

Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Solo Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith

FEBRUARY 1976
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THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded — namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.

2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.

3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.

4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question — even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

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To Contributors: Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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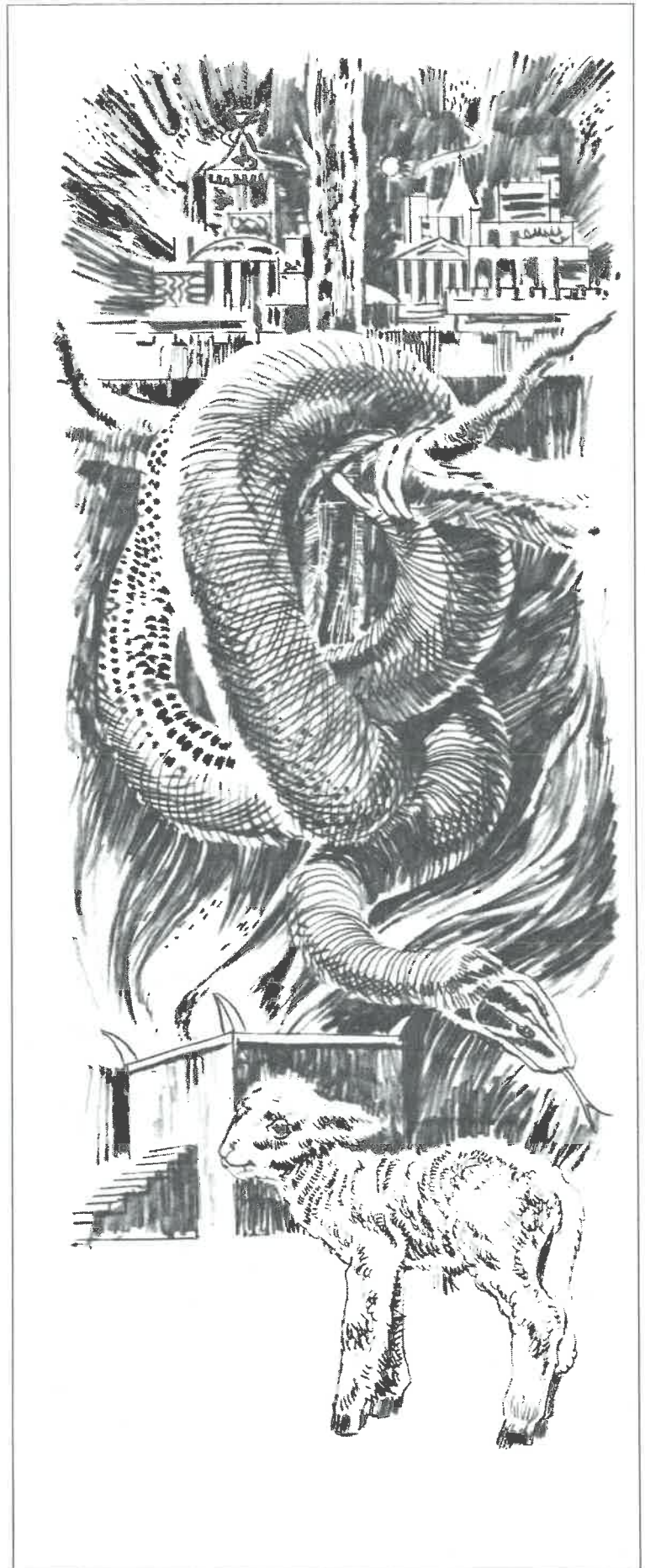
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Letters

Address Letters to *Present Truth*,
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"Exposed Naked to Satan"

Sir / In his article, "Exposed Naked to Satan" (*Present Truth*, Dec., 1975), Geoffrey Paxton mentioned the "high-priestly critics" and the "high-priestly champions of holiness," and he is "right-on" in his observations. However, I'm surprised that he failed to mention one of the most glaring scriptural hijackings of modern fundamentalism (falsely so called), that is, the dispensationalists' method of "rightly dividing" (?) the Word of truth. By designating most of the New Testament (the Gospels through the triumphal entry, Acts through chapter 9, and the Revelation) and large portions of the Old Testament as little more than a "Jewish Tribulation Handbook," they have in fact closed these for ordinary reading and exposition as surely as Rome did by putting the Scriptures on its "Index of Forbidden Books."

I very much appreciated Mr. Paxton's article. I do, however, long for the day when Darby, Scofield, Larkin and company's "hidden truths" will again be "hidden"!

Dennis Pettyjohn
Baptist Pastor
California

Sir / Your December, 1975, issue of *Present Truth* had an article so terrible that I do not want to see your periodical again. I am utterly unable to read anything that refers to some of the great leaders of biblical truth in the last generation under the title, "Exposed Naked to Satan." Please drop my name from your mailing list at once.

W. Smith
California

Easy to be Understood

Sir / I enjoy reading every issue of *Present Truth* and am benefiting from it very much, especially from your clear presentations of the doctrine of justification and all its impli-

cations. The tone of your articles is precise, plain, easy to understand, and yet so charitable—it is indeed refreshing.

Ludvik Rucki, Minister
Canada

Voice of Confusion

Sir / "... there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets. . . ." Matt. 24:24. You misrepresent the beliefs of others; you twist the Bible to fit your doctrine. The world needs another voice of confusion like yours like it needs more sin and death. . . . I presume you have never been born again (Christ's coming in) and therefore have no hope of glory.

Clinton R. Keaton
Baptist Minister
Idaho

Added Insights

Sir / I have read the December, 1975, issue of *Present Truth* with care and have found it to be very interesting. I'm a Lutheran pastor and am known among my brother pastors as one who is conservative. I have felt that I had a fairly good grasp of the doctrine of justification by faith, yet found that your article, "Justification by Faith and the Clarity of the Bible," gave me added insights into this basic teaching.

I am with you in the rejection of Pentecostalism, Romanism, and all of the subjective approaches to justification. Rightly understood, I believe that faith is "the hand which receives the righteousness which God bestows upon us." I'm wholly in accord with "justification by an imputed (outside-of-me) righteousness."

Walter A. Olson
Lutheran Pastor
Wisconsin

Perplexed

Sir / I am perplexed at your frequent barbs toward the Pentecostals. Your statement in the December, 1975, issue of *Present Truth*, "No one can

come to grips with the realities of justification by faith and at the same time subscribe to the basic principles of Pentecostalism," could hardly be further from the truth. Justification by faith and faith alone has been one of the mighty bulwarks of the Pentecostal faith throughout its history. This has been a firm foundation on which evangelists and ministers have built their ministry, and through this they have brought countless thousands into the kingdom of God. No one could have greater respect for Luther than these.

T. F. McNabb
New Jersey

Unfair and Unscholarly

Sir / I find your "educated" and unscholarly attack against Pentecostalism (*Present Truth*, Dec., 1975) unfair. How much of what you say in describing Pentecostals and Catholics is incorrect and distortion! Why don't you produce evidence to verify your assertions? Is it not because you are too full of bias and too opinionated to do so? Your magazine would be worth reading if it were documented with notes to demonstrate the accuracy of what you say. I regret that you are persuading so many people with what is a mixture of truth and error and not just "present truth."

H. M. Evans, Minister
Florida

Scriptural and Scholarly

Sir / As a Southern Baptist minister, I find your magazine to be a breath of fresh air in this polluted theological atmosphere we live in today. I have spent hours reading and rereading your articles. My compliments to your scriptural and scholarly approach to complex doctrines which, after you have exegetically spoken of them, are not so complex after all!

Patrick Reilly
Baptist Minister
California

Out of Focus

Sir / It seems that Mr. Brinsmead, in seeking to press his point in the October, 1975, *Present Truth* ("Understanding the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification by Faith"), has pushed things out of focus. Pluralism reigns in today's Catholic Church. Most Catholics are wandering humanists who hold to Catholicism out of religious convenience rather than conviction. The truth is that contemporary Catholics make good Arminians rather than the other way around (e.g., Catholic charismatics).

Dan R. Smedra
Colorado

Negative Ramblings

Sir / I find only sadness in your hair-splitting debates with Rome (who couldn't care less what you think!) or the hassles over "justification by faith" (which interest the vast majority of Protestants even less, who are primarily concerned with their local liturgical customs!).

Instead of an escape from reality and negative ramblings against Roman Catholicism these four hundred years later, try finding some real solutions for your Protestant readers—too many are spiritually starving on barbecued serpent and stone sandwiches. The Roman Catholics are a million years ahead of you in spiritual psychology and realism.

Mrs. Frances Yates
Wyoming

Encouraging

Sir / You can't imagine how encouraging your issue on "Understanding the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification by Faith" (*Present Truth*, Oct., 1975) was. I was raised in a very staunch Roman Catholic home with the idea of becoming a nun, and I praise God for how He has given me the understanding of the objectivity of the gospel. A relative is studying to be a Roman Catholic priest, and I pray that this issue will cause him to understand Catholic/Protestant differences.

Theresa Lasher
Georgia

Lack of Objectivity

Sir / *Present Truth* seems to be lacking progression, diversity and also objectivity. Though having dedicated your magazine "to the restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation," you have limited

yourself to the central issues of the sixteenth century Reformation controversy and the charismatic movement. Beyond that, little, if anything, has been done to restore the New Testament. To be sure, justification by faith is doubtless a central doctrine, but there are other important issues within the New Testament.

Though there is an abundance of objectivism in your magazine, there is a lack of objectivity. For instance, when you present Catholic and Protestant definitions of justification, you completely overlook St. James' definition of justification; in this you have not been really true to the New Testament. Or, when discussing modern Catholic writers on justification, you totally ignore the most influential and competent Catholic writer on the subject, Professor Dr. Hans Kung of the University of Tubingen, whose definition of justification is in complete harmony with that of Luther and Calvin.

Kurt Bangert
West Germany

Fantastic!

Sir / Your issue on "Understanding the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification by Faith" (*Present Truth*, Oct., 1975) is fantastic! I see that I've been Catholic in thinking most of my life. I've been in five or six churches, devoured much literature, and was thoroughly confused in my thinking. Your magazine has slowly but surely straightened out my thinking. Thank God for your publication.

Mrs. Dan Planchock
Ohio

"How to Live the Victorious Life"

Sir / I want to be among your many readers who will be writing to say they appreciate the little booklet, *How to Live the Victorious Life*. It is a great work, clear in content, well documented, and satisfying to my soul. Thank you for sending it to me. I love it.

But be assured there will be many who will raise thunder with you. They will protest with heat that you are peddling heresy and are knee deep in Bible ignorance. So let my letter be an encouragement to you. Keep up the good work.

J. Robert Lemon
Mennonite Pastor
Ohio

Sir / I am elated. The reason? Your publication, *Present Truth*. I have

received your booklet entitled, *How to Live the Victorious Life*, and it seems that with each mailing you outdo yourselves in clarity and common sense. After reading the first few pages of your booklet, my mind was silently applauding the merit of Brinsmead's work—a few pages later the roar became deafening—and at the end a full-scale "Encore, encore!" standing ovation and bravos.

How could Christians have lost sight of these truths? How have we permitted the gospel of Christ to become bastardized? It is so reassuring and refreshing to come in from an atmosphere of such distortion to enlightenment and understanding. *Present Truth* places the proper perspective on the Bible to do just that.

Charles Nash
Methodist Minister
Ohio

Inspiring

Sir / I believe that it was by the providence of God that I came across the special issue of *Present Truth*, "Justification by Faith and the Charismatic Movement." It had been buried in a pile of papers, and I just happened to uncover it the other day, for which I thank God. It's one of the most thought-provoking and inspiring magazines I have ever come across.

It really was a joy to my heart to find a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation that is not shackled by denominational ties and that is sounding out the Word of the Lord in the midst of the sea of religious subjectivism.

