

VOLUME VI: The Doorway Papers

time and eternity

and other biblical studies

SECOND EDITION

ARTHUR C. CUSTANCE

Edited by E.M. White and R.G. Chiang



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TIME AND ETERNITY AND OTHER BIBLICAL STUDIES
Second Edition
Editors: E.M. White and R.G. Chiang

The Doorway Papers, Volume Six

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Preface to Volume VI

The six papers in this volume, published between the years 1957 and 1967, do not form a connected series as the other volumes have done, but they have this in common: they all assume Scripture to be the touchstone of truth, and they demonstrate that it is able to stimulate one's thinking enormously, especially when the mind is informed by the data of current research. The Bible has nothing to fear from the most careful and detailed examination; more often than not the more precisely we attend to its statements, the clearer will be the overall picture of truth which emerges. I am convinced that people who find Bible study dull are simply not studying with sufficient care.

The first paper, "Time and Eternity," requires some stretching of one's thinking processes! It is an intriguing excursion into the question of the nature of TIME in heaven. It is well worth the effort it will demand if the implications of the lines of thought suggested in it are to be understood, and these implications are by no means purely academic or unrelated to present Christian experience.

The second paper, "Three Trees and Israel's History," provides an illustration of how one Spirit has clearly directed and supervised and inspired the writing of Scripture throughout. From Genesis to Revelation certain symbols have been consistently employed with hidden meanings to which all writers subscribed, though they nevertheless nowhere indicate to the reader that they are employing these symbols in such complete concordance with all the writers who preceded them, often by many centuries. This is a powerful witness to the existence of a single guiding Mind throughout.

The third paper, "Between the Lines: An Analysis of Genesis 1:1,2," is a study involving an issue which is highly controversial today because it appears to be a recent concession to modern evolutionary geology by opening up a "time-slot" of any length that geology might ask. That this is a total misreading of the evidence is borne out by showing, not only that the Hebrew original virtually demands such an interpretation, but that the idea of a hiatus in time, of unknown duration, between Genesis 1:1 and 2 was recognized by Jewish commentators in the centuries before Christ and has been continually referred to by Christian writers from the earliest times to the present.

The fourth paper, "The Omnipotence of God in the Affairs of Men," is a detailed study in somewhat concentrated form of the extent to which Scripture reveals that God rules or overrules in the affairs of men *and* in the calling and saving and positioning of the child of God within the Body of Christ. It is both a sobering and a comforting study — deeply rooted in the Word of God.

The fifth paper, "The Confusion of Languages," explores the fact that human languages do still indeed show many signs of having been developed from some one single original, and that this original was almost certainly a language belonging within the Semitic family, of which Hebrew is a member. The evidence suggests that in the confusion of tongues which put a halt to the building of the Tower of Babel, it was chiefly (if not solely) the members of the family of Ham whose speech was dramatically and very suddenly confused to such an extent that communication and further co-operation became impossible.

The last paper, "Cain's Wife and the Penalty of Incest," is brief but informative. It shows how beautifully consistent Scripture is, both with itself and with the latest assured findings of research into the genetics of inbreeding. There is no need whatever to suppose that Cain married some non-Adamic creature or that Eve was not truly the mother of *all* living.



PART I

TIME AND ETERNITY: CREATION AND THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY

Even if the attempt at discrimination should fail in exactitude, it may yet, by opening out fresh views, contribute light to minds of greater precision – who may thus be enabled to hit upon the exact truth.

Lord Arundell of Wardour
1872

Preface

It has been well said that it takes two to tell the truth. I think what this means is that there is a sense in which we conceive a truth most clearly when we have given it verbal expression for someone else's benefit. Often we think we understand – until we try to share our understanding with another person.

My impression is that the reader will profit most from this Paper if he lends it to a friend with whom rapport is already established and then discusses it so as to verbalize its implications for himself.

If these things are true, there is wonderful comfort – one might almost say a spiritual thrill – in the contemplation of them. Not the least surprising is the fact that some of the implications in the Theory of Relativity were so clearly perceived by Augustine and so wonderfully allowed for in Scripture. The light which the theory both casts upon and receives from the New Testament, especially John's Gospel, opens up all kinds of new avenues of Christian thought on some of the deepest problems of eternity. Much remains yet to be explored. If you begin to lose track, don't give up! Press on to the end – it will become clearer in due time.

If any excursive brain [...] wonder that Thou the God Almighty and All-Creating and All-Supporting, Maker of Heaven and Earth, didst for innumerable ages forbear from so great a work before Thou wouldst work it: let him awake and consider that he wonders at false conceits. For whence could innumerable ages pass by, which Thou madest not, Thou the Author and Creator of all Ages? Or what times should there be, which were not made by Thee? Or how should they pass by, if they never were? Seeing then Thou art the Creator of all times, if any time was before Thou madest Heaven and earth, why say that Thou didst forego working? [...]. But if before Heaven and earth there was no time, why is it demanded "what Thou then didst"? For there was no "then" when there was no time.

Augustine, Confessions

Introduction

In the history of science it has frequently been observed that every new theory involving highly abstract ideas has to be discussed and argued about at the upper levels for some time before it can be understood by the educated public in general. In the ordinary processes of conversation, the words and phrases and analogies essential for its verbalization have to be generated and combined in various ways before it can be communicated meaningfully to a larger audience.

At first the search for terms with which to convey the new ideas is slow and, for all but a few specialists, quite inadequate. But in the course of time a kind of natural selection operates to eliminate terms that confuse and to elaborate those that clarify the issues involved. Modes of expression are standardized. More and more individuals come to attach the same specialized meanings to phrases that are commandeered as the particular property of those who possess the new truth. A scientific "jargon" grows up that facilitates expression and gives new freedom to the exchange of ideas. The more abstract and removed from common sense the theory is, the longer it takes for it to percolate down to the lower levels. Occasionally the process is accelerated by the appearance of some scientific genius who has a peculiar gift for expressing the abstruse in remarkably appropriate common terms, thus bridging the gap from the specialist to the layman much more rapidly. A. S. Eddington and Sir James Jeans were men of this type.¹

The Theory of Relativity is a case in point. The difficulty of making the implications clear was increased by the fact that the terms themselves were all common ones, like space and time. This had the effect of misleading the public into supposing that employing the terms was equivalent to knowing what they meant. And, of course, since Relativity was applied to time, everybody knew what was meant because we all experience apparent fluctuations when we are waiting for someone or when we are trying not to be late! All this was plain common sense. .

..

The problem was even further complicated by the fact that the novelty of the idea stirred the imagination of popular science writers who explained Relativity to their readers by the use of analogies which at first appeared to give immediate insight into the new mysteries but afterward proved to be misleading. It then became difficult for those whose thinking had thus been influenced to *escape* from the insights supposedly gained in order to achieve the more profound insight which was required for a true understanding.

This Paper inevitably suffers from both these difficulties, and undoubtedly much discussion and argument is required to generate the more exact terms and

1. For example: Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, Cambridge University Press, 1930; Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 1931.

phrases necessary to crystallize the somewhat new application of the Theory of Relativity to the scriptural meaning of Time and Eternity.

A basic tenet of Einstein's theory is that time, as a fourth dimension, has no meaning or existence apart from the physical universe and could not be said to have existed prior to the Creation. In one of his more popular statements, Albert Einstein put it this way:

If you don't take my words too seriously, I would say this: If we assume that all matter would disappear from the world, then, before relativity, one believed that space and time would continue existing in an empty world. But, according to the theory of relativity, if matter and its motion disappeared there would no longer be any space or time.²

This in itself is difficult enough for anyone who has not reflected upon it. But there is an equally important corollary: namely, that in a spiritual world (in which matter has no place) the same situation would exist – there could be no passage of time. This would be a real world which either existed in the absence of a physical world altogether or existed alongside a physical world but without any dependence upon it. In either situation there need not be any experience of time as we understand it. If this spiritual world is thought of as existing in the absence of a physical world, it would be, as it were, "before" the Creation – that is to say, before Genesis 1:1. If it is thought of as existing alongside a physical world but not dependent on it, then we have the situation as it is now. Yet, although the present situation is what it is and time is being experienced by those of us who exist within the framework of a physical universe, those who now live outside this physical universe do not experience the passage of time in any form.

This concept is in a sense a part of the philosophy of modern physics, yet it really is completely understood only by something akin to spiritual insight. Its implications are highly complex. The light which is thrown upon many passages of Scripture fully justifies the effort necessary to grasp what is really being said – an effort made particularly necessary because we first have to abandon our characteristic common-sense views of what time is.

That Scripture explicitly and repeatedly takes into account the fact that time is wedded to the material world but not to the spiritual world is by no means a new discovery. Augustine, among others, saw it clearly, as a proper understanding of his quotation will show. But a careful exploration of those passages of Scripture that reflect this fact reveals much more than has been hitherto suspected: and the revelation is, to put it quite simply, a truly wonderful one. It will probably help considerably, before examining these passages, to review briefly the historical background of the events that led to Einstein's formulation of the two essential principles of the Theory of Relativity.



2. Einstein: quoted by Philipp Frank, *Einstein, His Life and Times*, Knopf, New York, 1947, chap. 8, section 5, p.178.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

It will be convenient in this study to consider the matter under two headings, one of which is strictly in the realm of physics and the other in the realm of philosophy. The first is the *relativity* of time, and the second is its *co-existence* with the created order. Or to put it a little more elaborately, the first consideration is how fast time really goes and whether it has a fixed speed independently of experience. And the second consideration is what happens to experience in the total absence of time. The first question involves us in a brief historical review which will prepare the way for a survey of some important passages of Scripture that involve the second.

In spite of what has been said above about the dangers of using analogies, even a historical sketch of this subject has to depend to a large extent upon analogy. It used to be thought that light was, as it were, instantaneous. No sooner did a man switch on his flashlight than the beam hit the wall. But in the seventeenth century, an astronomer named Ole Roemer (1644-1710) found that eclipses to the moons of Jupiter occurred sixteen minutes earlier when Jupiter and the earth were on the same side of the sun than when on opposite sides. He rightly concluded that light was not instantaneous. The difference in distance between the earth and Jupiter in the two situations made the light late in arriving, for it was actually taking time for it to travel over the intervening gap. He calculated that the moons circling the planet took so many hours to travel round once, thus establishing a regular time cycle for eclipses. These eclipses could then be clocked, and by projecting the time interval, could thenceforth be guaranteed to occur regularly over any number of years providing it did not slow down.

However, it was found that when the planet Jupiter was on the other side of the sun from the earth, the time sequence was thrown out and the eclipses were sixteen minutes late. Sixteen minutes is 960 seconds. The orbit of the planet gave the difference in the distance when on the same and on the opposite side of the sun. This distance divided by 960 revealed that the speed of light must be approximately 186,000 miles per second. His discoveries were published posthumously in 1735. Subsequent experiments gave a more accurate figure of 186,319 miles per second

This discovery was very quickly seen to be the possible answer to another question which had been troubling astronomers for some time. This question had to do with the speed of the earth through the supposed ether. And this second

question took a form something like this: because light and heat reached the earth from the sun, it was assumed that some kind of medium existed to convey the waves. However, if this medium had any kind of "substance," it seemed obvious that the earth would burn up as it raced through it in its circuit around the sun. The problem was to find a medium real enough to convey waves, but thin enough to offer no resistance to the passage of a body through it.

But this contingency led to a further question: Was this medium stationary with respect to the universe, pervading it uniformly in every part of it, like a sea in which the stars plowed their way? In which case the actual speed of the earth relative to the universe and to all other moving bodies in it ought to be discoverable. To determine this was very desirable. Our sun with all the other stars appears to be rushing madly outward as the universe expands. This assumption is based on certain observations which we do not need to enter into here; it is sufficient to say that the distance between other galaxies and our own seems to be increasing as the periphery of the universe is enlarged. However, this increase in distance could mean that we might be chasing these remote galaxies but losing in the race, like a dog chasing a car. Or they may really be chasing us while we make our escape. All that we know about it is that the distance between these systems appears to be growing gradually greater. But if the ether is stationary, it would be possible to discover who was chasing whom, and absolute motions could be calculated.

A man who strolls the deck of a modern liner may be travelling relative to the vessel at two miles per hour. If the boat is at rest on the St. Lawrence, this is his absolute motion and direction with reference to the river. If the boat begins to move at 15 knots, the whole problem changes. His speed relative to the boat is still 2 m.p.h., but to the river may be 13 or 17 knots depending on the direction of his walk. If he happens to be crossing the boat from side to side, his motion relative to the river is 15 knots one way and 2 m.p.h. in a perpendicular direction. When the current of the river is taken into account, all these speeds are affected and altered relative to the shore and unless he is in sight of some object on the shore which he knows to be stationary, he can never determine his actual speed with respect to the earth itself. But when the motion of the earth around the sun and the sun among the stars has also to be considered, his absolute motion becomes exceedingly difficult to determine, because there is no fixed point on the "shoreline" of space by which it can be gauged. It had been hoped that the ether might provide this gauge.

If we know that a wind is passing us at 60 m.p.h. and we have a wind gauge in our hands, we can from this knowledge discover our own speed. If the wind gauge indicates a higher figure, it is because we are travelling toward it. If the reverse, the opposite is the case. If there is no difference, we are probably stationary. We need to know only that the wind is passing us at a uniform speed, and the measurement of all subsequent movement is possible, given enough instruments.

Every effort to demonstrate the reality of the ether had failed, and we therefore had no "sea" through which the earth was passing with all the other stars which could serve as a basis for establishing absolute movement. But suddenly it appeared that a new yardstick had been provided by Roemer's discovery. Without going into too many details, it seemed obvious that light passing through a current of ether

would be either accelerated or slowed up if such a fluid medium did in fact exist to create a current, depending on which way the light was travelling.

The history of the experiments which were at once undertaken to test this hypothesis is now probably quite familiar. The most famous investigation has since been known as the Michelson-Morley Experiment, and it was the findings of these two scientists which led Einstein in 1905 to formulate the first two principles of his Special Theory of Relativity. The historical background has been given clearly and accurately by R. S. Shankland in the British Journal *Nature*.³

A. A. Michelson was born December 19, 1852, in Strelno, Germany. When he was two years old, the family moved to California. In 1869 he entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Here, in 1877, he made his first measurements of the speed of light and subsequently in 1880, while at the College de France, invented the Michelson Interferometer as a means for measuring the earth's motion through the ether. His interest in this problem had been aroused by a letter from James Clark Maxwell, who emphasized that all experiments to observe the earth's motion through the ether, which depended on measuring the first power of the ratio of the earth's speed to that of light, were doomed to failure. He said, in effect, that no terrestrial experiment for measuring the velocity of light could ever detect the earth's motion in space. This was a challenge to Michelson. His first experiment was made in Helmholtz's laboratory in the University of Berlin. Both this and a second trial in 1881 gave a null result, although Michelson himself never considered it conclusive.

In 1882 Michelson returned to Cleveland and made further measurements on the speed of light, obtaining a value of 299,853 plus or minus 60 kilometres per second, the most reliable measure until 1927. He subsequently met Edward W. Morley while attending a series of lectures by Lord Kelvin, and the two men collaborated in further experiments, using more refined methods.

In 1886 Michelson and Morley together undertook the investigation which has since been known as the Michelson-Morley Experiment. All kinds of precautions were taken to render any results obtained absolutely conclusive. As Shankland put it:

The work with this apparatus continued from 1886 until July 1887 and was conducted in buildings on the adjacent Case and Western campuses. The definitive null result obtained in these experiments led to profound changes in the development of Physics [...]. It is needless to say that the most direct and now universally accepted explanation for the Michelson-Morley Experiment [...] is provided by the Special Theory of Relativity given by Albert Einstein in 1905.⁴

J. W. N. Sullivan has summarized the significance of these events.

3. Shankland. R. S., "Michelson, A. A., 1852-1931," in *Nature*, vol.171, 17 Jan., 1953, p.101f.

4. *Ibid.*, p.102.

Since then the Michelson-Morley Experiment has been repeated many times. In principle it is very simple, and consists in comparing the velocity of light in different directions. If the earth is moving through a stationary ether, it can be shown that two rays of light, the one moving in the direction of the earth's motion, and the other at right angles to it, should take unequal times to cover the same distance. But although the experiment has often been repeated, no difference has ever been found, although in some of these experiments the apparatus has been so delicate that a difference one hundred times less than the difference expected could have been measured [...].

The dilemma thus created is a very real one and the way out, which was shown by Einstein in 1907, is an effort of genius of the highest order [...]. Einstein asserted that the velocity of light is always the same whether we measure this velocity from a system which is in motion or a system which is at rest.⁵

It often happens in the history of science that an effort to prove a theory fails in its immediate objective but leads by accident to a much more important truth. This was so in the case of the Michelson-Morley Experiment: it led ultimately to the discovery that light impacts an object at a uniform velocity regardless of whether the object is moving toward or away from the source of light at any speed less than the speed of light. Einstein's principle of constancy means that light rays if unobstructed have an observed constant velocity irrespective of the relative velocity between the observer and the source of light. Or to put it slightly more dramatically in the words of William Hudgings:

Einstein's declaration is that if two observers are on the opposite sides of the rotating earth, one revolving away from the sun and the other toward it, the instruments of each observer will indicate that the rays from the flash are travelling past him at exactly the same speed of 186,000 miles per second regardless of whether he is travelling towards or away from the sun.⁶

As it stands, this seems like an impossibility.

With profound insight, Einstein had pointed out in so many words that while the speed of impact of the light must logically be different, it could not be measured because the rate of flux of time was changing in such a way as to conceal any difference in the two velocities being measured, and time is a basic function of velocity. It is as though two watches keeping different time, one faster than the other, were being employed in this one experiment, the one watch for the speed of light in one direction and another watch for the speed of light in the other direction, so that by taking into account the difference in the time intervals shown by the two

5. Sullivan, J. W. N., *Limitations of Science*, Pelican, London, 1938, p.69.

6. Hudgings, W. F., *An Introduction to Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, Haldiman-Julius, Girard, Kansas, 1923, p.23.

watches which were not synchronized together, the logical contradiction could be explained. The question then arises which of the two watches was keeping "correct" time. Einstein's answer is "both" and "neither": there is no such thing as correct time in the sense of Absolute Time. The passage of time is entirely relative, and its rate of flow is established by each observer in each situation for himself—quite unconsciously. In some way, Nature has contrived—sometimes the word *conspired* is used—to make it impossible to discover any absolute passage of time.

However, in any given situation there is a measurable flow of time which makes possible the measurement of distance or volume or speed for that particular situation. Time therefore becomes the fourth dimension of all measurements taken within the framework of the physical universe. Without time no thing exists, and without things time has absolutely no meaning. This brings us in a circle, back once again to the observation made by Einstein which we have already quoted:

If you don't take my words too seriously, I would say this. If we assume that all matter would disappear from the world, then, before relativity, one believed that space and time would continue existing in an empty world. But according to the theory of relativity, if matter and its motion disappeared there would no longer be any space or time.⁷

One is reminded of the profound insight of Augustine, that time began with Creation. Or, to use his own words, "Beyond doubt, the world was made not in Time, but together with Time."⁸

As Sullivan says, Nature knows nothing of the distinction we make between space and time. The distinction we make is due to a psychological peculiarity of our own minds. This brings us to one consideration which is a little difficult to deal with because it is very easy to confuse the physical aspects of the Theory of Relativity with the psychological aspects. And these in turn have to be distinguished from what, for want of a better term, we can only refer to as the spiritual aspects. So we turn, first, to psychology and the realm of experience.



7. Einstein: quoted by Philipp Frank, *Einstein: His Life and Times*, Knopf, New York, 1947, p.178.

8. Augustine: *De Civitate Deo*, Book 11, chapter 6.

Chapter 2

The Relativity of Time in Experience

The distinction in the Theory of Relativity between its physical and psychological aspects is a very subtle one and at times difficult to maintain. Yet the distinction is vital. In a paper entitled "Some Points in the Philosophy of Physics: Time, Evolution, and Creation," E. A. Milne sets out to demonstrate that reality is so structured as to make it possible for two events in the universe to be given two quite different temporal orientations by two different observers. He points out that two events separated by a certain length of time may be experienced by one observer in quite rapid succession and by another observer with a considerable interval between them. But he is not thinking in psychological terms. This is a strictly physical possibility because of the nature of the universe. To use his own words,

You can say "was" or "is" at your choice. There is no difference in the two propositions until an observer is mentioned. In any one observer's worldwide present, for whom Creation "was" so many years ago, we can always specify events the observers at which reckon creation as arbitrarily close to "is" [...].

To summarize, the passage of time is a definite part of the experience of each individual, and from it may be constructed both time measures and space measures [...]. Different individuals assign different epochs and different distances to the same event, and the relation between the epochs they assign is perfectly definite for any two observers (in uniform relative motion) who stand in the same relation to the rest of the Universe.⁹

There is, therefore, a certain form of psychological relativity which *is*, however, quite objective and contingent upon position and speed. This is quite distinct from that kind of relativity of time which we associate with various forms of psychological excitement or anxiety. Certain drugs can radically upset the individual's time sense; hypnosis will do the same. Philosophically, it seems probable that some forms of animal life "experience" a much slower sense of the passage of time. There is some reason to believe that the time sense of children, of

⁹ Milne, E. A., "Some Points in the Philosophy of Physics: Time, Evolution and Creation", *Smithsonian Institution Annual Report for 1933*, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C., 1935, Publication #3265, p.236.

men, and of women may be somewhat different. In pain and in dreams there are disturbances of the time sense which may be very marked. And some less developed cultures appear, for reasons which are worth examining, to have developed a time sense that is very confusing to the more sophisticated Westerner.

All these are commonly thought of as bearing upon the Theory of Relativity. And while there is a sense in which they do, there is an even more fundamental sense in which they do not. In all these cases the assumption is made that there is an absolute flow of time which the individual by reason of some special circumstance experiences in accelerated or slowed up form. The important presupposition is that time does flow absolutely and independently. This common assumption is what has to be laid aside before the real meaning of the Theory of Relativity can be grasped. And the final conclusions of this paper will not be really understood until this is achieved.

It is, however, worthwhile examining some of these psychological aspects, because they will make it a little easier to grasp the meaning of what we are trying to bring out from Scripture on the difference between time and eternity.

It is well known, of course, that drugs bring a temporary disorientation in the time sense. This has been found to be particularly true for alcoholics, and according to Lester Gliedman, accounts in part for the alcoholic's helplessness.¹⁰ This takes the form of a kind of fragmentation of time so that experience becomes discontinuous and past experience bears no relationship to the present whatever. It is a curious fact that many primitive people share this view. For example, a native who has done some damage to a public building may be punished with a fine. But having no money at the time of conviction, the colonial administrator may deem it necessary to have a deduction made from the man's wages at the end of the month. This quite often outrages the moral sense of the native community, it being held unjust to punish a man today for something he did two weeks ago: he is not the same man and should not be held responsible. There is here, in both instances, a tendency to live consciously in the immediate present, and the effect of this not unnaturally is to render the individual indifferent to the possible demands of the future as well as lessons to be learned from the past. With native people, this accounts for some of their apparent improvidence.

We tend to think of time as something which binds experience in such a way as to make events which are separated by days or weeks part of a whole experience. Thus the experiences of the past are considered to have a bearing on the present in a very direct way. This is what we really mean by a "sense of responsibility," i.e., the present influences the future because it is part of the future. There is no discontinuity. We have no difficulty in thinking of several days as an unbroken unit of time, such as a week. But people like the Hopi do not habitually view experience in this way. They will readily speak of ten men, because one can have ten men at *one* time.¹¹ But they would not speak of ten days because you can have only one day

10. Gliedman, Lester H., "Temporal Orientation and Alcoholism," in *Alcoholism*, Alcoholism Research Foundation, vol.3, no.3, April, 1956, p.11ff.

11. Hoijer, Harry, "The Relation of Language to Culture" in A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology Today*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, p.562. See also Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Collected Papers on Metalinguistics," published by Dept. of State, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, D.C., 1952; and also *Language, Thought and Reality*, edited by John B. Carroll, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

at one time. However, within this one day, everything is "now," even though by our standards it may be later in the afternoon, for example. So that when a native says, "I'll do it now," he doesn't mean what we mean by "now." He means sometime during the day – if his unit of time is a day. If his unit of time is a week, "doing it now" may very well mean doing it sometime during the coming week by our standards. If his unit of time is a day and he doesn't intend to do it today (i.e., "now"), he probably won't even think about it. Hence his apparent improvidence.

In some so-called primitive societies, this habit of living "in the present" is extended to mean that action planned for the future is in effect being done now. This can be highly disconcerting to the Westerner who finds it difficult to put too much trust in what his fellow men say they are going to do in the future. A good illustration of the confusion which such ways of thinking can create is given by Melvin Kyle, who tells the following story:

A desert traveller went with a missionary friend to visit one of the 10,000 mud villages in the valley of the Nile. The night was not a restful one in a native home. The next morning the traveller wished to return as soon as possible to the boat on the Nile. The missionary, however, knowing the demands of courtesy, insisted that they must not go until after breakfast, but expressed the hope that breakfast might be expedited. "Oh," said the host, "breakfast is just ready." One hour and a half after that time by the traveller's watch, a match was struck to kindle the fire to cook the breakfast. And sometime later still, a cow was driven into the court of the house to be milked to provide the milk to cook the rice to make the breakfast. Was the host untruthful? Not at all; he did not reckon by time, but by events. He had no way of determining the passage of time. When he said, "Breakfast is just ready," he meant it was the next thing in the household economy, that they would do nothing else until that thing was done, and that everything done was to that end. That is to say he reckoned only by events.¹²

This is interestingly reflected in our word *presently*, which in Shakespeare's time quite logically meant "in the present," i.e., "right now," but has come to mean "sometime in the future" – indeed in the distant future! A similar concept is to be found in the Hebrew of the Old Testament which did not have a distinct verbal form for the future tense. The present tense is used, as a rule: but the past tense is used for the future when God is declaring what is to come. It is as though the certainty of it rendered it already done. It is spoken of by Hebraists as the "prophetic perfect." In one way this is not so strange, because we sometimes find ourselves doing the same thing: we may say, for example, "I am going to see the dentist tomorrow," using a present tense for a future action.

and Wiley, New York, 1956.

12. Kyle, Melvin G., quoting Edward Mack on the "Chronology of the Old Testament," in an article appearing in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. I, 1831, p.644.

But this is really only a manner of speaking, whereas among primitive people and apparently among alcoholics it is a characteristic habit of thought. Life is lived in the present with very little consciousness, most of the time, of either the past or the future. It would be invidious to imply any real parallelism, yet one supposes this must be somewhat the manner in which animals "experience" time.

