoer may be keeping silence, but others are not. A man may think it is none of other people's business, but they are making it theirs, and he may not know it.

2. Unconfessed, Unforgiven Sin is the Source of Unhappiness.

Many people are unhappy, but they do not know just why. They do not know that it is the secret sin which they have never gotten off their hearts. Can't sleep, fretful, irritable, a failure in business, alienated from friends. Sin wrecks the man who will not secure forgiveness through confession.

“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.”

More things than time turn the hair gray. I know people and you know them who are getting old before their time. Some wonder why. In some cases, it is because they have a secret sin unrepented of. “My bones waxed old,” says the psalmist.

For that reason, some of the protestant ministers feel that some method should be provided for people to confess. Some even conduct confessionals but without any claim at the power of absolution. They simply advise in the matters at hand.

How it helps, to talk matters over.

3. There is great recompense in Confession.

(a) Peace -- When Jesus spake to the troubled sea, Peace be still, there is a calm.

“When peace like a river attendeth my way.”

(b) Safety -- vs. 7

(c) Guidance -- vs. 8

4. The Sooner we Confess the Better.

One cannot escape God. “Whither shall I flee from thy presence?” A change of scene does not effect a change of heart.

Must be more than a casual appendix to our prayers.

Addenda

There is a Swiss inscription, quoted by Carlyle, in “Sartor Resartus”, to the effect that “Speech is silvern, silence is golden”. In that well known passage in Ecclesiastes (3:1f) in which the Preacher says, “There is a time to every purpose under the heaven”, he observes that there is a “time to keep silence, and a time to speak”.

Undoubtedly in the great and important task of achieving usefulness and perfection of character, and happiness, there is a time when silence is not golden.

Dr. John S. Bonnell has an excellent chapter in his book “Pastoral Psychiatry” on the “Confession and forgiveness of sin”.

He relates the interesting story of a woman, 31 years of age, who was beset by fears. She was afraid when the doorbell rang, or the telephone. She was afraid of suffocation and of a sudden death, either of herself or her husband. She had consulted some twenty doctors in the past three years. The doctors could find nothing the matter with her, and declared it a matter of nerves. She manifested a great desire to convince others of her truthfulness, which aroused in the consultant a suspicion that she was concealing a major falsehood. It developed that she had been living a lie. She finally came to make full confession of it and was gradually enabled to regain her composure and health.

Doctors have patients who manifest no physical basis for the symptoms they have: dizziness, indigestion, neuritis, mental disorder.

Sometimes people put off too long the matter of breaking silence. Dr. Bonnell relates that a certain woman for 20 years had concealed from her husband the fact that she had a living son, born two years before they were married. The boy lived in a southern city, attending a university. Correspondence with him was carried on through a third party. She had lived in terror for these years lest her husband discover that this son lived. This was too much for her to carry so long. She had already developed certain psychopathic symptoms which must be treated in a sanitarium. She had been haunted by the fact: She could not bear the movies for they frequently portrayed her story. She got to where she felt that Hollywood had been given the facts of her life. The popular songs even had her story, and the radio gave it.

The papers frequently carry the news of confessions made by people unsuspected of crimes. They name cases that were not regarded as crimes. They felt that they must come out with it. Their silence was wrecking their lives.

James says, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed” (5:16). The mutual confession of Christians. This is not the confession of the Roman Catholic Church. It is something better. It helps one to get at the cause of his trouble.

From the depths of subconscious life, there sometimes arise emotions, memories, impulses, that express themselves in conscious life. They make their presence known in acute nervous disorders, decreasing efficiency, phobias. The sovereign remedy is complete confession.

God's Will and Your Life

Minden, LA

July 18, 1937

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye."

A friend of mine has submitted to me this question: "I am trying to so live that my life will conform to the will of God. I am endeavoring to formulate a certain plan of action. How can I ascertain whether my plan will be agreeable to the will of God, or not?"

What a fine question that is! It indicates a true life purpose and a most commendable spirit in the effort to achieve that purpose. This is a question which has been asked since the dawn of human history. But it is ever a fresh and vital question. I wish it might be said that it is the universal question. But it is not. In fact, it is not so general that it fails to excite interest whenever it is raised.

Why We Are Here

Whether it ever comes consciously to the mind of most people or not, all either consciously adopt, or drift into a working philosophy of life. Their actions, at least, indicate in each case the answer to the question: "Why am I placed in this world?" It may take some tragic situation to bring this question consciously to mind. But it is liable to come at any time.

If we might judge the answer given generally by what we observe, we may be justified in saying that people believe they are in the world for their own pleasure. Observe the continuous outpouring of human energy in the effort to minister to themselves. The streets and highways are crowded, amusement centers are congested, the air is filled with din and smoke and dust; the papers reveal no end of pursuits, projects, aims, anxieties, and indulgences; there are wars and rumors of wars. We want no interference either on the part of God or man. We seem to say by our action, "We are our own end".

But when we come to consider the life of our Lord, we find that he had a different conception. Although he came from the bosom of the Father, he came not to do his own will. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work". Again he said, "Not my will, but thine be done". Paul said of Jesus: "Christ pleased not himself".

In the light of this example on the part of our Lord, and the rest of the teaching of the Bible, the compilers of the Shorter Catechism, one of the creedal statements of our church, put it that "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever".

Every Person Has a Mission

In order that the glory of God may be complete, there is a work for each of us to do. It is a particular work for which we are peculiarly equipped. Everyone who breathes has a mission -- the high and the low, educated and uneducated, young and old, man and woman.

Men and women are called to tasks which will further the will of God and which it will be their chief glory to perform. Men are equal before God, but they are called to different tasks here in this world. Shakespeare had one of his characters to say, "All the world's a stage, and men and women only actors". Paul seemed to think of the world as a great arena in which people participated in various events before many witnesses. Off the stage, there is equality of rank. But on the stage, men take different parts.

The fate of the person who thinks that life is for one's own glory and not God's is illustrated in the life and fate of Dives, at whose gate Lazarus sat. He was perhaps a young man, with a good estate, who determined to enjoy himself. Everything was in the best of style -- house, means of transportation, dress, servants. It was for enjoyment, show, applause. He was fashionable, fastidious, high bred, dining on what was rare and costly, making a science of sensuality, with senses steeped in impurity. When he fell ill, he cursed his luck, but died and was buried in hell.

Some may never approach Dives in outward show. But may even surpass him in inward attitude. There are those who set themselves above religion, make a show of wisdom, glory in the prominent persons they know, are snobbish, vain, selfish, contemptuous of those less fortunate.

Christ indicated that such are utter failures in life. Men may praise their material achievements, but in the eyes of God they have missed the mark.

How to Secure the Guidance of God

What I am saying this morning is of no interest to the man or woman who is convinced that he or she is perfectly capable of directing his or her own life. God accomplishes his purposes, regardless of how men act towards him. He overrules the perverse acts of men. He does not force the conformity of man, but allows him the right of choice. If man chooses the way that is wrong, he must suffer the consequences.

Now, it is true that some people have made mistakes in thinking that God was guiding them when He was not. They had wrong impressions. Some have gone out to foreign lands with the impression that God would miraculously furnish them with money and enable them to speak the language through a gift of tongues. They found they were mistaken. But this does not disprove the fact that God leads.

The Lord stands ready to direct those who seek that leadership in the proper way.

Dr. R. A. Torrey was a great Bible teacher, evangelist, writer, and counselor in religious matters. His was a rich experience, and out of that experience he has given us some advice as to the way to secure the leadership of God.

George Muller was a philanthropist, born in Germany, who migrated to England in 1828, while a young man. He built great orphanages by faith and prayers. He has written about his

ventures in five volumes, entitled “A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Muller”. He erected five large orphans’ homes, sheltered 10,000 orphans, received about \$7,500,000, scattered millions of Bibles and books, gave away \$400,000 out of sums received for personal use, and left in all about \$300 and a fragrant memory. George Muller depended entirely on the guidance of God in all his adventures. He tells us how to secure this guidance. What he has to say, and what Dr. Torrey says, coincide fully.

Outline of Procedure

1. Accept Christ as Savior, and surrender to him. There is no promise to an unbeliever. Christ is the greatest revelation of the will of God we have. We cannot conform to the will of God without being a follower of Christ. In fact, we will not have the heart to do God’s bidding unless we have new experience of grace.

2. Face the situation with no will of our own regarding the matter. It is here, says Muller, that people have nine-tenths of their trouble. When one gets to that point, he is but a little way from the knowledge of what God’s will is. Dr. Torrey calls attention to the statement of James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5-8). Dr. Torrey says the promise is to those lacking wisdom, not to those who have it already.

3. Be willing to do God’s will, whatever it may be. Our attitude is generally that we want God to say yes to our own plans. We want his sanction on what we think is best. It ought to be observed that because a venture involves sacrifice it is God’s will. We may be guilty of spiritual pride in the making of our sacrifices. God’s will in all probability will surpass our fondest dreams, but not always in the way we would choose.

4. Engage in definite prayer for guidance. “Let him ask of God,” said James. We do not know enough. The answer that comes from prayer will depend upon our conformity in preceding particulars. Faith must be mingled with prayer. “Let him ask of God in faith.” One may expect definite clear guidance.