Rick Deighton
West Germany

From Poland

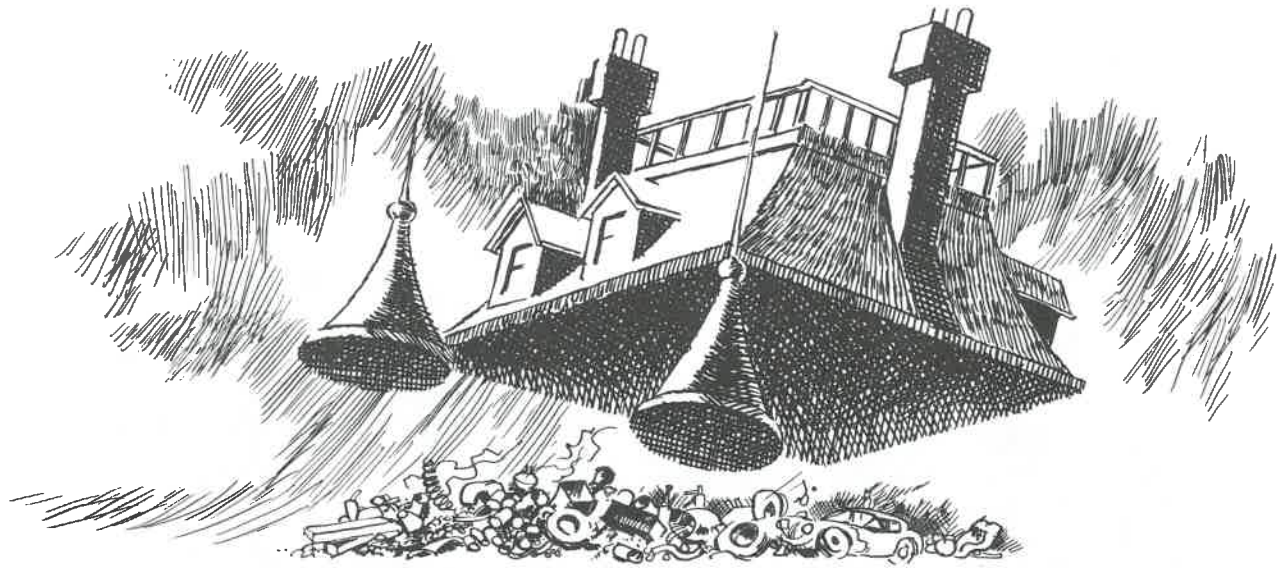
Sir / I believe you are *really* restoring New Testament Christianity in this age of confusion. I live in a Catholic country; the majority of its citizens don't care very much about Jesus. I'm very grateful to you for such a sincere, powerful, really Christian message.

Name Withheld
Poland

Systematic Theology

Sir / I greatly enjoy your publications. They are like a course in systematic theology.

W. R. Gregg
United Methodist Minister
Pennsylvania



Introduction to This Issue of *Present Truth*

One of the first great heresies that confronted the early church was Marcion's effort to throw out the Old Testament from the Christian Bible. He said that the God of the Old Testament was the vindictive God of law who was wholly unlike the gracious God of the gospel. Marcion therefore contended that the Old Testament has no revelation for the Christian faith.

Marcionism was rejected by the church. But as Dr. John Bright points out in his book, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Baker), Marcion has lived on in tendencies within the church to downgrade the place of the Old Testament in the sacred canon.

We need to be reminded that the Scriptures used by Jesus and the apostles were those of the Old Testament. The spirit of the New Testament prophets is subject to that of the Old Testament prophets. The God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. Its Scriptures were those which Jesus said "cannot be broken."

In his book, *The Kingdom of God* (Abingdon), Dr. Bright likens the relationship between the Old and New Testament to that of a building and its roof (pp. 192-198). He very aptly points out that a roof without a building can be used to cover almost anything! We can too easily talk about New Testament theology or New Testament Christianity as if the New Testament were to be understood in isolation. The only valid kind of theology is biblical (the whole Bible) theology.

. . . it is impossible rightly to set the New Testament apart and to construct a purely New Testament religion without regard to the faith of Israel. The New Testament

rests on and is rooted in the Old. To ignore this fact is a serious error in method, and one that is bound to lead to a fundamental misunderstanding of the Bible message. He who commits it has disregarded the central affirmation of the New Testament gospel itself, namely that Christ has come to make actual what the Old Testament hoped for, not to destroy it and replace it with a new and better faith. . . .

For if anything is clear, it is that Christ did not come to contribute a new ethic. . . .

Nor was Christ's mission to teach his people some new and loftier idea of God. . . .

The New Testament, then, does not present us with a new religion which we may study for itself alone.—*Ibid.*, pp. 193-196.

We devote this issue of *Present Truth* to a series of articles on the Old Testament. The main article, by Graeme Goldsworthy, Th.D., presents a bird's-eye view of the Old Testament's unfolding revelation of the kingdom of God concept. Should the Old Testament be allegorized, spiritualized, literalized or moralized? Dr. Goldsworthy has some interesting observations on its proper handling. The writer is an Anglican clergyman whose area of special interest has been the Old Testament. He did his Th.D. studies at Union Theological Seminary (Virginia) under Dr. John Bright.

We are well aware that in this issue we are touching on some sensitive areas. We too want to remain open to truth as we plead with our readers to remain open to reasonable Christian dialogue.

"Come . . . , let us reason together. . . ."

R.D.B.

Philosophy and the Old Testament



PART I: Solomon on the Meaning of Life

Ronald R. Lambert

Philosophy is concerned with the meaning of life. Millions of people are still asking: "What is the meaning of life?" Does my life have any significance? "Is there any meaning to my existence?"

Inspired Hebrew literature not only contains the most excellent biography and history and the most beautiful poetry, but it contains the most lofty and up-to-date philosophy. Solomon's book of the Preacher¹ is the statement of Hebrew philosophy par excellence. In this little book Wisdom addresses herself to philosophy's great question, What is the meaning of life?

The words of the Speaker, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Emptiness, emptiness, says the Speaker, emptiness, all is empty. What does man gain from all his labour and his toil here under the sun? Generations come and generations go, while the earth endures for ever.

The sun rises and the sun goes down; back it returns to its place and rises there again. The wind blows south, the wind blows north, round and round it goes and re-

turns full circle. All streams run into the sea, yet the sea never overflows; back to the place from which the streams ran they return to run again.

All things are wearisome; no man can speak of them all. Is not the eye surfeited with seeing, and the ear sated with hearing? What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look, this is new'? No, it has already existed, long ago before our time. The men of old are not remembered, and those who follow will not be remembered by those who follow them.

I, the Speaker, ruled as king over Israel in Jerusalem; and in wisdom I applied my mind to study and explore all that is done under heaven. It is a sorry business that God has given men to busy themselves with. I have seen all the deeds that are done here under the sun; they are all emptiness and chasing the wind. What is crooked cannot become straight; what is not there cannot be counted. I said to myself, 'I have amassed great wisdom, more than all my predecessors on the throne in Jerusalem; I have become familiar with wisdom and knowledge.' So I applied my mind to understand wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, and I came to see that this too is chasing

¹Ecclesiastes. The original title of the book means *Preacher*.

the wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and the more a man knows, the more he has to suffer.

I said to myself, 'Come, I will plunge into pleasures and enjoy myself'; but this too was emptiness. Of laughter I said, 'It is madness!' And of pleasure, 'What is the good of that?' So I sought to stimulate myself with wine, in the hope of finding out what was good for men to do under heaven throughout the brief span of their lives. But my mind was guided by wisdom, not blinded by folly.

I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards; I made myself gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit-trees in them; I made myself pools of water to irrigate a grove of growing trees; I bought slaves, male and female, and I had my home-born slaves as well; I had possessions, more cattle and flocks than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem; I amassed silver and gold also, the treasure of kings and provinces; I acquired singers, men and women, and all that man delights in. I was great, greater than all my predecessors in Jerusalem; and my wisdom stood me in good stead. Whatever my eyes coveted, I refused them nothing, nor did I deny myself any pleasure. Yes indeed, I got pleasure from all my labour, and for all my labour this was my reward. Then I turned and reviewed all my handiwork, all my labour and toil, and I saw that everything was emptiness and chasing the wind, of no profit under the sun.

I set myself to look at wisdom and at madness and folly. Then I perceived that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than darkness: the wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in the dark. Yet I saw also that one and the same fate overtakes them both. So I said to myself, 'I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? What is the profit of it? Even this,' I said to myself, 'is emptiness. The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!' So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind. So I came to hate all my labour and toil here under the sun, since I should have to leave its fruits to my successor. What sort of a man will he be who succeeds me, who inherits what others have acquired? Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the fruits of my labour and skill here under the sun. This too is emptiness.

Then I turned and gave myself up to despair, reflecting upon all my labour and toil here under the sun.—Eccl. 1:1-2:20, NEB.

Solomon's answer to the question, What is the meaning of life? is quite shocking. Life *in itself* has no meaning. It has no value and possesses no significance. This is why Solomon said, "Then I turned and gave myself up to despair. . . ."

There are those who say, "Solomon was writing out of such a pessimistic attitude toward life that you cannot take his jaundiced view too seriously." But this sort of observation ignores what the book says at the end: ". . . what he wrote was the honest truth. The sayings of the wise are sharp as goads, like nails driven home;

they lead the assembled people, for they come from one shepherd." Eccl. 12:10, 11, NEB.

Life Is Mortal; Death Negates All

The reason that life in itself has no meaning, no value, no significance, is because it is mortal. It ends in death. How can life that dies have any value? How can there be any significance to anything in life if death stands over it to negate everything? This is Solomon's case. That is why he speaks so repeatedly about death. Death stares him in the face at every turn. It mocks all of life's achievements and robs it of any value.

I set myself to look at wisdom and at madness and folly. Then I perceived that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than darkness: the wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in the dark. Yet I saw also that one and the same fate overtakes them both. So I said to myself, 'I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? What is the profit of it? Even this,' I said to myself, 'is emptiness. The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!' So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind. So I came to hate all my labour and toil here under the sun, since I should have to leave its fruits to my successor.—Eccl. 2:12-18, NEB.

' . . . For man is a creature of chance and the beasts are creatures of chance, and one mischance awaits them all: death comes to both alike. They all draw the same breath. Men have no advantage over beasts; for everything is emptiness. All go to the same place: all come from the dust, and to the dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward or whether the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?'—Eccl. 3:19-21, NEB.

I counted the dead happy because they were dead, happier than the living who are still in life.—Eccl. 4:2, NEB.

As he came from the womb of mother earth, so must he return, naked as he came; all his toil produces nothing which he can take away with him. This too is a singular evil: exactly as he came, so shall he go, and what profit does he get when his labour is all for the wind? What is more, all his days are overshadowed; gnawing anxiety and great vexation are his lot, sickness and resentment.—Eccl. 5:15-17, NEB.

In my empty existence I have seen it all, from a righteous man perishing in his righteousness to a wicked man growing old in his wickedness. Do not be over-righteous and do not be over-wise. Why make yourself a laughing-stock? Do not be over-wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? . . . The world contains no man so righteous that he can do right always and never do wrong.—Eccl. 7:15-17, 20, NEB.

I applied my mind to all this, and I understood that the righteous and the wise and all their doings are under God's control; but is it love or hatred? No man knows. Everything that confronts him, everything is empty, since one and the same fate befalls every one, just and unjust alike, good and bad, clean and unclean, the man who offers sacrifice and the man who does not. Good man and sinner fare alike, the man who can take an oath and the man who dares not. This is what is wrong in all that is done here under the sun: that one and the same fate befalls every man. The hearts of men are full of evil; madness fills their hearts all through their lives, and after that they go down to join the dead. But for a man who is counted among the living there is still hope: remember, a live dog is better than a dead lion. True, the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing. There are no more rewards for them; they are utterly forgotten. For them love, hate, ambition, all are now over. Never again will they have any part in what is done here under the sun.

Go to it then, eat your food and enjoy it, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for already God has accepted what you have done. Always be dressed in white and never fail to anoint your head. Enjoy life with a woman you love all the days of your allotted span here under the sun, empty as they are; for that is your lot while you live and labour here under the sun. Whatever task lies to your hand, do it with all your might; because in Sheol, for which you are bound, there is neither doing nor thinking, neither understanding nor wisdom. One more thing I have observed here under the sun: speed does not win the race nor strength the battle. Bread does not belong to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor success to the skilful; time and chance govern all. Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come; like fish caught in a net, like a bird taken in a snare, so men are trapped when bad times come suddenly.—Eccl. 9:1-12, NEB.

The light of day is sweet, and pleasant to the eye is the sight of the sun; if a man lives for many years, he should rejoice in all of them. But let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. Everything that is to come will be emptiness.—Eccl. 11:7, 8, NEB.

Emptiness, emptiness, says the Speaker, all is empty.—Eccl. 12:8, NEB.

If a man takes off the Hebraic glasses and puts on Grecian ones, he may say: "Life in itself does have some value and significance because, although the body is mortal, the soul of man is innately immortal. Man does have some death-proof substance which survives the disaster of death." But the Hebrew Scriptures know nothing of man's natural immortality, either in whole or in part. Furthermore, such a view of man's inherent worth utterly misses the entire point of the gospel according to Solomon—and we could also add, the gospel of the whole Bible from beginning to end.

Just as Paul in Romans does not end his message on the utter sinfulness of all men, so Solomon does not end his message on the emptiness of life. It is true that life considered *in itself* has no meaning because it is

mortal life. We must go *outside* of life to find that which gives it true meaning. At the beginning of human history stands the Creator (Eccl. 12:1). At the end stands the Judge (Eccl. 12:14). In between "all . . . are under God's control." Eccl. 9:1, NEB. ". . . Whatever God does lasts for ever. . . ." Eccl. 3:14, NEB. It is God, and God alone, who provides life with purpose, significance and meaning. Without Him life is emptiness and despair.