An interesting case of the unconscious slowing-up of normal physiological processes in the presence of an excess atmosphere of carbon dioxide was witnessed when Major David G. Simons made his remarkable balloon ascent to the altitude of 102,000 feet. At one point, his physical condition was noted to be deteriorating because he was found to be speaking over the intercom system at only one fourth his usual speed. Major Simons was apparently quite unaware of this change in tempo, and one may therefore assume that his experience of the passage of time was being remarkably modified by the presence of the carbon dioxide acting in conjunction with considerable psychological stress.¹³

Under hypnosis—as under the influence of drugs such as hashish or opium—the time sense may be shortened or extended almost unbelievably. L. F. Cooper of the University of Georgetown suggested to a hypnotized patient that a metronome beating once per second was actually beating at a lower rate and showed that it was possible for the patient to accept the new time scale and fit it into her dreams. Thus the passage of a few minutes was extended to hours. In one dream lasting three seconds, the patient imagined that eighty minutes had passed, during which interval she was able to pick and count 862 bolls of cotton.¹⁴ It is generally agreed that a person who is awake could not possibly count 862 of anything, even in imagination, within an interval of only three seconds, in spite of the extraordinary feats of some mathematicians who can make extended calculations in their own minds in a remarkably short time.

There is plenty of evidence that most dreams last only a few seconds, yet much often transpires during this interval—far more than can possibly be recounted afterwards in the same length of time. Almost everyone has had the experience of lying awake in the dark and finding that time passes terribly slowly. Recent experiments have demonstrated that the sense of time is modified in the dark. Signals given to an observer were estimated to have been more widely spaced in time than they actually were.¹⁵

When we consider the time experienced by animals, we are, of course, unable to do much more than philosophize. But it must surely be true that a creature that lives only for a day experiences a full lifetime of childhood, youth, middle age, and senility. Just what form its consciousness takes is impossible for us to know. But if its momentary experience is always one of the immediate present, then its lifetime may be experientially longer than ours. Interesting papers have been written which suggest that cold-blooded animals may in fact, experience the passage of time as slow or fast, depending upon environmental temperatures. For example, carrying this situation to the extreme, when the temperature is low enough for such

13. Simons, Maj. David G., "A Journey No Man Has Taken", *Life Magazine*, 2 Sept., 1957, p.19ff.

14. Cooper, L. F., "Trance Slows Down Time", reported in *Science News Letter*, May 15, 1948, p.311.

15. Kafka, John S., "A Method for Studying the Organization of Time Experience," in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol.114, no. 6, Dec., 1957, p. 546-53.

creatures, a state of suspended animation sets in and all experience of the passage of time must come completely to a halt. This concept is explored in an intriguing way by C. B. Goodhart of Cambridge, in an article entitled "Biological Time."¹⁶

LeComte du Nouy has explored the possibility that the passage of time as experienced by children and men and women may be rather different.¹⁷ He suggests, in fact, that time is much longer for children and much shorter for men. A child's "wait" is a long one. A man's wait is somewhat reduced. And then he suggests the provocative idea that a woman's "wait" is scarcely conscious at all. This is manifestly an exaggeration, but his point is that whereas a man is governed by clocks and other logical fragmentations of the day, a woman's life is governed much more by cycles – a month, nine months, and so forth. For her, the interval tends to be overshadowed by the next event, so that in preparing for it she may often attend to the completion rather than to the time of preparation, and say "I'm coming" as though she meant at once, while the man, with his different time sense, becomes fretful over the interval.

There is a slight extension of these thoughts which has interesting possibilities, though it may be a misleading one. To a creature that lives only for a day, the events of geological ages would be almost equal to an "infinity" of time. To man, whose life span is so much greater, these events took long enough to complete, yet he is capable of mentally measuring the time in a kind of a way, immense though it is. If there were some creature with a life span of twenty thousand years and this creature were capable of consciously viewing geological ages, the process would perhaps not seem so long. If we carry this kind of thinking to its logical conclusion, we would have to assume that for God, who lives in eternity, the whole process could be reduced to a matter of minutes, perhaps even seconds, perhaps even instantaneous.

What has been said here with respect to the passage of time since the Creation can be applied in the same way to the size of the universe. In this connection, although the quotation does not directly contribute to our thesis, it is interesting to note the following observation by the Victorian essayist Ambrose Bierce, written long before Einstein's time:

Magnitude being purely relative, nothing is large and nothing small. If everything in the universe were increased in bulk one thousand diameters, nothing would be any larger than they had been. To an understanding familiar with the relativity of magnitude and distance, the spaces and masses of the astronomer would be no more impressive than those of the microscopist. For anything we know to the contrary, the visible universe may be a small part of an atom, with its component ions, floating in the life-fluid (luminiferous ether) of some animal. Possibly the wee creatures peopling the corpuscles of our own blood are overcome with the

16. Goodhart, C. B., "Biological Time," *Discovery*, Dec., 1957, pp.519-21.

17. du Nouy, Lecomte, *Human Destiny*, Longmans Green, New York, 1947 p.208.

proper emotion when contemplating the unthinkable distance from one of these to another.¹⁸

With respect to pain, it appears that the time sense may be disoriented almost completely. In this case, it is not a shortening of time, but a lengthening of it. It was found during World War II that when a prisoner was captured and tortured for information, the sufferer could survive the ordeal somewhat more successfully if in some way the sense of time was not lost. It was, in fact, held by some of those who had reason to know that if a man could survive the first few minutes of torture, he could not be made to talk by any further application of it. The problem for the sufferer was to know within himself how long he had been suffering, and so in the underground movement in World War II, those who ran great risks of being captured and so treated were encouraged to begin counting, if it was at all possible, as soon as torture was applied. It appears that maintaining the time sense had a profound effect upon the capacity of the individual to survive the ordeal. In the absence of the time sense, it often seemed at the end of the first few seconds as though the suffering had been endured interminably, and all hope of holding out was abandoned almost at once. Punishment may be endless if the sense of time is lost, because the sufferer has no hope that the end is near.

For three hours the Lord suffered on our behalf on the Cross (Luke 23:44). In this interval He assumed total responsibility for every wicked thing, every murderous thought, every selfish desire: that has ever been committed since man was created and that ever will be committed to the end of time. And this He did for those who should accept or who had by anticipation accepted this sacrifice on their behalf. In this interval, One for whom an evil thought or a wicked act was utterly remote, was tortured with the ultimate responsibility for man's wickedness. But our clocks deceived us. For He who was God-made-man lived continually outside of time, as many Bible passages show. Those "three hours" were, for Him, a continuing present that amounted to an eternity.

And this brings us to one final thought in this section. The sense of time is undoubtedly impressed most keenly upon the consciousness of the man for whom things have most meaning, for time is the fourth dimension of things. It may well be that in primitive cultures which possess less of the material wealth, but compensate for this by having a greater social consciousness (a kind of a wealth of the spirit), are for this very reason less aware of the passage of time. One might suppose that in some sense spiritual growth is paralleled by a sort of "timelessness" – indeed, for those who are saved when they are young there is a measure of eternal youth. But this leads us into the spiritual aspects of the Theory of Relativity, which are the subject of a later section.



18. Bierce, Ambrose: quoted by E. L. Hawke, in a written communication for the discussion of a Paper by F. T. Farmer, "The Atmosphere: Its Design and Significance in Creation", *Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, vol. 71, 1939, p.54-55.

Chapter 3

Time and Relativity in Creation

Before we come to consider the spiritual aspects, it seems desirable to review briefly the bearing which the Theory of Relativity has upon the "time" taken for Creation. To begin with, the possibility of a real acceleration or deceleration of Time in certain given circumstances introduces the question of whether time was needed for the Creation at all, or whether it might have been instantaneous. It might be well to state clearly, first of all, that Scripture does not demand the Universe to have been created instantly. Its evidence of "age" is probably not a deception deliberately introduced by the Creator for some unknown reason. The age is real.¹⁹ Whether we argue for 4,000,000,000 years or twice or half this amount – it is not important at the moment – it seems clear that the Universe is very old.

But what does such a concept mean, and was it necessary for God to work so "slowly"? Could He have created it all, as was once supposed, in a moment of time? Was there any fundamental advantage in establishing the time-consuming process which seems to characterize geological change, if such changes could actually have been in some way vastly accelerated "to save time"?

First, we may ask whether the actual age of the Universe has any meaning at all. Suppose all the "clocks" by which we now "tell" geological time are actually running fast – would we be aware of it? Is it not possible that all geological (and chemical) processes at one time occurred much more rapidly? Could we discover the fact if it were indeed the case? It seems doubtful. All the counting devices in the world that give us an age of so many millions of years are perhaps right – in that they are being read correctly and register consistently and in concordance with one another. But we still do not know whether the rates involved are absolute and have always been what they now are. Just as Nature conspires to conceal Absolute Time, so it may have closed the door against any inquiry into the absolute rate of the passage of time in the past. We are speaking, of course, of geological time, and not the time since man appeared.

In any case, the appearance of age could have a purpose, even if it were an appearance only. Appearance or reality, we unconsciously derive considerable comfort from it. This comfort is both of an intellectual and a psychological – perhaps one might even say a spiritual – nature.

Intellectually, there is real satisfaction in being able to unravel the stages by which something complex has come to be what it is. It is rather like a mystery story

19. This is considered in some detail in another Doorway Paper, "The Preparation of the Earth for Man," Part I in *Evolution or Creation?*, vol.4 of The Doorway Papers Series.

or a detective novel. Sometimes it almost looks as though God took delight in this process of unravelling, either by leaving in the rocks some special link in the chain of evidence—like a single specimen of *Archaeopteryx*, for example—or by confounding the experts by preserving some remote form, out of context as it were, like the *Coelacanth*. For some men, the adventure takes on the form of a spiritual exercise, as when Kepler in studying the starry heavens is said to have exclaimed involuntarily, "O God, I am thinking Thy thoughts after Thee." The thrill of being able to visualize what underlies the countryside at one's feet, with its hills and valleys, cliffs and plains, and occasionally to stoop down and pick up some small but exquisite fossil of a shell or a leaf, is something experienced universally by those who have sufficient training to recognize what they see. And because imagination knows no bounds, it seems to revel in the expanse of time in the past, as it does in the mystery of space above.

Moreover, from a knowledge of the order in which forms were introduced, we may draw a peculiar satisfaction. We could, of course, be reading too much into the "text"; but it does look as though some special forms of life of particular delight to man—perfumed flowering plants, for example—were introduced just in time to gain profusion before his arrival. It is as though God put flowers on the table shortly before His special guests were due. Had they always been there, the effect would not have been the same.

Or again, as one studies palaeontology, one gains the strong impression that many, if not most, living forms of more remote times would not have appeared particularly beautiful in man's eyes, if he had been there. Possibly this is the "fault" of those who attempt to reconstruct them, but that does not seem too likely. They were on the whole a rather terrifying or ungainly or frighteningly large congregation of animals. But as we approach the time of man's appearing, animals which are more and more beautiful seem to crowd in upon the scene, as though God knew what man's sense of beauty would require and was pleased to prepare for it.

Of course, some may say, "But there are many ugly animals still! Why didn't God finish the job and convert them all?" The answer to this could possibly be that He wanted to show that beauty was not necessarily an aid to survival—ugly animals have survived quite well. Then it seems difficult to account for the appearance of beauty other than by the supposition that God shares man's delight in it. Again it may be said that much beauty in Creation is a sheer waste, because man never sees it. I think Hugh Miller has the answer to this. Speaking of the fossil shells and fishes that characterize that segment of the rocks which is known as the Old Red Sandstone, he says,

Nor does it lessen the wonder that their nicer ornaments should yield their beauty only to the microscope. There is unity of character in every scale, plate and fin [...] and yet the unassisted eye fails to discover the finer evidences of this unity; it would seem as if the adorable Architect had wrought it out in secret with reference to the Divine idea alone [...]

There is a feeling which at times grows upon the painter and the carver, as if the perception and love of the beautiful has been sublimed into a kind of a moral sense. Art comes to be pursued for its own sake; the exquisite conception in the mind, or the elegant and elaborate model, becomes all in all to the worker, and the dread of criticism or the appetite for praise almost nothing. And thus, through the influence of a power somewhat akin to conscience, but whose province is not the just and the good, but the fair and the beautiful, works prosecuted in solitude and never intended for the world have been fraught with loveliness.

Sir Thomas Lawrence, who finished with the most consummate care a picture intended for a semi-barbarous foreign court, was asked why he took so much pains with a piece destined, perhaps, never to come under the eye of a connoisseur. "I cannot help it," he replied, "I do the best I can, unable through a tyrant feeling that will not brook offense, to do anything less." It would be perhaps over bold to attribute any such over-mastering feeling to the Creator Himself. Yet it is certain, that among His creatures well nigh all approximations towards perfection owe their origin to this feeling, though God in all His works is His own Master.²⁰

If in the course of time their beauty is buried in the earth, God sees fit to uncover these rocks so as to disclose them again for those who search. And if He masks their beauty by their very minuteness, He gives to man the power to build a microscope so that one day he may discover it. The millions of flowers that bloom unseen, and which thus appear to be entirely wasted until we find them, give us the assurance that we shall not find in God's universe ugliness where beauty can replace it.

All Nature interacts as an organic whole, and its harmony seems always to have been there, awaiting discovery, even in geological times. In each passing phase of the earth's history certain forms of plant life and animal life, each exactly suited to fulfill its purpose, were introduced in the appropriate order, modifying their environment and being modified in turn until little by little the stage was reached where the setting was ready for the climax – the coming of man. Prior to this, one might suppose that beauty was not important, only the suitability of the form for the function. But by now, the necessary plant life, animal life, and mineral accumulations (coal, oil, gas, etc.) which contribute to man's position as dominant in the earth (Genesis 1:26) were all made ready.

The evidence of forethought in Creation is intellectually reassuring. It depends upon a certain deliberate and measured plan of operation on God's part which, whether apparent or real, contributes greatly to our well-being and would not be evident if all were done instantaneously. Part of this satisfaction is derived from a recognition that God timed the Creation for man's benefit by introducing those forms of life which would delight him most or serve him best only a short time before introducing man himself. If Creation had been instantaneous, this kind of

20. Miller, Hugh, *The Old Red Sandstone*, Nimmo, Hay and Mitchell. Edinburgh, 1889, p.113.

deliberate forethought could hardly have been apparent, unless of course God had at the same time created the appearance of age.

There is something rather frightening in the thought that at one moment nothing whatever existed, and then five minutes later everything existed and that this happened only a few hours before man appeared on the scene. Such a situation has all the features of the "sudden and unexpected" – which we usually find disturbing. This is completely contrary to our experience. What we do for others is to a large extent evaluated by them in terms of the time taken, because for us time and energy are equated. In this context time means forethought, and forethought means a plan, and plans take time. If we discover that no time at all was taken in preparing for us – which could mean either that there was no planned preparation, or that it was effortless and immediate – the impression we gain is that our coming meant very little to the One who prepared for it. Perhaps God was pleased to take the long course (or at least to appear to have done so) in order that we might discover how carefully He planned and made preparations for us.

Furthermore, age does something to things, mellowing and beautifying in a special way. The very age of the hills adds to their beauty, because experience teaches us that few things in life achieve real beauty without time. God's method of perfecting the saints follows this rule. By slowing up the work which He might have done far more rapidly, He has made it possible for us to perceive something of His method in Creation, something of the meaning of His title, the "Ancient of Days," and something of His right to be called the "God of all patience." These are some of the sources of our spiritual comfort. God will, in time, perfect that which He has begun in us – however long it may take.

In summary then, perhaps the process was slowed up so that we could separate out the events into a meaningful pattern which would permit us to discover how God was preparing for us. He could just as readily have made the same complete preparation instantaneously – but we would then have been unable to sort it out and make the discovery.

And by this method God revealed Himself to us in a way not unfamiliar to our experience. In Scripture, angels are sometimes given wings (as in Isaiah 6). Why? Possibly because it would be contrary to our experience for someone to be suspended in the air without rational means of overcoming gravity. To some people, this would be distracting and they might not have heard the message. The wings are surely quite unnecessary, but are an accommodation to our sense of normality. So also perhaps was the time taken to prepare the earth for man.

We often expect God to do at once for us what we feel we urgently require – and are disappointed when He delays. But we ought not to lose confidence in His power to act in His own good time. God works slowly when He sees that this is the better way for our sakes, and not because there are limitations to His power to work instantly.

Undoubtedly God could have accelerated the original process immensely, so greatly in fact as to perform what would be called instantaneous Creation. In Scripture there are numerous instances of this, and they appear to us as miracles. Some tiny organism for whom a few minutes is a lifetime may have seen some of these as long, slow, developmental processes.

For example, when Peter drew his sword and cut off Malchus' ear (Luke 22:50,51), the Lord instantaneously re-created it. Surely He did not stoop down to pick it up and press it firmly back into place to make it stay! Even if He did, there must still have been an instantaneous re-creation of the joining tissue which made it a true and living ear once more. Rapid as the process was, some tiny microbe may have watched that ear grow as we might watch a human ear grow from the embryonic to the mature adult stage. But the process was more rapid – immensely so – from our point of view.

Then, in effect, our objection to instantaneous Creation may actually be based on our size. Philosophically, this is not surprising if time is the fourth dimension. One might logically suppose that an object with large physical dimensions might in some way have large time dimensions. An object is relatively larger and larger as the observer becomes smaller and smaller. Consequently the smaller the observer, the longer might the time be, or appear to be, associated with the larger object. As we are puny observers of a physically immense Universe, the time element is correspondingly immense. But objects which appear small to us, and are therefore associated in some psychological fashion with short intervals of time, must – to creatures small enough to look upon the same objects as very large – appear to be associated with large periods of time: that is, if they have any time sense at all. If we were microbes, perhaps the restoration of Malchus' severed ear would not strike us as remarkable in any way.

However, being as large as we are, we may reasonably ask, "How old actually was this new ear?" The question is not a facetious one. The implications are far reaching. This new ear was a man's ear, not a child's, yet in point of time, it was but a few minutes old. Should it then have been created as an embryonic ear first, and then allowed to grow slowly in order not to deceive us? Was this, in other words, a deliberate deception?

And here we touch upon a problem of considerable importance. Does God ever create an object instantaneously which, in all other cases, is known to have taken a long time to reach a similar stage, and does He give to it a form that makes it *look* as though it really has reached its present character by a long process of development which in fact has never taken place?

If God created a tree instantly, would it have tree rings, for example, to show that it was, say, fifty years old, when in fact it was only a few minutes old? Well, the case again is not purely hypothetical. Moses carried a staff cut from a tree (Exodus 4:2 f., and 7:10). Undoubtedly it bore witness of its age in the number of annular growth rings it showed in its cross section. In due time, it became a serpent – a real, live serpent that was as completely different from a piece of wood as any such serpent always is. Within a matter of minutes, with considerable trepidation Moses took it up by the tail and it was restored to its original self, a piece of wood with annular rings. These rings would have told its age, but their witness would have been false, for a few minutes earlier that particular piece of wood had not existed in the universe.

And what of the serpent? Like other reptiles, snakes are normally as long as they are old. They grow until they die. This particular snake had a certain length, but did that length actually bear witness to its true age? Undoubtedly it was a

species of snake familiar to the locality and recognized by Moses as dangerous, for he fled from it. Was this a deception, as we understand the term? The issue can become very involved, and it suggests that when God chooses to act in a special way, the ordinary processes of logical reasoning may not necessarily apply. As Augustine put it, such situations are not contrary to Nature, but contrary to what *we know* of Nature.

The reader may be well aware of the ancient controversy regarding Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel of the creation of Adam. Adam is shown with a navel. The question is, Would God create Adam with this physiological feature if it would only be accounted for by assuming that he was born by natural generation which in this instance we know was not the case? But here, by our standards of logical reasoning, we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma: if Adam did not have a navel, then this physiological structure must have been different at a deeper level also, and one might question whether Adam was really a true man. Of course we shall never know the answer till we meet the Lord, for now we see only darkly. But there is no doubt that in the first two cases from Scripture which have been cited, the rules of logic break down. God can, and does, create instantaneously upon occasion; when He does, the event inevitably has a quality of deception about it: but it is a deception because of the way our minds work and not because of the way God works.

There are many occasions in Scripture when such a situation has occurred. Consider those instances in which food was miraculously multiplied. This occurred not only in the New Testament in the case of the loaves and fishes, but also in the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 4:43 loaves were multiplied, and in 1 Kings 17:14 the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal were strangely replenished. In the New Testament we are told that the fragments which remained were gathered up and found to compose an even greater quantity of food than was originally employed by the Lord (John 6:9,13). Consider these fragments for a moment and suppose oneself in a laboratory on some experimental farm. It would not be difficult, probably, to identify the wheat which had been used; chemical analysis might even give some indication of where it was grown. Yet what would this tell us in this particular case? Absolutely nothing. It is inconceivable to suppose that these fragments of bread actually had any history whatever other than that they were the tangible demonstration of God's creative power. The scientist in the experimental laboratory might complain that he was being deceived. Yet the basis of his deception would not be the Lord's creative activity, but his own insistence that God must work according to certain principles which he has been able to derive from studies carried out in some other areas of God's world.

The raising of Lazarus is another illustration of this principle. The condition of the dead man's body was such that decay had already begun (John 11:39); to set that body vibrant with life required the direct creation of millions of new cells of all kinds. There is a sense, in fact, in which this was the instantaneous creation of a living man; why then should we suppose that God could not create a body at the very beginning of human history and call it forth to life as the first Adam exactly as Lazarus was called to life? It would surely be quibbling to argue that the task in Lazarus' case was easier because some, at least, of Lazarus remained!

The reader will remember that after the resurrection, the Lord entertained the disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:4-13) and invited them to partake of the fish He had already prepared. Is it conceivable that the Lord obtained the fish from the nearest marketplace? Or had He caught them (with His own hands) from the sea? Surely such a supposition is absurd. Yet one cannot doubt that they were real fishes of a size and age and species which would in no sense be distasteful to the disciples for whom they were prepared. These men were fishermen. How old were these fish?

But this is by no means all that may be said. In all these instances we have, it seems, undoubted examples of what must be termed—to use a current phrase—"creation with a history," i.e., things brought into being in such a way that they appear to have a history behind them which in actual fact they do not have. However, there are instances in which the reverse of creation took place, namely, instantaneous annihilation. There is a sense in which these two are fundamentally the same, both of them being completely outside our ordinary experience, although atomic power appears to depend on something analogous to the very rapid annihilation of matter.

In the New Testament we have an example of instantaneous annihilation in one of the resurrection scenes. The details are given in Luke 24:36-45. The Lord Jesus invited the disciples to prove for themselves, tangibly, that it was really He Himself who stood before them. And the record says, "While they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them." Shortly thereafter He was taken out of their sight.

If one may speak reverently of such an event, what happened to the food which He had eaten with the disciples the moment it entered His glorified body? In some way, it was immediately transformed to something other than material as we understand it. To all intents and purposes, it was annihilated.

Such cases must either be taken as pure myth < or, if they are fact, which we most certainly believe they are, then creation with a history is also a fact, indeed one might almost say a common one in certain circumstances.²¹

The Resurrection Body

This brings me to one final point in this chapter. It is clear that the Lord's resurrected constitution far transcended our present constitution insofar as He manifestly possessed a real body which was yet utterly different from ours. It was a clearly recognizable body—since the disciples knew who He was, once they had overcome their surprise—and one that could accept food originally prepared for bodies like ours (Luke 24:43), yet without being in any need of it for sustenance. It was a body, too, that could move through closed doors, the material world being

21. There is a further and perhaps even more dramatic instance of this in Luke 24:28-31, the incident of the journey to Emmaus. The only assumption we have to make is that Christ did actually partake of their hospitality. This he surely did, for it says, "He sat at meat with them." A few moments later He vanished out of their sight. Once again we have to suppose that the food eaten vanished also.

no barrier to it, and yet which could resist the pressure of an inquiring finger in a wound still identifiable for what it was (John 20:27). What a body this was!

Now, the important thing is that we are to have bodies like that (Philippians 3:21)! How wonderful! . . . From childhood, we dream of bodies that are free of the chains of gravity, that can pass through doors and walls, that can vanish and re-appear at will. We do not really look forward to the prospect of being like angels; we would like some kind of bodily existence: but it should ideally be free of the bonds and limitations of the body we now have. And indeed it will be!

So we shall retain our contact with the physical world somehow at will, while being recognizably our own selves yet without the slightest burden of what we are: subject to a "gravity" of some unique kind that will allow us to walk with others as Jesus walked to Emmaus, yet entirely free of the downward pull that prevents us now from soaring like a bird, that binds us to the road.

But what kind of existence is this in terms of time? Certainly it took time for the Lord to walk to Emmaus. Does it not suggest the probability of a real ordering of events and therefore of some kind of time sequence, but time as *sequence* rather than as *delay*?

While we are in this body, we experience the kind of time which constitutes the fourth dimension of our physical world. When we are in our spirit body, we shall presumably experience the kind of time which constitutes the fourth dimension of that non-physical world. I suppose that between death and the resurrection of the body we are without consciousness of time of any kind, because we are not part of either our world or that other world: but this does not make any difference, of course, to the continuance of the reality of either world. It is quite possible for a particular individual to have no experience whatever of the passage of time while others are very much aware of it. This is true when we are asleep or in a coma or unconscious for any reason. The only thing we can say is that in some way the eclipse of time under such conditions is not frightening, and we almost at once pick up the threads again, so that the possibility of an interval of time not experienced should not be an occasion for any fear.

The Lord after His resurrection evidently moved in a world which was constituted differently. It was a real world, but a world with a different kind of reality: a spatial world, but a world with a different kind of space. Being a world with a different kind of space, it was presumably a world with a different kind of time. It was a world in which He could be seen, heard, and felt, walked beside, and entertained at the table: and also a world from which He could reach across some invisible threshold that makes it at present inaccessible to us and act upon and handle the things of this world and yet by-pass them at will (as, for instance, when He entered rooms with doors barred from within or suddenly vanished, taking the food He had just eaten along with Him out of this world into that one). We speak of that world as the "next world," but it is *next* only in the sense of being next-door; it is not next in the sense of waiting until the present order disappears. It exists now.

The world in which the resurrected Lord was (and is) living evidently so corresponded in its arrangements to our world that interaction was natural between the two. Yet it was a world which transcended ours in that our world's limitations were not its limitations. It involved a sequence of events, and therefore some kind

of time order also that corresponds to what we experience and yet transcends the time frame of our world because it transcends the spatial order of our world.