5. Seek the knowledge of the Will of the Spirit through and in connection with the Word of God. After praying, do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. One is liable to be misled here. The Word and spirit must be combined. Dr. Torrey tells of a man who told him that he felt the Spirit was leading him to marry a woman who was a deep Christian character. “But,” says Dr. Torrey, “you already have one wife”. “But,” said the man, “you know we have not gotten along very well together”. “Yes,” said Dr. Torrey, “I know that, and I have had conversation with her and believe it is your fault more than hers”. The Doctor assured him that he Bible was clear as to his duty, and that he was mistaken about the leadership of the spirit.

6. Take into account providential circumstances. These often indicate God’s will in connection with His word and Spirit. One finds himself in a situation wherein his duty is clear. To renounce his clear obligations would be in violation of his avowed aim.

7. Follow God’s guidance a step at a time. Peter’s course as he came out of prison. “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord” (Psalm 37:23). Paul and his companions going

through Asia Minor. They purposed to go into certain sections, but were led otherwise by the Spirit.

8. Always bear in mind that God's guidance is clear guidance. Some are disturbed because they may fail to go when guidance is not clear. We have no right to be in dread. If the way is not clear, we have no right to go on.

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on;
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene -- one step enough for me.

“I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

“So long Thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.”

On the cross our Lord prayed, “My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?” It was but a short time till he said, “Father into Thy hands I command my Spirit.”

A Nation's Need of God

Dun. Men. (unreadable)
Minden, LA
Minden, LA
Minden, LA

January 28, 1912
February 24, 1924
June 7, 1931
October 12, 1941

“Blessed is the nation whose God is Lord.”

Psalm 33:12

After calling upon the righteous to offer praise to Jehovah with all kinds of music, the psalmist here gives reasons why God is worthy to be praised. God is good and faithful and it is by his word that all things were created. He is All-wise, All seeing, Almighty, Ruler of Nations. The psalmist was no doubt contemplating with satisfaction the favorable aspects of his own nation's lot. Any nation having God as its sponsor, he mused, is fortunate.

This psalm may have been written at a time when Jehovah was extensively worshipped in Israel. That may not have been true. It may have been that the psalmist thought of God as having chosen Israel as his favored people. There may not have been any real acceptance of the full responsibilities of such a favored position.

However, as we read the history of the Hebrew people as recorded in the Bible, we note that there were times when Jehovah had ceased being the God of a large proportion of the people. Consequently the nation drifted into decay and final dissolution.

Godliness Essential to Perpetuity

Obedience to the will of the great God of nations is essential to the life of any people. Disregard of the principles set forth in God's revealed will is certain to bring woe. This is a fact easily established by a study of history. Statesmen, many of whom were not regarded as being religious, have seen this.

In the memorable convention of 1787, when the framework of our nation was constructed, Benjamin Franklin made a request that God's guidance be sought. “I have lived a long time,” he said, “and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?”

Washington's words are even better: “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible”.

Daniel Webster said, “If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper”.

In May 1794, in the French National Convention, Maximilien Robespierre, whose name is associated with all that is bloody and cruel in the history of the French Revolution, a puzzling character but a sagacious statesman, made an eloquent appeal for a return to morality as the basis

of national security -- a morality which is itself based on belief in God and the immortality of the soul.

The Lesson of History

Then name of Greece stands as the synonym of culture. The world still pays homage to the intellectual achievements of the Greeks. They show what man can do through his own efforts. It was during the Periclean age that the people of Greece deserted the gods in which the race had previously trusted and came to believe in a supreme Being. They seem to have caught a real, though faint, vision of God. In the principles of government which they set forth, they came astonishingly near the Christian ideal. But they did not reach it, and thus revealed man's inability to work out his own salvation. The failure of Greek civilization shows that something more than culture is necessary to preserve a nation.

Rome stands as a synonym for imperialism and power. Rome enriched herself materially by conquest and the establishment of law. By the supremacy of her power, she was able for a time to establish peace (*pax Romanorum*). Rome exemplified to the most extreme degree the tendency of people to exercise authority over other peoples. It had strong armies, curbed tolerance, and repressed civil liberties. Yet Rome fell. The history of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" is one of the classics. It shows that something more than power is needed to preserve a civilization.

The Hebrews, among the ancients, represented religion. They worshipped the true God, as a rule. But they descended into ritualism. They had much formality but little morality. God sent his prophets to them and they repeatedly and earnestly called the people to repentance. But they stoned and otherwise mistreated the prophets sent to them. The kingdom was divided. First, the ten tribes were sent into captivity and oblivion. Then the Kingdom of Judah was carried away to Babylon. The history of Israel reveals that mere formal religion will not save a nation. There must be right living.

Unwholesome Tendencies in America Today

If we are to profit by experience, we should watch for tendencies that have proven so disastrous in times of the past. As we study America, which seems so strong and durable, do we find health and vigor? Or do we find the factors that contributed to the downfall of the civilizations of the past?

We find today worship of intelligence. We have today what might be called a religion of science. Science seems to bring a certitude not before attainable. But it is so limited and circumscribed. There is still need for the exercise of faith even in science. Knowledge itself is not virtue. The virtue consists in the purpose for which the knowledge is acquired. We may have the greatest educational institutions in the world, but that will not assure the perpetuation of the nation. Culture did not save Greece, and it will not save America.

We find also a worship of power. It is commonly accepted that money is power, and hence the acquisition of money seems to be the main interest in the United States since the war.

Greed seems to be the basic sin of the nation. It may be the cause of the present depression. Since America has been made a creditor among the nations of the world, thoughts of imperialism -- economic imperialism -- seem to prevail. Consequently there is greater demand than ever for large armaments to protect our wealth. Profits are placed above human welfare. The nation is regarded as a source of income. Politics for self-enrichment is the slogan of the time. Along with that goes the compromise with those high ideals that serve as the saving factors in any nation. Material power did not save Rome, and it will not save the United States.

We find also in our churches today a growing regard for the formalities. We are wanting more machinery in the church. Great institutions seem to be the ideal religious organizations. There is a growing emphasis on worship in the more formal way. The application of the ethics of Jesus to the time is unpopular with many. The preachers are told that they had better stick to the "pure gospel". But ritualism did not save Israel, and it will not save America.

Real Christianity Essential

In view of these facts, it appears that there was never a time in the history of our land when there was greater need for the proclamation of real religion.

The nation needs the vision of God as embodied in the person of Jesus. His teachings supply the world with laws for social relationships. The poor and the well-to-do alike gather about him.

Following Jesus would mean --

1. That relations of individuals to individuals would be based on goodwill and not power. This would mean the overthrow of greed. Gandhi has done this, inspired by the Sermon on the Mount. The spirit of service.

2. That acquired knowledge will not be purposeless. It will be put to work. There will be an untrammled search for truth, and the full demands of such a discovery will be met. Tolerance and freedom of speech, press, and assemblage will be preserved.

3. That righteousness in life will be made the basis of success and not the acquisition of material resources by questionable methods. Religion will be more than a formal exercise.

The Light that Shows the Way

Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Killeen, TX
Rockdale, TX

December 12, 1937
December 5, 1943
December 9, 1951
December 8, 1957 (rewritten)

“In thy light shall we see light.”

Psalm 36:9

We take no liberties when we associate the term “thy light” with God’s Word. In the 119th Psalm (v. 105) we read: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”. So, the text could read, “In thy word shall we see light”.

That at least has been the witness borne by an ever increasing host of Bible readers. Before our rapid means of transportation had been developed, traveling salesmen had to spend nights away from home and in hotels. Among them were Christian men who, for the sake of fellowship, formed an organization known as the Gideons. Their aim was to improve every opportunity for the betterment of the lives of their fellow travelers, business men, and others. The organization derived its name from an Old Testament character by the name of Gideon, a judge of Israel, who is described as being a “man willing to do exactly what God wanted him to do, irrespective of his own judgment as to plans or results”.

The project for which the Gideons are best known is that of placing copies of the Bible in the rooms of commercial hotels and motels. Hundreds of thousands of Bibles have been so placed. True, a great many people who occupy hotel rooms do not open those Bibles. Now that television sets are beginning to be standard items of room equipment, there is less inclination to read anything. But some people do read the Gideon Bibles, and are bearing testimony to the strength and comfort which they have derived therefrom.

This project is founded on the assumption that the Bible has a potency all its own, and that one needs but to make it available to men and women everywhere. That conviction lay behind the institution of an organization known as the American Bible Society back in 1816, which has made it a matter of earnest endeavor to make it possible for every person on earth to possess the Scriptures in his own language. What this organization has done during the past 141 years staggers the imagination. We are told that in 1956 alone, this Society distributed over 15,000,000 copies of the Scriptures in 193 languages in 60 countries. Other Bible Societies are also at work. We are told that now the Scriptures, at least in part, are available in 1,109 languages. You might think that surely there are no more languages for the Bible to be translated into. We are told, however, that there are at least 1,000 more. The Scriptures now come out in a new language at the rate of one a month, which is not fast enough. Effort will be made during the next 25 years to produce 16 new translations a year instead of 12.

The Best of “Best Sellers”

About ten years ago, Frank Luther Mott gave out the results of his study of the best sellers among books. He went back as far as 1690, and listed 3,500 books that were best sellers in the years since. From 1690 to 1750, the best sellers were religious books. Some later ones were definitely not religious: "Gone With the Wind", "How to Win Friends and Influence People", "See Here, Private Hargrove", "The Egg and I", "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn". Some of these reached 2,000,000. The best sellers of all time are religious: "Pilgrims Progress", "Dickens' "Christmas Carol", "Ben Hur", "The Robe", "In His Steps". There has never been a year in American history when the Bible did not outsell any other book. This writer estimated that from colonial days to the time he wrote, 200,000,000 copies of the whole Bible had been sold in America, not to speak of copies of the New Testament and other portions, nor of the number sent abroad. The ten years since will add to those figures.