Solomon's message is consistent with the whole biblical doctrine of justification by faith. The people of God are considered righteous, but their righteousness is, as Luther said, "an alien righteousness." It is outside of themselves in the Person of Christ. So too, faith in itself has no value or saving properties. To find its true value, man has to go outside of faith to its Object. Thus Solomon teaches us that we have to go *outside* of life itself to find that which gives it value.

If mortal life, life which dies, has no meaning in itself, then it must become clear that only a life which is immortal has any intrinsic worth. And since God "only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16), it follows that only His life has intrinsic value. Thus the Word declares: "There is none good but One, that is, God." Matt. 19:17. ". . . Thou only art holy." Rev. 15:4.

That which fills my life with meaning and makes it precious is not my own worth nor my own immortality, but the Word outside and above me, which declares, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" Ps. 139:17. The preciousness is not an innate quality in the object, but in the eye of the Beholder.

To teach that life has an inherent value by virtue of an inherent immortality is no different in principle than to teach salvation by an inherent righteousness. They are one and the same error. It blinds a man with the fantasy of his own worth and obscures the truth that life never has worth or meaning in itself except as it stands related to the One who is both Life and Righteousness.

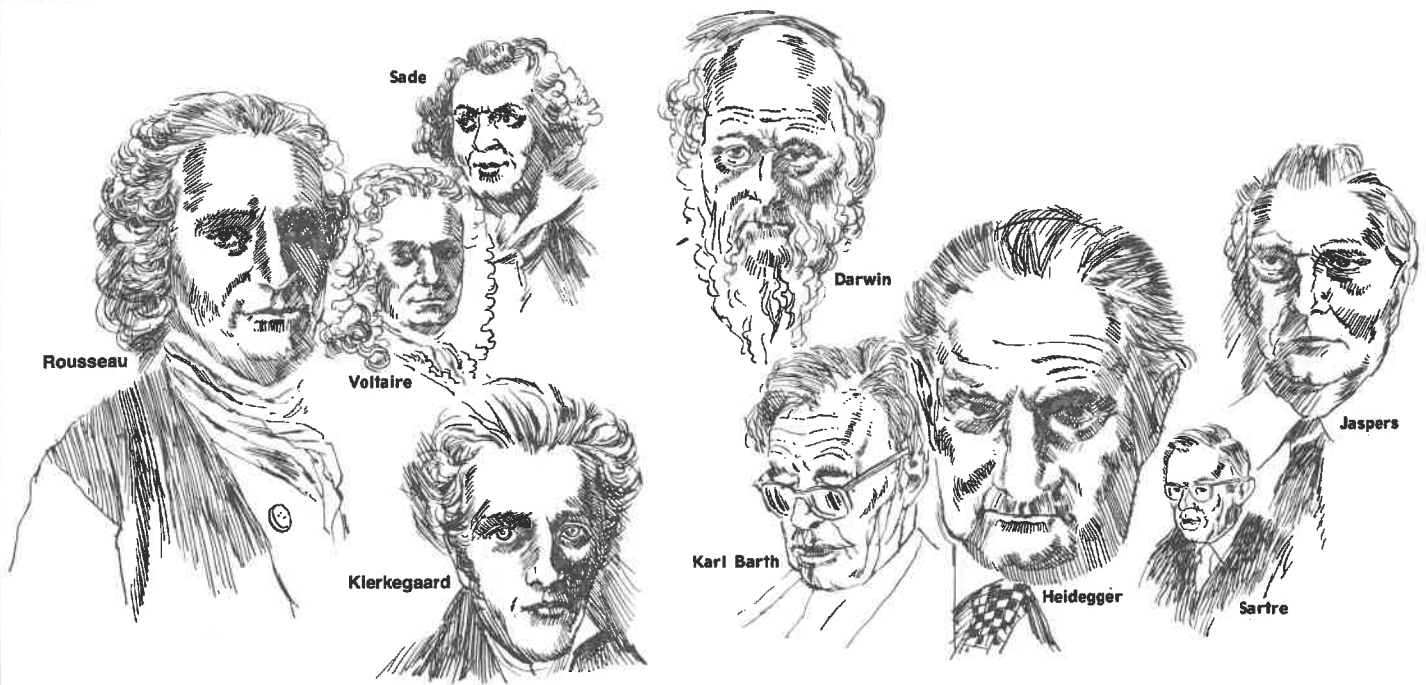
The Preacher brings his message to an end with the thrice repeated appeal:

Remember your Creator. . . .

Remember Him before the sun and the light of day give place to darkness. . . .

Remember Him before the silver cord is snapped. . . .
—Eccl. 12:1, 2, 6, NEB.

Apart from the remembrance of Him life has absolutely no meaning, no significance. Without Him all is emptiness, and nothing remains but despair.



PART II: Despair and Modern Philosophy

The Editors

In medieval Christendom man tried to find God by natural religion (the philosophy of Aristotle) or by mysticism. All this led to a great sense of guilt which men tried to rid themselves of by pilgrimages, indulgences and fasts. Men's burden of guilt was even reflected in a lot of the art of that period.

Then came the Reformation with its emphasis on the revealed religion of the Bible. Reason was made subordinate to revealed truth. When reason was put in its proper place, it became fruitful. Following the great Reformation awakening, the age of modern science was born. This was no accident.

. . . Christianity created a climate of thought which put men in a position to investigate the form of the universe. . . . The early scientists also shared the outlook of Christianity in believing that there is a reasonable God, who had created a reasonable universe, and thus man, by use of his reason, could find out the universe's form. . . . Nature had to be freed from the Byzantine mentality and returned to a proper biblical emphasis; and it was the biblical mentality which gave birth to modern science.—Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason* (Inter-Varsity), pp. 30-32.

The age of the Reformation was followed by an age of theistic rationalism. When man found that he could rationally understand and discover God's universe, he also depended more and more on reason to support the Christian religion. As the universe began to yield its secrets, reason assumed the lofty confidence that it could explain everything. It began to distrust

anything that could not be rationally explained.

The next step was the development of agnostic rationalism, the age of skepticism and growing attacks on the Bible (Rousseau, Voltaire, etc.). The beginning of the nineteenth century saw Kant's so-called Age of Enlightenment. Man must become of age, said Kant. He must renounce all external authority and do what reason alone tells him is right. This meant that reason took the place of revealed religion. Men like Voltaire, Rousseau, Marx, Sade and Darwin thought it was time to kick God out of His universe altogether.

Nietzsche (1844-1900), the German philosopher, was bold enough to carry the movement to its logical end. God is dead, he declared, and man must go it alone. Man alone must decide what is right and what is wrong. But he was logical enough to see that if God is dead, man is also dead. Life has no real meaning. Sade (1740-1814) said that what *is* is right. With the rejection of any revealed truth, man is left without any objective moral guide, without any absolute standard or any distinction between right and wrong.

As we trace down this line of thinking to our present age, we find that modern philosophy is completely pessimistic. Such philosophy says that life has no meaning, man has no significance, and the universe is absurd. The end is despair. That too is just what Solomon found out when he examined the meaning of life without God. ". . . there is nothing new under the sun."

Two Alternatives

Modern man has two alternatives as he is confronted with the despair of an existence which has no meaning:

1. The first alternative is found in being irrational.

If reason has only brought man to despair, he must escape into the realm of the irrational. It was Kierkegaard (1813-1855) who proposed that since reason cannot get man anywhere, he must take a "leap of faith"—meaning the kind of faith which has nothing to do with rational evidence. Rationalism appeared to have discredited the historical accuracy of the Bible, so Kierkegaard concluded that a man cannot base his eternal happiness on historical uncertainties. What is needed, he said, is a blind leap of faith, a commitment to the absurd.

Kierkegaard became the great-grandfather of modern existentialism—whether secular (Jean-Paul Sartre, Jaspers, Heidegger) or religious (Barth, Bruner, Bultmann). Existentialism is not based on the authority of truth which is objectively revealed in propositions, but on the authority of experience. Secular existentialism says there are no external authorities, no systems. Man makes his own values. Death mocks everything anyway, and brings all to nothing.

In forsaking God, millions of Western men have been reduced to mass men herded together like ants in our great centers of population as part of the "lonely crowd." In forsaking God, modern humanists have severed their connection with the true basis of their existence as human beings, and they have thereby opened up the way to apostate nihilism, so prophetically foretold by the most honest atheist of modern times, the German philosopher, Nietzsche. The masses now seek satisfaction in such false idols as sports, sex, gambling, alcohol, and automobiles. But as they fail in all this to find true peace of mind, they will eventually land in nihilism. Already many of the West's leading artists, poets, painters, and thinkers have reached this final stage where human existence is thought to be futile and senseless. . . .

Post-Christian man has created a sterile society in which he discovers that when he lives as if God is dead, man also becomes dead. Human life has today lost its meaning and purpose as apostate modern man finds himself reduced by his own science and technology to a mere cog within the great machine of nature and society. The only way of escape now lies in a nonrational world of experience, of drugs, pornography, and an elusive "final experience," and then ultimate madness. . . . Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* teaches that the ultimate in autonomous freedom is being crazy. It is a great thing to go insane, for then only can you become truly free.—E. L. Hebdon Taylor, *Reformation or Revolution* (Craig), pp. 135, 136.

Francis Schaeffer shows how the modern drug culture had its birth:

Aldous Huxley made a titanic addition to this way of thinking. We find him using the term "a first-order experience." In order to have a first-order experience he advocated the use of drugs. I have worked with many intelligent people taking LSD and have found hardly any

of them who did not realize what they were doing was related to Aldous Huxley's teaching in regard to a "first-order experience." . . . The basic reason that drugs are seriously taken today is not for escape or kicks but because man is desperate. On the basis of rationality and logic man has no meaning, and culture is becoming meaningless. Man is therefore trying to find an answer in "first-order experiences." This is what lies behind the modern drug mania. It is related to a thousand years of pantheism, for Eastern mystics have taken hashish for centuries to achieve religious experience.—Schaeffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 54.

While most people do not read the leading philosophers, yet their message of meaningless and despair is mediated to the masses in music, art, stage, theater and popular literature. From the heady aspirations of the Renaissance, beautiful and sublime art, music and literature have descended to the absurd and downright ugly. Much of it has gone from despair to madness. A monkey can dip his paw into a paint pot, daub it on a canvas, and win a great art prize. A group of men can break every literary rule and deliberately write utter rubbish, yet it becomes a best seller (*Naked Came the Stranger*). Many parents wonder why their children want to listen to "music" which is stark crazy or drop out of the world of the rational into the world of the irrational with the help of drugs. But they themselves have brought their children up in a godless, secular culture, and their children see that it is all an empty, plastic society.

Here, then, is one way of escape from the despair of life which has no meaning, no significance. Solomon called it madness and folly.

2. The other alternative is the one offered in God's Word. The only true philosophy of life is the one which builds on a revealed religion which posits a Creator who stands at the beginning of history and a Judge who stands at the end:

Remember your Creator. . . .

. . . God brings everything we do to judgment. . . .
—Eccl. 12:1, 14, NEB.

It is to this age and to this society which is eating the bitter fruits of Darwinism that God's last-hour message rings out with startling relevance:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.—Rev. 14:6, 7.

R.D.B.



The Nature of Man and the Old Testament

Editorial Note

For centuries many Pauline scholars have taken it for granted that Paul's anthropology was basically Hellenistic, reflecting the influence of the Greek culture in which he was reared and educated. Early in this century British and German New Testament scholars began to challenge this assumption. They presented extensive evidence to show that Paul's terminology of man was not so much Hellenistic, but Hebraic (Old Testamental). After all, did not Paul say he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews? Could we not expect that it was the Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament) that molded his thinking more than anything else?

Many good Christians of a more conservative or fundamentalist bias are inclined to ignore the findings of recent scholarship or even to disparage it all under such epithets as "liberal," "modernist," "neo-orthodox," etc. But not all evangelical scholars are prepared to take such an obscurantist position. While they hold tenaciously to the time-honored eternal verities of the Christian faith, they are at the same time open to the best contributions of scholarship and are willing to rethink certain areas if the evidence demands it. Dr. George Eldon Ladd, Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, is such an evangelical scholar. His recent *A Theology of the New Testament* is conservative and evangelical, but is also abreast of recent scholarship. His very recent *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* is Christian apologetics at its best. In both these books Dr. Ladd makes some stimulating comments on the nature

of man in the light of the Old Testament. We produce these comments here by permission.

From *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*¹

To understand the Old Testament hope, we must first of all understand the Old Testament concept of man. It stands in sharp contrast to the Greek view of man. One of the most influential Greek concepts of man stems from Platonic thought and has often had a strong influence on Christian theology. It is that man is a dualism of body and soul. The soul belongs to the real, permanent, noumenal world; the body belongs to the visible, transitory, temporal, phenomenal world.² The body is not thought to be *ipso facto* evil, as was the case in later Gnostic thought, but it is a hindrance to the cultivation of the mind and the soul. The wise man is he who learns how to discipline the body so

¹Reprinted from George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 44-49. Copyright 1975 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Used by permission.