There is no doubt that we are to have bodies. Does this, then, automatically involve us in the occupation of space? It may be argued that a resurrected body such as the Lord's need not have occupied any space. I think this possibility has to be admitted: but I think it must also be conceded that He did occupy *position*. If this is so, then perhaps we must also agree that any dimensionless position implies the possibility of shifts in position; and this at once introduces the idea of *sequence*, of previous and subsequent position, of present and future position. So if there is any kind of time, it looks as though it would be the fourth dimension of a frame marked off by the three dimensions of past, present, and future rather than being the fourth dimension of a three-dimensional *space*. Perhaps it is somewhere in this direction that there will be a time-frame in heaven. Most assuredly conversation will be possible, for though it occupies time, it need not occupy space. Maybe space requires time, but time does not require space?



Chapter 4

Time Contrasted With Eternity in Scripture

People still pose the question that Augustine answered in the opening quotation: What was God doing before He created the universe? To which Augustine had replied, in effect: Since time did not exist, God did not have time to do anything.

But this is a situation that we find exceedingly difficult to grasp. Augustine was doubtless perfectly right, and his achievement in sophistication is all the more remarkable because it was solely the result of a mature Christian mind seeking to comprehend something of the real nature of the spiritual world into which every child of God is born again. He did not have the advantage of the scientific discoveries of the past fifty years to give him a clue.

Perhaps it will help a little to consider what the concept of eternity does *not* mean. To begin with, the Theory of Relativity did not strictly concern itself with a world in which time was non-existent, but rather with a world in which time was relative. The Theory of Relativity, *per se*, therefore, is not concerned with eternity at all. When we come to the *psychological* aspects of time, we are again dealing with the relativity of time, but in this case with its relativity as experienced, rather than its relativity as measured. We are still dealing with time, but not with eternity. In the first case, then, the physicist is concerned with *measured* relativity of time, and in the second the psychologist with the *experienced* relativity of time. Both are concerned with time. But there is neither measured nor experienced relativity of *time* in a purely spiritual world, because time belongs to the physical order.

It can be argued, of course, that in experience the passage of time could be so rapid as to be virtually eclipsed. It would then appear that you could have the experience of timelessness within the natural order of things. But I think this is a confusion of terms because it implies that if a thing is small enough, it is no thing at all. This is analogous to saying that there is no fundamental difference between something and nothing; or, to use a more familiar idea at the other end of the scale, that infinity is merely a very, very large number. The basic error here is that infinity differs from a very large number for the important reason that if you subtract one from a very large number (no matter how large it is), you have one less: if you subtract one from infinity, you still have infinity.

This principle has wide application. The difference between a Being who is absolutely righteous and a creature who is very, very good is as great as the difference between infinity and a large number. It is for this reason that

righteousness is something which God must credit to us outright; no approach can ever be made by stages any more than one can count to infinity and arrive there. This may seem like a digression: actually it is not.

The really important thing to notice is that time stands in the same relation to eternity, in one sense, as a large number does to infinity. There is a sense in which infinity includes a very large number, yet it is quite fundamentally different and independent of it. And by analogy, eternity includes time and yet is fundamentally something other. The reduction of time until it gets smaller and smaller is still not eternity; nor do we reach eternity by an extension of time to great length. There is no direct pathway between time and eternity: they are different categories of experiences.

The fundamental point to grasp in all this is that when we step out of time, we step into eternity, and we cannot be in them both at once. But God can. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus testified continually to this capacity. And every child of God, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, does pass in one unique situation back and forth from one to the other with remarkable consequences. This will become clearer as we study some of the passages in Scripture that make this assumption.

Some passages, because of their familiarity to most readers, will at once come to mind in support of the view that God lives outside the ordinary limitations of time as we experience it. For example there is the Lord's remarkable statement, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). If we make the period before Abraham to be represented by the letter *A*, Abraham's time by the letter *B*, and the Lord's time of speaking by the letter *C*, we have the three periods *A*, *B*, *C* amalgamated as one and the tenses confused as though *C* preceded *A*. What we might have expected to find would have been the words, "Before Abraham was, I was" — which would have satisfied our normal sense of time. But this is not what the Lord said. What He did say is much more significant and is evidence of His living outside of time.

It seems desirable, even at the risk of being repetitious, to re-state this situation again in slightly different terms. The subject of the conversation had been the patriarch Abraham. The Lord took Abraham's time as the pivot and spoke of two periods balanced on either side, namely, the ages which preceded Abraham, and all that followed (including the present). He then deliberately picked up the present and put it back before Abraham, but still referred to that distant period in the present tense. Though it was centuries ago, to Christ it was "now." Even if He were here today, He would still refer to the time before Abraham as the "present" time. Why? Because He is God, and to God there is no passage of time, but all is "present." The reaction of the Jewish authorities to His statement suggests that in some strange way they had understood what He meant. The mystery of God's name, as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:13,14 — "the One who is existing always in the present" — is unlocked here and undoubtedly determined the Lord's choice of words in speaking to the Jews.

Augustine reflected upon this, and his words reveal his insight. He said,

Thy years stand together at the same time [...] nor are some pushed aside by those that follow, for they pass not [...]. Thy years

are one Day, and Thy Day is not like our sequence of days, but is Today.²²

One is at once reminded of 2 Peter 3:8: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This is poetic language in one sense, and the contradiction it implies is therefore permissible by a special kind of license. Yet the very contradiction leaves one with a momentary perception of the kind of timelessness which seems to be involved in God's ever-presentness. As the writer says – though he certainly would not have formulated it this way – there is neither a slowing up of time nor a speeding up of time with God, but both at once, which is no time at all as we understand it.

Another illustration of this apparent inversion of time is found in Isaiah 65:24, "Before they call, I will answer." Most people have taken this to mean simply that God foreknows what we shall pray for and thus anticipates our needs. But this is not really what it says; it does not actually say that before they prayed God would arrange provision so that the answer might follow immediately. What He says is that the fulfilment of the request will have been completed before the request is made, which would appear to render prayer quite unnecessary in the first place. The question may be asked, If God has already answered, why pray? – a question which is meaningful in our time framework but it is not meaningful in God's, where there is no past, present, or future as we experience it. The reader may recall the statement previously quoted from E. A. Milne in which he pointed out that a quite strict interpretation of the implications of the Theory of Relativity is that "future events have the same kind of reality as past events." Which means, in effect, that from God's point of view the prayer is already answered, because from God's point of view it is already prayed.

It may be thought that this is making far too much of the text. But this is not simply a text; this is God's Word. And while it is profoundly simple, it is also simply profound. Each reader draws from the Word of God that which meets his own level of sophistication, and the child and the philosopher read the same story with equal delight. It is in this sense that the Word of God is truly eloquent, for the words are for children and the thoughts for men.

There is yet a third example of the inversion of the time order, found in Revelation 13:8. Here the reference is to "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."²³ Once again, the ordinary rule is to interpret this sentence as demonstrating God's foreknowledge. But it does not say that the Lamb was foreordained to be slain, before the foundation of the world. Or, to invert the sentence, that before the foundation of the world, the Lamb was foreordained to be slain. This is an entirely different thing: it is the foreordination which is before the foundation of the world in these sentences. But in the text it is the Lord who is slain, from the foundation of the world – slain, in fact, out of time. This was the sacrifice of God, an event which

22. Augustine, *Confessions*, book 11, chap. 13, section 16.

23. The expression "before the foundation of the world" (*pro kataboles kosmou*) or its equivalent "from the foundation of the world" (*apo kataboles*) is found in nine other places in the New Testament: Matthew 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 17:8.

was timeless in itself. This is a truth which it is by no means essential that a man should understand in order to be saved, but it is a wonderful thing to enter into God's revelation and think His thoughts after Him. The Lord Jesus Christ continually lived in time for our sakes, and in eternity by His very nature. It is in this sense that He could speak of Himself while on *earth* as "the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13).

We come now with some diffidence to illustrations of this principle that have not always been recognized as such, but which are much more remarkable in some ways. We have said "with diffidence," because at first it will be difficult to escape from common-sense interpretations and penetrate into the real significance of the things revealed in Scripture about the relationship between time and eternity. These relationships are so apparently conflicting that the revelation about them has to take an apparently contradictory form. And these contradictions have led to some rather weird and wonderful expositions of Scripture in the effort to resolve them.

Here is one example. We have every assurance that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). There is no ambiguity whatever about this statement, and many who have passed on to be with the Lord have, at the moment of departing, expressed their joyful delight when the call to go home was at last received.

But we also find the Lord comforting the disciples as He discussed His going away by assuring them that when He came again, He would receive them unto Himself (John 14:3). Did He mean that they must wait for His second coming before being received into His presence? It seems so. This statement is also unambiguous. Yet these assurances are contradictory. Can they both be true? Undoubtedly they are! Then how can these things be reconciled?

It is here that we apply something of what we now know about time and eternity as different categories of experience. And the light which these two passages receive is found to illuminate many other passages in an equally wonderful way. The statement that follows requires very careful reading. When any Christian dies, he passes from this realm of time and space into another realm of pure spirit, that is to say, out of time as we experience it into a state of timelessness, the ever-present of God. As he makes this passage, every event in God's scheduled program for the future which, as revealed in Scripture must come to pass before the Lord's return, must crowd instantly upon him. He does not "wait" for the Lord's return: it is immediate. But the Lord's return is an event which, in the framework of historical time, cannot take place until the church is complete and the end of the age has come. It must happen for him, therefore, that these events are completed instantaneously, though the living who survive him await these events in the future.

Yet, for him, those who survive him must in his consciousness also have completed their journey home, and therefore he will not even experience any departing from them, but they with him rise to meet the Lord on His way for His second triumph with all other saints. Within the framework of time, this general resurrection is future, but to the "dying" Christian, it is a present event. This is the meaning of the Lord's words "The hour is coming—and *now is . . .*" (John 5:25). There is no difference between "is coming" and "now is."

The thief on the cross said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." The Lord who knew that His kingdom was not to come yet – historically speaking – also knew that the man who spoke would "die" that day and in his experience would that very day be with Him in His kingdom (Luke 23:43)! We have put the word *die* above in quotation marks: he did not die! While each man dies in so far as his contemporaries are concerned, they therefore need the assurance of resurrection that he may live again. But in his experience he passes at once to meet the returning Lord without any conscious interval and therefore without any conscious dying. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," said the Lord, speaking to the living who remain to mourn the lost one; but "he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die," says the same Lord to the saint who is about to depart (John 11:25,26).

As each child of God passes into glory, he therefore experiences no death nor the slightest pause in consciousness, nor even any sense of departure from the loved ones who remain. For him, the time that must elapse till they too "follow" is completely absent. They depart with him. Is it any wonder that men can die joyfully in the Lord and show no sadness in "leaving their loved ones behind"?

Now, this can be carried a little further. The experience of each saint is shared by all other saints, by those who have preceded and those who are to follow. For them all, all history, all intervening time between death and the Lord's return, is suddenly annihilated so that each one finds to his amazement that Adam, too, is just dying and joining him on his way to meet the Lord: and Abraham and David, Isaiah and the Beloved John, Paul and Augustine, Hudson Taylor and you and I – all in one wonderful experience meeting the Lord in a single instant together, without precedence and without the slightest consciousness of delay, none being late and none too early.²⁴

Enoch saw "the Lord coming with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14) – though he was but the seventh generation from Adam when the population was still small – at the very same moment that Stephen, four thousand years later, saw the same Lord about to come (Acts 7:56). In so far as our time sense is concerned, the Lord is seated at the right hand of God in expectancy. But when time was effaced for Enoch and Stephen, the Lord was found ready to return for His second triumph. For us who remain, this event is still future, an event greatly longed for: for those who have gone on, it has already happened – but not without us.

It is in this sense that Scripture twice affirms, observing events from our point of view, that no man hath yet ascended into heaven (John 3:13), not even David (Acts 2:34). And yet, when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord in heaven. David is not there yet, nor any others, because we are not there! As we have said, in one body, in one single experience, all pass together to be with the Lord, and all intervening time being eclipsed, the Lord is at that moment on His way back.

This wonderful fact is even found in a kind of allegorical form in a New Testament incident. The disciples had run into a severe storm. Their ship seemed about to be engulfed, with the haven of port far away. Suddenly they perceived the

24. This could be the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

Lord, walking on the water toward them, and a moment later He had entered into the ship. Then there is this remarkable comment: "And immediately the ship was at the land whither they went" (John 6:21) — in the Lord's presence and instantly at home, the intervening journey unaccountably eclipsed from the record.

The question may be asked, What happens to our sense of time when we do come back with the Lord? We are then, it seems, to share His reign as active participants over a world of very real space and time. Does this not at once re-introduce us to a temporal orientation? Probably it does. Thinking forward (forward, that is, to us who are still here), it may be that the experience will be like this: At death we pass out of time to be with the Lord, only to return at once into time to reign with Him. We may not be aware of these shifts from one category of experience to another, from time to eternity and back to time. Since the interval here marked by the word *Eternity* is timeless, there will in effect be no interval at all, and the experience of time will be continuous.

Since we have the assurance — and somehow it is surely a comforting one — that the passing of this old world will be the signal for a new heaven and a new earth, perhaps time will always be with us thenceforth. But we shall experience time not as limitation, but as opportunity. For us now, time is continually running out; then it will be continually opening up. We shall have all kinds of time to do all kinds of things.

So long as we are separated from the desired goal of being with the Lord, it is a comforting thought to know that there will be no consciousness of delay in meeting the Lord and our loved ones. When no such longings are experienced, it will be equally comforting to know that haste is never again required of us. Thus we shall probably have no desire in that new heaven and new earth to escape from time, even if such a thing should be possible.



Chapter 5

Time in Redemption

We have not yet exhausted the light of Scripture on this wonderful subject. It has been known for many years, to those who have studied biblical chronology, that there have been times in the history of God's people which He was pleased to overlook and to count as though they had not been. The most familiar instance of this is to be found in 1 Kings 6:1, which reads,

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Zif [May], which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

Many attempts have been made to correct or emend this text on the grounds that, according to information derived on the basis of Paul's figures in Acts 13:17-22, the period specified was actually 594 years, a difference of 114 years. Paul picked out certain critical periods in Israel's history and gave a summary of the times involved as 40 years for the wilderness period, 450 years for Judges, and 40 years for Saul. Between these critical periods were others, the duration of each of which is given elsewhere in the Old Testament (Judges, 1 Samuel, etc.). Adding all these together, we have a grand total of 594 years from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, when he began to build the Temple. This seems quite clearly to have been the actual interval in years, historically speaking, between these events.

However, a wonderful truth is revealed by this apparent contradiction. It is found that if all the years during which the children of Israel were in bondage to their enemies 'round about in the time of the Judges are added together, with an extra three years in which Abimelech usurped the throne, the total period is 114 years. It is evident that the inspired writer of 1 Kings 6:1 was directed to strike from the record these years of failure. This is manifestly not human history as we think of it, but the history of God's people as God thinks of it.

These periods of servitude are as follows:

Periods of Servitude

Oppressor	Period in Years	Reference
Chushan of Mesopotamia	8	Judges 3:8
Eglon of Moab	18	Judges 3:14
Jabin of Canaan	20	Judges 4:2,3
Midian	7	Judges 6:1
Ammon	18	Judges 10:7,8
Philistines	40	Judges 13:1
Sub Total	111 years	
Abimelech	3	Judges 9:1-57
Total	114 years	

To these must be added the usurpation of Abimelech (Judges 9-1-57), for a period of 3 years. These two totals therefore account for the missing 114 years, which added to the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 provide the total of 594 years.

These figures are treated in some detail in Martin Anstey's classic work on biblical chronology, and some of his comments are worth repeating. He wrote:

Why, then, are these 114 years of servitude and usurpation omitted? Because the author is computing the years of the Theocracy, of the government of God,—and during those years Israel was not Isra-el, not "governed of God," but under the heel of the oppressor and the usurper. Hence they are not included in the Theocratic years of the reckoning of God, though they are reckoned in the computation of the years of the age of the World.

The method appears strange and almost impossible to the modern mind, with its highly developed historical sense, its keen scent for fact, and its pantheistic indifference to distinctions of good and evil. Nevertheless, there are days in the history of individuals and years in the history of the nations which we would fain blot out of the calendar of time. Job desired for the day of his birth that it might perish, that it might "not be joined to the days of the year, nor come into the number of the months."

It is a first principle of Statistical Science that no list of figures compiled for one purpose, should be used for another purpose.²⁵

There is another interesting example of the obliteration of time, in this case not from the nation's history, but from the history of one individual, David. And it was noted

25. Anstey, Martin, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, Marshall Brothers, New York, 1913, vol.1, p.159.

by the Rabbis. For six months David was, in their view, a leper. They concluded this by comparing 2 Samuel 5:5 and 1 Kings 2:11. The first tells us that David reigned in Judah for seven years and six months, but the second that he reigned only seven years. The latter could be a kind of abbreviated statement. But we know from Jewish custom that such an abbreviation would be quite exceptional, since any *part* of a year is credited as a *whole* year, not merely discounted entirely: seven and a half years would certainly be abbreviated to read *eight* years, not seven years. This is a habitual mode of reckoning and was adopted by Jewish writers as a standard practice. By noting this principle, Edwin Thiele was recently able to establish complete harmony between the records of the reigns of the kings of Judah and of Israel respectively, thereby solving a problem that had bothered biblical chronologists for centuries.²⁶

The same principle seems to have been applied to the period of three nights and three days during which the Lord was in the grave.²⁷ This principle is, for the most part, foreign to our way of thinking, but not entirely so—we do allow a man married on December 31 to claim married status for that whole year when he makes out his income tax return. But the Rabbis went to extremes and counted a reign of one year *plus one day* as being equal to a reign of two years.²⁸ So the Rabbis themselves were led to comment on the apparent contradiction between 2 Samuel 5:5 and 1 Kings 2:11 by saying that God struck from the official record of David's reign that period of time during which he was in disfavour with God. This disfavour they took to have been leprosy, brought upon him by his treatment of Uriah. The Rabbis ferreted this out in the following way: Psalm 51:7 says, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."²⁹ This, they held, was the specific treatment for leprosy. During that time the shekinah departed from him, for it is said (verse 12), "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." The time period they then calculated on the basis of the difference between the figures given in 2 Samuel 5:5 and 1 Kings 2:11. It seems a little fragile as a proof of leprosy, but it does show that they felt it necessary to account for these missing six months and did so by using as a key the basic principle that God does not reckon time when His chosen are under His displeasure. The principle itself was clearly recognized, even if it was sometimes abused.

There is a lesson in all this. God strikes from the record those occasions of failure and disobedience and judgment which eternity might have otherwise recorded to the discredit of each one of us, that even the times which occupied them are eliminated also, as though they had never been. It is as though God would never give to our enemies or to Satan the opportunity of asking what were we then doing. There will be no "thens" except those which have been redeemed and for which we will gladly render an account. The wasted times will not be on record to bear witness against us; they will have ceased to exist. But they will not merely have been removed out of hand—they will have been purchased. There are times which

26. Thiele, Edwin, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, University of Chicago Press, 1951, xix and 298 pp.

27. See Custance, A. C., "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Part VIII in *The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation*, vol.5 in *The Doorway Papers Series*, especially chapter 2.

28. Eighth Tractate of the Mishnah B. Rosh Hashshanah, p. 2a and b, in the Babylonian Talmud.

29. See Paul Isaac Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudic Commentary*, Bagster, London, 1883, p.25.

we can redeem (Ephesians 5:16), but those which we cannot redeem, the Lord will have redeemed for us. And this brings us to the final and most solemn aspect of time and eternity in Scripture.

The Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of God and the Son of Man. As such He lived in time and eternity at one and the same moment. He also lived both in heaven and on earth at once: on earth as the Son of God, while as the Son of Man being in heaven. This is clearly revealed in John 3:13, where He said of Himself, "No man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Notice two things here: first, that He uses the title "Son of man" though speaking of being in heaven; and He uses the present tense "is in Heaven" though He was on earth.

It will be found that the great majority of passages referring to the eternality of the Lord appear in John's Gospel. Because of the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke give a picture of the Lord from a single "point of view," their Gospels are termed Synoptic. There is a real sense in which they deal, by analogy, with the three dimensions of space, while John deals with the fourth dimension; only John substitutes eternity for time. In the light of this, a remarkable fact is revealed with reference to the events of the last hours of the Crucifixion.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all refer to the circumstance that there was darkness over the earth for a period of three hours by our clocks, during which God laid upon Jesus Christ the iniquity of us.³⁰ In John's Gospel, no mention whatever is made of this. God had turned away, and time in the record books of eternity was eclipsed.

But this does not mean that it was eclipsed in the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Him, it stretched out interminably. When the end cannot be seen, suffering is endless while it is endured. That God might strike from the record every moment of sin, of defeat, of envy, of faithlessness, of sheer wickedness, in the lives of all who are to be redeemed, Jesus' suffering was added together in one great total of time, the length of which, while it was experienced in utter shame, must have been beyond comprehension.

For this ghastly interval of inconceivable length – which our clocks mistakenly marked off in history as three hours – the Lord Jesus assumed personal responsibility, consciously and with the frightful intensity which only a perfectly innocent Man could experience, for the total guilt of all who believe. Christ became actually responsible, as though the dreadful catalogue of wickedness was His very own doing. And God turned away from the One who had become so wicked, for our sakes. For how long? We shall probably never know. But for long enough that at last God said, "It is *enough!*" And Jesus, in His moment of victory, cried out in triumph "It is *finished!*" (John 19:30).

And it was, and it is.

But who is adequate for such thoughts, and where shall we find words? It is sufficient to believe, and to find forgiveness, because of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world."



30. Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44.

Part II

**THREE TREES:
AND ISRAEL'S HISTORY**

Introduction

During that period in the history of biblical research when the Higher Critics were enjoying their heyday of recognition, and before most of their more rash prognostications had been exploded by the findings of archaeologists, it was customary to ascribe the various books of the Bible to more and more authors as the years rolled by. In time we had not one Isaiah or one Moses but many Isaiahs and Moseses! The Pentateuch became indeed a Mosaic.

With characteristic wit and insight, *Punch* in London was moved to observe that the Higher Critics, using their fertile imaginations with an ingenuity worthy of Scotland Yard, had come to the very learned conclusion that the first five books of the Bible were not written by Moses at all, but by another man of the same name.

But as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:8, one can say nothing against the truth but *for* the truth. Truth has such a nature that every challenge to it is in the end bound to be a vindication of it. Consequently, while a very large proportion of the findings of the Higher Critics have long since gone by the board or carry weight only with those who share their sentiments with regard to Scripture, their scholarship was undoubted, and some at least of their findings served to stimulate evangelicals to re-examine the text of some parts of Scripture a little more carefully.

It seems likely now that the Critics were not altogether wrong in arguing that Genesis bore signs of multiple authorship. Not unnaturally, they took this to mean that these were in reality late documents organized into a single whole and ascribed to Moses in such a way as to give the impression that Moses was indeed their author. Many evangelical scholars re-examining this evidence came to the conclusion that what Moses really did was to set forth in a connected narrative form a transcript of some eleven ancient documents, each of which was written by a contemporary of the events recorded who then signed himself as the author in the familiar words: "This is the history of Adam," "[...] of Noah," "[...] of Shem," etc., or more familiarly, "These are the generations of [...]" It appears that the word *generations* may equally well be rendered "history," being a collective word. It may be for this reason that while Moses was the editor of Genesis, he was not strictly its author and while tradition ascribes Genesis in its present form to Moses (a tradition which was never challenged in the New Testament) no quotation from Genesis is ever introduced with the words, "As Moses said [...]" or "As it was written by Moses [...]"

If this is true, then the writing of Scripture occupied not merely something less than two thousand years from Moses to John, but something more nearly

approaching four thousand years. No other book has ever taken so long to write. Yet it appears in our hands today to be one book with a single philosophy of history, a single value system in judging human conduct, a single answer to man's need, and a single picture of what God is like.

This Book was not written merely by approximately forty people as we commonly understand it, but rather, if Genesis really does comprise eleven successive records handed down and accumulated from Adam to Moses, by forty plus eleven people—a fantastic number of authors to contribute to a volume so obviously organically one.

Consider, for example, that for the average Englishman the nine hundred years since William the Conqueror invaded his country in 1066 represent an enormous span of time which encompasses the coming and going of a great company of people who experienced during those centuries continuous and profound changes in cultural values, social habits, literary forms, and vocabulary transformations. Some of these took place so rapidly that a few centuries made the older forms of words almost unintelligible to the later generations. Many people, perhaps one should say almost everyone, finds Shakespearean English confusing and Chaucer almost impossible. But for thousands of years God raised up men who added their words to a growing Holy Scripture without their contribution seeming in the least bit foreign to its spirit or its language.

What is even more surprising is that this great array of authors by some strange tacit agreement—an agreement which was made in secret and never once referred to in writing—undertook to use certain symbols with certain meanings that were not self-evident and could be understood only by those with spiritual discernment—always in precisely the same ways. Yet, if possible, an even stranger circumstance surrounds this silent agreement. Some of these symbols refer to objects of everyday experience (such as rocks, deserts, rivers, trees and so on), yet even when these are used in this literal sense their symbolic significance is effectively preserved.

There are a number of illustrations of this, but we are concerned here with only three of them. These are three trees: the vine, the fig and the olive. Whether used symbolically or (as will be shown) in recording actual events, their secret meaning is preserved intact throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. For all this, not one of the writers who used them ever took the trouble to state explicitly that he was making his use agreeable to that of previous authors.

It seems to me that this circumstance is one of the strongest proofs of the inspiration of Scripture from a single source, a proof doubly strengthened by the fact that no attention is ever specifically drawn to it in Scripture itself. It is stamped with that kind of truthfulness that characterizes the words of a child who is quite unaware that anyone might question what he is saying. It is completely without guile.



Chapter 1

History in Three Dimensions

Somewhere I have read the statement that the life of any child of God today may be as luminously punctuated by divine interferences as were the lives of any of the saints of the Old Testament. And we are persuaded that God's hand is always poised over the natural order of things to interject a supernatural order, whenever necessary. Thus we are aware that we live in two kingdoms: that we take part in events which are either natural or supernatural—the temporal and worldly, the spiritual and heavenly.

The life of every individual can be viewed as a miniature of the life of his own society and even of the civilization of which he is a part. Just as he has a birth, a childhood, a blossoming forth into an age of great aspirations, a plateau of compromise, and a time of retreat and coming to an end, so it seems to be with a society or a civilization. This has been called a cyclic or organic view of history: it was Toynbee's view, as it was Spengler's, and Vico's before that. Each civilization is seen as living and growing, decaying and dying, like an organism.