One thing that makes translation a difficult procedure is the inability to find words with which to express equivalent ideas. We are told that it is not difficult to find equivalents for "hypocrite", for such persons exist in all societies. The word "redemption" presents some difficulty, for instance. The Bambara preachers in West Africa get the idea over to their hearers when they say, "Go took our heads out". The Arab slave traders went into the interior, captured large numbers of natives, placed an iron collar on each captive, with a chain running from one slave to another. As they passed through a town, a local chief would recognize a friend among the captives. He could secure the friend's release if he paid enough brass, gold or ivory. He could thereby take his head out of the iron collar. So, say the evangelists, "God took our heads out".

Striving for Accuracy

The English Bible has a romantic history. It is a long struggle to produce a version that is true to the original text, even though no original text is in existence, in a language that is understandable to the greatest number of readers.

The version with which we are most familiar was produced in 1611. It is known as the King James Version. You recall that it was King James under whose reign England and Scotland were united. He held the titles of James VI of Scotland and James I of England. He was the son of Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic, but he was brought up a Presbyterian by the Scottish nobles.

James found the deferential, if not obsequious bearing of the English prelates a very striking contrast to the bold and frank attitude of the synods and preachers of Scotland. This extreme courtesy is said to have gone straight to his heart and gratified his enormous self-complacency.

He prided himself on his knowledge of theology, and was very intolerant. A version known as the Great Bible, produced under supervision of Coverdale, was favored by the Anglicans, and passages from it are still used in the Book of Common Prayer. But a version produced in Geneva under guidance of John Calvin was gaining great favor among the Puritans. But James did not like the Geneva Bible because the notes on the margin exhibited disrespect to the royal office. He was therefore favorable to the production of a new version. He got together scholars of the highest order, who in less than three years produced the book that became the

accepted version of the English-speaking Protestant churches, and for 300 or more years exercised a profound influence on English thought and literature.

There were numerous deficiencies in the character of James. Henry IV of France called him the “wisest fool” in Europe. Vain and conceited, he was the easy prey of those who fawned upon him. Even the scholars knew his weakness, and in the preface to the King James Version, lavished their praise upon him in rather fulsome phraseology.

So, the King James Version of the Bible was a “revised version”. Furthermore, it has itself been revised as many as four times. Our present King James Version is the revision of 1769, when 80,000 or more changes were made in spelling, etc.

The Revised Standard Version (NT, 1946; OT, 1952) has had phenomenal circulation and will very likely in the course of time become the version most generally used.

Why This Labor Over a Book?

The Bible has been called by many figurative terms: “Sword”, “Bread of Life”, “Garden of the Lord”. Another is “Light”. As in the dawn of creation, God said, “Let there be light,” so thereafter through the pens of some 40 writers, over a period of some 1,500 years, in an extended area, he again said, “Let there be light”.

1. Light on the character and purpose of God.

Job exclaimed, “O that I knew where I might find him” (23:3). The Bible is not a treatise on science, botany, astronomy, or jurisprudence. It does answer a question that man is asking and needs to know: What kind of Being is it that lies behind all that we see? Nature tells us something of God, but not enough. It is a wonderful picture of the Father God which the Book gives us. Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us”. Jesus said: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:8,9).

2. Light on the origin and meaning of life.

You recall that when the missionaries first took the Bible to Britain the old chief, after hearing their message, declared his willingness to accept the Word, since it told what was in the dark out of which human life came and something of the dark into which the soul entered.

Some would have us believe that man evolved. But the Bible tells us that man is the handiwork of a Creator. Some would have us believe that we are but automatons, moving only as we are moved upon by stimuli. The Bible tells us that we are responsible beings who must give an account of deeds done in the body.

Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), a prominent lawyer and skeptic, once told Dr. Jos. R. Sizoo that he had his own definition of life -- “It is an unpleasant interruption of nothingness”.

Paul said: “For to me to live is Christ” (Philistines 1:21).

3. Light on the problems of life (personal).

It reveals man's moral imperfections -- the fact that he is a sinner before the God of Righteousness. It never glosses facts nor smoothes the portraits of its heroes. Cromwell told the artist engaged to paint his portrait to depict it "wart and all".

But the Bible also sheds light on how to get right. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" asks the psalmist. He answers his own question: "By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (119:9). Paul said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: all things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell tells of a young business woman in his church whose custom it was to read a consecutive passage of the Bible each day, beginning where she left off the previous day, until she met a verse that she felt was "God's marching orders" for the day. She would meditate upon it, write it down on a slip of paper and take it with her. One drab morning she took a taxi. The driver wanted to talk. He leaned back to say: "New York is a ___ place to live in. People's nerves are on edge. It's confusion worse confounded. A man's crazy to stay here if he can get away." The young woman replied, "I used to feel that way myself". "Don't you feel that way now?" the driver asked. "Why don't you?" She said: "I have a peace deep down inside me which I didn't use to have." "How did you get it?" he asked. She told him about her plan of Bible reading. "Did you get a verse today?" he asked. "Yes, I have it here. It looks like the verse was intended for you". Opening her bag she took out the slip of paper and read these words: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). "Let me see that thing," said the driver. She passed the paper to him. He drove the rest of the way in silence. As she was leaving the taxi, the woman paid the fare and handed the driver a tip, which he declined. "Lady, I couldn't take any tip from you. You have given me something this morning worth more than all the tips I can earn today."

4. Light on problems of corporate life.

The problems of corporate life are different from those of personal life, for the reason that men seem to act differently in groups.

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, a professor of Union Theological Seminary in New York, has a book: "Moral Man in Immoral Society". He maintains that as individuals we are honest and want to be helpful to others. But when we act in groups, we disregard justice and honesty and assume that it is right for us to take what we want and can get.

The tensions of life, we need to exercise care lest we be governed more by the pull of the crowd than by the principle of personal conviction. Peter at Antioch, when some came from Jerusalem, withdrew and separated himself from the Gentiles with whom he had fraternized before. Paul rebuked Peter for this (Gal. 2:11f).

A great many of our international problems would be solved if so called Christian nations acted towards one another in a Christian spirit.

"O grant us light, that we may know
The wisdom Thou alone canst give;
That truth may guide where'er we go,
And virtue bless where'er we live."

Creed and Conduct

First Church, Shreveport, LA
Conyers, GA
Minden, LA
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX
Rockdale, TX

July 6, 1930
December 14, 1930
July 9, 1939
October 15, 1944
April 28, 1957

“Trust in the Lord and do Good.”

Psalm 37:3

This psalm is credited to David. His personal history illustrates the psalm. What he is saying in this psalm is that the righteous need not be vexed by the prosperity of the wicked. Implicit trust in God and a constant course of integrity will ultimately prove a blessing.

David sums it all up in this terse statement: “Trust in the Lord and do good”. When interpreted in the full light of Scripture, this passage gives us a concise statement of the essence of religion. It does not say, “Trust in the Lord and do nothing, or be nothing”. Neither does it say, “Do good and everything will be all right”. Trusting in the Lord and doing good go together. We have reason to believe that they are inseparable. The man who has the right relationship to God will do good, and no man can do good continuously without having faith in God.

It is the normal desire of human beings to make the most of life. We do not have the same idea about what constitutes the best in life. Opinions differ concerning what constitutes the supreme good. But the normal man or woman wants to do well. The person who is devoid of any such aim is not normal. Some devastating factor has come into his mental realm and subjected him to bondage.

The object of our concern, then, should be the choice of supreme good. Having found the best standards of life, we need to discover the best stimulus for the realization of that worthy end of life. What is the worthiest purpose? How may we realize it?

We can find the answer to both of these questions in the teachings of the Christian religion and the Word of God. We systematize and summarize the teachings of the Bible in what we call a “creed”. Occasionally we hear or read statements which are critical of those who subscribe to creeds, fixed beliefs, dogmas. But we find that in many cases, these disparaging people have creeds. And well they might have, for action flows out of belief.

In my younger years, the works of Count Tolstoy, a Russian novelist, philosopher and mystic, were widely read in this country. His normal attitude was one of revolt. There was a time when he challenged all accepted ideas in religion. Because of that, he was excommunicated from his church. After living for a time apart from religious affiliations, he became impressed with the futility of life. He was strongly tempted to end it all, when there came bursting in upon

him the thought that God lives. Let him describe the sensation: “There arose in me, with this thought, glad aspirations towards life. Everything in me awoke and received a meaning... He is there: he without whom one cannot live. To acknowledge God and to live are one and the same thing...Live, seek God, and there will be no life without him”. Tolstoy at least found that to do good, one must trust in the Lord.

What does trusting the Lord involve?

1. An Acceptance of God’s Standards of Life.

We are not left in the dark about what those standards are. They were exemplified in Christ, “who went about doing good”. As we read again what Jesus had to say about the good life, we note that it does not consist in what we do not do. Some people’s goodness is a negative thing. They do not steal, nor curse, nor gamble, nor drink.

We find that the central principle of the ethics of Jesus is love. Real goodness is in good will, it is a matter of attitude. Jesus considered personality sacred because of its capacity for fellowship with God. The best description of love in action is in the 13th Chapter of 1 Corinthians.

There is a goodness that has no winsomeness. It is the goodness of right conduct, of following a code, or doing the correct thing. It often proceeds from a self-centered hart. The goodness of the Pharisees and scribes was condemned by Jesus.