²This view is spelled out in detail in the author's book, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), chap. 1.

that it is held in control and does not impair the cultivation of the soul. In this view, the soul is immortal, and "salvation" means the flight of the soul at death to escape the burden of the phenomenal world and find fulfillment in the world of eternal reality.

A verse in Paul, taken out of context, can be interpreted in this light. "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). This sounds like Platonic dualism; but in the context of Pauline thought, the eternal "things that are not seen" means the world of God which eventually will break into this world and transform it.³ This includes the resurrection of the body. Paul never conceives of the salvation of the soul apart from the body. Salvation means the redemption of the body and of the whole created order as well (Rom. 8:21-23).

Paul's view is based upon the Old Testament view of man, in which man's "soul" (*nephesh*) is primarily his vitality, his life—never a separate "part" of man. "Spirit" is first of all God's spirit (*ruach*), his breath, his power (Isa. 31:3; 40:7) which created and sustains all living things (Ps. 33:6; 104:29-30). God's spirit creates the human spirit (Zech. 12:1), but neither man's soul nor spirit is viewed as an immortal part of man which survives death. Man's death occurs when his spirit—his breath—is withdrawn (Ps. 104:29; Ecc. 12:7), and his soul—his *nephesh*—may be said to die (Num. 23:10, literally, "let my soul die the death of the righteous"; Jud. 16:30, "let my soul die with the Philistines"). In other places, the soul (*nephesh*) is said to depart to Sheol (Ps. 16:10, "For thou dost not give up my soul to Sheol"; cf. Ps. 30:3; 94:17). In these last references, *nephesh* is practically synonymous with the personal pronoun; there is no thought of an immortal soul existing after death. In sum, the Old Testament view of man is that he is an animated body rather than an incarnated soul.⁴ "Life" in the Old Testament is bodily existence in this world in fellowship with the living God (Deut. 30:15-20). Death means the end of *life* but not the cessation of *existence*. The dead exist in Sheol as "shades" (Prov. 9:18; Isa. 14:9; 26:19). A "shade" is not man's soul or spirit; it is man himself, or rather a pale replica of a man. It is man stripped of his vitality and energy—a shadow of his earthly self. The evil thing about Sheol is that in death, man is cut off from fellowship with God (Ps. 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17).

However, this is not the last word. The conviction grew that if God's people had truly enjoyed fellowship with God, even death could not disrupt that relationship. God is Lord both of the earth and of Sheol. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall

³For this problem, see *ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴See N. W. Porteus in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, K-Q, p. 243.

I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!" (Ps. 139:8).

Under this conviction, several of the Psalms express the conviction of blessedness after death instead of the gloom of the nether world. An important passage is Psalms 16:9-11:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also dwells secure.
For thou dost not give me [lit. my soul] up to Sheol,
or let thy godly one see the Pit.
Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence there is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Some interpreters understand this to mean only that God will preserve his saint from dying. However, there is no hint of danger or sickness in the context. "He is cherishing the hope that in this life and beyond he may find in God his portion still, and so may be delivered from Sheol."⁵ "The real question in Ps. XVI is that of communion with the Living God; the writer foresees no end to this; he does not understand how its persistence will be possible, but that does not trouble his mind, because it depends on God."⁶ The important thing to note is that survival after death is not a characteristic inherent in man; it rests altogether with God.

A second passage is Psalms 49:15:

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me.

A recent commentator thinks that this passage means that the author expects to experience an assumption similar to that of Enoch and Elijah.⁷ However, it seems more likely that this should be understood as expressing a conviction similar to that of Psalms 16.

In death itself the difference between the man who serves God and the man who scorns Him is made apparent. The psalmist is sure that his God will not let him suffer the fate of the impious; through faith, he asserts that God will be with him, the hand of Sheol is impotent against the presence of Yahweh with those who are His own.⁸

The same thought is probably expressed in Psalms 73:24:

Thou dost guide me with thy counsel,
and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.

⁵H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: S.C.M., 1956), p. 174.

⁶R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 153.

⁷M. J. Dahood, *Psalms 1* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 301.

⁸Martin-Achard, *op. cit.*, p. 157. See also H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 171, "Whereas the righteous may have suffering here, . . . hereafter he will have bliss, for God will take him to himself." See also G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper, 1962), I, p. 406.

There is some difficulty with the text, but Rowley's conclusion seems sound: the Psalmist "first declares that he enjoys God's fellowship here and now, and if God is to receive him, it must be to future fellowship . . . Both before death and after death he has a secure treasure in the fellowship of God."⁹

Such passages give us only glimpses of a hope of a blessed existence after death. It is important to note that the hope is based on confidence in God's power over death, not on a view of something immortal in man. The Psalmists do not reflect on what *part* of man survives death—his soul or spirit; nor is there any reflection on the nature of the after life. There is merely the confidence that even death cannot destroy the reality of fellowship with the living God. This is very different from the Greek view of immortality. "The psalmists . . . cannot conceive that this communion [with God] can ever be broken even by death."¹⁰

There also gradually emerged in the Old Testament the hope of bodily resurrection. That the Hebrews believed that death need not be the end of human existence is proved by the bodily translation of Enoch and Elijah. Furthermore, there are stories of resurrections wrought by Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs. 17:17-24; 2 Kgs. 4:31-37; 13:21). However, these are all exceptional cases and lead to no conclusions about resurrection in general.

In the prophets, we find several clear intimations of the hope of resurrection. The first is in Hosea 6:1-2:

Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn, that he may heal us;
he has stricken, and he will bind us up.
After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.

Some scholars see here a reference to individual resurrection, but the passage more likely refers to the restoration of the nation. God has punished Israel for her apostasy. Here is expressed a plea to return to the Lord to receive healing; and if Israel turns, in a very short time God will restore the nation to its favoured position as his people.

The same idea is found in Ezekiel 37, where Ezekiel has a vision of a valley of dry bones which came together and then were covered with flesh. This clearly refers to the resurrection of the nation (Ezek. 37:11-13), not to individual resurrections. However, the very fact that the vision sees the restoration of dead bones to life suggests that the *idea* of bodily resurrection was familiar. "There is no doubt that the symbolism that [Ezekiel] employs raised among the Jews the question of renewal of life for the departed."¹¹

⁹H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹⁰Martin-Achard, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹¹*ibid.*, p. 102.

The Old Testament view of man is that he is an animated body rather than an incarnated soul.

The hope of a blessed existence after death is based on confidence in God's power over death, not on a view of something immortal in man.

The first clear reference to resurrection is found in Isaiah 25-26. In Isaiah 25:8 we read, "He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces." This verse appears in an eschatological context of the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth and the gathering of his people to enjoy the blessings of his rule. It pictures an entirely new situation in which death is no more. This is not yet a promise of resurrection, but only of the abolition of death.

However, Isaiah 26:19 expresses the confidence in resurrection:

Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise.
O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!

This does not appear to be a general resurrection, but only of God's people.¹²

A resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous is clearly affirmed in Daniel 12:2: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This may refer to a "general" resurrection,¹³ that is, a resurrection of *all* men. On the other hand, the text affirms the resurrection of *many*, not of all, and the resurrection may be limited to Israelites.¹⁴ The righteous are raised to "everlasting life". This is the first occurrence of this phrase in the Bible. The Hebrew has "to the life of the age", i.e., to a life that extends indefinitely into the future. By New Testament times, the equivalent Greek phrase meant "the life of the Age to Come" (see Mk. 10:30). In Daniel it clearly refers to an eschatological resurrection of the body. Rowley thinks that "what is in mind is physical life in this world, side by side with those who had not passed through death."¹⁵ This depends altogether on how one understands the word "physical". It cannot designate a body exactly like the physical body of this age, for this body is shut up to death, and the resurrection body transcends this limitation.

We have completed our survey of the idea of the after life and of the resurrection in the Old Testament. We have discovered that the Old Testament does not consider the soul of man to be an immortal part of him. On the other hand, death does not end existence; the dead exist in the shadowy realm of Sheol. Gradually the conviction emerges that even death cannot separate God's people from enjoyment of fellowship with God, and this leads finally to the belief in the eschatological destruction of death and the resurrection of the body. This was a logical outcome of the Old Testament view of man, for whom bodily existence is essential to the full



meaning of life. The idea of man as an animated body, and the faith in a sovereign God whose power and promises could not be broken by death, led to the belief in the eschatological resurrection of the body.

From *A Theology of the New Testament*¹⁶

Paul's view of man has been interpreted in three ways. Scholars of an older generation understood I Thessalonians 5:23, where Paul prays for the preservation of the spirit, soul, and body, to be a psychological statement and understood Paul in terms of trichotomy; spirit, soul, and body are three separable parts of man.¹⁷ Other scholars have interpreted Paul against the background of Greek dualism and have seen a dichotomy of soul and body.¹⁸ Recent scholarship has recognized

¹²G. von Rad, *op. cit.*, I, p. 407.

¹³*Loc. cit.*

¹⁴J. A. Montgomery, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Scribners, 1927), p. 471.

¹⁵H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

¹⁶Reprinted from George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 457-459. Copyright 1974 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Used by permission.

¹⁷See F. Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology* (1867), pp. 103-19.

¹⁸G. H. C. MacGregor and A. C. Purdy, *Jew and Greek: Tutors Unto Christ* (1936), pp. 335f.



that such terms as body, soul, and spirit are not different, separable faculties of man but different ways of viewing the whole man.

BACKGROUND. In order to appreciate Pauline psychology, we need to have in mind the chief elements in the Greek and Hebrew concepts of man. One of the most influential thinkers for the subsequent history of Greek philosophy was Plato. Plato held to a dualism of two worlds, the noumenal and the phenomenal, and to an anthropological dualism of body-soul. The body was not *ipso facto* evil, but it was a burden and hindrance to the soul. The wise man cultivated the soul so that it might rise above the body and at death be freed from the body and escape to the world above.¹⁹ In Hellenistic times, the body, belonging to the world of matter, was thought to be *ipso facto* evil by the gnostics. Stacey has pointed out that most of the philosophers of Greece followed Plato in his view of soul and body, and that it was so impressed upon the civilized world that "no man can discuss the relation of soul and body today without encountering some resurgence of the Platonic view."²⁰

The Hebrew view of man is very different from the Greek view. There is no trace of dualism. The Hebrew

word for body occurs only fourteen times in the Old Testament²¹ and never stands in contrast to the soul (*nephesh*). More often, the word for flesh (*basar*) is used to designate the body (23 times). This word carries primarily a physical meaning. One significant usage is "flesh" as a symbol of human frailty in relation to God. *Basar* appears as something that men and animals possess in their weakness, which God does not possess. "My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). "The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit" (Isa. 31:3). *Basar* refers to human beings in their frailty and transience, to man in his limitations, as distinct from the infinite God.²²

Soul (*nephesh*) is not a higher part of man standing over against his body but designates the vitality or life principle in man. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living *nephesh* (Gen. 2:7). Body and the divine breath together make the vital, active *nephesh*. The word is then extended from the life principle to include the feelings, passions, will, and even the mentality of man.²³ It then comes to be used as a synonym for man himself. Families were numbered as so many souls (Gen. 12:5; 46:27). Incorporal life for the *nephesh* is never visualized. Death afflicted the *nephesh* (Num. 23:10) as well as the body.

A third term is spirit (*ruach*). The root meaning of the word is "air in motion," and it is used of every kind of wind. The word is often used of God. God's *ruach* is his breath—his power—working in the world (Isa. 40:7), creating and sustaining life (Ps. 33:6; 104:29-30). Man's *ruach*—his breath—comes from God's *ruach* (Isa. 42:5; Job 27:3). Thus man is conceived of as possessing *ruach*, inbreathed from God, as an element in his personality (Gen. 45:27; I Sam. 30:12; I Kings 10:5). God is the supreme spirit (Gen. 6:3; Isa. 31:3). *Ruach* in man is expanded to include the whole range of emotional and volitional life, thus overlapping with *nephesh*.²⁴ The difference between *nephesh* and *ruach* in man is that *nephesh* designates man in relation to other men as man living the common life of men, while *ruach* is man in his relation to God.²⁵ However, neither *nephesh* nor *ruach* is conceived of as a part of man capable of surviving the death of *basar*. They both designate man as a whole viewed from different perspectives.

¹⁹See G. E. Ladd, *The Pattern of NT Truth* (1968), pp. 13-20; W. D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (1956), pp. 72-74.

²⁰W. D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, p. 74. Stacey gives an excellent brief history of the Greeks' view of man.