This is history seen from one point of view only, the *secular*. With respect to the individual, those who have experienced a rebirth into a new realm have coincidentally another kind of history entirely, a history which is written largely in secret, a history known chiefly and known fully only to God. This is a *spiritual* history. It too has a birth and a growth—but there is no death. Now and then some remarkable individual who is a Christian also happens to be prominent in national or international affairs. When the time is appropriate, his personal history may appear in print in *Who's Who* or a similar work. In the majority of cases no recognition whatever will be accorded to the fact that he was a child of God. *Who's Who* gives one history, the record which God keeps will give another one.

Nations as a whole may also be viewed as having two kinds of history which are experienced concurrently. Along with the secular there is a spiritual history which is not usually clearly identified and sometimes not even recognized. However, there was one nation whose spiritual history required even greater attention than their political history. This is the nation Israel. Indeed, in its influence upon the world *thus far* their political history has been comparatively slight. It is really their spiritual history which has had a transforming influence upon mankind.

All nations have a secular history, but only those nations which have experienced something of a true spiritual awakening have had a spiritual history.

Many African peoples, for example, achieved nationhood in the past, long before missionaries reached them to effect any kind of spiritual awakening, and they therefore enjoyed a national history but not a spiritual one. But there is a third kind of history which they experienced and which would be the proper subject of study for those interested in their *religious* beliefs and practices. Thus it seems necessary to recognize that both individuals and nations may have three distinctly different kinds of history: a secular or worldly history; a spiritual history which results from a genuine rebirth of a number of its citizens; and a religious history which reflects something that seems to be deeply rooted in human nature and is probably found in every society, namely, a recognition of a supernatural and largely invisible world impinging upon our own. The religious sense in man seems to be virtually universal.

This instinct for religion is so deeply ingrained in man that he seems unable to continue for long without organizing some sort of structured system of belief and ritual suited to his level of sophistication. In some societies this organization looms so large that it seems to eclipse most other facets of his culture, as it did in some Central America societies. Even when this occurs, historians find it quite possible to observe at least two concurrent streams of events, the secular and the religious. Only when missionaries have introduced the Christian faith and a representative Body of Christ has been divinely implanted in the society does it become proper to speak of a third stream of events; events which form the subject matter of a spiritual history.

It is conceivable that there could be a society with a secular history but without either a religious or a spiritual history. The Indus Valley culture seemed to have had no temples, and there is little if anything to indicate organized religion: and it seems exceedingly doubtful that there could have been any group of people in their midst who had experienced a spiritual awakening but left no evidence in their homes of their faith. We may perhaps have some cultures whose secular history has almost been submerged in their religious preoccupation. This seems to have been true of certain Central America cultures. By contrast, we may have had some civilizations whose religious history was overwhelmed by secular preoccupation, such as seems to have been the case in the Indus Valley.

A purely spiritual society has never existed, except perhaps for a few days after Pentecost and on a very small scale. But very quickly finances and other problems necessitated the creation of a kind of Christian Civil Service to handle these more temporal concerns and for the "serving of tables" (Acts 6:2), thus preserving the secular component.

Such circumstances illustrate the fact that the history of a society can be viewed from any one or from all three of these perspectives. There is little difficulty in conveying what we mean by secular history and what we mean by spiritual history, but it is not quite so easy to make clear in what sense the religious history of people is to be distinguished from both their spiritual and their secular history.

In what way is it distinct? It is distinct in this regard, that it is poised between the spiritual and the worldly, claiming exemptions from the civil where these are unwelcome, but demanding recognition in these very same areas to compensate for its failure to reach the spiritual. Throughout the Christian era, I think, this has been

particularly true of the Roman Catholic Church. Although it is possible to write the spiritual history of a people with almost no reference to their secular history (as tends to be done in missionary books), and though it is also possible to write a fairly complete secular history of some nations with virtually no reference to their spiritual history (as Gibbon did in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*), it is quite impossible to isolate the religious history from the secular history, simply because it ultimately depends upon it for continued existence. Yet it has certain qualities about it which have led students of ethnology to lump together relevant religious data into a department or by itself. In other words, this third category of history – the religious – is a real one, yet it seems to be inseparably bound to the secular, even though it may have had a spiritual beginning.

While we may catalogue some of the components of a nation's secular history – their laws, their social customs, their kings and princes, their wars, their economics, their architectural forms, their language – we may also catalogue the subject matter which would form the basis of a religious history of a people. It would comprise a study of the birth, growth, elaboration, and perhaps ultimate decay of their superstitions, their priesthood, their forms and places of worship, their sacred literature, their formalized creeds, their initiation ceremonies, and their treatment of the dead. From this it will be seen that there is no necessary connection with the secular history that is concurrent, but in the nature of the case, the maintenance and preservation of many of these elements is constantly being aided or challenged by civil authority; because these elements are rooted in human nature rather than in God Himself, these challenges have to be met usually by what must be termed worldly means. By contrast, the spiritual because it is rooted in God and not in society is paradoxically preserved by abandoning all dependence upon society. In its ideal formulation it thus ceases to be secular in any sense, and its history becomes an entirely independent one, though it is by no means without influence upon the course of secular history. This is beautifully illustrated in the case of the Lord Himself, who was in no wise disturbed by Pilate's questioning his claim to be a King, because His kingdom is not of this world, though it has a tremendous impact upon it.

The history of Israel is a unique one, for they have not been numbered among the nations as an ordinary people (Numbers 23:9). Thus, while these three kinds of historical perspective, generally speaking, apply to all nations which have had any spiritual life, they apply uniquely to Israel and are uniquely so treated in Scripture. Here the distinction between Israel's temporal history, their religious history, and their spiritual history is absolutely clear. Israel's birth as a nation in the Exodus, the establishment of the people in a homeland, the building of a capital city, the founding of a monarchy, the triumphs and tragedies of their engagements with neighbouring people, their captivity and near annihilation, their restoration and struggles under the Roman emperors, their one great national opportunity which they failed to recognize and their subsequent national suicide and dispersion throughout the world – all these are properly part and parcel of their temporal history as a nation. The circumstances surrounding the specialized training of Moses, the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the building of the Temple in the glorious reign of Solomon, the gradual accumulation of a collection

of sacred writings, the study of which led in time to the formation of synagogues and schools and a vast body of religious tradition and ordinance, the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple, the development of distinctly opposed religious sects, the religious philosophy which led to many of the conflicts with Rome, the blindness of the leaders in failing to perceive what was truly spiritual, and the final destruction of the Temple under Titus in A.D. 70—all these (as well as the subsequent development of synagogues outside the Holy Land) would form the appropriate materials for a religious history of Israel.

But throughout, there runs another thread which is evanescent and ill-defined, except insofar as it is always related to a minority—termed not infrequently *the Remnant*—whose real history is truly known only to God. It is illustrated by the seven thousand in Elijah's day who had not bowed the knee to Baal. We do not know of what tribe they were, whether they were poor or rich, nor even what happened to them subsequently. They had no social structure that would have set them off as a sect, for Elijah, with his profound knowledge of what was going on in his country was apparently quite unaware of them. They were individuals known to the Lord. They had a history all right, but the record of it was not kept here. Throughout the whole of Old Testament times such people were to be found, for God never left Himself without this witness. Enoch, who "walked with God," was one of these.

Because Scripture takes into account these three dimensions in dealing with Israel's history, this composite is set forth symbolically by the use of trees: the vine to portray Israel's national history, the olive tree to portray her spiritual history, and the fig tree to portray her religious history. These three trees are used in this symbolic sense, not merely in parables where they are hypothetical, but in circumstances where the references to them are strictly historical, where the writer has in view real trees that existed at the time of writing. Let us examine what Scripture has to say about these three trees.



Chapter 2

The Vine and Israel's National History

Each of these three trees has certain characteristics about it that make it peculiarly apt as a symbol for an aspect of history. As we have implied already, the life of an individual – and of a nation – may be lived in two directions, horizontally and vertically. The vine is a "horizontal" tree. It spreads along the ground, requiring artificial support, constant pruning and restraint (which is a function of government), and tending to expand at the expense of others. It is truly a territorial plant.

There seems to be a kind of law in Scripture that the first reference to any subject which thereafter receives particular attention has special importance. As we shall see, this is signally true of the other two trees, the fig and the olive. I'm not certain whether this is so of the vine. The first mention is found in Genesis 9:20, where Noah planted a vineyard. It was his undoing: it led, in fact, to the only lapse in what seems otherwise to have been a life of great piety. This particular incident seems to throw little light on the symbolic use of the vine. However, when Israel came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, they were welded together in a unique way under recognized leadership so that the event marked in the strictest sense the Birth of a Nation. In Psalm 80:8-19 a summary history of Israel is given which opens with the words, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land." The record goes on to describe how this vine spread across the country from Jordan to the Mediterranean. And then it was forsaken by the husbandman who planted it, and it perished.

Yet how much this divine Husbandman had done for His vineyard! Listen to what Isaiah said about it (5:1-7):

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes?

And now go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Archaeology shows very clearly how the way was prepared while Israel wandered in the wilderness before their subsequent entry into the Promised Land, their "planting." The Tell el Amarna Letters reveal how little by little the Egyptian possessions in Palestine were dis-united and whittled away so that when the time came for the crossing of Jordan, the heathen were in a sense, as Psalm 80:8 put it, already "cast out." It may be not without significance that while the spies brought back some other kinds of testimony when they returned from their exploratory trip, the prime witness they carried back with them was the fruit of the vine — a token, as it were — of national possession (Numbers 13:23,24).

Israel verily prospered until, under Solomon, the vine stretched from the Jordan to the sea and was glorious indeed. But nationhood had been granted to Israel for a purpose other than their own mere enjoyment of political freedom. The land with its capital city and its single place of worship was intended to stand as the centre of a circle of testimony which was to swing in ever-widening arcs until the knowledge of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But what was a true vine — that is, *true* because it was of God's planting — became a wild vine, a vine in short which rejected its Husbandman. It ran wild and produced wild grapes, or as Isaiah 5:7 put it, "God looked for judgment, but behold oppression." It became just like the other nations around, uncultivated from God's point of view and no longer fit to be the special instrument of His self-revelation to the world.

I realize that it is customary to interpret John 15:1 following, in a rather different way, but if there is the kind of consistency in Scripture which I am arguing for here, I think the Lord referred to Himself as the True Vine because He was in the strictest possible sense the true King of Israel and their mainstem nationally. When they rejected Him, they committed national suicide. Their ideas of what their nationhood really meant, what the special favour they had enjoyed at God's hand signified, were so far from the truth, so this-worldly, so unspiritual, that they failed entirely to recognize who Jesus really was.

Yet they had been reminded about this on many occasions. Time and again God had sent to them spiritually minded men who sought to convey to their leaders what constituted the grounds of their true nationhood. But it had all been to no avail. As 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 records:

And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place;

But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.

And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.

And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.

To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

The end result was the temporary disappearance of Israel as a nation, though not of Israel as a people. She was carried into exile, her capital city destroyed and her king deposed. Ezekiel lamented her fate (19:10-14):

Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

This picture is repeated again and again, using the same metaphor as in Hosea 9:10, where it will be noted that the fig tree is also introduced metaphorically. Moreover, Hosea takes a longer view, for he says (verse 17), "They shall be wanderers among the nations," a picture perhaps of the final dispersion which followed the

destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. In 10: 1 Hosea says, "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."

But it is not only in the Old Testament that the vine is so used symbolically. Matthew 21:33-43 records a familiar parable of the Lord's in which he said:

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it.

And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus said unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

In this passage, the servants were undoubtedly the prophets, for it was the prophets who were beaten and killed and stoned. Finally, as verse 37 points out, the Householder sent His Son. Verse 38 seems to indicate that as a *nation* – for this is a picture of the vineyard – they did indeed recognize the Son. This seems to be revealed by a rather remarkable admission made subsequently and quoted for us in Matthew 27:64, where the leaders of the nation went to Pilate and asked that special precautions should be taken to make sure that the Lord's body should not leave the tomb, in the event of which, they argued, the disciples would say, "He is risen from the dead: so that the last error shall be worse than the first." This seems to me to be a clear indication that they realized only too well they had made a "first error."

The parable, of course, depicts the casting out of the Lord from the vineyard, that is, His national rejection. In verse 41 the end result could only be as they

themselves were willing to admit: the transfer of national favour with its attendant special responsibility to other husbandmen who would bring forth the proper fruits in due time.

In verse 43 the Lord closes with the words, "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." There is little doubt that this is a prophetic statement foretelling how, if the Jewish people rejected their King, they would themselves be rejected of God as His channel of spiritual blessing to the nations, and how He would turn to the Gentiles themselves to become the channel in their place. Clearly this happened in due time when God turned to the Gentiles and Israel was laid aside.

There is, however, a dual sense in which this came about, for while God had a spiritual covenant with Israel as a nation, He never had such a covenant with the Gentiles in the same sense. Nevertheless it has remained true that "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Proverbs 14:34) so that when any Gentile society has genuinely turned to the Lord and sought to order itself according to New Testament principles, it has been prospered as a nation. Thus when any nation "brings forth the fruits of the kingdom" (Matthew 21:43), it is fulfilling the Lord's prediction, becoming thereby the "other husbandmen" to whom He had let out His vineyard.

I believe that throughout the "times of the Gentiles" since Israel was rejected for a season, there has always been some nation, or some group of nations, who singly or together could in a manner of speaking be termed "Christian" through whom the world has been blessed. From such societies people went forth to carry the light of the gospel to the rest of the world, their freedom to travel and their assurance of support resulting from a condition in their homeland which seems once to have been God's intention for the nation Israel. Such substitute nations, while they fulfilled these conditions, have brought forth the fruits of the vineyard, and in return they have been prospered and blessed by God nationally.

It is difficult to state this clearly without running the risk of being accused of blurring the lines of distinction between that kind of spiritual life in Christ which may be enjoyed by the child of God and that kind of condition of prosperity which an aggregate of people may enjoy by reason of their having a favourable disposition toward Christian standards of conduct and public acknowledgment of God, even though a personal experience of salvation is shared by only a small percentage of the aggregate. Righteousness does exalt a nation: and although "there is none righteous" in the strict theological sense, there is a kind of national righteousness which is pleasing to God and accepted of Him in the temporal order.

Any nation which patterns its way of life and its value system in such a manner as to favour the true Christian community which exists within it, will in turn be favoured by God, protected in times of threat and prospered in times of peace. It is a case of a cup of cold water given to one of the least of God's children in no wise failing to bring its reward, a reward which is "here and now." In Old Testament times, the same was true of the nation Israel. When that community favoured its "believing remnant," it prospered. Outside the Land of Promise, the same principle applied with respect to those who favoured Abraham's true children. We tend to suppose that God has only one kind of reward ultimately – a "reward in heaven."

But as such passages show, there are real rewards which properly belong within the temporal order also.

In short, my point is that God was with Israel as a nation and protected them and prospered them that they in turn might be a blessing to other nations; yet He revealed Himself intimately in what must surely be called "Christian experience" to only a comparatively small segment of the people. Israel as a nation has now lost this special relationship, so that in this sense they have ceased to be the bearers of blessing to the world. Their vineyard has been taken from them for a season and has in the meantime been entrusted to other nations successively who have for a season brought forth the fruits thereof and been blessed in the doing of it.



Chapter 3

The Olive and Israel's Spiritual History

In contrast with the vine which has a horizontal growth, the olive grows vertically toward heaven. That the olive tree is associated symbolically with the spiritual history of Israel is stated with equal explicitness in Scripture. The choice of such a tree is most appropriate, for it is from its fruit that olive oil is obtained, and this is the oil of anointing which symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The very first mention of the tree is, not unexpectedly, in connection with the restoration of the earth after the Flood. Noah sends out a dove, and the dove returns with an olive leaf (Genesis 8:10,11). Both the dove and the leaf reinforce the spiritual implications, the emergence of new life. Because God has always left Himself with some witness in Israel in times of direst judgment, the prophets in foretelling what would happen to the nation because of their disobedience speak of the cutting down of the vine and the fig tree and their destruction in the land; but never is it stated that the olive tree will suffer such total uprooting. Thus Jeremiah, the prophet of doom, added the warning (in Jeremiah 11:16) that although the green olive would suffer in this coming judgment, he does not speak of its total destruction, but warns only that the branches of it will be broken.

This seems to be the basis of the simile used by Paul in Romans 11:17-27:

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written; There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

It is evident from this passage that there is a time of restoration coming, a time in which the spiritual life of Israel will be renewed just as their national life will be renewed. The olive tree will become wholly itself again, and the vine will once more bear its fruit as originally planned. Israel will become the head of the nations: and Israel will be the spiritual centre of all human societies.

It may be argued that Paul says to the Romans that the olive tree suffered the loss of some of its branches because of their unbelief, and that this would imply that the olive tree is simply an alternative symbol for Israel as a nation, since one would not expect unbelief among "believers." The force of this argument seems strong enough, until one observes that Paul warns the believers to whom he is writing that they too might suffer the same fate (verses 20-22). Can a believer lose his spiritual birthright? There are some who believe this possible. Personally I rest in the assurance that what the Lord does, He does forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14) and that the believer is eternally secure. I think there is another kind of "cutting off" which a believer may, however, suffer at the hand of God: this is his removal, the foreclosure of his continuance on earth. In fact, the New Testament is full of passages which carry a warning of this possibility to those who are Christians.

For example, consider the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3,4). That these two had become Christians is surely to be inferred from the fact that Peter accused them of lying to the Holy Spirit and to God. In fact, they are illustrations of how we who are Christians may be judged *now* in order that we may not need to be judged when the world is (1 Corinthians 11:32). It is possible, then, for a child of God to see everything that he has done perish in the flames of God's examination, yet even so (and here are the most comforting words) he himself shall be saved (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

In 1 Corinthians 11:29,30 Paul speaks of those who defiled the Lord's Table and brought condemnation on themselves, for which very cause "many sleep." Again, in 1 Corinthians 3:17 the same writer remarks, "If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy." There were times when the saints were admonished to see that this occurred. In certain circumstances it was their duty "to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5).

It was possible, in fact, for a mature Christian to do something which was safe for himself but could not safely be copied by a weaker Christian who, being defiled, would "perish" (1 Corinthians 8:11). Paul himself said one should not eat any food if the example created thereby endangered the life of a brother in Christ (Romans 14:15). It is good to submit to the chastening of God when we go astray and to accept His correction – and live (Hebrews 12:9). Sometimes we are too blind to see the reasons why we are being chastened, until a brother points them out to us. James says that such a brother "may save a soul from death" (5:19,20). Remember that in this passage it is a brother in the Lord who is being persuaded to repent of his ways, and the death which he escapes by his action is a physical death, a premature taking home.

I believe there are circumstances in which the waywardness of a child of God reaches such disastrous proportions that the Lord is left no alternative but to remove him "that his soul may be saved." Other saints may be praying for such a one, but John says there is a point of no return: there is a "sin unto death" for which prayer is useless (1 John 5:16,17). Yet he hastened to add, because we are all failing in one way or another, that the case is exceptional and God is long-suffering, and there is sin which does not lead to such a drastic termination: "there is sin that is not unto death."

It should once more be emphasized here that such "cutting off" when applied to believers does not in the least imply a loss of salvation. I know there is controversy on this issue, but for myself eternal security is part of the believer's heritage. This "cutting off" has to do solely with physical life. Such people as Ananias and Sapphira were removed, taken home, to prevent an injury to the Body of Christ which it could not at that time possibly sustain. Moreover, in these passages it is not always unbelief that brings disaster; sometimes it is disobedience in some specific matter; sometimes it is simply irreverence. In any case, it appears that when the body of believers was small, God did not allow the continued existence of Christians who were defiling or might defile the church. They were removed.

To return to the symbolism of this brief survey, these were branches of the olive "cut off." The olive tree was a spiritual organism, and though these branches were properly part of the tree, they had become diseased and endangered its life.

In Zechariah 4:11-14 and again in Revelation 11:4, two olive trees symbolize two anointed ones, two spiritual beings who stood before the Lord.

In Psalm 52:8 David likens himself to an olive tree, and in Psalm 128:3 he speaks of the children of a godly household as being olive plants round about the table.

The olive tree is a slow-growing tree—unlike the vine—requiring years of patient labour before reaching full fruitfulness. Consequently its growth implies a certain degree of settledness and stability in the community, and hence its association with the idea of peace. The beauty of the tree is referred to in Jeremiah 11:16 and in Hosea 14:6 and yet—and surely this is deeply significant—the most fruitful of these trees are the product of bare and rocky ground. The cultivation of them requires a great deal of attention, constant pruning is necessary, and fruit comes very late in the year.

The oil itself was greatly used for anointing, to freshen and revive (Psalm 23:5 and Matthew 6:17), and it was used for the healing of wounds. A third important use was for illumination (Matthew 25:3). Thus it provided comfort, healing, and light. Moreover, olive wood was much valued for fuel. It is no wonder, therefore, that God chose the olive to stand for the spiritual element in Israel's history.

Although it is not explicitly stated in Genesis, I think it quite possible that the Tree of Life (whose leaves are for healing – Revelation 22:2) may have been an olive tree.



Chapter 4

The Fig Tree and Israel's Religious History

As with the vine and the olive, so with the fig: it is a symbol. There is a peculiar suitability in the use of the fig tree to symbolize Israel's religious history.

Unlike all other trees, the fig has this unique feature about it, that its fruit appears before its leaves. It is as though the clothing of the tree, the outward show of religious observance, the ceremony and the regalia of formal worship, is really the aftermath only of the bearing of a real fruit. Earlier in this Paper we proposed that all religion is descended from an earlier true spiritual understanding. Many people reverse this, enamoured as they are with evolutionary philosophy, holding the view that religion gives rise to spiritual life. James says otherwise: "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries?" (3:12). Religion is a vestige of the real thing. This circumstance lies behind the symbolic action of the Lord when He saw a fig tree in the distance with leaves, but upon approaching it found no fruit upon it -- and cursed it (Matthew 21:18-20).

In a somewhat similar way, the Lord meant more than His actual words are usually taken to mean when He said *of* Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed": and *to* Nathanael, "When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee" (John 1:48). Within the framework of Israel's religious life -- involving as it did the whole complex of education, religious orders, temple worship, and so forth -- there were those here and there who were truly spiritual. Under the fig tree one might now and then discover an olive.

Remembering what was said about the first occurrence of some subject or object to receive particular attention later on in Scripture, we may remind ourselves that Adam and Eve sought to cover their nakedness in the presence of God and one another with fig leaves. So long ago the spiritual light which covered them was replaced by the poor substitute of the outward form of religion. To the Lord Jesus -- if one may speak for a moment by accommodation to our own limitations of perception -- the Jewish people must have presented the outward appearance of a very flourishing fig tree, heavily foliated. But in fact when seen at close quarters, as the Lord could see only too clearly, the tree which ought certainly to have fruit upon it had none. In a peculiar sense, the Temple signified the fig tree. It appears from Scripture that Jesus probably visited it three years in succession, each time "expecting" to find fruit upon it in view of its verdure: three times He found none. This led to His telling a parable of deep significance.

The story opens (in Luke 13:6): "A certain man had a fig tree planted in a vineyard [...]." It is hardly necessary at this juncture to point out the significance here of the position of this particular fig tree. Nor perhaps need one underscore the statement of the husbandman who visited it three years in succession and, finding no fruit upon it, said: "Cut it down."

But someone stood in the breach and asked that it might be given one more year and then if it still bore no fruit, the axe should be laid to the root of it. Perhaps the "year" was up when Stephen presented the claims of the Lord as their Messiah to officialdom (the Sanhedrin) in Jerusalem—and became by their rejection of his message the first Christian martyr. The die was cast, the fig tree was doomed, and in due course the axe was indeed laid so closely to the root of the tree that it is doubtful if any single stone of Herod's temple was left in position. If any of the disciples lived to see this, they must surely have marvelled, as they did in Matthew 21:20, that such an impressive "fig tree" could wither away so quickly.

Finally, the Lord had a promise for us who look for His coming again, a sign which is to mark the end of the age. He said, "Behold the fig tree [...] when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand" (Luke 21:29,30 and Matthew 24:32). This was the sign of the end, the sign of the fig tree—not the sign of the vineyard nor yet the sign of the olive. The promise of national renewal with the coming of the Lord is in the Old Testament. Joel 2:18-32 is a prophetic statement dealing with the end of the present age: in verse 22 the fig tree and the vine both are to bear their fruit again, and there will follow a time (verse 28) when the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon the sons and daughters of Israel. This was the time of blessing which Peter in Acts 2:17 ff assured the people could follow only when Israel as a nation accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

Long ago it was predicted that Israel would return to their Holy Land, and we Christians have been stirred to see such things taking place before our eyes and are assured that the coming of the Lord draws nigh. But I think a much more important sign that we should look for is, not this revival of Israel's national life, nor a revival of her spiritual life, but a revival of her religious life taking place in the Holy Land: the fig tree flourishing in the vineyard.

When we begin to hear, as even now we do hear occasionally, of a concern on the part of the Israeli government for the re-building of the Temple, the re-establishment of the priesthood, and the restoration of their ceremonial worship in Jerusalem—then I think we may indeed say, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."



Epilogue

In view of the fact that Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover their nakedness in the Garden of Eden, we have the assurance that at least this tree was to be found there. In Revelation 22:2, as we have seen, the Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the nation could very well have been the olive; we therefore have some justification for supposing that the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden may likewise be so identified. Two of the three trees of major importance in the story of Eden are thus perhaps identified for us by this mean.

Might not one expect that the symbolic pattern is rounded out and that the third tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the eating of whose fruit brought a kind of nakedness and shame, was none other than the vine? This possibility has been explored quite fully in another Doorway Paper, "The Nature of the Forbidden Fruit," being Part II in *The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation*, vol.5 in The Doorway Papers Series.



Part III

BETWEEN THE LINES: AN ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was
upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ: והארץ
היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על־פני תהום ורוח אלהים
מרחפת על־פני המים

Introduction

This paper is admittedly somewhat "difficult." Every effort was made to clothe the content as far as possible in some kind of garment so that it would not appear altogether as dry bones. However, it is impossible to deal with such a subject from the linguistic point of view without becoming involved in questions of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, which for most people are not exactly inspiring!

Yet such a study seemed essential. One does not have the beautiful precision in such matters that is found, for example, in chemistry. But still there must be some attempt to approach exactitude even in the interpretation of an ancient language, and this can become very involved.