It is to Christ’s standard that we must attune our consciences. It is wrong to hold that if we follow our consciences, all will be well. Some of the worst offences of history were committed by conscientious people. Paul had lived a conscientious life but he had not lived a good life always.

Professor Hocking, of Yale, is quoted as having said, “There is a deep tendency in human nature to become like that which we imagine ourselves to be”. We are told in the Bible that by faith we become sons of God. “Now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:2). Just imagining ourselves to be sons of God doe not make us so, but the high consciousness of being sons of God should make us act like members of the divine household.

Trusting in the Lord means adoption of God’s standard of goodness.

2. Possession of the Necessary Incentive.

If someone were to come to you and ask the question, “Why be good anyway?” what would you say? You could say, for one thing, that the fact that a person asks that question indicates that his moral standards are slipping.

You could say, furthermore, that goodness is wholesome and prudent, that it promotes health and efficiency. But the element of self-interest lessens the virtue. Doing good to others makes for a happier world. It will make people good to us. But there we have the self-centered motive again.

Goodness becomes the guiding principle of life only when it flows from a right relationship to God.

Back in 1930, John Galsworthy, an English novelist and dramatist, produced a novel entitled, "Main in Waiting". In it there is a conversation between a mother and daughter. "Providence is too remote, Mother", says the daughter. "It's too remote. I suppose there is an eternal plan, but we are like gnats for all the care it has for us". "Don't encourage such feelings, Dinny," rejoins the mother, "they affect one's character". "I don't see the connection between beliefs and characters," said the daughter. "I'm not going to behave any worse because I cease to believe in Providence or in an after life...If I'm decent it's because decency's the decent thing and not because I'm going to get anything by it". The mother replied: "Yes, but why is decency the decent thing if there is no God?"

Back in 1929, I think it was, the papers were full of accounts of labor disturbances in Gastonia, North Carolina, a city of cotton mills and iron works. The chief of police was killing on June 7, 1929, and this was followed by 70 arrests, 16 indictments and finally by 7 convictions on October 21. During the trial, the wife of one of the men finally convicted, a young woman of 20 years, was placed on the witness stand for the defense. In connection with her testimony, she said she did not believe in a supreme being, but believed that "man controls his own destiny". The presiding judge then sustained the contention that her views regarding God and the future life made her unreliable as a witness. This judge was passing on the question from the standpoint of the law, basing his opinion on the "Statute of Oaths", bearing the date of 1777, which had certain stipulations.

Leaving the legality or constitutionality of such an opinion to the lawyers and the courts, we might be permitted to ask just what incentive a young woman in her position would have to give damaging testimony against her husband if she did not believe in God or the future life.

Trust in the Lord and you will have the incentive to do good.

3. Assurance that Every Good Deed is Significant.

Man can become tired of even a good thing if it seems to lead nowhere. To use an expression common in wartime, one becomes "fed up" with life. One becomes impressed with the "fatuous futility of our sufferings and pains". He experiences the "boredom of energy expended to no purpose" (Studdert Kennedy). But are good deeds ever done to no purpose?

We have been reading of the harrowing experiences undergone by floodwater victims in Texas. We have read, too, of the heroic efforts put forth by those who have gone to the rescue of marooned persons. Some of these acts are reported in the newspapers. But we know that many are never given recognition. But we can be sure that the all seeing Eye does not miss that kind of thing.

Gray, in his Elegy, wrote --

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air."

Such is not true in the economy of the Kingdom.

Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were English reformers back in the 16th Century. They incurred the disfavor of Queen Mary, a Catholic sovereign, and she sentenced them to be burned at the stake. As they were being fastened on, Latimer shouted: "Play the man, Master Ridley, we shall this day light such a candle in England, as I trust by God's grace shall never be put out". Quite prophetic.

4. Confidence and Strength.

Tonight at Calvert, our young people have a program to give on the seal of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It is made up of a number of symbols. You will find this seal on all of our literature. It is symbolic of a victorious church. The laurel branches are symbolical of victory.

I am wondering if we have the spirit of triumph in our church promotion. The efficacy of the church is not dependent upon numbers, nor money, nor activities. Our need is faith. We need to trust in God.

That was the note sounded by that great missionary pioneer on his way to the orient. He was asked by a boat officer if he were expecting to make that nation Christian, and he replied that he could not but that God could.

It was the note sounded by Patrick Henry in 1775, in his memorable speech, when he said: "Sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us".

It is the note which Whittier sounded when he wrote --

"I know not where his islands lift their fronded palms in the air;
I only know I cannot drift beyond His love and care."

It is the note which the psalmist (probably David) sounded when he wrote: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

Act on the Faith You Have

You say, "my faith is weak. I cannot see my way through. There are some things I cannot understand". I am reminded of Bunyan's fine touch on this point. In "Pilgrims Progress", when Christian was leaving the City of Destruction, Evangelist asked, "Do you see yonder Wicketgate?" Christian said, "No". Then said the other: "Do you see yonder shining light?" He said, "I think I do". Then said Evangelist: "Keep that light in your eye and go up directly thereto: so shall thou see the gate".

"Who comes to God an inch, through doubtings dim,

In blazing light God will advance a mile to him.”

“Tis by faith of joys to come
We walk through deserts dark as night;
Till we arrive at heaven our home,
Faith is our guide, and faith our light.”

So, trust in the Lord and do good.

The Hand at the Helm

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX

October 14, 1945

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

Psalm 37:5

During the war, we heard a great deal about the fighting forces. When the whole story is written, there will be much deserved recognition of all factors concerned.

An article in one of the current magazines (Washington New Digest, Rep. Frank W. Boykin of Alabama) gives us information regarding the pilots who guided a vast number of boats in and out of the 35 seaports of the country during the war, and are still doing it.

When war was declared and it became apparent that we as a nation would have need of very expert guidance for our ships in and out of our great harbors, the nation's 650 state-licensed port pilots were brought into the Merchant Marine and given responsibility of steering our ships, great and small, convoys, troopships, battleships, tramp steamers, tankers, in and out of the port. It is a job that requires great courage and expert knowledge at any time, since weather conditions greatly complicate the task. But in war time, ships must be guided through complicated mine fields and narrow openings of the anti-submarine nets guarding our seaboard ports.

They did a great job. During 1944, the pilots handled 120,000 assignments without a single major casualty, and not one of those vessels, loaded with troops or war equipment, was delayed because of the unavailability of a pilot.

It is said that a pilot is a welcome sight to a sea-weary captain. Far out from land, he boards the ship. It is not an easy thing at times to do this -- in a rough sea.

One old master has said: “Picture a pilot some thick night, on the bridge of a liner inward bound. Many lives and valuable property are in his hands. He stands there, or paces up and down and peers into the gloom and haze ahead of him. He must decide on the instant whether that faint, elusive glimmer he can just make out down there in the darkness is a buoy light or the lantern of some small craft.”

People who have watched pilots work have a profound respect for their ability. In the time of stress and peril, it is he alone who can bring a vessel to a safe landing.

The Great Pilot of each of us on life's sea is the Almighty.

It was some such figure as this that Tennyson had in mind when he wrote “Crossing the Bar”, one stanza of which runs:

“For though from out our borne of Time and Space
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.”

1. God's hand is at the helm of the universe.

There is a will of the eternal undergirding the course of human events. Through the ages one increasing purpose runs. That purpose will be established.

2. He is ready to direct each life to its best destination.

God is concerned about individuals. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psalms 91:11). As nurses guard little children. There is a host about those who are the objects of God's favor. "There shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling".

This is the statement of the text: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him and he will bring it to pass".

3. The condition under which God will do this is that we commit our way unto him.

You remember that great hymn --

"Lead, kindly light, amid th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,
One step enough for me.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Should'st lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on."

The temptation is very strong to take over the wheel ourselves. We become rather doubtful that God is interested. We seem to be having a rather hard time of it. We see others forging ahead, seemingly by their own resourcefulness. Then we are tempted to discard our reliance on God. We say that perhaps God wants us to use our resourcefulness and wits.

There is great comfort in the assurance of God's care. This morning, at the breakfast table, we were talking about how to bring about that mental relaxation which is essential to sleep at night. Frances said she had seen somewhere that one person had found a solution in a little prayer to this effect: "Now, Lord, I have had the day shift, you take over the night shift".

4. There are certain qualities that a God-committed way will have.

It will not be a way of presumption, as the Devil would have had Jesus choose saying that angels of God would bear him up. It will not be a way of worldliness, greed, selfishness, ambition; neither will it be a way of pride, for "pride goeth before a fall". He will not favor obstinacy, absurd fancies, or vanity.

The way that he will favor is a way of humble faith in Christ, obedience to divine laws, childlike trust, stern integrity, consecrated service.

At times this way will be stony and rough. It may be beset with temptation, at times. It may lead into strange relationships and over unwelcome regions.

But if we are in the line of duty, the great pilot will bring us to the best end.

The Steps of a Good Man

Colonial Prayer Meeting, Dallas, TX

November 7, 1937
June 7, 1944

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.”

Psalm 37:23

The reception given such a statement as this will depend upon what one understands by the term “good man”. In fact, I suspect that a correct definition of that term will establish the truthfulness of the statement.

There are misconceptions of what a “good man” is.

- (1) One well meaning, but unimpressive individual;
- (2) One who makes a show of piety, or piousness;
- (3) One soft and sentimental.

There has long been a search for the good life. A good man may be one who realizes the most the ideal of living the good life. But what is the good life?