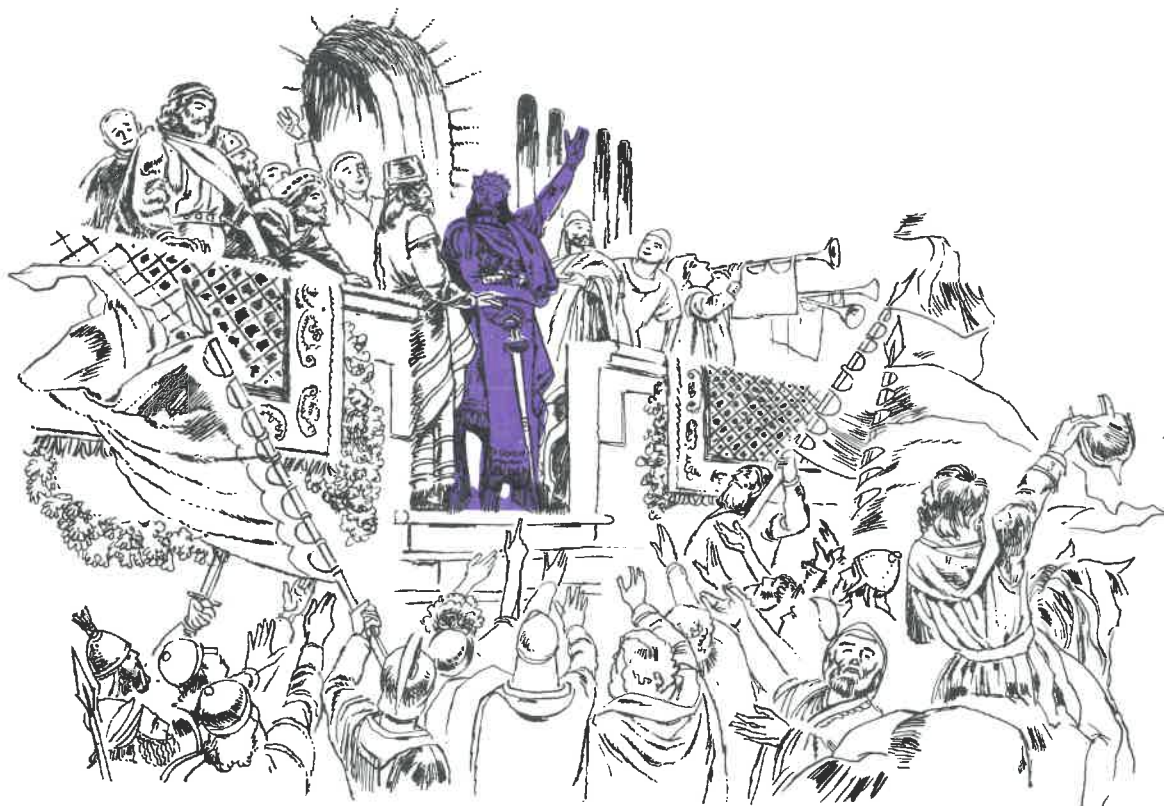
²¹*Ibid.*, p. 94.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 93.

²³Illustrations in *ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁴Illustrations in *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 90.



The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament

Graeme Goldsworthy

The theme of the Bible is the kingdom of God. That is where the biblical account both starts and finishes. Salvation is the means by which the sovereign God brings sinful people into that kingdom as its willing and acceptable subjects. When Jesus began His preaching, He declared that the kingdom of God was “at hand.” The term “kingdom of God” is not an Old Testament one, but the concept is. Clearly, Jesus’ hearers had some concept of “kingdom” which rested on their Old Testament upbringing, and they would have recognized Jesus’ words as a claim that the hope or expectation of Israel was to find its fulfillment in Him.

How, then, is the kingdom of God to be seen in the Old Testament, and how does it provide the foundation for the gospel which Jesus preached? This is an important question, for there are many views current about the relationship between the Old and New Testament. Indeed, the Old Testament has provided a major problem for Christians from the second century onward, for it was then that Marcion proposed that the Old Testament should be rejected by Christians because it revealed a very different God from the God of the New Testament. Marcion was simply expressing the

problem of the Christian use and interpretation of the Old Testament, and providing a very negative solution—i.e., abandon the Old Testament.

Loss of Historical Meaning

More orthodox Christians found they could not abandon the Old Testament, for they saw everywhere in the New Testament the testimony to Jesus Christ as the fulfiller of the Old. Yet the problem of how to interpret its message in a Christian way still remained. Ever since then there have been various Marcionite moves in the church ranging from outright, considered rejection of the Old Testament to plain neglect. One move to salvage the Old Testament actually led to its wrongful use. The school of Alexandrine scholars developed the method of allegorical interpretation, which ignored the plain, historical sense of the Old Testament and read out of it a supposed hidden, Christian meaning. It was, of course, open to anyone to read out of the text anything he liked. It was really a method of reading a Christian meaning *into* the text. In any case, the result was a gradual loss of the historical significance of the Old Testament.

Many medieval exegetes fought against the allegorizing method, but they never succeeded in providing a satisfactory alternative. By the time of the Reformation the so-called four senses of Scripture were widely accepted. It was held that the text had four meanings: literal, allegorical, moral and eschatological. But the literal-historical sense was given scant attention, while the other senses were established more on the authority of the church than on the basis of sound exegesis.

We should note one aspect which is no accident. The loss of the historical sense of the Old Testament went hand in hand with the medieval concept that the grace of God is primarily something done in the believer. Conversely, the recovery of the historical sense of the Old Testament by the Reformers accompanied the recovery of the understanding of God's grace as an attitude in God towards the sinner on the basis of the historical facts of the gospel.

The fact is that a clear concept of salvation history seen as the objective acts of God for men is the enemy of inner-oriented mysticism, which not only marked the medieval church, but which also characterizes much of what passes today for Protestant evangelicalism.

The Protestant Use of the Old Testament

Most evangelicals recognize that their view of the inspiration and authority of the entire Bible has saddled them with the Old Testament whether they like it or not. As a result, we see a variety of solutions to the problem of the relationship of the two Testaments. Two broad errors should be carefully avoided:

1. Many people simply draw on the great variety of Old Testament narrative for its wealth of human story. The aim is to illustrate how God deals with individuals, the godly and the ungodly. The result is a moralizing application that does little more than point up examples for us to follow and examples for us to eschew. Because there is no sense of structure and dynamic development, each narrative or text is treated in isolation from the wider framework of God's progressive revelation. Consequently, the relationship of Old to New involves little more than illustrations of gospel truth.

2. Another popular error is that of dispensationalism. Dispensationalism, to its credit, treats the Old Testament very seriously. However, it views the Old Testament as a totally different dispensation (in fact,

a series of dispensations) from the New. God acts for man's salvation in the Old Testament in a way quite different from the way He acts in the gospel of the New Testament. With regard to Israel's history and prophecy, God is seen acting exclusively for Israel in a way which is unrelated to the gospel. For the Christian, then, the Old Testament is of interest only in so far as it prophesies of the future events relating to Israel. By applying a rule of interpretation which appears to guard the integrity of Scripture but which in fact is not itself drawn from Scripture, dispensationalism confines prophetic fulfillment to the future of Israel as a nation and severs Israel's history from any significant relationship to the gospel. In order to make the historical narrative relevant to Christians, it then constructs an elaborate and uncontrolled typological interpretation of the historical significance of the Old Testament and its essential unity with the New Testament.

When Luther asserted the importance of a literal reading of the Old Testament, he did not mean (as dispensationalists mean) that it is read apart from the New Testament. For Luther, the literal meaning involved both the word of the old covenant promises and the fulfillment of this as it is found in Jesus Christ. Calvin taught the unity of the covenants, pointing out that what was promised in the old covenant had its substance in Christ (see Calvin's commentary on 2 Corinthians 1:20).

The Unifying Theme of the Kingdom of God

Now let us examine the theme of the kingdom of God on the basis of the fact that we can discern its reality everywhere in Scripture. The kingdom of God involves three essential aspects:

1. The subjects of that rule, who are the people of God.
2. The sphere of that rule, which is the place where God is the unchallenged Lord among His people.
3. The ruling relationship by which God establishes the nature of His kingdom and its subjects according to His own eternal and unchanging character.

We may summarize these elements by saying that we see in the Bible the concept of the kingdom of God as involving

God's people,
in God's place,
under God's rule.



The Kingdom in Eden

The first manifestation of the sovereign rule of God is the creation. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of creation, for it establishes the foundation for all our understanding of reality. It establishes once and for all the sovereignty of God and the fact that things are what they are because God made them so. The climax of God's creation was the establishment of the kind of kingdom that we are now considering. In Eden God set His people—Adam and Eve, made

in His image and reflecting His rule—in their own dominion over the rest of the created order (Gen. 1:26). God's own rule was epitomized in the probationary word which set the bounds of human freedom within the kingdom (Gen. 2:15-17). The blessedness of kingdom existence consisted in both the relationship of man to God and the relationship of man to the creation. Nature was submissive to man's dominion and fruitful in providing his needs. Salvation, of course, had no place in this prototype kingdom since man was made in the kingdom and needed no saving.

The Kingdom in Israel's History

The fall of man (Gen. 3) caused a disruption in his kingdom existence. As a rebel against God, he was no longer a willing subject and had to suffer ejection from the garden. As man fell, the creation was made to fall with him. The ground was cursed, nature challenged man's dominion, and all of man's existence was now outside the garden. But judgment and grace go hand in hand. God declared His purpose to reverse the fall by means of the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15). Genesis 4 to 11 shows two lines of human development—one ungodly line expressing human sin and inviting God's judgment, and a godly line showing God's purpose of grace to make a people for Himself. The godly line leads us to Abraham, to whom the significant covenant promises were made. These promises have three focal points:

1. God will make of Abraham's descendants a great nation.
2. They will be given a land to dwell in.
3. They will be established on a special relationship to God.

Here we see nothing less than the promise of the kingdom of God. Abraham's descendants are to be *God's people, in God's place, under God's rule.*

The rest of Genesis shows the tension between the promise and the actual experience of the patriarchs. Everything seemed to work against the fulfillment of the promises, so that only God's word of promise was left to be embraced by faith. The ultimate reversal was seen when the descendants of Jacob ended up in Egypt, where they suffered a cruel bondage.

The relationship of the covenant to Abraham and to the salvation of Israel from Egypt is clearly seen in Exodus 2:23, 24: " . . . their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." RSV. We cannot comment here on every detail of the great exodus from Egypt, but we should note its main features, for they form the pattern of salvation in the Bible.

As to the cause of salvation, we see that it is grace alone. It is on the basis of God's gracious promise to Abraham and not on the basis of any merit in Israel that God works salvation. Next we note the function of Egypt and Pharaoh to demonstrate a real bondage as that from which salvation is a release. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart makes it doubly clear that Israel is not able of her own will to break free from this bondage, but must comply with the command, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today. . . ." Ex. 14:13, RSV. When we add to this the miracles of the plagues and the opening of the sea, followed by the miracle of Israel's preservation in the desert, we can see why Israel ever after praised God by recounting His mighty acts in history by which He saved them (e.g., see Ex. 15; Deut. 6:20-24; 26:5-

Salvation is of grace, and the covenant of Sinai was given, not so that Israel might be saved, but because she was saved.

10; Josh. 24:5-13; Ps. 78; 105; 106; 114; 135; 136; Neh. 9:9-15).

When God gave His covenant stipulations at Sinai, He addressed Israel as His people. It is clear that this law of Moses is not a program of works for salvation. Salvation is of grace, and the covenant of Sinai was given, not so that Israel might be saved, but because she was saved. The law is thus a manifesto for the people of the kingdom.

Again, space is too short to detail the whole range of Israel's history, but we can easily observe the emerging pattern:

1. The promise of the kingdom was given to Abraham.
2. The acts of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt were the definitive acts of salvation.
3. Sinai marked the objective constitution of Israel as the people of God.
4. Salvation as the way into the kingdom also involved the bringing of Israel into possession of Canaan. The pattern of conquest under Joshua continued the demonstration of the fact that it was the power of God at work in salvation.

5. The political development leading through the period of the judges to the establishment of the united monarchy was a demonstration (albeit imperfect) of the principle of a theocracy—a God-ruled state.

6. The rule of God in Israel was mediated through the Sinai covenant as it was administered by God's anointed, King David and his lineage, and as the focal point of this administration was established in relationship to the temple in Jerusalem.

Once again we see a clear expression of the kingdom of God answering to the promises to Abraham and exhibiting the basic characteristics of *God's people, in God's place, under God's rule*. But history will not permit us to oversimplify the situation, for the decline and fall of Israel between 922 B.C. and 586 B.C. raises the very important question about the nature of the fulfillment that existed under David and Solomon. In certain ways the physical characteristics of the promises to Abraham were fulfilled:

Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land which He swore to give to their fathers. . . . Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.—Josh. 21:43, 45, RSV.

And Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.—1 Kings 4:25, RSV.