In spite of its difficulties, the Paper is perhaps worthy of careful study: it does not seem that anything comparable has been undertaken previously. Manifestly there will be errors of judgment and failure to interpret the Hebrew correctly. On the whole, however, we believe the Paper takes the essentials of the question into account in one way or another with reasonable objectivity. More could have been said—but it would have been largely opinion. Somewhere (at least in heaven, hopefully on earth) there is a correct interpretation of these opening verses; this study may be a step in the right direction—until something more exact and satisfying appears.



Chapter 1

Analysis of Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning. . . " **בְּרֵאשִׁית**

IT IS USUALLY noted in the more scholarly commentaries that this first Hebrew word in the Old Testament in the form in which it appears cannot be too readily translated. What we have in almost all versions is therefore an interpretation, an effort to recover for the reader the meaning intended by the original text. It may seem strange that the very first word should present this problem, but the difficulty is undoubtedly there, and various learned commentators have adopted various means of getting around it. What is the difficulty?

This word is actually composed of two elements, a preposition and a noun, which according to Hebrew usage are written together as one form. The preposition is *beth* (**ב**) meaning "in," and the noun *reshith* (**רֵאשִׁית**) which means "first." The definite article is entirely absent. As it stands this cannot properly be translated "in the beginning."

It is a familiar fact to all acquainted with Hebrew, that the vowels (referred to as "pointing") were not written into the text in the original manuscripts. Nevertheless the correct pronunciation of each word was carefully guarded by tradition, and all kinds of steps were taken to preserve it. If the original form of the first word was intended to be read "in the beginning," a long *a* would have been written under the initial *beth*, to give *ba-reshith* instead of *be-reshith*. For some good reason this was not done.

On the other hand, the word *beginning* is a noun and cannot be read as a participle. We may not therefore fall back upon the idea that the passage should be taken to mean "in beginning" in the sense of "to begin with." As far as we know, no other ancient manuscript gives any variant reading, although many critical scholars, noting the peculiarity of the text here, have suggested a different "pointing" so as to change the vowels and give the Hebrew the sense "in the beginning." In short, one could only derive the meaning "in the beginning" by changing the original text.

Another alternative is a little difficult to explain to a reader unacquainted with Hebrew, but the proposal is to translate it as "in the beginning of the creating [...]" in which the word create is turned into a participle. Rudolph Kittel, having examined well over one hundred manuscripts or codices of the Old Testament, including all the more famous ones and many minor fragments not so well known,

was unable to list any such alternatives in his critical edition of the Hebrew text. In the footnotes he merely points out that perhaps it should be read according to one of these alternatives. But no authority can be given for any change in the present text other than the feeling that it does not make good sense. As it stands, the form of the word is unusual and appears always to have been so written without the definite article.

It was suggested at one time that the word *bereshith* was in what is known as the Construct form, the whole of the rest of the sentence being in the genitive which would properly follow. The idea would be expressed something like this: "In the beginning of . . . [the occasion when] God created the heaven and the earth. . ." However, this may be considered equally unsatisfactory, since the conjunction *and* which opens the second verse would then have to be deleted. Thus, while it might be possible in this way to save the present form of the first word in the first verse, the first word of the second verse would have to be changed! Once we begin to make changes simply because we do not yet understand the meaning, there is no fixed point at which to call a halt: and we really never know whether we have the original meaning at all.

But in connection with this same word *bereshith*, one or two interesting points are raised by a study of Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, as translated by Owen C. Whitehouse.¹

One is that there is the same controversy over the exact meaning of the cuneiform word which opens the Babylonian account of Creation and which therefore stands in the same relation to the rest of the cuneiform text as this Hebrew word does to the Hebrew text. The Chaldean account opens with the form *i-nu-ma*, which is variously translated by different authorities. For example, Lenormant has "At a time when," Haupt translates this as "There was a time when," and Oppert gives it as "Formerly" without specifying when. None of these can be exactly equated with the English phrase "in *the* beginning."

While the parallels between the Chaldean and Hebrew accounts are easily recognizable, they are by no means exact. To begin with, the Babylonian texts all start with chaos. But as we shall see, the Hebrew word for *creation* as applied to God's activity in no way allows the idea of chaos, but clearly signifies that which is finished and perfect. In this connection, Schrader observes, "While the Universe is evidently thought of as still a liquid mass, [the god] Bel cleaves the darkness in twain, and separates Earth and Heaven from one another to produce an ordered earth." Order comes out of chaos. On the next page he continues, "The *re*-creation of Chaos into an ordered universe, is expressly attributed to Bel and the other gods." Thus Schrader divides the general picture as given in the cuneiform text into sections (verses 1-6 and verses. 7-11), the first section representing a chaos, the second section a re-creation to restore order.

The significance of this parallelism is that the opening word does not strictly convey the idea of a point in time which could properly be termed a beginning, but rather an extended period in which the earth was in a different state. In this account the state is one of chaos which is converted into order; but in the Hebrew account,

1. Schrader, Eberhard, *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, translated by Owen C. Whitehouse, Williams and Norgate, London, 1885.

as will become apparent, the original state is one of perfect order – which becomes a chaos.

We must therefore look elsewhere for some English equivalent for this phrase which will make sense of the original as it stands and justify its present form. The problem is, then, to know how to translate this opening Hebrew form. The best and perhaps the only legitimate way is to examine its usage elsewhere throughout the Word of God.

In the first place it should be stated that the exact Hebrew phrase represented here in the Authorized Version by the words "In the beginning" is never repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament. In all the other passages of Scripture in which we find the same English wording (as for example, Jeremiah 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34: "in the beginning of the reign of. . ."), the Hebrew original is put in what is called the Construct form. This form is used whenever a noun is followed by the word *of*; the noun itself is written in a modified form – which has not been employed in Genesis 1:1. This is the rule; although there are exceptions to the rule, they occur under circumstances which do not apply here. The shortened form not only modifies the noun itself, but affects all prepositions attached to it, by eliminating the sign of the definite article, whether or not the article is required in English.

This statement is not an exact enunciation of the rule, because this is not a textbook of Hebrew grammar or syntax. But it means this: on the only occasions where we might otherwise have been able to cite parallel cases of the use of the word, the Hebrew original is actually different despite the fact that the English translation does not reveal it.

To the ordinary reader unacquainted with the Hebrew, it might appear that many of the other passages in which the same phrase occurs in the English could be taken to indicate the proper meaning here. Unfortunately this is not so. The original Hebrew in all such passages differs from the original Hebrew as found in the first word of Genesis 1:1.

An excellent illustration of this fact will be found in Isaiah 1:26, where the sense of a "beginning" appears twice in one verse and is written in two different ways in the original. In the first instance the Hebrew is found in the form **כְּבִרְאִשְׁנָה** (*ke-barishonah*), in the second in the form **כְּבִתְחִלָּה** (*ke-batehillah*). Both incorporate the definite article *the*, but neither uses **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*ba-reshith*) which is the form sometimes proposed as an emendation of the text in Genesis 1:1.

It is significant that in Proverbs 8:23, where a true beginning is clearly intended, the word *reshith* is not used at all. In fact, as modern cosmology seems to hold that the universe is of approximately the same age in every part of it and the earth therefore almost as old as the sun and the stars, a time "before ever the earth was" is a time very near the beginning of the creation of the universe itself. Such a time would clearly represent the conditions that are popularly supposed to be intended in Genesis 1:1. It is important to note therefore that the Hebrew is **מֵרֵשֶׁת** (*me-rosh*) and not **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*be-reshith*) as in Genesis 1:1. It is not that Hebrew lacked a word for a true beginning.

This is not mere quibbling over small, inconsequential differences. In Proverbs 8:23 the term means quite literally "from the very first." In Genesis 1:1 the phrase has a different meaning and, as we shall see, is never a complete idea in itself.

Although the words appear to be related since they share certain radicals, it is fairly certain that the longer form of Genesis 1:1 is not derived from the shorter form of Proverbs 8:23 even though it might be supposed that it was.²

We cannot therefore find any light from other passages to show why this opening sentence should be translated "In *the* beginning [...]." Thus we should probably look for some other meaning for the noun which will permit the Hebrew text to stand as it is.

The next important point, then, is to observe that the meaning of the noun itself is "first" or "former" and not "beginning." Actually it is never complete without the addition of some other English word. So we find, "the first (born)" – Genesis 49:3; "the first (part)" – Jeremiah 26:1, etc.; and "the former (state)" of Job (in Job 42:12) as contrasted with his latter end. It does not mean that God blessed his death, a point in time, more than his birth, a point in time, but rather the state of his latter days as opposed to what preceded. This is clearly the meaning as seen by reference to Job 8:7. So likewise in Isaiah 46:10 we have "former (time)" and in Proverbs 4:7, it is used in the sense of "first (thing)." Then again in Genesis 10:10, referring to Nimrod's depredations against his neighbours, we are told that the "first (extension) of his kingdom was Erech."

The word is used on numerous occasions in the sense of "first (in importance)" – cf. Amos 6: 1; Dan. 11:41, etc.; "first (in point of value)" – 1 Samuel 15:21. Then in Deuteronomy 33:21 we have "first (part)," and in Hosea 9:10 "first (occasion of bearing fruit)."

In his *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, Skinner elucidated this as follows:

It signifies primarily the first (or best) part of a thing. From this it easily glides into a temporal sense as the first *stage* of a process or series of events: Deut. 11:12 (of the year); Job 8:7 (a man's life), and 40:19; Isa. 46:10 (starting point of a series), etc [...].

It is of more consequence to observe that at no period of the language does the temporal sense go beyond the definition already given, viz., the first *stage* of a process, either explicitly indicated or clearly implied. [Emphasis mine]³

In many instances we can get some light on such words by reference to the Aramaic versions currently in use at the time of the Lord. In this instance, the Targum of Onkelos has **בְּקִדְמִין** (*be-qadmin*), a composite form in the plural, of which the root has merely the meaning "ancient" or "former times." In Hebrew this same root appears in the form **קִדְמִים** has exactly the same significance, being frequently used when reference is made by the prophets, etc., to the times of the patriarchs so long ago.

Thus we find it is practically essential to add a word to get the full significance, and if we follow the pattern of Job 42:12, we might permissibly render Genesis 1:1 as:

2. Skinner, John, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1951, p.12.

3. Skinner: *Ibid.*

IN A FORMER STATE GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

By this means we satisfy the text as it is, and illuminate the Author's original meaning.

Hebrew has at least two perfectly good words to express exactly what we mean by our word *beginning*. One has been referred to in Proverbs 8:23, (i.e., *me-rosh*). The other word is *tehillah* (תהלה), which simply means "commencement." It is frequently used, and it applies essentially to a true commencement, a point in time, never in value. It was not, therefore, a lack of vocabulary that determined the choice of this Hebrew word in Genesis 1:1; it was evidently used to convey a precise idea. It is in fact exactly parallel to the Greek of John 1:1, where the definite article is also missing: "In a former (time or state) the Word was God." Theologically this is a far more exact and significant statement of fact. There is really no question of a beginning at all—it is entirely a matter of a prior circumstance. And since the Septuagint translators were careful to translate Genesis 1:1 by the same *phrase* ἐν ἀρχῇ (*en arche*), not ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ (*en te arche*), it was probably a deliberate choice to convey a specific meaning:

"In a former state God created [...]."

Much has been written regarding the word *bara* (ברא), translated "created."

The word means strictly "to cut out" or "to carve out," and thence from the idea of sculpture it came to mean "to put the finishing touch," "to polish," and so "to perfect." The basic idea appears to be that God's creative work is a finished product and therefore perfect. Yet it means more than this. Man's creative works are the result of some considerable effort before the article is finished, but God simply speaks and it is done. In keeping with this, we find that the verb is used only in what is termed the Kal or Simple form with respect to God's activity. But when man's creative works are under consideration, an intensive form of the Hebrew word is employed. In the things of the Spirit, there is a sense in which God's creative work is not without great effort, for the perfecting of the saints is indeed a difficult task. But in the material realm God does not experiment. His work is direct, perfect, and complete, and while the same verb is occasionally applied in Scripture to man's creative activity, it is never used in the form which occurs here. The really difficult task was man's salvation. Creation was the work of God's Fingers (Psalm 8:3), judgment the work of His Hand (Psalm 39:10), but salvation was the work of the whole Arm of God (Psalm 77:15).

It is sometimes stated that *bara* means to create from nothing. But man himself was not created out of nothing. The materials for his body were already at hand (Genesis 2:7), though perhaps his spirit was created *ex nihilo*.

As to the perfection of God's creative activity, Scripture bears ample testimony. Deuteronomy 32:4 tells that His work is perfect, and in 1 Corinthians 14:33 Paul affirms that God is not the author of chaos. The word he uses here, ἀκαταστασίας (*akatastasias*), is a strong one and was also used by the authors of the Septuagint—as for example, in Proverbs 26:28, "a flattering mouth worketh ruin." While God is not the author of chaos, He appears to have been made so by the English rendering

of Genesis 1:1,2, for as we shall see, every word in verse 2 is associated elsewhere in Scripture with that which is ruined and under God's judgment.

Moreover, the perfection of God's creative work is clearly implied in Hebrews 11:3, which states "the worlds were framed by the Word of God." Here the Greek word used is *katartidzo*, which means "to make perfect." It is used accordingly in Hebrews 10:5 with reference to the Lord's prepared body. And it is similarly used in:

Matthew 21:16,	of perfected praise
Luke 6:40,	of perfected people
1 Corinthians 1:10,	of perfected fellowship
2 Corinthians 13:11,	of perfected brethren
1 Thessalonians 3:10,	of perfected faith
Hebrews 13:21,	of perfected behaviour
1 Peter 5:10,	of perfected saints

From these passages we might conclude that as originally created, the universe was in every way beautifully appointed for the purposes for which God brought it into being. It was in fact, as Isaiah 45:18 says, in no sense "created a chaos" (so the Hebrew), but "formed to be inhabited." The Greek word *kosmos* (**κόσμος**), which in the New Testament is applied to it, basically means "order," or the very opposite of chaos. This concept is comprehended in the Hebrew word translated *creation*.

There are many who hold that far from being perfect as created, the universe was a nebular mass, a kind of chaos awaiting the Hand of God to bring it into order. And those who adopt this view interpret Genesis 1:2 as the primeval state of chaos. They argue that the rest of the chapter is then to be understood as a revelation of how God ordered it and arranged it as a setting for life and finally for mankind. It is considered, in this light, that the "days" of Genesis are geological ages; some parallelism is felt to be apparent between current geological "schemes" and the sequence of events as shown in the six creative days.

We are not concerned with these arguments one way or the other at the present moment, for this would be to anticipate our subject. We are concerned in determining if possible the exact implications of the actual Hebrew in the original text of these two verses. And for the present we can only examine this text word by word, comparing each part with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Not one of these points alone will carry much weight, perhaps not even all of them together when once set forth. Somewhere there must be a final court of appeal as to the exact meaning of a word or phrase or construction. We have to go on examining this portion of the Word of God till we reach a measure of finality. It will not do to try to complete by dogmatic assertion what we know is lacking in factual evidence. But this much is fairly clear: the Hebrew word *bara*, when used in the Kal form, does mean to create in a state of perfection, to finish perfectly. It does not mean to create a chaos.

We therefore have:

IN A FORMER STATE GOD PERFECTED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.



Chapter 2

Analysis of Genesis 1:2

"And the earth was without form and void [...]."

Every single word of qualification in this sentence is used in connection with judgment. Let us start at the beginning and analyse the whole sentence word by word.

The normal order for a Hebrew sentence is:

Conjunction – Verb – Subject – Object

Because of the comparative simplicity of the verb system, only two tenses are indicated in Hebrew, present and past. It is as though the Hebrews simplified their thoughts by considering a thing as either being done or already completed. All suppositions regarding the future, where man is concerned, are void; it is pointless for a man to say with any certainty that he will be doing something on some future occasion, for he does not know what a day may bring forth. The "future" tense is not represented by a designed form.

But with God's activity, if He has said "It shall be done," so certain is the future that it can without hesitation be written as completed already. Hebrew, therefore, uses the perfect tense for God's proposed future actions; the term *prophetic perfect* has been given to this mode of expression.

But there were sometimes necessary refinements – such as the pluperfect. In this case, the lack of a distinct tense form was overcome by a change in the order of words. For the most part it appears that the established order of words was departed from under only two circumstances, exclusive of poetic license: the first, when a new subject was introduced, and special emphasis upon this fact was required; and the second, when the pluperfect was to be understood. This matter receives considerable attention in textbooks of grammar and syntax. A. B. Davidson, in his *Hebrew Syntax*, deals with this question in some detail and shows how the word order may be used to indicate the English pluperfect.⁴ He states that this use is most common in dependent (relative or conjunctive) clauses. And having pointed this out, he adds, "It is of great consequence to observe it in translation." He specifically states that when the dependent clause is introduced by *and* (*waw*, in Hebrew), the subject usually precedes the verb in such clauses. Illustrations of this will be found in Genesis 20:4: "But Abimelech had not approached [...]."

4. Davidson, A. B., *Hebrew Syntax*, Clark, Edinburgh, (1984) 3rd edition, pp.58-59, note C.

examples are in Genesis 31:19,34; 1 Samuel 9:15; 25:21; 28:3 (twice); 2 Samuel 18:18; etc.

As with English, so in Hebrew, there was a poetic license which permitted departure from the correct word order for no other reason than re-arrangement for euphony. However, this applies chiefly to the poetry of the Psalms and other Writings; since the Massoretic text of Genesis 1 is not written as poetry, it does not apply to the verse under consideration.

Now, the order of the Hebrew in the second verse is *irregular*. This was evidently intended to draw attention to one of the above special circumstances. Either the order was changed (1) to put the tense into a pluperfect, or (2) to lay emphasis upon a new subject, or (3) by poetic license. The third alternative cannot apply here.

The second alternative is not likely either, because the introduction of a new subject in such circumstances generally implies the recurrence of the original verb and the word *create* does not recur in this instance. We have such antitheses as "Moses said this, but the Lord has said that." The verb continues the thought, but the subject is pointedly changed. In this verse it is obviously not an effort to set the subject *earth* in contradistinction with the former subject *God*. It must therefore be intended to signify the use of the pluperfect. To apply this rule here means a change in the wording of verse 2 which we shall propose shortly.

However, we can actually go further than this. The conjunctions *and* and *but* are not distinguished in Hebrew, and there are good reasons for thinking that *but* would be a better translation of the first word than *and*. In fact in Genesis 20:4, already referred to, the *waw* is logically and correctly rendered *but*.

This conjunction actually has upward of seventy meanings. It is a particle which discharges in the Hebrew the functions of all the conjunctions, both *conjunctive* and *disjunctive*, its sense being determinable in each particular case only by the relation of the context and the practice and genius of the language.

When we look to the most ancient Hebrews themselves, who were well exercised in and conversant with the peculiarities of their native tongue, we find that in this particular instance they all interpreted it by the disjunctive particle *but*, and none of them by the copulative *and*. Thus it was rendered by the first interpreters of the text, the Jews of Alexandria, nearly three hundred years before the Christian era:

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν...

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; but [...] earth [...]

In the same sense it was understood by the learned Jew, Josephus, who thus paraphrased the passage:

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ταυτης δὲ ὑπ' ὄψιν.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; *but*, the latter not coming into view [...].

In the same manner we find it in the Chaldee paraphrase, the Targum of Onkelos, which in the Latin is rendered thus: "*In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram; terra autem erat [...]*" — i.e., "the earth, however, was [...]"

The old Latin Version renders the conjunction in the same manner: *Terra autem*, etc [...]. Likewise does the Vulgate, translated by Jerome from the Hebrew original with the aid of the other translations of his time.

We thus learn how it was understood in this particular instance, by those who knew how to connect it. And it is evident that the interpretation was justified by application of the rule of the language as understood by the ancient Jewish scholars. The truth is, of course, that the Hebrew language did not possess, and therefore could not command, the diversity of particles which the Greek and the Latin both enjoy. It was therefore constrained always to repeat the same particle (*waw*), the proper sense of which was impressed in the mind of the reader by the tendency of the argument.

There is an interesting illustration of this in Acts 7:4-5, where Stephen in his address to the Jews, drawing his material closely from the Old Testament Scriptures, adhered to the idiom of the original Hebrew, rendering his conjunctions uniformly throughout by the Greek equivalent of *waw*, namely **καὶ** (*kai*). This, when it was quite unnecessary to do so, since the Greek could readily have supplied him with variants which to any other than a Hebrew might have seemed absolutely necessary. Thus he says, "*And from thence when his father was dead. He removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell; yet He gave him no inheritance in it, not so much as to set his foot on; although He promised that He would give it to him for a possession.*" In these three cases the Greek uses *kai*, because the original Hebrew used *waw*, which clearly shows how wide a variety of meanings this little word was required to convey as the context demanded. As the English required these different words, so the Greek would have used these different words, but for the fact that the writer was a man who thought in Hebrew or Aramaic but was writing in Greek.

Curiously enough, some of the early Church Fathers not only were careful to translate this as *but* instead of *and*, but they even built up weird and wonderful theses on the strength of it! This is not to say, of course, that they were right. It only goes to show that there are good reasons for believing that the alternative translation is more exact, a fact recognized from the earliest times. Tertullian argues some abstruse points on the grounds that this should so be translated.⁵ He uses the same basis for an argument on baptism.⁶ Clement also makes use of this alternative.⁷

5. Tertullian, "Against Hermogenes," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Scribners, New York, Vol. III, chap.26, p.492.

6. *Ibid.*, "On Baptism", chap. 3, p.670.

7. Clement, "Recognitions," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Scribners, New York, 1917, Vol. III, Book VI, chap.7. p.154.

Here again we are not arguing that any of this is conclusive. All we can safely say is that there is not only no objection to it (as Hebrew scholars are well aware), but there is some justification for preferring it. We may reasonably take it therefore as disjunctive rather than conjunctive.

Now, in the first half of the sentence, the verb *to be* is expressed in the Hebrew, but in the second half of the sentence it is omitted, a small fact which may have considerable significance. This is revealed in the Authorized Version by the use of ordinary type for the first *was*, but italics for the second. In Hebrew it is not usual to include any form of the verb *to be*, unless it is to signify a new situation. For example, "The man is black" would merely be written "The man black." But if the sentence reads, "The man became black," then the verb would be inserted. Thus it is omitted in the second half of this verse which says "darkness [*was*] upon the face of the deep." So also in the phrase, "God saw the light that it [*was*] good." The brackets here indicate (like the italics in the Authorized Version) that the verb does not appear in the original, because the meaning is fully covered by the English word *was*, and there is no implication of "becoming" intended. The light did not become good—it *was* good. That is all the Author wished to say. It is evident therefore that the insertion of the verbal form *hayah* (היה) is quite deliberate and should be translated *became* rather than *was*.⁸

We must note that in addition to this, however, the presence of the inverted order of words indicates that what would normally be translated *became* must actually be rendered in the pluperfect tense, i.e., *had become*. It is sometimes argued that *hayah* means "become" only when followed by the Hebrew letter *lamedh* (ל) placed before the next word. This is not actually so. Quite often the *lamedh* follows the verb, but very frequently it does not. The absence of *lamedh* before the qualifying word does not always seem to determine the exact meaning of the verb *to be*. Any number of examples can be given where this verb has the significance of "becoming" without the *lamedh* following. Genesis 19:26 is a good illustration because it is a familiar verse: "Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." In 2 Kings 17:3: "Against him came up Shalmaneser King of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents." In Judges 11:39f., the sense is obviously "and it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah."

There is really no need to give references to prove something so commonly known. Yet if illustrations are desirable, the first chapter of Genesis furnishes plenty of them. Thus in verse 3 the actual Hebrew should be translated: "And God said, 'Let there become light: and it became light.'" To indicate this, the verb *to be* is twice written in the text as shown by the use of solid type for "be" and "was." But it did not "become" good in verse 4, so *was* appears in italics, since no Hebrew verb is used in the original. In verse 5, the introduction of light led to a new thing, a time period which "became" the first day. Similarly throughout the chapter, this principle is clearly and consistently applied. In verse 12: "The seed [*was*] in itself" — not became in itself; and in verse 29: "The Lord said, I have given you [...] all that [is] upon the

8. The author's *Without Form and Void* (published by Doorway Papers, Brockville, Ontario, 1970) examines this matter in some considerable depth and demonstrates that this verb *hayah* (היה) almost always (if not without exception) carries the sense of *becoming* and is probably never used copulatively at all.

face of the earth"; consequently the verb *to be* is not represented in the original Hebrew in either case, a fact noted in the Authorized Version by the use of italics for the word *is*.

The Old Testament is full of examples. On every page they can be found as long as the Authorized Version is used; this is one of the advantages this version has over the Revised Standard Version. A glance at Judges 6 and 7 will illustrate this beautifully, for here the verb *to be* is written in italics where it simply means "was" or "is," etc., because it has been omitted in the Hebrew original. This will be noted in Judges 6:10 (*am*), 13 (*be*), 15 (*is* and *am*), 22 (*was*), 24 (*is*), 25 (*is*), 30 (*was*), 31 (*is* and *be*); 7:1 (*is*), 2 (*are* and *are*), 3 (*is*), 12 (*were*), 13 (*was*), 14 (*is*). These all appear in italics. But contrast 6:27, where "was" is *not* in italics and therefore a really new situation has come about, i.e., "and so it came to be that" or "it came to pass that because he feared [...]."

It is a remarkable fact that we have in Jeremiah 4:23 what appears to be an exact parallel to Genesis 1:2; but there is this significant difference which is clear enough to anyone who will read the Authorized Version text with care. In Jeremiah 4:23 the verb *was* is in italics. The sense is therefore simply, "I beheld the earth and lo, it was without form and void." The statement in Genesis 1:2 is significantly different.

Only a student of Hebrew is in a position to verify these references in the original. By the time he is able to do this, he will have had the opportunity to discover constant occasions when the verb *to be* is used to give the sense of "becoming" and so is inserted (unlike the copula), and without the addition of *lamedh*.

As Martin Anstey, no mean Hebrew scholar, pointed out some years ago,

The Hebrew verb **היה** (*Hayah*, i.e., "to be") here translated "was," signifies not only "to be" but also "to become," "to take place," "to come to pass." When a Hebrew writer makes a simple affirmation, or merely predicates the existence of anything, the verb **היה** is never expressed. Where it is expressed it must always be translated by our verb "to become," never by the verb "to be," if we desire to convey the exact shade of the meaning of the original [...].