Lao-tse, 600 years before Christ said it is living in harmony with the cosmic order. Confucius later held that the good life is that of kindly reciprocity in the fundamental relations of society -- the family and friendship -- the Golden Rule negatively stated. The famous “Code of Hammurabi”, who reigned in Babylon from 2123 to 2081 BC held that the good life is established by establishing justice in the land. Homer exalted deeds of heroic adventure.

Dr. William DeWitt Hyde, President of Bowdoin College, has a book on “Five Great Philosophies of Life”, covering the period from Socrates to the death of Christ. (1) The Epicurean pursuit of pleasure; (2) the Stoic self-control by law; (3) Platonic subordination of the lower to the higher; (4) the Aristotelian sense of proportion and harmonious adjustment; and (5) the Christian spirit of love.

In the main, modern quests have their roots back in these ancient philosophies.

Christ established the fact that “there is none good but God”. Therefore, goodness is Godliness. So the text states, “If a man is good, his goodness comes from God.” “By the grace of God, I am what I am,” says Paul.

Some religion has been ineffective in making people better. Some worship is linked with immorality. There may be ritual without right conduct. Some evils have been sanctioned by religion -- intolerance, persecution, slavery, prostitution, jealousy, and war.

The more earnest one is about God, the better the conduct. Call the roll of history: Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, Washington, Lincoln, Lee.

Our greatest revelation of goodness is in Christ. Christianity alone can give the good life.

Christianity gives us (1) our moral ideal -- Christ; (2) power to deal with an unsatisfactory past -- forgiveness; (3) strength to resist evil -- Holy Spirit; (4) a passion to serve; (5) the consciousness that what we are and do matters to God.

The Soul's Thirst for God

Minden, LA
Rockdale, TX

March 19, 1940
March 3, 1957

“My soul thirsteth for God.”

Psalm 42:2

There was an ancient fugitive -- David, perhaps, who was in hiding at some distance from the tabernacle in Jerusalem. He was driven there by rebellion. Naturally, he was lonely and unhappy. God seemed to him to be as far away as Jerusalem. It was the custom of the Jews to associate God with certain localities. Even generations later, as the woman of Samaria said, the Jews felt that “in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:20f).

It was probably Moses who wrote that beautiful 90th Psalm, which begins: “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations”. God is the home of the soul. It is natural to want to be back home. One always wants to be back in the structure erected by the sinews of consecrated devotion, where abides the sheltering, understanding love of friends and family.

Familiar to all is the story of the prodigal who, upon becoming satiated with the indulgence of which the husks of his humble diet were mockeries, came to the realization that he had a deep craving for his father and the atmosphere of home.

There is something peculiarly appealing in the line from Gray's Elogy, which runs, “The plowman homeward plods his weary way”.

So, this fugitive declared, “My soul thirsteth for God”.

1. The Thirsty Soul of Man

The psalmist is here expressing the universal craving of mankind. A great soul of the early church said, “Thou hast made us for thyself; and we are not at rest until we rest in thee”. The fact that one is not at the moment conscious of this need does not disprove the existence of the need. The woman of Samaria had it even before the Master quickened it and brought it to her notice. Like a host of others, she had, as Jeremiah expressed it (2:13) forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewn herself out a cistern that would hold no water.

I recall having read once in a newspaper a man's description of his impression of Dayton, Ohio, where he found himself at noon one day in a whirlpool of humanity issuing from the great factories, bent on getting bread. “The clang of cars, the scream of brakes, made a roaring monotone that drowned out the human voice so that men and women walked silently, with heads bent and eyes intent -- on bread, bread alone”. Then he became aware that from above him, in a church tower, the noontide chimes were ringing out a message in the clanging, smoky atmosphere that penetrated to the very souls of some. The chimes were playing, “Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me”. But sad to say, there were some who, though they had ears, heard not.

There are those today who tell you that you can satisfy that thirst from within. There is a philosophy known as Humanism which holds that man has within himself all that he needs. That is one of the “cisterns” that will hold no water.

Some try to satisfy that thirst with things. Recall the story of Jesus regarding the man who felt that business was all. This man of the parable had at least the virtue of knowing when he had enough. Some in our day never come to that point. Jesus gave his estimate of that man who said, “Soul, take thine ease; thou has much goods”. “Thou fool,” said Jesus. The soul can’t be satisfied with things.

Indulgence is another of the futile recourses. A London physician is quoted as saying that the great of human miseries is one that cannot be touched with the knife nor cured with drugs. It is boredom. “There is more wretchedness, more torment, driving men to folly, due to boredom than there is in anything else. Men and women will do almost anything to escape it. They drink, drug themselves, prostitute their bodies and sell their souls. They take up mad causes, organize absurd crusades, fling themselves into lost hopes and crazy ventures; they will torment themselves and torture other people to escape the misery of being bored.”

Some throw themselves into more worthy pursuits, but there is no substitute for God in the realm of the soul.

George John Romanes (1848-1894) an English scientist, born in Canada, friend of Darwin’s, writer of several scientific books, had a collapse of faith, and he tells us that for 25 years he never prayed. He was honored as few men have been, but that did not satisfy a great lack in his life. Finally he came back to God and found peace.

An adequate philosophy of life is essential, and a cardinal principle in that underlying philosophy is belief in and acquaintance with God. Without this, there is no meaning in life. We cannot have an adequate sense of direction. Life deepens and expands under the influence of the nourishing and invigorating power of a faith in God.

2. A Great Need Apparent in Crises

David was in trouble. There can be no certainty above the circumstances under which the psalm was written. Many expositors believe that it was written while he was fleeing from his son Absalom. He was at any rate in trouble. It is in time of trouble that we learn how deep-seated our thirst for God is.

Among the few papers that came into my hands from my forebears, is a brief diary kept by my paternal grandmother during the dark and gloomy period of the war between the states -- the winter of 1864-65 -- when the cause was obviously hopeless from the South’s point of view. Her husband, my grandfather, a physician, was a private in the 42nd Georgia Regiment, then fighting under General Hood in Tennessee. She, a young woman of the middle twenties, had been left at home on a farm not far from Atlanta, in Gwinnett County, with two small boys and the Negroes. For two years and nine months, she had been holding things together at home, hearing only occasionally from her husband, the doctor, though she made many trips to

Loganville to get letters. The report, to which she refers in her diary, that Hood had lost 30,000 men in a battle at Nashville, only increased her anxiety. Her home, situated in the path of Sherman's march to the sea from Atlanta, had been frequently visited by marauding bands of Northern soldiers. So she writes (January 14-15, 1865) "Went to Haines Creek (Church) and heard the first preaching that we have had there since August, 1864. I am wading through." A few days later she wrote, January 30: "I wish we could have peace on fair terms for I am tired of the war... This world is a hard place for me, but if God will be my helper I will try to wade through." On April 3, just before the surrender, even while it was still dark, and no word coming from her husband, she wrote: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in Him". On May 1, my grandfather arrived home, with a leg wound that he received in the last battle of the war.

God is needed in times when we are fighting battles of a different kind. There was for instance the case of John G. Woolley (1850-1922), an American lawyer, editor, statesman, lecturer. He was one of the most effective foes of the liquor business that this country has ever produced. He was himself an alcoholic. He overcame his weakness, but not without a terrific battle.

He relates, according to Dr. Wilbur Chapman, "Another Mile" p. 108f), that after two years of total abstinence, he was riding on a train to a speaking appointment, when he became ill. A stranger pitied him, gave him a quick remedy which eased his pain, but brought to life the old thirst for drink. So powerful was that flaming thirst that he would have gotten drunk that night if he could, despite his friends and their faith in him. He tried to pray, but God seemed far away. Upon getting off the train, he went to the hotel, locked himself in and, as he said, by the grace of God he won the battle. But he adds, "the people of Pawtucket never knew that the man who spoke to them that night had been in hell all day".

There is an exaltation in many quarters of the products of man's genius. Their power staggers the imagination. But what about the character of those who control these forces? Lawlessness, greed, oppression, hatred, fear, and international discord are rampant. It would be tragic if God and the ideals of religion were to be pushed out of the scene.

How to Slake the Thirst

With the most of us, there is no intention to lose touch with God. But in the pressure of affairs, we drift away from religious participation. Under such a mode of life, we are likely to miss the basic need of all life. In the words of the song, we should "take time to be holy". We need to develop a sensitiveness to the presence of God in the world.

That noted American physicist, Professor Michael Pupin (pu-pen), of Columbia University (died in 1935) declared that he came to the conclusion when he herded sheep in the hills of Serbia, and later when he explored the mysteries of light and heat and sound in the laboratories of Columbia University, that the whole universe was like a vesper bell summoning man to the praise of God's glory (McKee: "What Use is Religion?" p. 35).

Basil Mathews, Englishman, graduate of Oxford, more recently a professor in Boston University, closes one of his books ("Shaping the Picture") with the story of pioneer days in this country. A husband and wife were driving West in a wagon over the prairie. A baby boy lay in

the back of the wagon. As the wagon lurched, the baby rolled out on the tall grass. But it was not until an hour later that the parents discovered the loss. They turned back, but could not find the baby for an Indian tribe had crossed the track and picked up the baby and adopted him. He was trained in the craft of the woods. He was trained to listen.

Years passed. A city sprang up close by. The boy was sent into the city to be educated at its schools. A few years ago he was standing with a friend on the pavement at one of the crossings in New York City -- elevated railway overhead, street cars and taxis grinding and bumping on the street -- a deafening din.