We can see in the latter reference the same reflection of the Eden paradise model of the kingdom that also figures in the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey (cf. Deut. 8:7-10). Eden will continue to be reflected in the promises of God, but any fulfillment in the present world order remains part of the fallen world, which is outside Eden. That is why the ultimate fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and of all prophecy of the kingdom of God will be apart from the present state of creation's fallenness.

So, while the kingdom of David and Solomon was a glorious fulfillment of the promises, it was nevertheless a kingdom of fallen people in a fallen world. It never could be permanent in itself, for it was imperfect. But when this kingdom fell apart, the question of the real fulfillment of the promises was a problem. The answer was given by the prophets of Israel, whose principal function was to interpret the decline as God's judgment on transgression of the covenant and to reaffirm the faithfulness of God by pointing to a great future day when all would be restored and made perfect, permanent and glorious.

The Kingdom in Prophecy

The obvious characteristic of futuristic prophecy is that it describes the future in terms which are drawn from the pattern of past history. When God moves for



the final salvation of His people, it will be a repetition of the events from the time of bondage to the setting up of the theocratic state in the promised land. Their exile is a second bondage, salvation a second exodus. A second way through the wilderness will lead to a second possession of the land. The city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and also the temple, and the Davidic king will once again rule God's people.

All this is not mere repetition, for there is a spiritualizing, or supernaturalizing, of the whole process. The exodus salvation in prophecy involves forgiveness of sins, and the covenant will be written on the heart. Human nature will be changed to conform perfectly with God's law. The land will perfectly reflect Eden by its fruitfulness, and nature will no longer be at odds with itself and with man. In fact, the renewal will be a remaking of the very sky and the earth. Sometimes the prophets deliberately mixed the restored Israel theme with the restored Eden theme (Ezek. 36:35; Isa. 51:3). So Ezekiel depicts the river of life flowing from the new temple and flanked by the tree of life (Ezek. 47:3-12; cf. Rev. 22:1, 2).

Now the crucial question is, When is all this fulfilled? Clearly, the historical restoration from Babylon was not the anticipated fulfillment. It did provide a very pale reflection of fulfillment in that all the physical features were there to some degree. But the restoration



that we read of in Ezra and Nehemiah, far from outshining the glories of David and Solomon's day, did not even come near to equaling them. In the face of this disappointment, the post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) point still to that future great day of the Lord.

The Kingdom in the New Testament

While the New Testament provides a more diversified description of the kingdom and concentrates on its reality in the spiritual plane, the same basic structure of the kingdom is there as is in the Old Testament. Because of the spiritual emphasis of the New Testament, some Christians (notably, dispensationalists) have suggested that the kingdom of the New Testament is not the one promised in the Old Testament. We must allow the testimony of Jesus and the apostles to decide that question for us. It is our firm conviction that the New Testament gospel kingdom is proclaimed everywhere as the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectations.

1. God's People. We have seen that this theme begins with Adam, not Israel. Theologically, Adam in Eden corresponds with Israel in the promised land. But to what do these elements correspond in the New Testa-

ment? Adam is the son of God (Luke 3:38). Israel is the people of God: ". . . I . . . will be your God, and you shall be My people." Lev. 26:12, RSV. This covenant formula is individualized in the king, the representative of Israel: "I will be his father, and he shall be My son." 2 Sam. 7:14, RSV. Israel is also spoken of as God's son: ". . . out of Egypt I called My son." Hosea 11:1, RSV.

The genealogy of Luke 3 makes it quite clear that Jesus is the true Son of Adam, and this accords with the use of the title "Son of Adam" in the Gospels. Jesus is the "beloved Son" with whom God is pleased (Luke 3:22). Indeed, Luke follows this baptismal declaration with his genealogy showing that through Adam, Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is looked upon as both the ideal Adam and the ideal Israel—that is, He is the people of God, the Seed of Abraham to whom all promises were made (see Gal. 3:16). Jesus as the Son of Adam (Son of man) accomplishes that which Adam failed to do; and likewise, as the true Israel, He does what Israel failed to do. Thus the temptation narratives show the reversal of Satan's conquest of Adam in the garden and of Israel in the wilderness.

If Jesus is the true people of God, the true Adam and the true Israel, all the prophecies concerning the restora-

tion of Israel to be the people of God must have their fulfillment in Him. So Paul, preaching the gospel of Christ, was addressing himself to the hope of Israel (Acts 26:6, 7; 28:20). The consistent testimony of the apostle is to Christ as fulfiller (see 2 Cor. 1:20). We may not seek the true Israel outside of Christ or look for her restoration apart from the gospel. To become one of the people of God, one must be incorporated into Christ by faith (John 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:17; etc.).

2. God's Place. Israel's hope was to return to Zion, the place of God's dwelling among His people. The New Testament must tell us where Zion is if we would discover the new temple and the ruling son of David. Because Jesus is the Son of David to whom rule is given, Zion is where He is—i.e., in heaven. The kingdom of God cannot be separated from the presence of Jesus (Heb. 12:22).

In thinking of God's place, it is important not to be too conditioned by our earthly concepts of real estate. The prominence in the Old Testament of the promised land should not be allowed to establish our concept of God's place. We must remember that the promised land, Canaan, is an earthly expression of a reality which we saw set forth in the garden of Eden. But even Eden could not be Eden without the presence of God. Let Levi teach us a lesson. The tribe of Levi was chosen to be priestly representatives of Israel in having access to God (a priest is one who has access to God). God told Moses that He intended to make a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6), a truth which has its fulfillment in the priesthood of all believers. In this sense Levi was privileged to represent God's people in the ideal relationship of being accepted into God's presence. All the tribes were apportioned real estate as their inheritance, except Levi. Levi, the truly representative Israel, was given a far greater gift: "They shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord is their inheritance. . . ." Deut. 18:2, RSV.

The making of the true kingdom of priests comes through the preaching of the gospel. The ultimate inheritance is related to priesthood rather than land rights. And it is this priesthood that the New Testament applies to Christians, for they have access to the presence of God through Jesus Christ. Because the hope of Israel leads thus to the blessings of the gospel, the writer to the Hebrews describes Abraham's faith in terms of its ultimate conclusion. It is not to the land of Canaan that Abraham's faith leads, but to the heavenly homeland (Heb. 11:13-16).

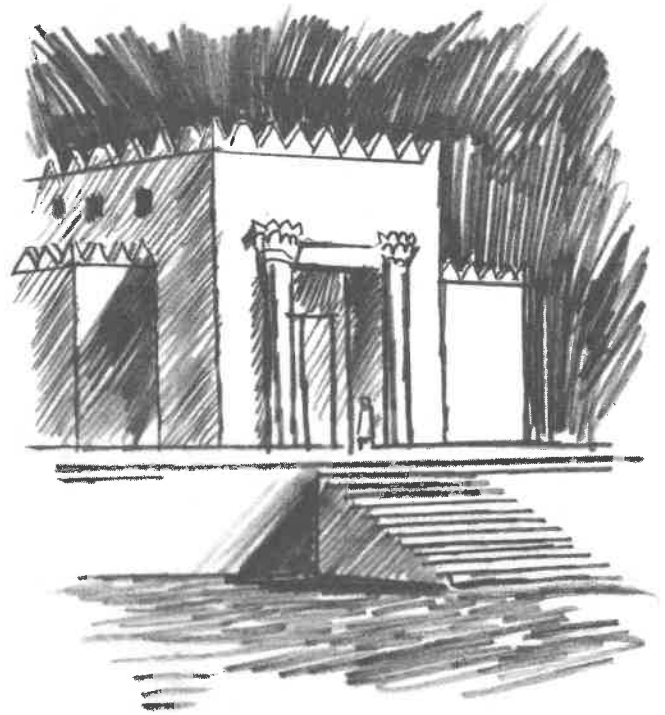
3. God's Rule. The concept of a theocracy established in the choice of a people as God's people and in the covenant regulation of this people, found its developed expression in the monarchy. The ruling of God's anointed king joined with the temple to provide an expression in Israel of these basic kingdom

ideas. When God "walked" in the garden of Eden, there was no need of a symbol of His presence. But in the fallen world where sin separates man from God, a tangible symbol was provided. The tabernacle was given to symbolize at the one time both the presence of God among the people and the separation between a holy God and a sinful people.

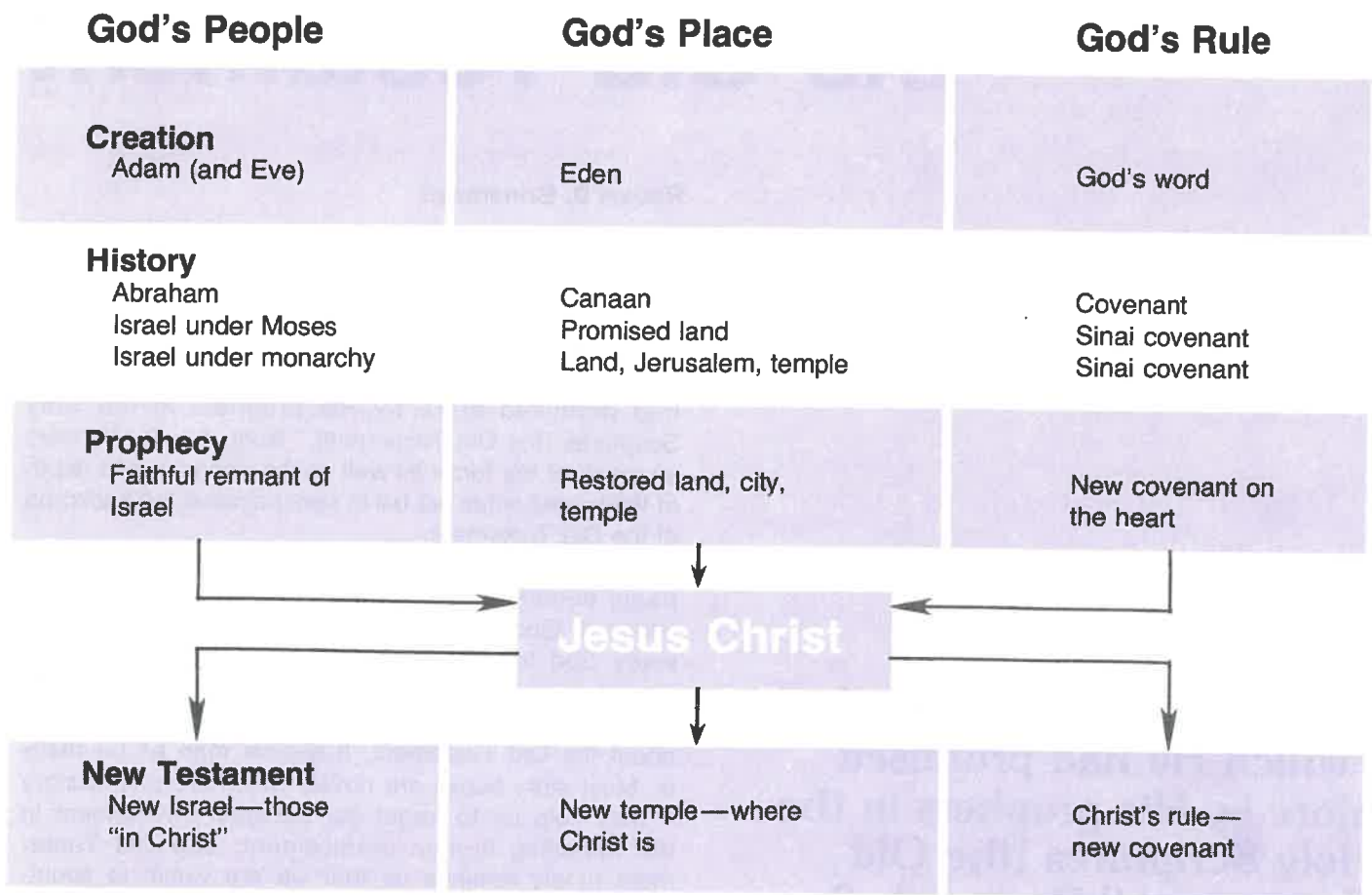
Solomon's temple became a fixed symbol of God's dwelling and rule until it was destroyed in 586 B.C. Prophecy established the hope in the restored temple as the center of God's rule in Zion.

As far as the New Testament is concerned, Old Testament prophecy about the rule of God and the temple is fulfilled in the gospel. The resurrection of Jesus is not only the restoration of the temple (John 2:19-22), but also the re-enthronement of the Davidic king (Acts 2:30, 31). The true temple is in heaven, where Jesus reigns now (Acts 2:33, 36; Heb. 8:1, 2). While believers are separated from their Lord (they are on earth, He is in heaven), there is another temple created by the Holy Spirit, who unites believers with the ascended Lord (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-22; 1 Peter 2:4-8).