The Hebrew of Gen. 1:2 requires the rendering of *Hayah* by the word "became," instead of the word "was" or better still "had become," the separation of the *Waw* from the verb being the Hebrew method of indicating the pluperfect tense.⁹

To the reader who is not convinced of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, this may sound like too much emphasis on words. Yet any English sentence may change its entire meaning not only by an inversion of words, but even by a change of emphasis! "Yes" may mean "no," an affirmative becomes a question or even a negative. It is a fundamental requisite in the interpretation of Hebrew that we master at least the rudiments of its inflectional qualities and peculiarities. It is most important in the case of a language simple in its structure that we be able to interpret correctly the subtle distinctions of meaning which are thus introduced by

9. Anstey, Martin, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, Marshall, London, 1913, p.62.

artificial means. I. A. McCaul, lecturer in Hebrew at King's College, London, stated in a paper presented before the Victoria Institute, dealing specifically with this question: "In my own mind there is no doubt whatever that this is the meaning of the Hebrew words."¹⁰ Iverach Munro, also in a paper before the Victoria Institute, wrote:

Contrary to the usual opinion, the Hebrew narrative actually appears to go out of its way to make room for this doctrine (i.e., of a break in the history at this point), which, developed in the Old Testament, culminates in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles in the New.

In the second verse the usual Hebrew construction to express continuous development would have been, as Hebraists are aware, the imperfect with Waw Conversive, i.e., **וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ** (*wat-tehi ha-a-rets*) which would be correctly translated "and the earth was," etc. The fact, however, is that the narrative goes out of the usual to say **וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה** (*weha-a-rets ha-yethah*), the Waw being separated from its verb, the usual way of expressing in Hebrew the pluperfect. When we turn to the third chapter of Genesis, verse 3, we find the same peculiarity in the narrative. The "Serpent" used as the embodiment of the power of evil is spoken of thus: **וְהַנָּחַשׁ הָיָה** (*Wehan-naghash ha-yah*). "Now the Serpent had become," etc., not "was" as in our translation.¹¹

We now have this:

IN A FORMER STATE GOD PERFECTED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH; BUT THE EARTH HAD BECOME . . .

"Without form and void. . . ."

We come therefore to a consideration of the words, "without form and void" (**תְּהוֹ וּבְהוּ** – *tohu wa-bohu*). From the outset we can say unequivocally that both words, whether occurring together or singly, are used throughout Scripture in connection with something under God's judgment. *Tohu* is used of something which has been laid waste (Isaiah 24:10; 34:11; Jeremiah 4:23) or has become desert (Deuteronomy 32:10) or of anything which is the object of false "worship" and therefore displeasing to God, as in Isaiah 41:29, etc. With the Hebrew preposition **לְ** (*lamedh*) it becomes an adverb, (Isaiah 49:4) and means "wastefully" or "in vain." In Isaiah 45:18 it is possibly an adverbial accusative of the noun, although the form is identical with the noun itself. We shall have occasion subsequently to examine this particular passage more carefully. Gesenius and Tregelles in their respective lexicons both define the meaning of the noun as "waste-ness; specifically that which is wasted or laid waste."

10. McCaul, I. A., in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol.70, 1938, p.116.

11. Munro, Iverach, in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol.46, 1914, p.151-52.

It is sometimes coupled with the word, **בוהו** (*bohu*), as in Jeremiah 4:23; Isaiah 34:11; and of course as here in Genesis 1:2. In fact these are the only three occurrences of this word in Scripture. In Jeremiah 4:23 the desolation which the two words together are used to portray is the result of a direct judgment of God upon the land and upon its inhabitants. When Jeremiah saw this vision, judgment had already been executed, and the land was in a state of desolation. In Isaiah 34:11 the same may be said, for the scene is one of God's "day of vengeance" (verse 8). In this case it is Idumea which is under consideration. The confusion is to be complete, the judgment final. Such is the evident meaning of the only other passages in which the expression found in Genesis 1:2 occurs elsewhere in Scripture.

Some further possible light on the meaning of these words may be found in the pagan mythologies now known from the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria. The word *bohu*, in slightly variant forms, was associated with destruction, and thence directly with the Destroyer. Wallis Budge, one of the earlier great cuneiform scholars, speaking of the Assyrian traditions in this connection, explains how the god Tiamat is said to have dwelt in the sea and to have been a kindred demon of Bahu, the personification of disorder.¹² This word is evidently to be equated with the *bohu* of Genesis 1:2. In fact he subsequently points out that the word *tahu* (the *tohu* of Genesis 1:2) is found also as a goddess of destruction.

The collaboration of these two evil beings, Bahu and Tiamat, brings us to a consideration of the final word of verse 2, translated deep (**תהום** *tehom*). We are told that the earth had not only become a desolation and a ruin, but "darkness was upon the face of the deep." Of course, darkness (except insofar as "night" is intended) is always associated with that which God has turned away from in judgment. The word is found, for example, in Psalm 36:6: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep." One might suppose that it has the same significance here also, although some feel that the darkness was due to material causes only and merely signified a state of incompleteness. Yet this is not the normal word used simply to signify the absence of light, as in the nighttime.

The word *tehom* (**תהום**) is evidently derived from a root *hamah* (**המה**), which means "to roar," and then "to confuse" or "to create confusion." Almost all Assyriologists equate the word *Tiamat* (and the earlier word *Apsu* of the Sumerian traditions) with this Hebrew noun *tehom*. No one who respects the Word of God as such will suppose for a moment that the inspired writer borrowed such a term with its familiar pagan connotations in mythology. It is almost certain that this first chapter of Genesis far antedates the much later cuneiform texts in which these cognate words are found. It is quite as likely that the simple statement of Genesis 1:2, having been written long before, became common property in the ancient world. Those who in early times educated their students in the traditional lore of their day seem to have had a strong liking for animation. We are only now discovering how successfully abstruse subjects can be taught by the animation of the elements, particularly to a less sophisticated audience.

Thus, if we suppose that the second verse records an actual event of serious, perhaps catastrophic proportions which resulted from the rebellion of a

12. Budge, Wallis, *Babylonian Life and Times, Bye-paths to Bible Knowledge*, Religious Tract Society, London. 1897, p.140.

supernatural being, it is not difficult to see how the beginnings of a titanic struggle could have stirred the imagination of early writers to set the story forth in new forms, giving personalities to the forces involved and climaxing the drama with the ultimate triumph of Light. There is every reason to believe that this is the clue to much in ancient cosmogonies.

There cannot be any doubt that *tehom* means either a place of judgment or a place *under* judgment. The most cursory glance at its occurrences in the Old Testament and its equivalent in the New certainly lends weight to this assumption. "The deep" was always associated with the place to which must finally be banished from the presence of the Lord those who were not worthy to enter heaven.

The Septuagint, like the New Testament, has ἄβυσσος (*Abussos*), in place of *tehom*, and undoubtedly the Abyss of Revelation 9:11, etc., is the same concept. The word is, in fact, manifestly a borrowed term, derived from the Apsu of the Sumerians. At the same time the authors of the Septuagint translated *bohu* by the Greek equivalent ἀκατασκεύαστος (*akataskeuastos*) which means actually the very opposite of the Hebrew word *bara*, since it signifies something rough, unpolished, unfinished. Even if we did not know by revelation that God's work is perfect, we might still hesitate to think of anything coming from His hand in a state of such confusion and disorder. We have only to consider the beauty of the lily, or for that matter of any single part of His creation, to see how perfect and fitting is His work. God does not labour to perfect or seek (by experiment) for modes of expression that are suitable. He proceeds directly, for there is no imperfection in His wisdom. The Greek original in 1 Corinthians 14:33 is remarkable in that it clearly adopts a vocabulary in contradistinction to the Greek text of Genesis 1:2, with which Paul, of course, was perfectly familiar. Such a chaotic state could hardly be as God made it, and we are not surprised therefore to find that the Hebrew indicates rather that it *became* so.

Now, Isaiah says specifically that God did not create the earth in a state of *tohu*. Whether we interpret the *tohu* (תהו) of this passage to mean simply "a desolation" or to mean "in vain" (treating it as an adverbial accusative) is of little importance. There is actually nothing in the Hebrew to reveal whether it is to be taken as a noun or an adverb. In any case the adverb carries the same sense as the noun, only in a different form: it still signifies potential failure. We are explicitly told in Genesis 1:1 of the creation of the earth, and Genesis 1:2 appears to qualify it as a *tohu*; yet Isaiah 45:18 says equally explicitly that God did not so create it. And one must therefore assume that Genesis 1:2 is not intended to elaborate Genesis 1:1, but is strictly descriptive of a subsequent condition. In fact, the Revised Standard Version has for this verse (Isaiah 45:18), "He did not create it a chaos." It should be noted also that an official Roman Catholic edition in French, translated by Crampon, renders this statement, "*Qui n'en a pas fait un chaos*," i.e., "who did not make of it a chaos."

Isaiah 45:18 is very carefully worded, like all Scripture. It will bear careful examination accordingly.

"Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens [...]." Here we appear to have the original creative act of Genesis 1:1. "God Himself that fashioned (יצר *yatsar*) the earth, and appointed it (עשה *'asah*). " He "established it" (*kun*, i.e., "set it in order,"

since it had become a confusion), but "He created it not a confusion. He formed (יצר *yatzar*, "fashioned") it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is none else."

Now *yatzar* really means to give shape to something shapeless, just as God took the dust of the ground and "fashioned" the Man (Genesis 2:7, Hebrew). It seems to imply the same kind of action here; but perhaps it is even more nearly like the action of the potter of whom Jeremiah wrote elsewhere, for this potter was fashioning a vessel, and it was marred in his hands so that he had to remodel it again (Jeremiah 18). In this incident the word *potter* is a translation of the present active participle of the verb *yatzar*.

The context of Isaiah 45:18 is worth noticing also. In the previous verses the prophet is arguing that although for the time being Israel is in a state of confusion – because of their own failure to serve the Lord with a true witness and because of the impending Assyrian conquest – yet God would still finally bring the nation back to health and fruitfulness. Perhaps he is pointing out that it is not the first time such a state of judgment and confusion has preceded a time of great enlightenment and deliverance. He remarks therefore on how the condition of the earth had at one time been ruinous, because it was under great judgment for reasons not stated; yet he affirms the Lord's original intention that it should be habitable, a thing of beauty and life and vitality. The same Lord who *is* the Lord would yet restore Israel as He restored a ruined earth.

In Isaiah 45:19, the phrase *in vain* occurs once more, the original Hebrew being again the same as in verse 18. Manifestly the appropriate translation here would be, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me to no purpose." If this alternative were to be applied to Genesis 1:2, the need for some break in the context is even more imperative, for surely God did not create the heavens and the earth *to no purpose!* Yet unless the hiatus is introduced between Genesis 1:1 and 2, this is exactly what is implied.

Paul Isaac Hershon, in his *Rabbinical Commentary on Genesis*, at Genesis 1:2,3 gave the text as follows:

And the earth was desolate and void. The earth will be desolate, for the Shechinah will depart (from the earth) at the destruction of the temple, and hence it is said: And the spirit of God hovered upon the face of the water; which intimates to us, that even although we be in exile (when, with the destruction of the temple, the Shechinah will depart), yet the Torah shall not depart from us; and therefore it is added: And God said, Let there be light. This shows us that after the captivity God will enlighten us, and send us the Messiah, respecting Whom it is said: Arise, shine, for thy light is come.¹³

Now, this method of interpretation seems strange to us today. But what is important here is that it could in no wise be justified unless the Jewish interpreters were taking this scene in Genesis to be one of desolation due to judgment. If they understood it to be the beginning of a promise of glory, it could certainly not be

13. Hershon, Paul Isaac, *A Rabbinical Commentary on Genesis*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1885, p.2.

taken as a picture of the earth when God turns away from it in anger at the destruction of His temple.

Moreover, it seems rather clear that Paul himself was influenced by this kind of tradition, even in fact by the very wording. When he wrote to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:6) he said, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." In this passage it is surely to be understood that Paul is saying by analogy, As God called for light to begin a re-creation of a ruined earth, so He calls for light to shine into our hearts to bring about the re-creation of a new man.

This Rabbinical Commentary therefore supports the Targum of Onkelos, which translated the words *without form* by the Aramaic for the phrase *was destroyed*, using a passive participle.

It is almost certain that we are here dealing with a catastrophic judgment brought upon an originally perfect creation, which had left the marks of confusion, lifelessness, and darkness revealed in Genesis 1:2.

It is with this in mind, perhaps, or certainly on the strength of the Hebrew text as it stands, that John Skinner in commenting on this passage remarks, "The safest exegesis would be to take Genesis 1:2 to indicate not a state of primeval chaos, but a darkened and devastated earth from which life and order had fled."¹⁴

So we may now set forth these two verses thus:

*IN A FORMER STATE GOD PERFECTED THE HEAVENS AND EARTH;
BUT THE EARTH HAD BECOME A DEVASTATED RUIN.*

If there really is a discontinuity here between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, not only does it give much room for further inquiry as to why the judgment was brought upon an originally perfect earth, but it also throws additional light on the work of the six days, as we shall see. We should also expect to find some reference to this catastrophe in the New Testament.

Anyone at all familiar with this whole problem is well aware of the evidence in the New Testament which is revealed in a peculiarly recurrent phrase, "the foundation of the world."

It has been pointed out many times that this is an interpretation rather than a translation of the original Greek, since **καταβολή** (*katabole*) does not actually appear to mean "foundation," but "casting down." One of the best-informed Christian scholars of the early church was careful to point this out, and his reference is important, since to him Greek was his mother tongue. Origen indicates the proper meaning of this word for his readers by equating it with *dejicere* in the Latin, which he argues must mean "to throw down."¹⁵ It is perfectly true that in subsequent usage it came to mean "the foundations," since they were laid down first. But in New Testament Greek it does not appear to have this significance. Every occurrence (with the possible exception of John 17:24) will be found to be directly in connection with God's plan of redemption; since the catastrophe seems really to have been the

14. Skinner, John, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1951, p.17.

15. Origen, "De Principis," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Scribners, New York, 1917, vol. IV, Book 3, chap. 5, p.4.

first evidence of God's anger toward a previous world that was now spoiled by sin, it marks a "first point" in His plan of redemption, a redemption that may have a very wide basis, as Romans 8:22 possibly signifies.

On the other hand, whenever there is absolutely no question of judgment, and whenever we are clearly in view of the original creation (as seen in Genesis 1:1), the correct Greek word for *foundation* (**θεμέλιος** *themelios*) is always used. So we have in Hebrews 1:10, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the works of Thy hands." This is clearly indicative of the proper word to be used to express the true "foundation" of the world.

In the following verses the word *themelios* or a derivative will be found to occur, and in every single case the meaning is beyond question a true *foundation*:

Acts 16:26	Romans 15:20
Luke 14:21	1 Corinthians 3:10-12
Revelation 21:14-19	Hebrews 6:1
Luke 6:48-49	Ephesians 2:20
1 Timothy 6:19	Hebrews 1 1:10
2 Timothy 2:19	

Surely, if there is a word unambiguously employed in Greek for the concept of a "foundation," it would have been consistently used in the recurrent phrase "the foundation of the world," if this phrase was intended to signify the original act of creation. On the contrary, we find a word chosen which primarily has quite another meaning and is used on a number of occasions in a context which seems to be most meaningful if it is understood in the light of our interpretation of Genesis 1:2. It might of course be argued that *katabole* was used because the word had come to be associated with the word *kosmos* by a kind of unwritten law established by literary usage. But this is not so. It happens that on a number of occasions the word *kosmos* is accompanied by the English word *beginning*. For example, in Matthew 24:21 we have in the Greek the following: **ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου** — *apo arkes kosmou* — "from the beginning of the kosmos."

Mark 10:6 and Mark 13:19, and also 2 Peter 3:4 contain another expression: **ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως** — *apo de arkes ktiseos* — "from the beginning of Creation."

In Mark 10:6 the words are "From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female"; in Mark 13:19, "For in those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be"; and in 2 Peter 3:4, "When is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

In each of these passages, the obvious intent of the writer is to refer back to the foundation of the world; but in no case does he employ the word *katabole*.

We find in Hebrews 1:10 an entirely different word used in connection with the original heavens and earth of Genesis 1:1; but the word *katabole* is frequently used on occasions where it could not possibly mean anything else than a "throwing down." So, for example, the saints are spoken of as "persecuted, but not forsaken; *cast down*, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:9). So also in Revelation 12:10 the text

reads, "The accuser of our brethren is *cast down*." And in Hebrews 11:11 Sarah is given strength for the "casting out" of her seed, i.e., for the delivering of her child when she was past age. Moreover, in Hebrews 6:1 both words, or derivatives of them, occur in the same sentence. This passage must surely be translated "not again casting out [i.e., throwing away] the foundation of repentance [...]." In his exhaustive commentary on the New Testament, Olshausen at this point dealt at some length with this and concluded:

We are therefore reduced to the necessity of taking *Kataballeshai* (the verb form) in the signification *which is the original one and the most common*, namely, "to throw down," "demolish," "destroy": which the word has in all the Greek classical writers and which it cannot surprise us to find in our author who writes elegant Greek.¹⁶

Olshausen then adds a number of illuminating remarks regarding such usages to support his contention, and comments, "The apostle would assuredly not have dissuaded men from 'laying again' the foundation of repentance, in the case of its having been destroyed."

Note the careful use of words here in the passage: not again "casting away" (**καταβαλλόμενοι** – *kataballomenoi*) the "foundation" (**θεμέλιον** – *themelion*) of repentance. This sentence is most significant in that the two words under consideration appear in juxtaposition, so placed as to convey a careful distinction between the concepts involved. Some texts of the New Testament use here a form of the word *ballo* (**βάλλω**) meaning simply "to throw." But other variant texts have the more specific form *katablethe* (**κατεβλήθη** from **καταβάλλω**) thus showing clearly what is the real meaning of this verb form as the New Testament writers employed it, since the more specific form means not merely to "throw," but to "throw down."

In his Introduction, and in a note on the early stages of Sophism—a phase in the development of Greek philosophy which led to a very general skepticism and indeed to Pilate's query "What is Truth?"—Forman has this passage: "Protagoras was a despairing skeptic, yet quite content withal, and on the assumed basis, quite hopeful of furthering humanity's progress by teaching rhetoric and what he called 'knock-down arguments'."¹⁷ In this sentence the same root word is employed (**καταβάλλοντες λόγους** – *kataballontes logoi*). It is therefore evident that classical Greek attached the same general meaning to the word.

Since *kosmos* in Greek is a word which implies order or arrangement and thence came to mean "ornament" also, it is not surprising that such a catastrophe should have been given an accepted and peculiarly appropriate phraseology, "The disruption of the ordered world" (**ἡ καταβολὴ τοῦ κόσμου** – *katabole tou kosmou*).

Moreover, if the days of Genesis were to be taken as long, long periods of time, perhaps millions of years, it would mean that the fall of man is separated from the actual "foundation of the world" by a very long period—a period in fact in the light

16. Olshausen, Hermann, *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament*, translated by A. C. Kendrick Sheldon. New York, 1861, vol. VI, p. 431.

17. Forman, L. L., *Plato Selections*, Macmillan, London, 1900, p.39

of which the total span of subsequent human history seems to be of little importance in point of time. To fix the time of the original creation as a significant "landmark" in God's redemptive plan as applied to man is therefore rather strange. But if we are here face to face with a judgment of the earth, introduced as a result of sin on the part of Satan and some of the angels, the effects of which were still clearly in evidence only six days before Adam was created, it is much more logical to consider this as a significant point in time from which to date the details of redemption. For the fall of Satan led to the fall of man also. But, of course, this brings us to another controversy — whether the days of Genesis are true days or long periods of time.

There are only a few ways of determining the laws of syntax and grammar in any language. One means is by the traditions revealed in rudimentary grammatical notes from earliest times. This method yields very small results, although it has yielded some in the study of cuneiform texts; it is characteristic of the Jewish people to have preserved all kinds of miscellaneous data regarding their own Scriptures, some of which help toward determining the laws of language.

Another method, most commonly in use, is to examine the literature and establish laws on the basis of actual use, making due allowance for poetic license and for exceptions. Hebrew is a particularly beautiful language, and although very difficult to master at first, it is most satisfying to study. Its laws regarding the use of numerals may appear to us as strange, but they are nevertheless well established. So far no rules have been sufficiently agreed upon with respect to the use of the word *day* (the Hebrew word *yom*, as used throughout the Creation account) by which its exact meaning may be determined in individual cases. At least no rules have yet appeared in textbooks of grammar or syntax. Sometimes it means a period of twenty-four hours, and sometimes an indefinite period.

However, it is evident that there is a possibility of establishing its particular meanings by a consideration of the qualifying words. If we exclude the usage in Genesis 1 from the argument, it is found as an invariable rule that in all other cases whenever the word *day* is used and whenever it is accompanied by a numeral, it refers to an actual day. Any concordance will quickly reveal that this is so. There is in fact only one type of exception, which is not really an exception but rather an indirect confirmation of the "rule" it appears to break, namely, that on one or two occasions a specified number of days are said to mean a specified number of years. But the very fact that these occasions are very carefully followed by an explanatory note is sufficient to consider them as deliberate departures from common usage rather than as grounds for latitude in interpreting the word as a general rule. And if it were intended in these cases to make it even more explicit, the word *day* is enlarged upon somewhat by using the more elaborate phrase "evening and morning." Thus Daniel 8:14 reads, "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." The Hebrew here has "unto 2,300 evenings and mornings." The Revised Version has perhaps wisely followed this literally.

The object of this peculiar emphasis seems to arise out of the circumstances. Daniel was greatly troubled on account of the great trials which were to come upon

the Chosen People and their city, and his cry goes up, with the cries of other saints, "How long?" Then this answer is given in very precise terms. It is not of indefinite duration, but 2,300 exact days, a period elsewhere revealed as being exactly 3 1/2 years (half a week of years), and another period of 2 years 10 months and 20 days. We need not attempt any interpretations of prophecy here, but it should be pointed out that the phrase "evening-morning" came to be a familiar one. The Hebrew thought was subsequently translated into Greek and is found in 2 Corinthians 11:25 (*νυκθήμερον* – *nuchthemeron*), where Paul says, "A night and a day I have been in the deep." This compound form does not appear to have been used in classical Greek at all. It must therefore be truly a Hebrew thought expressed in Greek by a coined word, and its use in this instance may have been because Paul was writing this passage with the Hebrew people particularly in mind.

It can never be argued dogmatically, even if the matter of the usage of this word should find its way into some textbook of Hebrew grammar. The "laws" in such textbooks, after all, represent little more than an agreement of the experts, a consensus of opinion based on known occurrences. Yet the weight of literary evidence seems to be in favour of actual days, even if such a conclusion presents problems for the student of natural science.

The fact is that the Hebrew language just does not have any other way of expressing the exact idea of a true day! How else could it have been written? But the idea of a long period of time could have been very easily written in a number of clear and unambiguous ways. The use of the word '*olam* (עולם) would have been logical, for example; on many occasions '*olam* is used of great ages in the past of indeterminate duration. It seems a clear departure from the obvious sense of the original to interpret these days as anything but true days. A phrase such as "the day of the Lord" or "the day of salvation" is unambiguous, and it is hard to see how a day of "an evening and a morning" is any more difficult to interpret. A child would have no hesitation in understanding the primary significance of each. There is no warrant from other passages for denying the obvious meaning.

This view is not by any means held exclusively by evangelicals or conservatives of the older school. As will be seen in the appendix which deals with this point, a letter to a select group of Hebrew scholars who are heads of their respective departments in nine major universities reveals a basic unanimity on this point. They consider that from a strictly linguistic or grammatical point of view, the Author intended a period of a common day.

Some years ago, Dr. Herbert Ryle, a churchman not to be confused with his father, the Evangelical Bishop Ryle, but a man of higher critical persuasion and no mean scholar, wrote as follows on this point:

If, then, it was still to be supposed that Gen. 1 definitely instructed us in science, some other interpretation of "the days" than the old literal one had to be found. The very discoveries of physical science suggested a solution. If "the days" were understood not as literal days but as infinite ages, or as vast periods in the development of the earth's formation, then it seemed as if the threatened contradiction of Scripture and Science might be averted,

and as if the words of Genesis might receive unexpected confirmation from the testimony of Science.

Accordingly, the metaphorical interpretation of "the days" found very general favour. Scholars and men of science have sought to show how, with allowance for the exigencies of poetic language, the statements of the opening chapter of Genesis may be brought into comparatively close agreement with even the most recent results of scientific inquiry.

But just as, in the earlier phase of interpretation, it was found that, by starting from a literal interpretation, a collision with scientific facts could not be avoided, so now, in the later phase, it is an objection that, starting from the facts of science, it has been necessary to have recourse to a forced or, at any rate, a non-literal interpretation. In a passage of striking simplicity of language, it is impossible not to feel an uncomfortable suspicion that it cannot be right to attach a non-literal explanation to just that one single word, the literal meaning of which happens to be a stumbling block in the way of the desired method of exegesis. And surely the doubt whether this non-literal explanation of "the days" can be correct, will be intensified in the mind of any one who also considers that the proposed explanation could never have suggested itself to the ancient Israelite, and would never today have been mooted, but for the discoveries of modern science.¹⁸

Yet if it is true that in Genesis 1:3ff. we have a picture of how God renewed the face of the earth by sending forth His Spirit (Psalm 104:30) after a judgment in which He had hidden His face (Psalm 104:29) so that animal life had perished by reason of a major catastrophe, what follows may very reasonably be understood as six days of re-creation.

It is not our purpose to examine the work of these days. But we may observe here the peculiar way in which the work of the "first" day is not spoken of as the work of the *first* day; it is merely said to be "one day." The implication of the Hebrew is that "there came a day when" God called His creative light to work again upon the earth's surface, after many days in which the earth had remained a ruin. It was not the first day strictly speaking, since the earth had seen many before in a previous creation. It was "one day" which arrived in God's good time. Naturally as a point of departure we may reasonably pass on to a "second" and "third" day, and so on. The word used *without* the article is also significant, as though to signify not *the* first day but merely as we have said, "one day." This was not the beginning of time. The second, third, fourth, and fifth days are then qualified by the use of ordinal numbers to indicate their relationship to the work of the first day. The sixth and seventh are once more signally marked off by the use of the definite article as though the writer would draw attention to the climax of creation and the pause which followed.