Grabbing the arm of his friend, the youth said, "Listen, I hear a cricket". "Ridiculous", said the friend. He found the cricket, however, among flowers on a windowsill. "Incredible," said the friend. "Not at all," said the other as he took a coin from his pocket and dropped it on the pavement. A score of passersby stopped to see where it had fallen. "You see," said the youth, "everyone hears what he is listening for".

Christ is the way to God. He said to the woman of Samaria, "I will give you the living water".

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live..."

"Be still and know
That God is in His world
Though men with reckless waste
May seek they know not what
In feverish haste.

"Be still and know
That God is in His world,
God speaks, but none may hear
That voice except he have
The listening ear."

-- George Harkness

Deep Calleth Unto Deep

Minden, LA
First Church, Shreveport, LA
Cotton Valley High School, Cotton Valley, LA
Rockdale, TX

August 5, 1923
August 3, 1924
May 10, 1925
December 15, 1957 (rewritten)

“Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts.” (RSV)

Psalm 42:7

This is the declaration of any exile from Jerusalem. It may have been David. More likely it was a priest. At any rate, there is evidence that he was in the land beyond Jordan, near the mountain ridges of Hermon. As he watched the streams descend to the Jordan, and heard the noise of the waterfalls, he held communion with the visible forms of nature and heard their varied language. He had watched the gazelle of the forest of Gilead quietly steal down to the streams to quench her thirst. “As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (vs. 1).

The ancients personified nature more than do we of this scientific age. It seemed to this writer as though one vast body of water summoned another. “Deep calls to deep accompanied by the sound of thy waterfalls.” There seems to be no satisfaction in nature where there is separation of corresponding depths. There is no satisfaction for the soul when separated from kindred spirits.

“Deep calleth unto deep”. There seems to be so much in that sentence. It strikes a fundamental chord in the symphony of life.

1. There are unfathomed depths in all of us.

We are told that even the waves of the sea are but surface movements. We live our lives on the surface, as a rule. Our thoughts are so often light and flippant. Our activities are largely without significance. But there are times when some great experience comes into our lives and plows beneath the surface and brings into participation untouched powers and resources.

With the assistance of mechanical farm implements, farmers soon learned “The Possible You”. I never had opportunity to get hold of it. But the very title sets one’s bells ringing. There is much more in us that we ever realize. There are inarticulate stirrings of the soul which have not yet been given expression.

It has been suggested that we have three selves: first, the self that our friends know. Second, the self that we know. Third, the self that God knows. The last is our real self. It would be wonderful if we could come to know our real selves and if we could reveal that to our friends.

Jesus saw untouched depths in men whom he called to service: Peter, John, Matthew, Andrew, Saul. Jesus tapped hidden resources. The tragedy of life is that so many have never been aware of their hidden potential.

2. These depths find satisfaction in contact with kindred depths.

There is an affinity between things of like nature. We are told that the great law of gravitation extends out into the heavens and that the planets have attraction one for another. The ancients thought that lightning was a thunderbolt hurled by Jove, the god of the gods. We speak of lightning "striking". As a matter of fact, lightning is but the communication between two bodies of electrical energy. It is a matter of "deep calling unto deep".

When interest and effort focus on oneself, the result is disappointment. There are people who are engrossed with self. The object of their thought, letters, conversation, is self. Neurasthenics are engrossed with self. Someone visiting an asylum observed that certain patients seemed to talk sensibly. An attendant remarked that they always talk about themselves. There is need for one spirit to be reaching out to another.

At the very dawn of human history, the Lord declared, "It is not good that man should be alone". When a helpmeet for him had been provided, the Lord declared that they should be one flesh. One's fullest life is lived when there is correspondence with kindred spirits.

Love for companionship is one of the deepest yearnings of the human heart. There is a little touch to the story of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt. After delaying as long as he could the matter of revealing his identity to his unsuspecting brethren, he had to yield finally to the call of the depths within him for their love and fellowship. "Come near to me, I pray you", he exclaimed to his brethren. What was all the pomp and glory and power of his exalted position in Egypt in comparison with the joy of fellowship?

It is normal for people to crave a peace of mind. The extensive sale of books on the subject reveals the prevalence of this great desire. People do not have it because they seek it in the wrong places. It cannot be found in oneself. Neither can it be found in things -- social security, immunity from disease, defense against disaster, luxurious surroundings. We well know that at any moment a peace of mind so established could be destroyed by a letter, a headline, a doctor's diagnosis. We feel the need of something that will keep us calm in the midst of the inevitable reverses of life.

I wonder if you recall the broadcasted statement made by Winston Churchill on the fateful day when the war came to England: "Outside, the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace". That's the kind of thing we need for the living of these days.

3. Our deepest satisfaction is found in fellowship with God.

The writer of this 42nd Psalm begins by saying, "As the heart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God" (RSV).

In Genesis (1:27) we read that God created man in his own image. He placed something of himself in man. By that, man is being eternally drawn to his Creator. While the planets may attract each other, all are held in place by the power of the sun which is the center of the system. God is the center of the spiritual universe.

“Like tides on the crescent sea beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in,
In from the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod,
Some of us call it longing,
And others call it God.”

Religion is response of man to the Eternal which reaches down and gives meaning to life. Some claim to rule religion out altogether. But religion persists nevertheless. Businesses fail, but churches continue on. If churches were an invention of man, they would have disappeared. There is something deep and abiding in human life to which religion ministers. The highest as well as the humblest feel the need of it.

Johan Kepler (1571-1630) was a German astronomer and mathematician. He is quoted as saying, “My one desire is to find the God within whom I find everywhere without”. George John Romanes (1848-1894) was an English scientist. After going through an experience involving separation from God, he said, “The soul of man is miserable without God”.

“Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord,” said the psalmist (Psalm 130:1). “My heart and flesh crieth out for the living God” (Psalm 84:2). “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come” (Psalm 65:2). “All flesh”: all colors and classes and conditions of people shall come. The longing is universal.

We are reading much in the papers about American uneasiness over the rapid development of offensive might by the Russians. A foreign reporter last night reported that the American delegation to the NATO conference in Paris will not offer that which the other participating nations want most. While they might accept arms from us, they want more a community of participation in the policy making activities of the non-Communist nations.

Munitions of war cannot permanently save a nation. Nations that forsook their God and relied on other defenses have passed out of existence.

We read in the 73rd Psalm, that the psalmist when troubled with the problems of life went into the sanctuary. Out of the depths he cried unto the Lord. Deep called unto deep. There he saw more clearly the issues that he faced.

Religion puts meaning into life. By it we see that life is more than eating, sleeping. It provides assurance that the beauty, truth, goodness and love for which we long will be realized.

4. In this quest, each of us has responsibility.

Our responsibility is to keep ourselves in such position that the interchange of calls from the depths can be operative. Jesus, as a boy of 12 years, was found in the Temple. He said to his parents, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" There is no better place to be when we seek to sound the depths of our spiritual natures.

Jesus has become for us the way to the heart of God. Once again, the world will gather around the manger at Bethlehem, in spirit, at least. Let us join the throng, saying in the words of the Greeks "We would see Jesus".

One of the church fathers said: "Thou has made us for thyself and we are not at rest until we rest in Thee".

Isaiah said: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (26:3).

God Our Refuge and Strength

Minden, LA

January 10, 1937

Psalm 46

There is supposedly some connection between this psalm and the invasion of Sennacherib, the great Assyrian king, waged in Palestine some 700 years before Christ.

It was an expression of thanksgiving for deliverance from that dreaded warrior. For he had been continually triumphant as he marched. He had conquered Sidon, Zarephath, Askelon, Joppa, and other cities. According to his account, he captured 46 fortified towns of Judah and carried away 200,150 people as captives. At Jerusalem, he met defeat.

When the good king Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah, that nation was paying tribute to Assyria. After destroying the popular symbols of idolatry in the kingdom, and establishing the true religion, he renounced the yoke of Assyria, and asserted his freedom and independence.

Then the Assyrian host invades Judah, captures the fenced cities, and compels Hezekiah to pay heavy tribute.

Flushed with victory, complete capitulation is demanded by the vaunting captains standing with their armies before the walls of the city. Rabshakeh even claims to have the authority of Jehovah for his enterprise. He tries to entice the people who stand on the walls listening to the interchange of remarks.

To the idea that Jerusalem puts her trust in Jehovah, Rabshakeh answers that the gods of the other nations have been helpless before the Assyrian hosts, and Jehovah will prove to be likewise.

Hezekiah was troubled. It seemed hopeless to offer resistance. He had but one refuge. Man's extremity had been reached. He made a deeply earnest prayer to God for deliverance. It was answered. 185,000 Assyrians were smitten in one night and Sennacherib murdered by his own sons.

Such a deliverance must have deeply impressed the nation of Judah. How noble must have seemed the towers and the temple of the city, saved by a miracle from the hands of the spoiler.

Naturally there would be an expression of thanksgiving in song. The supposition is not unreasonable that this 46th Psalm was written at this time. Students have found close similarity of expression between this psalm and utterances of Isaiah in connection with the foregoing event.

Subsequent Use of the Psalm

The psalm furnished inspiration for the army led by the Grand Prince Demetrius of Russia in 1360, when, by victory over the Tartars, the independence of Russia was founded.

Modern Russia has felt herself independent of Jehovah. But we may be sure that the day will come when she will not feel so strongly her self-sufficiency.