The New Testament develops Stephen's assertion that God's temple is not made with hands (Acts 7:47-50). It is, in fact, the heavenly dwelling to which temple prophecy ultimately points, and there the Eden typology is answered in the face-to-face relationship which requires no symbolic temple, for God is the temple (Rev. 21:22).



The Kingdom of God and the Gospel



Some Conclusions

All the biblical promises find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Every element of the Old Testament's unfolding revelation of the kingdom leads to the Person of Jesus Christ come in the flesh. The kingdom of God has its objective reality in Him. He is God's true people. His presence marks the presence of God in the place we designate His kingdom. His word comes as God's ruling word with all authority.

The New Testament, in declaring the kingdom "at hand" with the coming of Jesus, points us to the fact that there is yet a consummation. But this consummation, such as is described in Revelation 21 and 22, is the outcome of the definitive work of Christ in the flesh, His living and dying. The great victory over the dragon of the Revelation is essentially the victory won two thousand years ago for us in the Person of Jesus Christ. To understand the gospel—Christ's life and death and resurrection for us—is to understand eschatology. The gospel, and it alone, is the key to those events which the Revelation describes as part of the process of bringing about the consummation of the kingdom. In the book

of Revelation no new principle, no new aspect of the kingdom of God, is dealt with which is not already established on the basis of the gospel. The second coming of Christ and the whole of biblical eschatology involves the consummation of the gospel. The first coming of Christ determines the nature of events at His second coming.

In looking at the theme of the kingdom of God in the Old and New Testament, we have done little more than establish a framework necessary to understand the Old Testament basis of the gospel. Most importantly, this framework establishes the objective, historical nature of the gospel and rescues us from subjective caricatures of the gospel. Since all the promises and hopes of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, we recognize that the righteousness of God is fulfilled in Him. The reading of the entire Bible as a coherent and unified revelation forces us to acknowledge that the righteousness we need for acceptance with God is outside of us in the Person of God's Christ.

The Gospel and the Old Testament

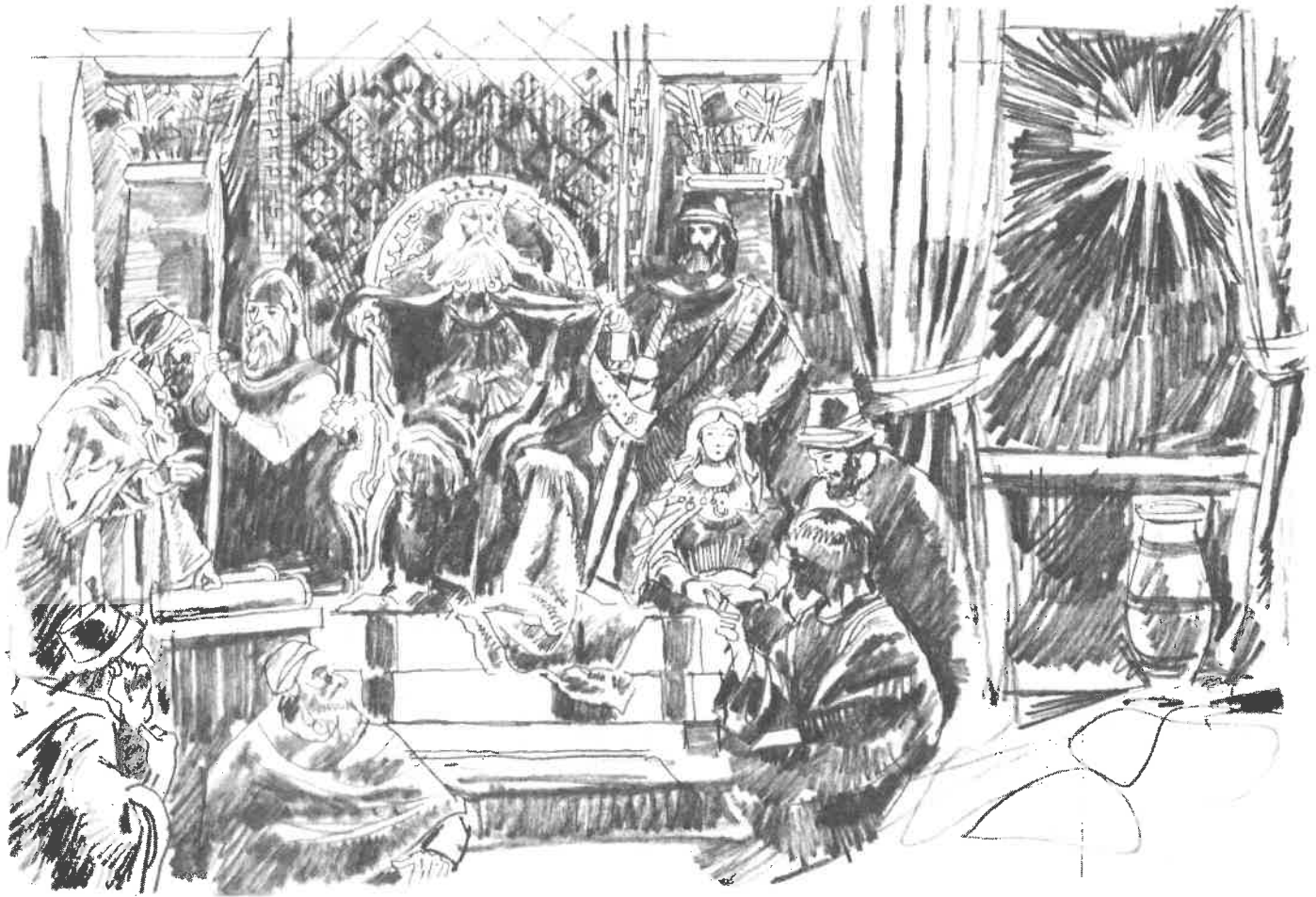
Robert D. Brinsmead

The New Testament cannot be understood in isolation from its Old Testament background. The Scriptures which Jesus and the apostles used in the authoritative proclamation of their message were those of the Old Testament. "The gospel of God" is that "which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures [the Old Testament]." Rom. 1:1, 2. We miss so much of the force as well as the richness and depth of the gospel when we fail to see it against the backdrop of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is written in the context of the tragic human situation. Man, who was made in the image of God to inherit thrones and dominions and to enjoy God forever, is in a tragic situation. He is enslaved, oppressed and afflicted. His fallen condition is no phantom. There is a startling flesh and blood realism about the Old Testament. It depicts man as he really is. Most story books are novels which are diversionary—they help us to forget our personal involvement in the appalling human predicament. The Old Testament rudely reminds us that we are victim to countless disorders and prey to the cruel tyrants of sin, misery and death.

There is no question but that the people of God represented in the writers of the Old Testament abhor death. Death is an overwhelming, unspeakable disaster. It is an unmitigated evil, "the king of terrors." Job 18:14. It is the negation of life and everything that God had in mind for man and also what man's own heart aspires to. Yet it is this great enemy called *death* which confronts us everywhere in the Old Testament. Adam and Eve bury their son, so prematurely cut down by the murderer's hand, under the cold sod. Abraham weeps for Sarah and buries her in the cave of the field of Machpelah (Gen. 23:2, 19). Jacob's bereavements threaten to bring down his "gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Hebrew children are snatched from their mother's arms and thrown into the Nile by the action of a monstrous king. The prophet Jeremiah hears not just the weeping of mothers in Bethlehem, but the cry of the great heart of humanity across the centuries when he says, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Jer. 31:15.

"The gospel of God" is that "which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures [the Old Testament]." Rom. 1:1, 2.



The Great Captivity

The Old Testament is the story of the great captivity. The Hebrew slaves build the treasure cities Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh. The Jewish exiles hang up their harps beside the river of Babylon and refuse to sing the songs of Zion. Yet these only serve to illustrate the larger captivity of every son and daughter of Adam's race. Since the day our first father sinned and was expelled from Eden, the whole of Adam's race is born subject to the real king of Babylon (Isa. 14). They are forced to serve him with rigor and receive the miserable wages of death. He keeps them in his prison house (Sheol) and lets none escape.

Out of this night of bitter humiliation and bondage, there shines the light of God's prophetic promises. A star of hope illuminates the future. Even as Adam and Eve stand under sentence of death, they hear the promise that the "seed of the woman" shall defeat their captor (Gen. 3:15). The promise is reiterated to Abraham, and his posterity are made custodians of the promises of God. The dying words of Jacob fill the hearts of his children with hope: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. . . ." Gen. 49:10.

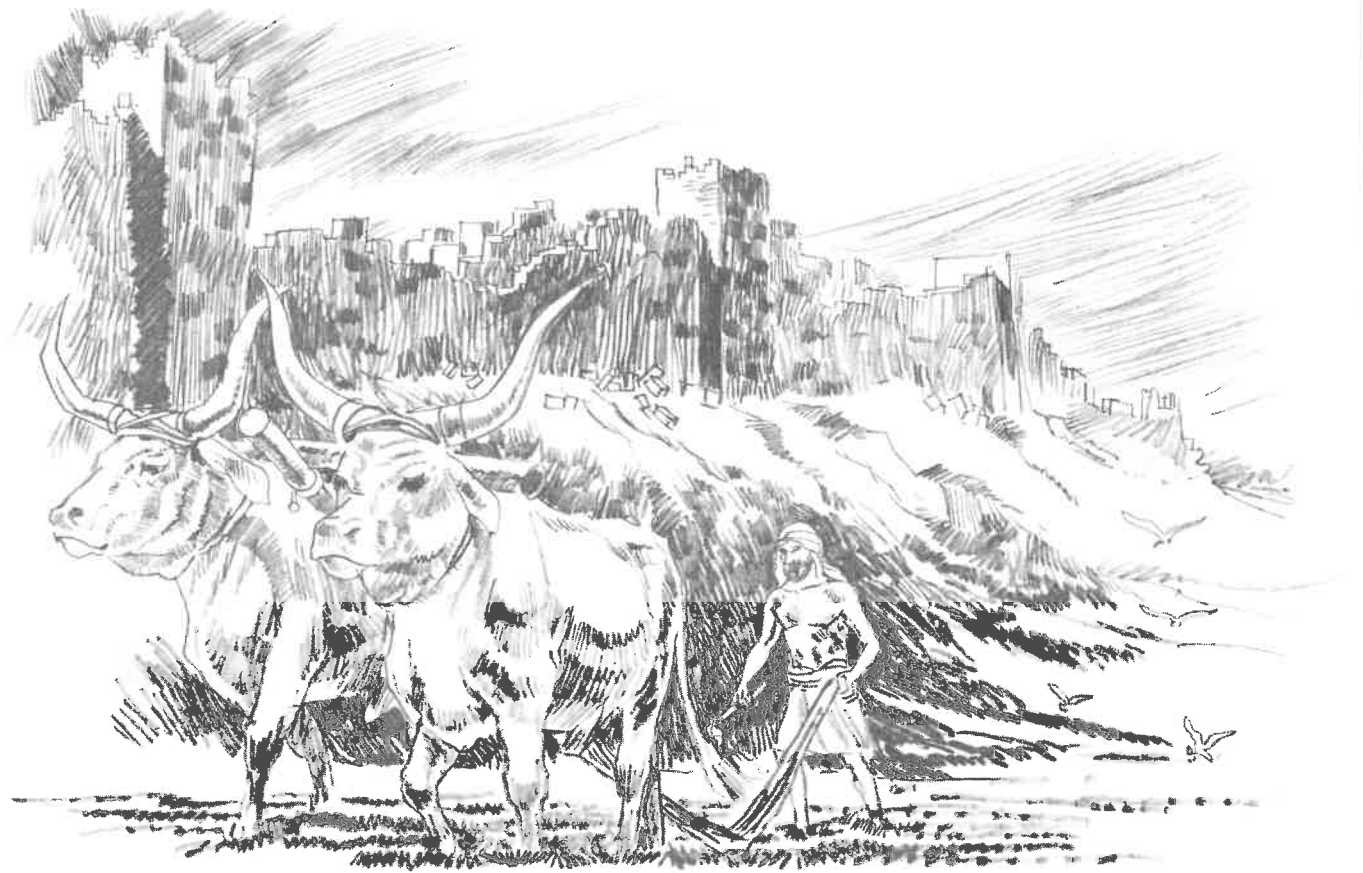
Not always will the people of God's covenant be oppressed, trodden down and afflicted:

There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. —Num. 24:17-19.

Not always will death reign and stand over God's people to negate all that they love and aspire to. The faithful God of the covenant will act on behalf of His people and defeat their enemy:

Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and



the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. —Isa. 25:5-10.

Then the prophet continues:

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

“We have a strong city;
He sets up salvation
as walls and bulwarks.

Open the gates,
that the righteous nation which keeps faith
may enter in.

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on Thee,
because he trusts in Thee.

Trust in the Lord for ever,
for the Lord God
is an everlasting rock.

For He has brought low
the inhabitants of the height,
the lofty city.