18. Ryle, Herbert, *The Early Narratives of Genesis*, Macmillan, London, 1904, pp.24-26.

Now, this is not because the Hebrew normally uses *one* without the definite article by rule, for it does not. Any number of passages reveal this (cf. for example, the Hebrew in Genesis 2:11; 4:19). And while the word *one* in Hebrew may occasionally be used instead of the word for "first" (i.e., *echod* — אֶחָד , instead of the word *rishon* — רִשׁוֹן) this occurs only when the definite article is added, making it by way of distinction "the one [...] the other," and so forth. In this passage there must be a specific reason for the construction as it is, and by understanding it as we have suggested, a distinct idea is revealed. "There came a day when . . ." This is not merely a "question of words"; it is a matter of the actual intent of the original.

Those who suggest that the days were geological ages argue that the term "evening and morning" really defines the beginning and the conclusion of these ages. Apart from the fact, however, that these ages do not actually exist except in textbooks where they are adopted for mnemonic reasons, there are perfectly good Hebrew words for *beginning* and *end*, were these what the Author really had in mind.

It is never quite fair to make appeals for special meanings, unless the language has no other way of conveying the idea. If we adopted this governing principle on all occasions (and not one of us does), it might save a lot of argument. However, it often happens, as Neander pointed out long ago, that a man sees some point of interpretation as a fundamental issue, and dare not yield for fear that the whole body of Christian truth will be endangered. Such a spirit of adherence to an idea is often due to anxiety for the welfare of the whole truth rather than for a single aspect of it. And while such concern is commendable in itself, it is a great pity that as members of the blameless family of God, we cannot learn to disagree agreeably when the issue is not vital, instead of impugning the intelligence (even the honesty sometimes) of our opponents. It is unwise to close one's mind to an alternative which is not vital, while other more vital issues are left without sufficient definition. Not infrequently, dogmatism is exactly in inverse proportion to scholarship—perhaps it inevitably is.

It is hardly fair to argue that we must assume God would want us to take the plain sense of Scripture and that by all this preamble we are departing from it. It is hardly fair for two reasons. The first is the assumption that the English text as we read it *is* the plain sense of Scripture. The second is that we have to decide whether we mean the plain sense of verse 2 or the plain sense of the word *day!* We can hardly argue for both, as they stand, unless we hold the universe to be not much more than six thousand years old. The very people who argue most strongly for the "plain sense" of verse 2 have a tendency to "interpret" the "days" of the rest of the chapter as geological ages even though it seems obvious that the writer had real days in mind

The fact is that in many cases the plain sense of the Hebrew can only be determined by a Hebrew scholar. Even then he may be led or misled by what he thinks the text ought to say. Nevertheless, no one acquainted with Hebrew and able to read it with some fluency keeping track of its subtle forms of syntax, will question the allowability of what we have thus far suggested with respect to the text itself. It may take a long time to arrive at a true translation of a passage, even

knowing the laws of the language and its vocabulary. Many passages have taken years to translate so that the real meaning is clear; some are not yet truly "translated." We are not labouring to interpret these two verses to suit a thesis. It required very careful study to notice the exact pointing, the choice of words, the order and significance of inclusions and omissions. This is *Hebrew*, and it must be studied as Hebrew.

I can well remember spending eleven hours trying to translate the very first line of the Prism of Sennacherib from the cuneiform original. It was only a few words long, and I finally ended up with this sentence: "May the god Sin multiply brothers." Actually it was the name *Sennacherib*! True, the name has this meaning approximately, but the mere possession of a dictionary and a grammar were not enough. We had failed to notice a little sign which indicated that what followed was a name!

Since then I have learned by many other experiences in the study of a number of oriental languages that, unlike our own literature, the very simplicity of them in certain respects often tended to make exact statement depend upon small "artificial" means. These means make all the difference in the world! Unless we take proper account of such apparent inconsequentialities, we cannot safely say we have translated even the simplest passage of the original Hebrew.

And therefore, with no claim to infallibility and certainly in no spirit of unbending dogmatism, we submit that a more exact translation of these verses would be something like this:

IN A FORMER STATE GOD PERFECTED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. BUT THE EARTH HAD BECOME A RUIN AND A DESOLATION, AND THE DARKNESS OF JUDGMENT WAS UPON THE FACE OF IT.



Chapter 3

The Continuity of Tradition

In spite of the evidence to the contrary, some of the best authorities still maintain that this interpretation of the text is a modern one. They argue that it is extracted by an unjustified exegesis of the original Hebrew which has little linguistic support. It is presented as a solution to the problem of the apparent conflict between the current views of modern geology and an outmoded view of Scripture by those who are determined to have the days of Genesis mean periods of twenty-four hours! It is traced back to Chalmers (who was an able exponent of this view) and then dismissed—sometimes as hardly worthy of serious consideration, nearly always with the implication that it is an emergency measure without real foundation.

It is strange in this particular instance that any Christian scholar should make such an assertion, because this interpretation has been held by men of learning and integrity almost since commentaries on the Old Testament were first written. Not that all these arguments have been presented previously. They have not. But the general thesis most certainly has. When geologists in the middle of the last century first formulated the concept of vast ages for the formation of stratified rocks containing fossils, the challenge to Scripture was recognized at once, and the significance of a correct translation of Genesis 1:2 was quickly understood by a few evangelical scholars. That this view of Genesis had already been held by ancient authorities was pointed out, for example in the Revised Edition of Chamber's *Encyclopedia*, published in 1860. Under the heading "Genesis," we find the following statement:

Two principal methods of reconciliation (between the Creation story of Genesis and the conclusions of modern Geology) are advanced, those of Dr. Buckland, and Hugh Miller respectively. The first of which adopts and amplifies the Chalmerian interpolation of geological ages prior to the first day [...] an opinion strangely enough to be found already in the Midrash.

It should be pointed out that the Midrash is the oldest pre-Christian exposition of the Old Testament. For fifteen hundred years after the Exile it had accumulated from the explanations of scriptural passages proposed by various Jewish scholars.

It had become the basis of rabbinical teaching in the time of our Lord. Dr. Thomas Chalmers was born in 1780 and died in 1847. The Jewish commentators considerably antedated the learned doctor!

William Buckland, to whom the *Encyclopedia* makes reference, contributed a paper in 1836 in the *Bridgewater Treatises* in which he stated his view in the following excerpt:

The word "beginning" as applied by Moses expressed an undefined period of time, which was antecedent to the last great change that affected the surface of the earth, and to the creation of its present animal and vegetable inhabitants, during which period a long series of operations may have been going on: which, as they are wholly unconnected with the history of the human race, are passed over in silence by the sacred historian whose only concern was barely to state that the matter of the universe is not eternal and self-existent, but was originally created by the power of the Almighty [...]. The first verse of Genesis seems explicitly to assert the creation of the Universe, the heaven, including the sidereal systems, and the earth more especially specifying our own planet as the subsequent scene of the operations of the six days about to be described [...].

Millions of millions of years may have occupied the indefinite interval between the beginning in which God created the heaven and the earth, and the evening or commencement of the first day of the Mosaic narrative [...]. We have in verse 2 a distinct mention of the earth and waters as already existing and involved in darkness. Their condition also described as a state of confusion and emptiness (*tohu wa bohu*), words which are usually interpreted by the vague and indefinite Greek term chaos, and which may be geologically considered as designating the wreck and ruins of a former world.¹⁹

The other gentleman referred to in Chamber's article was one of those enviable scholars who was able to adorn the naked facts of geology in the most beautiful literary garments. Hugh Miller interpreted the days of Genesis as geological ages.

But let us return to the Jewish commentators. In the "Book of Light," known to the Jews as the *Sefer Hazzohar*, or simply *Zohar* – traditionally ascribed to Simeon ben Jochai, a disciple of the more famous Akiba – there is a comment on Genesis 2:4-6 which, though admittedly rather difficult to follow, reads thus:

"These are the generations of heaven and earth, etc." Now wherever there is written the word "these" (אלה) the former words are put aside. And these are the generations of the destruction, which is signified in verse 2 of Chapter 1. The earth was *Tohu* and *Bohu*. These indeed are the words of which it is said that the blessed

19. Buckland, William, "Geology and Mineralogy Considered With Reference to Natural Theology," *Bridgewater Treatises*, Pickering, London, 1836, vol.1.

God created the worlds, and *destroyed them*, and *on that account* the earth was "desolate and empty" (tohu and bohu).

Like most of the Cabalistic literature of the Jews, of which the Sefer Hazzohar is a part, this extract is not easy to follow. But it means in effect that the interpretation which the writer placed upon Genesis 1:2 was very similar to that attributed by others more recently to Chalmers. In Simeon's view, the old world was destroyed, and on that account the earth was desolate and empty as described in the second verse.

It is perfectly true that the passage is attributed to a disciple of Akiba, a famous Jewish scholar, a Palestinian rabbi living from about A.D. 50 to about A.D. 132. But this ascription is questioned by some modern authorities who claim that the Zohar is written in a form of Aramaic which demonstrates it to have been composed as late as the twelfth or thirteenth century A.D. Even so, it shows that the view was held centuries before the coming of modern geology.

But we can trace the idea a little further back still. Among the early Jewish writings there are a number of Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament. The oldest of these so-called Targums is that of Onkelos, which is confined to the Pentateuch. According to the Babylonian Talmud, Onkelos was a proselyte who was the son of a man named Calonicas, and was the composer of the Targum which bears his name, which he in turn had received from Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, both of whom lived toward the end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D. However, in the Jerusalem Talmud the very same thing is related by the same authorities (and almost in the same words) of the proselyte Aquila of Pontes, whose Greek version of the Bible was much used by the Greek-speaking Jews down to the time of Justinian; so it is sometimes argued that Onkelos is but another name for Aquila. Aquila Ponticus was a relative of the Emperor Hadrian, living in the second century A.D. Thus even if Onkelos is not an absolutely authentic figure, the works attributed to him must still be placed very early in the Christian era.

In dealing with the first chapter of Genesis, Onkelos gave the following Aramaic paraphrase of verse 2:

וַאֲרַעָא הוּת צַדְיָא *W'are'ah hawath tsadh'ya*

In this passage, the composite verb form (*tsadh'ya*) means "was destroyed," being the Aramaic form of the verb to be (*hawath*) with the feminine passive participle of the verb *tzadhah*, which means "to cut" or "to lay waste."

Moreover, it happens that part of the Greek version of Aquila is found in Origen's *Hexapla*. It is not surprising therefore to discover that Origen himself held the same view of this early portion of the text of Genesis. Thus in his great work *De Principiis*, the worthy scholar remarked in connection with Genesis 1:1,2:

It is certain that the present firmament is not spoken of, nor the dry land but that heaven and earth from which this present heaven and earth which we now see, afterwards borrowed their names.²⁰

Origen therefore argued that the world which then was, which perished as a result of the judgment of God, differed from the heavens and the earth which are now, but was nevertheless the material out of which the reconstituted earth was subsequently built.

We thus have a more or less continuous tradition from the Jewish "Fathers" of the first century, to the "Fathers" of the early Christian Church. And there can therefore no longer be any excuse for dismissing such an interpretation of the text on the grounds that it is a recent invention that would never have occurred but for modern geology.

While many of the early Church Fathers can be shown to have leaned toward this view, it is not always too meaningful in some respects, since their methods of interpretation at times tended to be extreme, as those who have studied them well know. In fact, like Origen, they often used one passage to teach two entirely different ideas when directing their words to two different classes of people.

However, it cannot be denied for one moment that from the works of the Jewish commentators to the present day there is an unbroken chain of commentators who recognized the unusual character of the original text and took a similar view of it. While Chalmers, like Darwin, may have crystallized an idea and received credit for much that he borrowed from those who went before him, he is certainly not the first advocate. That God should have begun His creation with a chaos was a pagan idea, not a Jewish nor a Christian one; many of these pagan ideas became deeply rooted in Christian thinking as a result of Augustine, who, while being a man of great piety and vision, still clung to many unscriptural ideas, not the least of which was evolution.

Erich Sauer, in his book *The Dawn of World Redemption*, wrote:

In both old and more recent times there have been God-enlightened men who expressed the conjecture that the work of the six days of Gen.1 was properly a work of restoration, but not the original creation of the earth; and that originally man had the task, as a servant of the Lord and as ruler of the creation, in moral opposition to Satan, to recover for God the outwardly renewed earth, through the spreading abroad of his race and his lordship over the earth.

Thus Prof. Bettex says that man should originally, "as the vice-regent of God, gradually have reconquered the whole earth." Also Prof. v. Heune, who likewise upholds the restitution theory, says, "that the great operation of bringing back the whole creation to God, starts with man [...]."

Traces of such an explanation of the record of creation are found in ancient Christian literature as early as the time of the church

20. Origen, "De Principis," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Scribners, New York, 1917, vol. IV, Book 2, p.290.

father Augustine (about 400 A.D.). In the seventh century it was maintained by the Anglo-Saxon poet Caedmon. About A.D. 1000 King Edgar of England adopted it. In the seventeenth century it was specially emphasized by the mystic Jacob Boehme. In the year 1814 it was developed by the Scottish scholar Dr. Chalmers, and in 1833 further by the English professor of Mineralogy, William Buckland.

There are also very many German upholders of this teaching, as for instance, the professor of geology Freiherr von Heune (Tubingen); and well known are the English scholar G. H. Pember, and also the Scofield Reference Bible. From the Catholic side there are Cardinal Wiseman and the philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel [...].²¹

In their over-anxiety to sustain an argument, some advocates in recent years have gone beyond the text, and it has consequently suffered injury at the hands of its friends. Speakers will occasionally point out that both Noah and Adam were instructed to *re-fill* the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1). Since the statement has particular significance in the case of Noah who had lived to see the destruction of a previous world, it is argued that the use of the same command to Adam must imply that Adam stood in a similar relationship to a perished world. However, the Hebrew word *male* (מלא) translated in both instances *replenish* does not have this significance. It simply means "to fill." No argument can be sustained by reference to the form of the command, although it might possibly be that the translators of the King James Version used the word *replenish* in the case of Adam because they felt that it was applicable. If this were so, it could only be further evidence that even at this time there were commentators who perceived the real meaning of the first few verses of Genesis 1, although they did not reveal it in their translation of Genesis 1:2.

At any rate the eminent oriental scholar and biblical critic, Johann August Dathe – who became professor of oriental literature at Leipzig in 1763 and who is perhaps best known for his six-volume work on the books of the Old Testament, illustrated with philological and critical notes and edited with the help of the original Hebrew text as well as other Latin versions – translated the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis, "And the earth was made (*facta erat*) a waste and a desolation." Since the Vulgate or accepted Latin version has simply, "But the earth was void and empty," he must have felt that this was not a sufficiently exact rendering of the original. We therefore have one more link in the chain of evidence supporting the contention that the view did not originate with Chalmers at all.

Among the later Hebrew scholars of great prominence who supported this point of view was Alfred Edersheim, himself a Jew to whom the language of the Old Testament was as familiar as a mother tongue. In a work published about 1890, he made the following observations:

Some have imagined that the six days of creation represent so many periods, rather than literal days, chiefly on the ground of the

21. Sauer, Erich, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1953, pp.35-36.

supposed high antiquity of our globe, and the various great epochs or periods, each terminating in a grand revolution, through which our earth seems to have passed, before coming to its present state, when it became a fit habitation for man. There is, however, no need to resort to any such theory. The first verse in the book of Genesis simply states the general fact, that "In the beginning" – whenever that may have been – "God created the heaven and the earth." Then, in the second verse, we find the earth described as it was at the close of the last great revolution, preceding the present state of things: "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." An almost indefinite space of time, and many changes, may therefore have intervened between the creation of heaven and earth, as mentioned in verse 1 and the chaotic state of our earth, as described in verse 2. As for the exact date of the first creation, it may safely be affirmed that we have not yet the knowledge sufficient to arrive at any really trustworthy conclusion.²²

Many famous commentaries have supported this interpretation. For example, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown have the following comment on verse 2 :

This globe, at some undescribed period, having been convulsed and broken up, was a dark and watery waste for ages perhaps, till out of the chaotic state the present fabric of the world was made to rise.²³

It is not without significance that people of other cultures, whose thinking does not seem to have been influenced by the teaching of missionaries have traditions of a catastrophe which overtook the first creation. Not unnaturally such stories tell of people in this former world, for it is always difficult to conceive of an earth totally devoid of any population. It requires a certain sophistication to conceive of a world uninhabited by man.

Thus the Arabians have a strange belief that there were once forty kings who ruled over a creation prior to Adam, and that they were called "Solimans" (after Solomon, who to them seemed to be the ideal of what a monarch ought to be). They say that their history was recounted by the "Bird of Ages," whom they called the Simorg and who had served them all. Their statues, monstrous preadamite forms, were supposed to exist in the mountains of Kaf.²⁴

In one of his books, Franz Cumont remarked that according to the Mithraic teachings,

The demoniac confederates of the King of Hell once ascended to the assault of Heaven and attempted to dethrone the successor of

22. Edersheim, Alfred, *The World Before the Flood*, Religious Tract Society, London, no date, p.18.

23. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, edited by Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 1871, reprinted 1961, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, p.17.

24. From D'Herbelot's "Soliman Ben David," in Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church*, Scribners, New York, 1911, vol. II, lect. 26, p.144.

Kronos. But, shattered like the Greek giants by the ruler of the gods, these rebel monsters were hurled backwards into the abyss from which they had risen. They made their escape however from that place and wandered about on the face of the earth, there to spread misery and to corrupt the hearts of men, who, in order to ward off the evils that menaced them, were obliged to appease them by offering expiatory sacrifices.²⁵

There is a Far Eastern tradition in which some further details are provided. G. Rawlinson, in his second Bampton Lecture in 1859, gave an extract as follows:

The Chinese traditions are said to be less clear and decisive than the Babylonian. They speak of a "first heaven" and an age of innocence when "the whole creation enjoyed a state of happiness." Then everything was beautiful and everything was good: all things were perfect in their kind. Whereunto succeeded *a second heaven introduced by a great convulsion*, in which the pillars of heaven were broken, the earth shook to its foundations, the heavens sank lower towards the north, the sun, moon, and stars changed their motions, the earth fell apart and the waters enclosed within its bosom burst forth with violence and over-flowed. [his emphasis]²⁶

The Egyptians believed that the earth had suffered more than one destruction and renewal, and certainly the Babylonian traditions held strongly to at least one serious destruction and reconstitution quite apart from their recollections of the great Flood of Noah's time.²⁷

Even as we today have found the advantage of animating stories for children, so the early Babylonians turned inanimate forces into spiritual beings; they set much of the early geological history of the earth, as they conceived it, in the form of a titanic struggle between giant forces in personal guise. The great catastrophe of Genesis 1:2 in time became one of the most popular themes of cuneiform literature.

In a paper titled "Genesis and Pagan Cosmogonies," Edward McCrady gave an excellent and concise statement of the matter. He remarked:

It is generally conceded that the Dragon, as a personification of the Evil Spirit, is more or less identified with the destructive and rebellious forces of Nature, especially as they bring chaos and suffering to mankind in floods, storms, etc. But it is only in connection with such stories as that of Bel and the Dragon that we begin to catch a glimpse of the origin of the original myth: and only again as we compare this Chaldeo-Assyrian legend with the first chapter of Genesis that we begin to realize that this Dragon is but a

25. Cumont, Franz, *Mysteries of Mithra*, Open Court, Chicago, 1903, p.112.

26. Lord Arundell in his *Tradition: Mythology and the Law of Nations*, Burns and Oates, London, 1872. p.328.

27. Dawson, W J., *The Origin of the World*, New York:, Harper and Brothers, 1877, p.148.

personification of the watery abyss or chaos mentioned in Genesis. Bel, or Bel-Merodach, is a personification of the sun which appearing on the fourth day "breaks through the watery abyss that envelops the earth, piercing and tearing asunder the Dragon of the abyss with his glittering sword" and eventually after a long struggle bringing order and law out of chaos. Then we begin to see the explanation of the whole. Similarly, we may see little significance in the Egyptian picture of Kneph sailing in a boat over the water, and breathing life into its tumultuous depths: or the Phoenician legend of Colpias and his wife Bau, or Bahu, effecting a like organization of the waste of primeval matter: until we remember that Kneph signifies wind, air, living breath, or spirit. And Colpias likewise means "wind," while Bahu is evidently the Phoenician form of the Hebrew "bohu," the waste of waters.

With this discovery, however, it immediately dawns upon us that these legends must obviously refer to the statement of Genesis that "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light."

A further careful study of the succession of male and female divinities of the Chaldeo-Assyrian Theogony, Lachmu and Lachamu; An-Sar and KiSar, will also bring to light the fact that they are, respectively, personifications of the Light with his consort Darkness; of the Sky or Heavenly Waters, and the earth waters (divided by the "expanse"), and occur exactly in the order of their appearance in the narrative of Genesis while the divinities Anos (or Anu), Ilinos (or Enlil), and Aos (or Ea), which follow next, and which are universally identified with the heavens, the earth and the sea, are obviously personifications of these physical phenomena, which as Genesis records, were separated from one another as the next step in the creative process; while as the hero of the next succeeding generation appears, Bel-Merodach, easily identified as the sun now appearing for the first time together with the moon and the stars, we have the completion of the fourth day. And these events are still further reflected in the Chaldean myth of the birth of Sin (the moon) Adar (Saturn), Merodach (Jupiter), Nergal (Mars), Nebo (Mercury), and all the rest of them. The order of the appearance of the corresponding physical phenomena given in Genesis – the Theogony (the "toledoth of the gods"), of the Chaldeans – is simultaneously a cosmogony based on the cosmogony of Genesis.²⁸

Subsequently McCrady remarked:

Indeed, the echoes of this primal revelation, transformed and corrupted as we have thus explained, are to be found in nearly all

28. McCrady, Edward, in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol.72, 1940, p.46,47,59.

the mythologies, cosmogonies, and theogonies of paganism. For besides the Chaldean, Assyrian, Phoenician and other narratives, we find them in Greek and Latin literature also.

In conclusion the author points out what must have occurred to all who study these things in this light: not only do we find in this the origin of the idea that the world began with a chaos, an idea which found its way almost inevitably into our translations because of the power of habits of thought, but also we find the root of much polytheism and idol worship – for they have exactly done what Paul in his Epistle to the Romans reveals, changing the truth of God into a lie, worshipping and serving the created things more than the Creator, who is blessed forever (Romans 1:25).

There is, therefore, from the very earliest times, a continuity of tradition that at some remote time in the past, great spiritual powers came under the judgment of God and brought about a disruption of the *kosmos*, the record of which is undoubtedly reflected in Genesis 1:1,2.

This continuity of tradition from the earliest times to the beginning of the last century is a strong confirmation of the view advocated in this Paper. It is a strong confirmation because the individuals who supported it were in an excellent position to know what the original text could mean and at the same time they were quite uninfluenced by modern geological theory and were not, therefore, biased in this respect.

Nevertheless, the strongest confirmation is surely to be found in Scripture itself. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," he was clearly referring to the regenerative experience of the new birth when a man, ruined by sin, becomes a new creation in Christ. But the force of his words is lost entirely unless the command "Let there be light" was also to begin a new creation of a world which had been marred by sin.

The necessity and reality of the new birth is some indication of the necessity and reality of the re-creation which seems to be the subject of Genesis 1:3ff.



Appendixes

1. The Meaning of the Word "Day"

In an effort to obtain a reasonable unbiased opinion from prominent contemporary Hebrew scholars on the probable meaning of this word, a letter was sent personally to the appropriate department heads of nine major universities (three in Canada three in the United States, and three in England). Among the other things they were asked: Do you consider that the Hebrew *yom* as used in Genesis 1 accompanied by a numeral should be properly translated

- a. a day as commonly understood,
- b. an age,
- c. an age or a day without preference for either.

Seven out of nine replied, and all of these stated that it means a day as commonly understood, in their opinion.

They were also asked whether it could be taken as a rule that whenever the word *day* is accompanied by a numeral, it must normally be interpreted as a period of twenty-four hours. Five said "yes," one said "no," and one said "hardly."

2. The Meaning of the Verb "Make": By Contrast with the Verb "Create"

It is sometimes pointed out that the use of the word *day* in Genesis must be metaphorical since Genesis 2:4 makes this statement: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." The implication here is that a single day is stated to have occupied the creative process which had previously occupied six days. Manifestly in this instance, the word *day* stands for six days, in which case the six days could equally well be said to stand for six ages.

However, there are two matters to consider here. In the first place, the word *day* is not accompanied by a numeral; it does not say in *one* day, but in *the* day, a metaphorical use of the word which is found frequently in Scripture where it is not defined by a numeral. In the second place, the word used to qualify the phrase "in the day," is '*asah* and not *bara*. This word is used on numerous occasions to convey the idea of "appointment." For example, the Ten Commandments and the Cities of Refuge were both appointed; they were not created, since they were already in existence in one form or another. The significance of the appointment is that they received divine sanction as part of God's plan. In a similar way, the evils which may exist in a city can only be by God's appointment (Amos 3:6). In 1 Kings 12:31, priests are "made" of the lowest of the people by Jeroboam.

One of the best ways to find the original meaning of such a word is to examine names of which it forms a part. Here are some examples of names which incorporate the word '*asah*.

Asahael	(2 Samuel 2:18)	"God has appointed"
Asiel	(1 Chronicles 4:35)	"Appointed by God"
Asahiah	(2 Kings 22:12, 14)	"Jah has appointed"

Many others are found in which variant forms of the root occur with this basic meaning. We may reasonably conclude, therefore, that in Genesis 2:4 the word *day* without a numeral simply means “time,” so that the verse refers to the time when the Lord appointed the earth and the heavens as a setting for the introduction of man. It is in this sense that the sun and moon and stars, which already existed, were given their special appointment in Genesis 1:16.

Not a few commentators believe that the word *’asah* and the word *bara* both mean the same thing, “to create.” Their “proof text” is Exodus 20:11, which speaks of the process of *making* the heavens and the earth as having occupied six days. It is argued that this six days’ work is intended to cover the whole of Genesis 1:1-31. But actually Genesis 1:1,2 are set apart by themselves as though they were preliminary. The six days’ work begins with the phrase “And God said [...]” – a phrase which introduces each day’s work very distinctively, as will be seen in verse 3 (day 1), verse 6 (day 2), verse 9 (day 3), verse 14 (day 4), verse 20 (day 5) and verse 26 (day 6). This introductory phrase is not *limited* to the events of each day, for sometimes it occurs twice on a single day. But it always precedes the activity of any particular day, and it does *not* appear in connection with Genesis 1:1,2 at all, clearly setting these statements in a class by themselves.