Martin Luther, living as he was, in stormy days, was stirred by this psalm. He wrote a paraphrase of it: "Ein' Feste Burg ist Unser Gott" ("A Mighty Fortress is Our God"). This has been called "The Marseillaise of the Reformation". It was written during the stormy days in Germany, probably for the Diet of Spires. In 1529, when German princes made their formal protest against the revocation of their liberties, and thus gained the name of "Protestants".

A hundred years later, Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, "Lion of the North", and champion of the dispirited and leaderless Protestants, inspired by strong religious convictions, and his whole army to sing this song of Luther's before the Battle of Leipzig (1631) and also before the Battle of Sedan. There was triumph for the Protestant cause.

A few years later, Oliver Cromwell, in England, addressing the second parliament of his protectorate, in September 1656, said: "And if you set your hearts to it, then you will sing Luther's Psalm (the 46th). That is a rare Psalm for a Christian! And if he set his heart open, and can prove it to God, we shall hear him say, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble'...If Pope and Spaniard and devil and all, set themselves against us -- yet in the name of the Lord we should destroy them! 'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge'".

In the 18th Century Frederick the Great (Frederick II of Prussia) (1712-1786) called this hymn, "God Almighty's Grenadier March".

James Moffatt, in his "Handbook to the Church Hymnary", declares this "the greatest hymn of the greatest man in the greatest period in German history".

This Psalm was a favorite text among the Scotch covenanters in their great struggle for conviction.

The refrain was evidently in the mind of John Wesley as he passed away. You will recall that his last words were, "The best of all is God is with us" -- an utterance which became the watchword of Methodism.

What the Psalmist Says

The Structure of the Psalm

It is divided into three strophes, or stanzas, indicated by "Selah". They are composed of 3, 4 and 4 verses, respectively.

Some commentators hold that the refrain, "The Lord of Hosts is with us", etc., originally appeared at the close of the first stanza, just as it appears at the close of the other two. Roth, in Expositor, November 1930, takes this view, following Hupfeld's Commentary. Perowne takes issue with this view, and contends that the omission was intended. Were the refrain included, there would be four verses in each strophe, or stanza.

The First Stanza (1-3) General Observation

God is the one sure defense always, even in a world of chaos.

The enemies of righteousness and their works compared to the tottering of the earth, the toppling of the mountains, the roaring and foaming of the sea, the quaking of the hills.

In the chaos of crashing worlds, God is an immovable place of trust.

The Second Stanza (4-7) Particular Application

Certainly the City of God is secured by his presence.

Though it seem small in comparison, the gentle flowing stream of Siloam, never ending and ample, undisturbed and refreshing, conducted through channels over the city, will make it glad.

So is the grace of God sufficient. Earthly powers are impotent against the trickling grace of God.

“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved”. Prothero tells us that this is inscribed behind the altar of the oldest church in Russia, the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, at Kieff, built in 1037. The text will yet vindicate itself in Russia. To it might be added, “God will help her at the break of dawn”.

Note the drama in this: “The nations roar; the kingdoms totter; He utters his voice -- the earth melts”. How it fits the world today. The reference here is the same as that in verses 2 and 3, but with the figure dropped.

The Third Stanza (8-11) Clear Demonstration

God has here and now demonstrated his saving might.

“Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has wrought.” These astonishing things suffered by the enemies of God. The instruments of war are smashed. These are impotent in the combat of righteousness with unrighteousness.

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Stop your mad course. Consider your folly. “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

The Meaning for Us

There are godless trends in the world today. Dictators and movements are defiant of God.

The church is seemingly suffering loss. There is opposition and persecution. Temples are being demolished and the people forbidden to teach religion. Where the church is allowed to exist in some lands, it is made subservient to the state.

There are commotions and upheavals, the display of power, the boastings of proud men.
But it will come to naught in the end.

The challenge of God is, "Be still, and know that I am God".

"This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems e'er so strong,
God is the ruler yet."

Be Still and Know

Rockdale, TX

July 22, 1956

“Be still and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:10

There is not one person here this morning, I am sure, who has not been moved by that great hymn of Martin Luther's:

“A mighty fortress is our God,
A Bulwark never failing.”

Luther produced it in a very stirring period in the church's history, and it put heart and courage into the protestations of the German princes whose liberties were being curtailed. The words of the hymn are a paraphrase of the 46th Psalm, which is thought to have been associated with stirring events in the Kingdom of Judah, when Sennacherib the great Assyrian King, invaded Palestine 700 years before Christ. His advance in the neighboring areas had been a succession of triumphs -- Sidon, Zarephath, Askelon, Joppa and other cities. According to his account, he captured 46 fortified towns of Judah and carried away 200,150 people as captives. But at Jerusalem, he met defeat. This psalm is an expression of thanks for deliverance from that dreaded warrior.

This is one of the most beautiful of the psalms. The psalmist sees the hand of God in the deliverance. There was no other way of accounting for it. He says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...God is in the midst of her (the city of God), she shall not be moved...The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge”. The 10th verse of this psalm is an interruption in which God himself speaks: “Be still and know that I am God”.

The literal translation of the command, “Be still,” is “let your hand sink down”. The people were commanded to cease their efforts for a while and consider what has been done as a testimony to the reality of God. They were not to rush presumptuously on. They were to stop and think.

Appropriate to Our Time

This injunction is suited to the hurried age in which we are living. There are so many things that we want to do, so many more things than we ever could do before, but we have no more time in which to do them. So we speed up our movements. We are ever crowded. We are impoverished in thought and character because of a lack of time for restful meditation.

I recall a talk given by a doctor over radio once in which he said that many of our troubles physically are due to our over stimulation of the heart. He said, if I understood him, that

the only time the heart has to rest is between the systolic and the diastolic movements. When the expansion and contraction become more frequent, there is less time for rest, and the wear and tear will tell.

So in like manner we suffer when time is not taken out for such meditation as will enlighten the mind, enlarge the soul, sanctify our faculties, and transform character.

Is This Mysticism?

Someone might ask, Is this not a rather vague and mystical procedure? What is mysticism, after all? There are many definitions of mysticism, or at least the term is used in different senses. We should know what we mean when we use the term.

I have known teachers of religion who seemed to prefer a highly involved method of stating a fact to a simple one, when the latter was perfectly possible. They liked to throw the atmosphere of mystery about their words. There was a studious effort to avoid the clear and direct statement. People sometimes are impressed by their lack of ability to understand what they were talking about, and therefore they supposed that the teachers were profound and deep, whereas they were merely muddle-minded and confused in their thinking. Some may have called this mysticism, but it hardly deserves the name.

Another form of mysticism is occultism, or belief in hidden or mysterious powers. Into this group we might put spiritualism, theosophy, new thought, and the like.

Still another form is Pentecostalism, as when one loses self-control and allegedly becomes possessed by the Spirit, and is given the ability to speak with tongues. Usually this seems to be nothing more than an emotional upheaval.

Some claim to have had visions. One of the famous characters of history is Joan of Arc. When only 16 years of age, she was convinced that she saw angels, and in fact became so intimately acquainted with them that she gave them names: St. Catherine and St. Margaret. They represented to her the invisible world by which she was guided. She knew nothing of the implements of war, but she became possessed with the conviction that God was to use her in a crisis. 500 years later, American soldiers in France were singing, "Joan of Arc, They Are Calling You". They were calling one who had contact with God in the stillness of a quiet retreat.

It will be recalled that during the World Wars, there was frequent reference to the fact that soldiers saw the form of Christ on battle fields.

I am inclined to the belief that these and other such examples of visible appearances of divine messengers were due to hallucination. But evidently they were used of God for good ends.

Back in the 17th Century, there lived a man by the name of George Fox. He was considered queer. He had a natural bent for religion. He became known as the "man who saw the inner-light". He formed an organization known as the "Society of Friends". One day, Judge Bennett was questioning Fox in court, and Fox declared that the time had come for men to quake and tremble before the Lord, and the judge said, "So then you are quakers, are you?" They were

afterwards called Quakers. But Fox taught the people reverence, and gave them a more spiritual concept of God.

There is, however, a form of mysticism which I wish to commend to you this morning. I believe it is the type suggested in the text. If we will but take the time to open our minds to the promptings of the Spirit of God, we will get convictions and leadings that are obtainable in no other way. It is said of an Old Testament hero (Moses) that he “endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). The invisible forces of the world are the potent forces. What we see is prosaic. It is the unseen that thrills, as when a young woman looks at a diamond ring on her finger.

Essential to a Vital Religion

In too many instances, our religion is a very circumscribed affair. It may be the mere routine observance of a set of rules. It may consist of an occasional participation in the formalities of a church ritual. It may be very little more than giving a few dollars to the church. Or it could be even a very zealous discharge of duties in church responsibilities. What we need is expansiveness in our religion.

In our mental institutions, there are what are called catatonic patients -- those who stay in one position for hours. The room in which they sit may be large, but that doesn't matter, because they are going nowhere anyway. We can easily become religious catatonics. We simply stay fixed, even though we have a large expanse in which we can move. Moses was a routine performer until he stood before the burning bush and God in the desert. We think, too, of Jacob at Bethel, and John on Patmos.

During the first World War, Carl Sandburg wrote, in tribute to the aviators and scientists of the time:

“They have taken the ball of earth
And made it a little thing.”

While it is true that the advances of science have caused a retreat from the religious explanation of certain phenomena that once seemed mysterious, they have opened vistas to more incomprehensible wonders of God's universe. Even more significantly than David ever imagined can we say:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou has ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him” (Psalm 8:3-4).

To catch the impact of creation, we need but to “be still, and know that He is God”.