He lays it low, lays it low to the ground,
casts it to the dust.

The foot tramples it,
the feet of the poor,
the steps of the needy.” . . .

O Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us,
Thou hast wrought for us all our works.

O Lord our God,
other lords besides Thee have ruled over us,
but Thy name alone we acknowledge.

They are dead, they will not live;
they are shades, they will not arise;
to that end Thou hast visited them with destruction
and wiped out all remembrance of them.

—Isa. 26:1-6, 12-14, RSV.

We must remember that the prophets penned these bright visions of future glory at a time of darkness and calamity. Isaiah wrote the preceding words when the cruel Assyrian king and his rapacious armies were descending from the north upon the hapless residents of Palestine. But if there was ever a prophet who wrote in days of crushing sorrow and bitter heartbreak, it was Jeremiah. He saw Jerusalem destroyed and Zion plowed as a field by the Babylonians. The people of

God were bereft of king, city, sanctuary and homeland. Thousands were either killed or taken captive into foreign lands. It was like the fall of Adam all over again. Yet nothing could kill the prophetic spirit nor quench the light that God had put among the chosen people. Declares Jeremiah:

Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border. . . .

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me. —Jer. 31:16, 17, 23-26.

Yes, the prophet had dreamed of a better day. The future still belonged to God's people, and it was a future big with hope and full of glory:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord. . . .

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. . . .

Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be

holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.—Jer. 31:27, 28, 31-34, 37-40.

The words of the prophets kindled a hope in a glorious destiny for the Israel of God that nothing, absolutely nothing, could kill. The hope of Israel was a unique miracle which survived centuries of set backs, disappointments, failures, captivities and conquests by foreign armies. They had an unshakable hope that one day God would act and bring to pass all His promises to His people.

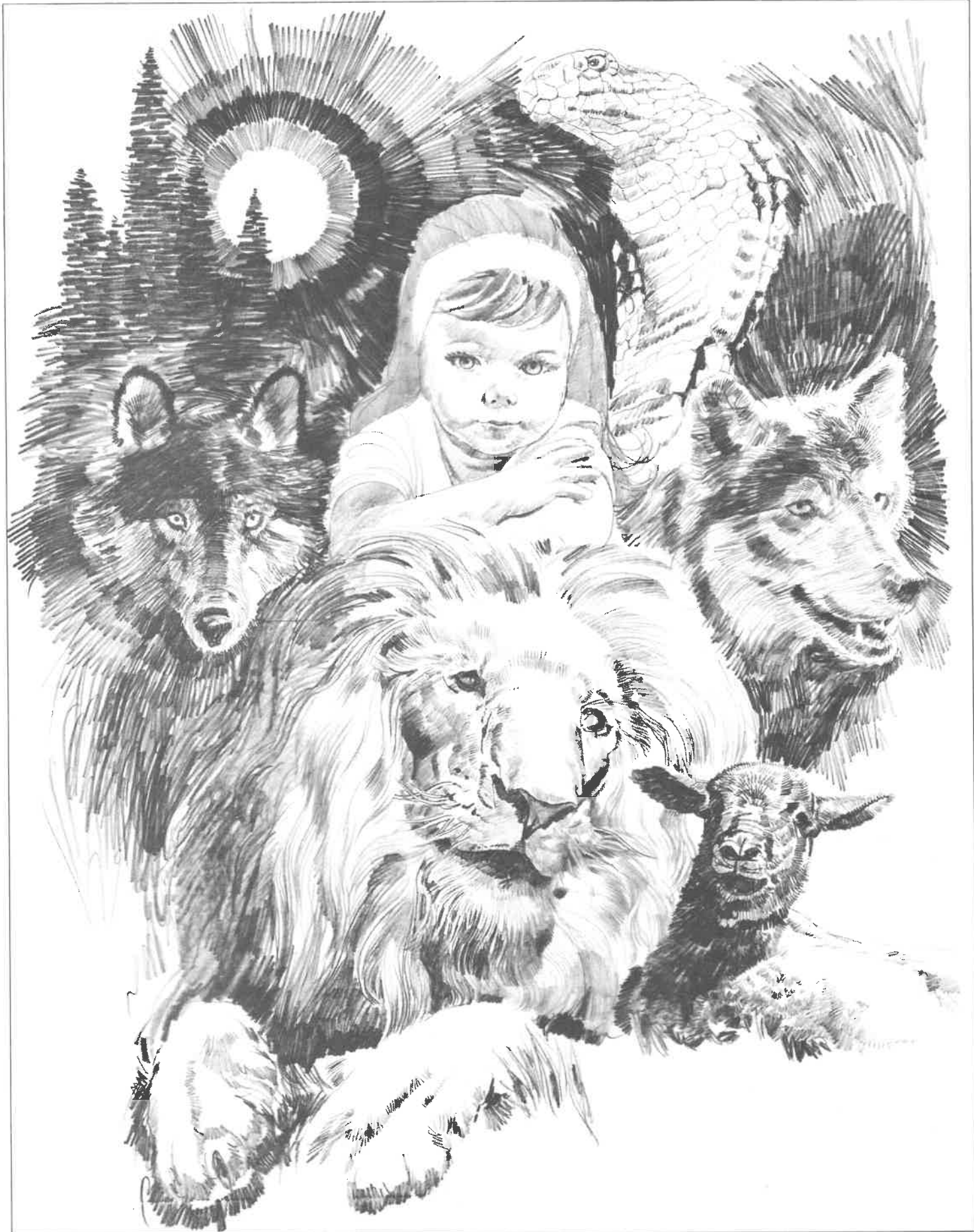
The Old Testament is forward looking. As prophet after prophet illuminated the promise of God's bright tomorrow, there gradually crystallized in the minds of God's people the concept of the day of the Lord—the day when God would finally act and fulfill His word of promise. The present age was evil, frustrating and tragic, but God and the future were still with the chosen people. There would be an "age to come" in which God would finally act for the full salvation and deliverance of His people. The key words of the Old Testament are: "Behold, the days come. . . ." "In that day. . . ." "It shall come to pass in the last days. . . ." This forward looking stance is not only the key to understanding the Old Testament, but as we will shortly see, it is the key to the gospel.

Old Testament Realism

Before we turn to consider how the gospel so dramatically and joyously bursts onto this stage which is set by the Old Testament, let us first pause to consider how Hebrew inspiration conceived of salvation and redemption. Due to a certain Grecian influence on Christian thought, the church has tended to lose much of the biblical realism about salvation. So often Christians think of salvation in terms of the salvation of man's "soul-box," which is finally freed from the hindrances and encumbrances of corporeal existence and flies away in some form of spirit existence to enjoy the rewards of salvation. The humorous cartoons of a ghost of a man sitting on a cloud strumming a harp are an obvious caricature, but our "Christian" ideas on salvation and "the life to come" often lend some support to these distortions.

The Hebrew prophets knew nothing about this kind of salvation. There is a refreshing, down-to-earth realism about the Old Testament's picture of the blessings of redemption in "the age to come." To start with, it depicts a salvation of the whole man—to be man as man was meant to be. Human existence is *corporeal*, or *somatic*, existence. When we think in Hebraic or Old Testamental categories, we cannot tear off a part of man and say, "It lives." Man is not saved unless the whole man is saved.

The prophets depict the glorious future in very corporeal terms. The desert will rejoice and blossom.



Instead of briars will be flowers and fir trees. A little child will play with vipers and lead the beasts which at present are dangerous and vicious. The redeemed of the Lord will build houses and inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. In short, nature herself will fulfill the divine intention of being subject to man's rule even as man is subject to God's rule.

The New Testament Change of Tense

The New Testament does not present a new message or a new ethic. Jesus did not come to destroy the hopes of the Old Testament, but to fulfill them. The stage is fully set in the Old Testament. In the fullness of time Jesus breaks in upon that stage "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand [that is to say, it has arrived and is here]: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15.

Whereas the Old Testament proclaims, "Behold, the days come. . .," the New Testament electrifies us with the announcement: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The time is fulfilled. . . ." " . . . the hour is coming, and now is. . . ."

Unless we utterly deny what the New Testament gospel is all about, we must see that its message is that God has at last acted, gloriously acted, in fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets looked forward to in hope. Old Testament expectations have become present tense. The long-looked-for, hoped-for kingdom of God has arrived in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The hope of Israel has become present fact in Jesus Christ. In His Person and work the new age has broken in upon human history. The miracles of Jesus were not just a case of His proving that He was the true Messiah—for the false Christ is the one who ostentatiously shows himself off as Christ by signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:1-9; Matt. 24:24)—but the miracles of Christ are the incontestable evidence that the powers of the new age have broken into history. Here is the Son of man, the new Adam, the Man as man was meant to be, who is subject to God and therefore Himself is Lord of the whole created order. Whether it is an unbroken donkey, the sea and the waves, disease or demons, even death itself, all are subject to this Man who fulfills God's plan of being Lord over God's creation (Gen. 1:26-28). The marvelous works of Jesus are thus the manifestation that the kingdom of God has come among men (Luke 17:21).¹

The Old Testament with *all* its hopes and promises finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is the united testimony of all New Testament witnesses. The great hermeneutical question is not whether we are going to interpret the Old Testament promises and prophecies (prophetic promises) *literally* or *spiritually*. These terms

are often red herring that beggar the real issue. The issue is whether we are going to follow the lead of all the apostles and interpret the Old Testament Christologically!

We say again that the gospel announces that God has acted in Jesus Christ to fulfill what He had promised through the prophets. According to all He had promised, the New Testament records that He has indeed "visited and redeemed His people." Luke 1:68. He has put away sin, abolished death, brought in everlasting righteousness, and restored human nature to acceptance and glory at God's right hand (Heb. 9:26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Dan. 9:24; Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 2:10). What God promised to the Hebrew fathers He has fulfilled in raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 13:32, 33). That was Paul's startling message to the Jews after they had read the prophets again in their synagogue on the Sabbath day.



He told them that these things are no longer future tense, for God has acted to do all He said He would do in Jesus Christ.

If one says, "Wait a minute, there are a lot of promises in the Old Testament that have not come to pass yet," then he does not see how gloriously God has fulfilled all, accomplished all, indeed given to Israel absolutely all things in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:32). Paul declares that *all* the promises of God have found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

Did God promise Israel wisdom, peace, victory, power, an inheritance? Well, He has given them all that and much more in the gift of Jesus to be King of the Jews. The fact that the majority of Jews refused the gift and the way God fulfilled Old Testament hopes, makes no difference (Rom. 3:3). They are not all Israel who are of Israel (Rom. 9:6). Those who did accept Jesus as the hope of Israel were the prophesied remnant, the only true Israel of God.

¹We suggest that "the kingdom of God is among you" is the better reading for Luke 17:21.



The blessings of God's Messiah could not be contained in Jewry alone, for had not God said that in Abraham's seed all families of the earth would be blessed? Israel's table would overflow with more than crumbs for the Gentile "dogs." God's Christ was not only the Servant of Israel as depicted in Isaiah, but the second Adam. He was therefore not alone the hope of Israel, but "the Desire of all nations." Hag. 2:7. This is a beautiful title for Jesus. It means that Jesus Christ is what every human heart needs. In the gift of His only Son to Adam's lost race, God has answered every true cry for help and consolation. He has answered every prayer that has ever ascended or ever will ascend to God from any human heart.

Let the imagination again take in that tragic human situation so realistically depicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. Let us again survey all their bright hopes of a better future in the age of the life to come. Then let us see that the gospel of Jesus is the message that God has acted to do all He said He would, and to do it exceedingly above all that any man could ask or think. If that gospel is not exciting and the most joyous thing that was ever conceived, then there is absolutely nothing in this whole world to be really cheered or excited about. And if we still think we can read the Old Testament and find any part of its fulfillment anywhere or in any event outside of God's action in Jesus Christ, then we put ourselves in the position of a Christ denying rabbi who says that Jesus is not God's Messiah. Either

the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, or no part finds its fulfillment in Him!

The Gospel Must Determine Our View of Everything

It is on the basis of the gospel that we look for a new heaven in the age of the life to come. This is no vague hope. This new creation is already a reality in Jesus Christ. The end of the world and the great consummation will merely be the open disclosure and empirical realization of what God has already done in Jesus Christ. More than that, as we grasp this salvation by faith, God gives us even now a foretaste, a first fruits, of that life of the age to come (Rom. 8:23). Although still living in the world that is passing away, we are already part of that new order in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This is why the believer cannot give ultimate significance to anything in this world of the old order. Faith in God's holy gospel demands total and radical obedience of those who belong to the new creation which has already come in Jesus Christ and which will be manifested *shortly* when Jesus returns. This gospel must now determine our entire existence. It must determine our world view, our view of Old Testament prophecies, and our view of Christian ethics. If we may summarize the essence of Paul's message to the churches, it is this: *Believe the gospel and act accordingly.*

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