Where Shall We Look For Him?

Job exclaimed, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!” (23:4).

Mrs. Browning wrote --

“...Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”

If we will stop to consider, we will find God in human history. Nations have risen and flourished. They became self-sufficient and indulgent. They passed off the scene of human action. Like the motto of Glasgow, Scotland: it used to be, “Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word”. But now only the first three words are used. Glasgow will follow other cities that have felt that they have outgrown God. Dictators have arisen in every age, but they pass off the scene. The sovereignty of God is certain.

I once heard Dr. Fosdick talk about the near end of God. He said that God is too great to be fully known, just as the ocean is too great to be fully comprehended. But God can be known. There is a near end which we can touch, just as there is the portion of the ocean which we may know.

When We Worship

Why do people go to church? We might not be able to say exactly why we go to church. We know it satisfies a hunger. We may think it is because of the people who go to a certain church, because of the feeling of moral responsibility. But we fail in our purpose, if we do not arrive at a clearer vision of God.

Worship is difficult in our day. There is so much to be crowded into our weeks that we hardly take time for it. We do a lot of weekending, which is so often devoid of all religious participation. We are so completely immersed in the present that we lose sight of the eternal verities.

As I think back over the years of my ministry, I recall unforgettable Sunday morning scenes of whole families sitting together in pews, week after week. It is little wonder that out of those homes have come men and women with clearness of vision, with high principle, and expansive souls, prepared to cope with the reverses of life. The parents in any home are doing themselves and especially their children a grave injustice who do not lead them early to make God a real factor in their daily lives.

James Russell Lowell went to church and came out with thoughts like these:

“This life were brutish did we not sometimes
Have intimation clear of wider scope,
Hints of occasion infinite, to keep
The soul alert with noble discontent
And onward yearnings of unstilled desire;
Fruitless, except we now and then divined

A mystery of Purpose, gleaming through
The secular confusions of the world.”

The Faithful God

Minden, LA

March 14, 1937

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised...”

Psalm 48

Many an anthem (hymn and song) of the Church has been written with utterances found in this psalm, as the basis and inspiration. It is truly one of the great psalms of praise.

In this old Hebrew hymnbook, we find here together three psalms with the same background: the 46th, 47th, and 48th psalms. Jerusalem has just had a great deliverance, a deliverance that could hardly be regarded as other than divine. We are not told definitely what the events were that occasioned this outburst of song. It was probably the Assyrian invasion in the days of the good king Hezekiah. When Hezekiah renounced the yoke of Assyria, Sennacherib and his satraps and armies invaded Palestine, captured the fenced cities about, and came upon the city of Jerusalem itself. But there was earnest prayer to God. An answer came in the form of an epidemic in the host of the Assyrians, and the host was put to flight. Such a deliverance deeply impressed the people of Jerusalem. These three psalms are thought to have been the expression of the feeling of the people at the time of deliverance. They are in praise of God. The titles given these psalms by the American Version (J. M. Powis Smith translation) are: 46th: “The Mighty God”; 47: “The Victorious God”; 48th: “The Faithful God”.

The Psalm Considered

The 48th psalm seems to fall naturally into three divisions, which we may designate as the Rapture, the Reason, and the Reflection. According to verses, the division may be vv. 1-3; vv. 4-8; and vv. 9-14.

1. The Rapture (1-3) Here we have an outburst of praise of Jehovah of Whom the city of Jerusalem seems to be regarded as a visible symbol -- a symbol of his glory and strength and beauty. The Hill of Zion is holy, beautiful, the joy of the whole earth, a tower of strength -- because God is in it.

Zion was one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. Moriah was another. Zion was originally the seat of the Jebusite fortress which David took. The ark was brought here, and thus the hill was made sacred. Afterwards the Temple was erected on Mount Moriah, and the ark removed to the Temple. These are distinct eminences. But the term “Zion” came to be used for the whole city, and is so used in this psalm. The term is now given even wider significance. “Zionism” is a nationalizing movement of the Jews, which involves colonization of the Jews in Palestine as a whole, or if this be impracticable, in any other region. But here, the city is thought of -- the city of Jerusalem.

“Beautiful for situation”, or “in elevation”. I suppose it is impossible for us to appreciate fully the feeling that came over one who in those ancient days traveled from the sultry plains of the Jordan or the coast to the higher altitudes about Jerusalem, and as a climax came in view of

this most striking sight of a great city rising aloft in beauty. There was probably no capital in that day as imposing and impressive in appearance as Jerusalem.

The abiding conviction that this was “the city of the great King” stirred depths of feeling in the Jew that is now beyond the comprehension of many of us.

2. The Reason (vv. 4-8) “For” suggests reason for the outburst of praise. “The kings,” Sennacherib and his petty subordinate kings, “assembled”, or “conspired together”. “They passed by” in array, they saw, they marveled, they were troubled, they hastened away. The terror that seized the hostile kings and their armies is compared to travail, a very common figure in the Old Testament. The result is compared to the wreck of the strongest navy of the day -- the ships of Tarshish.

This deliverance, says the psalmist, is a demonstration of the irresistible power of a loving God. “As we have heard” from the fathers, “so have we seen”. Fresh proof of this wonder working presence is taken as a pledge of the permanent establishment of the city forever.

3. The Reflection (vv. 9-14) “We have thought,” pondered deeply. What a great thing this is to do! We should frequently withdraw from the duties of the day to think on the mercies and blessings of God. This writer reflected while at church. We have been delivered from great sicknesses and calamities and wars and pestilences, but as good times begin to come again, we forget about God.

The psalmist declares that the praise throughout the earth is in accordance with the greatness of the name of the Lord.

“Let the city herself rejoice!” “The daughters of Judah” were the small towns and villages which had suffered from the invasion. They should be glad.

Now that the siege is ended, the people are asked to go forth about the city, look at her towers, consider her palaces, mark well her bulwarks; that they might tell to the following generations that no breaches were in the walls, no harm done the palaces, that the beauty of the city remained intact. They might bear witness to the greatness and faithfulness of the God of Israel, Who will be Israel’s God forever, and will be the Guide until the end.

The Significance to Us

The Psalms express the highest aspirations of the Hebrew soul. The significance is vaster than a strictly Jewish interpretation would indicate. The psalms have meant vastly more to the Gentile than they have ever meant to the Jew.

There is little that is strictly Jewish in the Psalms. There is everywhere the idea of universality. The true Zion is no local city. We will miss the richest meaning of this psalm if we fail to give the wide conception to the term Zion. “The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion”.

The true Zion today is the Church. Truly, the Church is the joy of the whole earth. Great have been the assaults upon her. Kings and dictators have combined to destroy her. But still she stands in all the strength and beauty with which God has endowed her. “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her”.

“O Where are kings and empires now

Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, Thy church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same.
Unshaken as eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
A house not made with hands.”

-- Bishop Coxe

The Jew's Failure to Comprehend

So far as the physical well being of Zion, the city of Jerusalem, is concerned, there has been a great deal of tragic history since the day this psalm was composed. The temporal aspiration of the Jews have met with many rebuffs. They forsook Jehovah and God seemed at times to forget his city.

There seems, however, in spite of all that has taken place through the centuries, a lingering hope that Zion shall yet reach the point of supreme power and glory that the Jew has thought promised by the ancient prophets.

There is no indication that this hope will ever be realized on the basis now considered. The Jew has undoubtedly been a great people, “a peculiar people” in more than one sense. The race has produced many saints, martyrs, statesmen, reformers, scientists, poets, musicians, philanthropists. But the Jew has been the “riddle of the ages”.

In the days of our Lord's earthly ministry, we see how narrow the nationalism of the Jews was. Though since dispersed, the Jew has never been able to throw aside this narrowness. This has been due to certain causes:

1. It began with a misunderstanding of the significance of the choice of Israel as the medium of revelation. This was increased when the restoration took place after the captivity. The call to come out and be separate was the occasion for the development of an unsympathetic attitude towards the people around.
2. Then came the pressure of a sensuous and aggressive paganism in the form of Hellenizing culture, which caused the Jew to resort to national segregation to preserve his identity. The Maccabean uprising is holy ground.
3. After that was developed a set habit of the Jewish mind, a fixed scorn of gentile custom, and the purpose to dominate wherever possible -- in finance, stage, screen, journalism, education.

In a very recent issue of Liberty Magazine (March 6, 1937), David Lloyd George, once Prime Minister of Great Britain, asks and attempts to answer this question, “Why is the Jew persecuted today?” He says that it is true that greed is one reason -- the desire of governments to get what the Jew has been able to accumulate. Religious bigotry is another reason. But he believes that underlying these and other reasons is the basic one: the determination of the Jews

throughout the centuries not to lose their identity as a separate and distinct people in any land where they dwell.

One of the strange things is that there is no racially pure Jewry today, unless it be the Ishmaelite of the Arab tribes. There are many racial types seen among Jews. There is no homogeneity even in religion. But there is that aloofness held by the Jewish group in every nation. The Jewish superiority complex, says Dr. Mack, finds its expression in loud aggressiveness, which deeply offends the gentle quietness of cultured reserve.

The Larger Vision of the Ancient

Some readers of the Bible forget that this narrow nationalism was a later development in the race, and let that spoil for them the beauty of the psalms. Let us not make that mistake. This old psalmist had a wider outlook than that. Jerusalem was but the chrysalis of that everlasting church which shall stand against all comers, the true city of the great King.

“We mark her goodly battlements,
And her foundations strong;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.”

-- Bishop Coxe