Moreover, the word *’asah* is used quite clearly in the sense of appointment only, as is clear for example in Job 14:5 (appointed) and Psalm 104:9 (set). In the latter instance, we clearly have a reference to Genesis 1:16 and to the appointment of the sun and moon as markers of time. It does not seem likely that those who hold to an apparently essential part of their faith that the earth is only a few thousand years old, and that the one great catastrophe to have ever overtaken it was the Flood of Noah’s time, will not be persuaded that Genesis 1:2 has reference to a greater catastrophe in terms of the earth’s past history, nor that the six days’ work were reconstitutive, not initiative. But I believe that these two words, *to make* and *to create*, are clearly distinguishable and cannot really be equated. It is not creation that God completed in six days in this case, but rather a process of reconstitution. Had it been otherwise, Scripture would surely have used the Hebrew word *bara* in Exodus 20:11 in order to make it clear that creation really was the subject of those six days.

3. The Meaning of the Phrase “The Foundation of the World”

The Greek word *katabole*, translated *foundation* in the Authorized Version, is evidently derived from the verbal form *kataballein*. This word was used quite frequently by the Alexandrine Jews who produced the Old Testament in Greek. They used the word *kataballein* to translate some nine Hebrew forms which are given below. The meanings of these words are taken from Gesenius and Furst *Hebrew Lexicon*, edited by B. Davies. Four other Hebrew lexicons were also consulted and are in essential agreement.

1. חרס (*haras*) to tear down, break down, devastate, overthrow, destroy, extirpate.
2. לקח (*laqah*) to take, lay hold of, seize, snatch away, captivate.

3. נָטַשׁ (*natash*) to stretch or spread out, scatter abroad, reject, let loose, disperse, give up.
4. נָפַל (*naphal*) to fall, fall away, fall out, fail, hurl down, cast down, fall upon (attack)
5. נָתַץ (*nathatz*) to break down, destroy, smash down.
6. פָּרַע (*paratz*) to break, demolish, scatter, break up, spread abroad.
7. שָׂטַם (*satam*) to lurk for, way-lay, entrap.
8. שָׁחַת (*shahath*) to break to pieces, destroy, ruin, lay waste, devastate, volate, injure, corrupt.
9. שָׁפַל (*shaphel*) to fall or sink down, to be laid low, humiliate, humble.

This list represents the total range of meanings covered by the Greek verb *kataballein* as found in the Septuagint, and they provide, therefore, a basis for determining the meaning of the noun *katabole* as used in the New Testament.

Since we know that the New Testament writers were deeply influenced by the Septuagint version, we may reasonably assume that the word *katabole* conveyed to them what the verbal form conveyed to the authors of the Septuagint. Its meaning is clearly one of destruction. The noun *katabole* does not occur in the Septuagint translation of the canonical books of the Old Testament, but it does occur in one single instance (2 Maccabees 2:29) where it has the meaning of a building foundation (see Revised Version, marginal note). Perhaps this extended meaning originated with the rubble which formed the building platform in earlier times.

An examination of those passages in Scripture (some ninety in all) in which a Hebrew word is used that clearly conveys the idea of, or explicitly uses the word, *foundation*, reveals that in no single instance did the Septuagint employ any form of the verb *kataballein*. The word used is always *themelios* or some modified form of it, exactly as the New Testament writers used it.



Part IV

**THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD
IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN**

There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

Hamlet; Act V, Scene 2

Introduction

Shortly after I was saved, I had the wonderful privilege of being left almost entirely free for a whole winter, far from the madding crowd and with virtually nothing to do but study the Word of God. Eight times I read it through from cover to cover, and at that time I was particularly concerned with the Problem of Evil.

This study is part of that experience.

The text is punctuated in the appropriate places by a series of increasingly detailed "genealogical trees" of Scripture references, set out in such a way as to show to the best advantage how very much God has really said about His own omnipotence in the affairs of nations, and of individuals – saved and unsaved alike.

It is essentially a Bible study, and there is much room for further discussion of the many points raised in the text, especially in the final chapter dealing with the basis of God's judgment of our lives. It is comforting indeed to my own soul to know that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, in spite of all things.

Note: related to this paper is "The Problem of Evil: Some Little Considered Physical Aspects" in *The Flood: Global or Local?*; vol. 9; also, "Nature as Part of the Kingdom of God" in *Man in Adam and in Christ*, vol. 3 in the Doorway Papers Series.



Chapter 1

The Omnipotence of God in the Universe

Alleluia! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! – Revelation 19:6

I remember a class at the university at which about 150 premedical students were present, and the professor was attempting to visualize on the blackboard the course of events, evolution-wise, from the first atom to the amoeba, to the reptiles, to mammals, and to man. The line went upward across the board, punctuated at the appropriate intervals by the appearance of successively higher categories of life. The progress of the past gave every promise for the future, until he stopped and said,

"In time, of course, the universe will die a heat death and all life will cease, and this line will peter out and disappear."

Then there was a long silence. As the implications slowly dawned upon these young students, there was a certain uneasy shifting of position, and a shuffling of feet. Then a subdued voice said rather fearfully,

"Is that all – all there is to it . . . ?"

And the professor, after a moment's pause, said, "Yes – as I see it."

We struggled to conceive of such a meaningless spectacle: so magnificent yet all to no purpose. Some of us at least found it impossible to believe this could be a true interpretation. However, it seemed to be the "scientific" account. But is such an account necessarily the whole truth? I think not.

In the first place, science can tell us nothing about the origin of the universe. The origin of the universe can, in the nature of the case, only be attributed to pure accident or to deliberate creation with a purpose. It is really meaningless to speak of pure accident, because one cannot possibly conceive of the kind of accident that would have to occur to account for the appearance of the materials out of which the universe formed itself in the first place. It is possible to argue that this material always existed, implying the eternity of matter. But this again really solves no problems, for the eternity of matter is not something that we can conceive: such a conception is quite beyond our powers of imagination. Rationally we are really left with only one alternative, namely, that the universe was created: and a creation means a Creator, and the Creator must have had the power, the will, and a plan. These three prerequisites are summed up simply in the word *God*: and as has been pointed out on more than one occasion, the first verse of Genesis takes into account

the time ("in the beginning"), the will ("God"), the power ("created"), the space ("the heavens"), and the materials ("and the earth") involved in the origin of the universe.

But what do we know about this Creator? God has spoken in no uncertain terms about His own relationships with the created order, claiming to be the Designer and Sustainer of the universe from the very beginning through every stage. Furthermore, it is revealed in Scripture that this creative and sustaining activity has always been in the hands of the Word of God, the Son of the Father. If we have not entirely lost the power of wonder, we do well to remind ourselves of the fact that the little baby lying in the manger was none other than the Creator of this universe – surely a stupendous fact.

Genesis 1:1 tells us simply that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but Hebrews 1:8-10 tells us that "with respect to the *Son*, He said, [...] Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." This is what lies behind John's statement, "In the beginning was the Word [...]. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made [...]. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:1,3,14). In Hebrews 1:1,2 we are told that "God [...] hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son [...] by whom also He made the worlds." These passages are reflected in the Old Testament as, for example, where we are told in Psalm 33:6 that "by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made."

Isaac Newton was one of the first "modern" scientists to find himself faced with the problem of reconciling a universe which he believed was manifestly the work of God and yet which was so governed by law that its deterministic machine-like character seemed to exclude God. He therefore thought of the Creator as something of a Watchmaker who made the watch, wound it up, and thereafter stood apart from it without interfering in its operation. Undoubtedly this was a view which he held in his mind rather than in his heart. As a firm believer in Scripture and a keen student of the Word of God, he must many times have been comforted by those passages which show that God does not stand aside, allowing the watch to run itself down; He is constantly at work, as the Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Not only has God a plan for this universe, but He has at no time been forced by any circumstance whatever to deviate in the slightest degree from it. From God's point of view, there are no such things as accidents, in spite of the declarations of such people as Sir Julian Huxley that the world as we know it has come about purely by chance. Not only can we say that God has never altered His plan, but we can go one step further and say that throughout history He has continually guided events in accordance with it.

Psalm 33:11 reminds us that "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." This is reiterated in Isaiah 14:24,27, "The Lord of hosts hath sworn saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand [...]. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed; and who shall disannul it?" Indeed, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" – Psalm 62:11. And Job 23:13 declares, "He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth."

There are many broad statements in Scripture revealing the operation of the Lord's overruling providence within the compass of His creation, ordering and guiding its multitude of interrelated forms into a beautiful harmony. What kind of "providence" this is we are in a most comforting position to know, for this Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been clearly revealed to us in the New Testament and personal experience bears out His care for His creatures.

Perhaps the most comprehensive claim is made in Ephesians 1:11, where it is stated that He effectually operates all things "after the counsel of His own will." In the original, this statement is even more explicit than appears in the Authorized Version, for it will be found that the New Testament Greek has two phrases which look much alike and are translated as though they were synonymous, but which are essentially different in their meaning. The simple phrase *all things*, so recurrent in English versions of the New Testament, is actually used to translate two quite distinct Greek concepts represented by the word *panta* standing alone, and *ta panta* with the definite article. The first is equivalent to our word *anything*, but the second means *the universe*, a very different concept. In a loose way of speaking, both could be rendered *everything*, but this actually conceals a fundamental distinction between the two ideas.

The first is found for example in Philippians 4:13, and differs from the second, which is found for example in Colossians 1:16. Yet both are merely translated *all things*. Thus we find the words "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" and "By Him all things consist: all things were created by Him and for Him."

The difference in the original lies in this, that in the first instance the Greek has simply **πάντα** (*panta*), but in the second **τὰ πάντα** (*ta panta*). The first means "anything," a somewhat indefinite phrase; the second means "the whole," or from its basic meaning, "the universe." Thus Colossians 1:16 really reads, "By Him the universe holds together; the universe was created by Him and for Him." This is in perfect harmony with the fuller meaning of Ephesians 1:11 (which we have just quoted) who effectually operates the *universe* after the counsel of His own will.

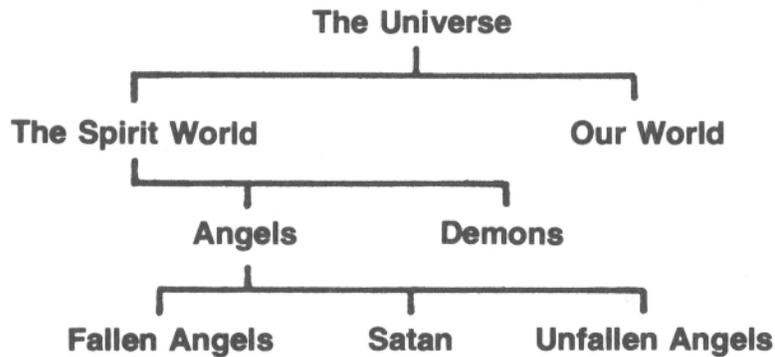
There are many, many categorical statements to the effect that in the overall view, God is omnipotent. Thus in Deuteronomy 4:35,39: "Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord, He is God: there is none else beside Him! [...]. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else." So also in Psalm 135:6: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places," and in Psalm 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." In Psalm 103:19 it is written: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all."

A similar sweeping assertion will be found in Daniel 4:34,35. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, said, "Mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth forever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

The unquestionable dominion which He now exercises in heaven and earth is the very last claim the Lord Jesus made. Surely His words here were then meant to give assurance to those who must have felt themselves facing overwhelming odds. In Matthew 28:18,19 appears this last great commission, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore [...]."

These are sweeping assertions, in a sense so sweeping that their impact is apt to be lost. In one way, it is not until God begins to claim omnipotence in some areas of our national or even our personal lives, in which we feel we ought to be left free, that the force of His claims strikes home. I think it is perhaps for this very reason that as the statements of Scripture become more personally applicable, they become increasingly concrete and specific – and, at times, disconcerting!

The pattern which this aspect of revelation takes emerges more distinctly if we tabulate such passages in the form of a kind of genealogical tree. Starting with the Universe at large, we may construct a simple division composed of the Spirit World as opposed to Our World. Leading down from the first of these divisions, we break it down further into Angels and Demons. Under the general heading of Angels, we have three subdivisions, namely, Fallen Angels, Satan, and Unfallen Angels. These are not arbitrary divisions; they are very clearly recognized in Scripture. The tabulation thus takes a form something like this:



In this chapter we consider only the Spirit World. In the next chapter we shall consider Our World. It will then be very apparent that God has far more to say about His omnipotence in Our World than in the Spirit World. But this is not because His omnipotence is greater here: it is rather that it concerns us more directly.

Now, in the Spirit World we have two categories of beings: Angels and Demons. With reference to the demons, first, we are told much in the New Testament, although their origin is not clearly revealed. Some believe that they came into being when angels cohabited with the daughters of men and when supernatural creatures were born who subsequently perished in the Flood (Genesis 6:1ff.). These creatures having once known what it is to possess a body have, so it is held, sought for re-embodiment on this account. Their great strength when in possession of a body is taken to reflect the tradition of giants resulting from the first union of angels and men: and their fear of water (see Matthew 12:43) is also held to have resulted from

the judgment which brought their disembodiment. They therefore stand in the scale of beings halfway between angels and men, being neither one nor the other. There seems a clear distinction at any rate between demons and angels in the New Testament, where they figure most prominently. One thing is absolutely clear, namely, that they were completely subject to the Lord's omnipotence.

Of the Unfallen Angels, we have the words of 1 Timothy 5:21: "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things [...]." The implications of this simple observation must be, I think, that those angels which are fallen are distinguished from those which did not rebel – not by reason of any inherent distinction of their moral nature, but by election. This will be challenged by many as unfair. If there is an answer to this accusation, I think it will become apparent in chapter 4, when we deal with the omnipotence of God in the Christian's life.

In Hebrews 1:14 the angels are said to be His ministers. There are a number of occasions upon which angels ministered to the needs of men and of the Lord Himself; and when, toward the end of His earthly ministry, the Lord seemed in immediate danger from the mob and when Peter drew his sword to defend Him, He said – as though it were a thing not the least surprising – that He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to defend Him (Matthew 26:53). Considering that a legion was composed of six thousand persons, twelve legions would be a very sizable army to call instantly to one's aid. Upon one occasion in the Old Testament (2 Kings 6:17), a prophet who stood in a special way as a forerunner of Jesus was protected by a huge army of spiritual beings.

There appear to be two classes of Fallen Angels: those who left their first estate and brought upon the world the judgment of the Flood, and those whom Satan persuaded to join him when he rebelled against heaven at a much earlier period (and, as I believe, brought upon the world the judgment reflected in Genesis 1:2, necessitating a re-creation and re-ordering of the earth). The first of these categories, we are told, is now chained (Jude 6) and therefore clearly completely under God's control. The second class of angels, though they are apparently still free to hinder God's work (Daniel 10:13), are nevertheless subject to God's commands whenever He so wishes, as indicated in Psalm 78:49 and possibly in 1 Kings 22:23. In both of these instances, God used them to perform duties which an unfallen angel could not possibly have carried out.

Of Satan we have some limited but significant intimations. In Isaiah 54:16 there is a concluding statement which has been taken by some commentators to be a reference to Satan. It is written, "And I have created the waster to destroy." It may seem a strange thing that anyone should suppose the Lord to have created a being who would seem always to be hindering the fulfillment of His purposes. Yet there are indications that this may be so in other Scriptures – as perhaps in Isaiah 45:7. This is by no means a solitary statement: it is repeated throughout Scripture upon many occasions and with equal emphasis. We shall return to this point subsequently. At any rate, Satan undoubtedly carries out his opposition by God's permission. This is stated categorically in Job 1:12, for example. In Revelation 20:10 Satan is finally robbed of even this much freedom.

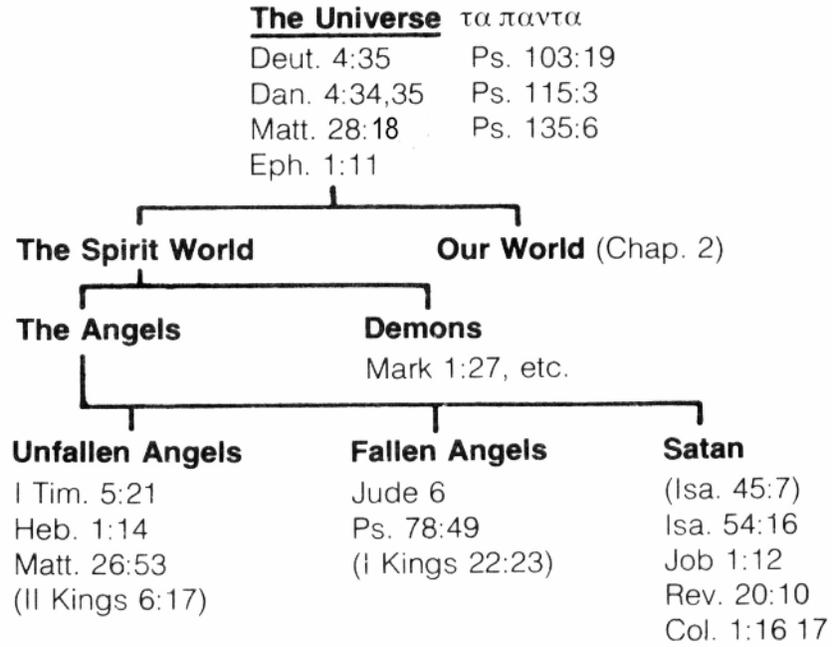
In Colossians 1:16,17, it is revealed that the universe was created not only *by* the Lord, but also *for* the Lord, i.e., to serve His purposes. The statement is made even more explicit by declaring just what is included in this universe. Powers of every category, and both those which are visible as well as those which are invisible, were created "by Him and for Him." Since Satan, like the other angels, is a creature of God, his continuance as a living creature is dependent entirely upon the Source of all life. Though Satan has the power of death apparently with respect to man (Hebrews 2:14), he does not have the power of sustaining his own continued existence, for he is a creature of God. That he is allowed to continue can only mean that such continuance serves the purpose of God.

Not for Curiosity

I do not think that God ever reveals anything merely to satisfy our curiosity. The statements of Scripture which we have examined so far could hardly be termed "satisfactory" if the purpose of setting them forth had been to give us a clear picture of how God overrules in the spirit world. All that can be said for them is that we are told enough to assure us that we have no more need to fear the unseen world that is hostile than we need to fear the seen world that is hostile. We are told that Satan works by permission: we are told that the angels which are still the Lord's ministers are elect of God: we are told that the angels which left their first estate and unnaturally obtruded into the realm of things which is peculiarly ours are now chained: we are told that even Satan is to be bound when God so wishes: we are told that not only the Lord but the disciples also commanded the demons and they were obedient: we are told that the angels of God were instantly ready to minister at the Lord's command. This is sometimes by explicit statement of Scripture, at other times only by implication. To many, such passages may not appear convincing. The issue is not too important, for even those who find such passages unconvincing tend, nevertheless, to assume that God is in command in the spirit world. Most assuredly, it is stated in no uncertain terms that He doeth His will in the army of heaven and among men and no one can hinder.

What seems important for us to know is that the Lord is still in charge of things, the fortunes not merely of nations, but even of individuals. Here Scripture is far more explicit, as we shall see.

We may thus tabulate these admittedly brief, yet significant statements regarding the omnipotence of God in the universe as follows:



We turn now to the omnipotence of God in what may be appropriately termed Our World.



Chapter 2

The Omnipotence of God in Our World

As we enter into a study of what Scripture has to say about the omnipotence of God in the affairs of our own world, we begin to find that the statements become more specific as they are more personal.

The largest aggregates of men with which the Bible deals are *world empires*: the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. We descend then to the *nations* which constitute them, including in a category by themselves, Israel. Over these nations are *kings*, and a surprising number of individual kings are singled out and statements made concerning them which sometimes seem to rob them even of moral responsibility for their actions. Whenever one reads such passages, the tendency is to explain away the text. But my experience has been that a much more profitable method of studying Scripture is to assume that the text really means what it says – and then to search more deeply for a resolution of the problems which arise by referring to the rest of Scripture.

Under these kings were *governors* and *generals* and their armies. And finally, we descend to *ordinary folk*. Within this largest of all classes there are the *saved* and the *unsaved*. Scripture has a surprising number of things to say about the omnipotence of God in the lives of the unsaved. Nevertheless, the extent to which the omnipotence of God rules and overrules in the lives of His children is even more surprising – and, for many of us perhaps, unexpected. We might assume it in our triumphs, for this seems obviously to His glory. But I venture to suggest that the Word of God has some pointed things to say also about His overruling even of our failures. This aspect of the problem is a subject of the last chapter. We turn now to a consideration of what God has to say about the operation of His will among men without particular respect to whether they are His children or not. To help structure the passages which will be referred to, we may recapitulate what has been said above by setting it in the form of a genealogical tree, as shown in the diagram that follows.

One point is highly important to this Paper. Scripture, I think, makes it abundantly clear that God has what may be called a Master Plan, the broad outlines of which are revealed in the Bible even to the extent of showing the future in a general way so that, for all the disagreements between us in our interpretations of prophecy, we nevertheless share the comfort of a firm belief that this Master Plan will be perfectly fulfilled and, when so fulfilled, will call forth our united praise.

The Christian unity which we strive to achieve now we shall one day undoubtedly enjoy when we say with great rejoicing, "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37).

There are surely many incidents in the lives of individuals and nations which are not directly related to this Master Plan. It would be foolish to attempt to illustrate this by referring to some inconsequential detail of a man's life (for example, that he chose to wear a gray tie one morning instead of a brown one), because such inconsequentialities sometimes turn out to be the hinges upon which the doors of destiny swing. But wherever an event or a decision is related (as God sees things) to the Master Plan, at those points He rules or overrules as required.



Our World

Before examining those passages which concern the chart above, reference should be made to an aspect of the subject that tends to be overlooked. An important part of our world is the realm of Nature. The reign of God in this realm is the subject of another Doorway Paper ("Nature as Part of the Kingdom of God," Part 2 in *Man in Adam and in Christ*, vol.3), in which evidence is presented to support the view that this realm is actually an essential part of the kingdom of God.

Certainly the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ in Nature was dramatically illustrated in the New Testament when the disciples discovered that even the winds and the waves obeyed Him instantly (Matthew 8:27). There are many intimations of His lordship, as for example the fig tree which withered at His command (Matthew 21:20); the water which became wine (John 2:3ff.); and the wild beasts which shared His wilderness watch without molesting Him (Mark 1:13). We are assured that no sparrow is forgotten. In the Old Testament a raven was commanded to feed Elijah; a great fish was commanded to save Jonah; and a dumb ass was commanded to rebuke Balaam. The Psalms are full of passages which reflect what must surely be described as the "worship" which Nature affords to her Creator.

The Christian, especially in the first days of wonder in a new experience, becomes very much aware that this is his Father's world. It seems as though God rules in Nature: with man, alien as he now is to this kingdom, He *over* rules. Even in His own children, who by re-creation have been reinstated within this kingdom, He must still often overrule, for our acceptance of His dominion over our lives is by no means complete.

Empires and Nations

In the affairs of empires and of nations, there are times when this overruling can be discerned and is reluctantly admitted even by pagan historians. World War II was punctuated by circumstances which were so strange and unexpected and so greatly to the advantage of those who were defending human freedom that it has been difficult for even the most agnostic of writers to evade the unwanted conviction that, here at least, Providence (for they do not like to speak of God personally) was at work.

Certainly Scripture makes it clear that in the rise and fall of the great world empires of antiquity, God had a direct hand. One of the most striking and self-contradictory characteristics of those who built these empires was the combination of complete ruthlessness coupled with a strange sense of ultimate dependence upon God. Possibly their own despotism made it easier for them to conceive of an even higher Despotism than their own.

Not unnaturally this revelation attaches itself more particularly to the first world empire and to the last, as though to indicate the pattern. The first world empire was the Babylonian, and its best-known monarch was Nebuchadnezzar. He has left us abundant evidence of the fact that his power was absolute in his own eyes; and yet in Daniel 4: 17,24-26 he was warned in no uncertain terms:

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones [the Trinity?]: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men [...].

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

That they shall drive thee from men [...] till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will [...].

Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

And so again in Daniel 5:21: "And he was driven from the sons of men [...] till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will." It is not certain exactly what sickness overcame the emperor, but two things are quite clear from Scripture in connection with it. The first is that as soon as Nebuchadnezzar attributed entirely to himself the great achievements associated with his name, then God reduced him to something

less than a man so that he "ate straw like an ox." The second is that when in some strange way, in his demented condition, he came to realize that there was really only one Lord in the universe, then he was at once restored to his former position of authority and he had no hesitation whatsoever in acknowledging this circumstance. Scripture reveals that the Lord was overruling these men, and strange to say, they were sometimes quite aware of it. It was a kind of Divine Right of Kings.

All of which is in perfect harmony with the fact that the final world empire will appear at a time when God shall have "put into the hearts [of the nations] to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Revelation 17:17). From beginning to end, in the major aspects of world history God is clearly omnipotent. Ultimately, of course, "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations" (Psalm 22:27,28). For God dictates the rise and fall of nations; as Job put it (12:23): "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations and straighteneth them again." And so likewise in Psalm 47:6-8: "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth on the throne of His holiness." It is indeed a cause for praise!

Now, over these nations are kings who, to some extent, determine the fortunes and the character of the nations they rule, just as the significance and the character of the Jewish nation will ultimately be determined by their appointed Lord and King. At this level God begins to be even more explicit in His revelation. For example, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water [i.e., in an irrigated garden]: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). This is, of course, in harmony with Psalm 75:6,7, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." Likewise in Daniel 2:20,21: "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: and He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings."

Many are the specific examples of God's overruling in the histories of individual kings. The obvious example which springs immediately to mind is that of "Pharaoh," the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The graphic picture of vacillation and cowardice, of resolution and decision, on the part of the king is so clearly drawn. We are given an insight into the thoughts of a man moved upon by forces far greater than himself, and who is apparently quite unaware of this overruling. He would have let the children of Israel go, would have been glad to see the last of them, after each exhibition of power on Moses' part. But as the miracles became increasingly amazing, he found his heart strengthened even when he was most fearful of the consequences of refusal!

This is clearly what lies behind the comment of Paul when he observes in Romans 9:17, "For the Scripture reveals with respect to Pharaoh, Even for this very purpose have I 'made thee so,' that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." So in Exodus 10:20: "But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go." And

Exodus 8:10: "That thou [Pharaoh] mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God." Pharaoh was a pawn in the hand of an omnipotent God. The fairness, or otherwise, of God's action in the light of Pharaoh's unhappy end we must deal with later on, for undoubtedly the Lord punished him for doing His will! But suffice it to say that this man was entirely in the hands of God and was, as it were, "driven" to do what he did by a higher power whom he, nevertheless, constantly refused to acknowledge.

It is curious how frequently the Egyptians were used to fulfill the purposes of God with respect to Israel in a punitive role. When Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him, the Lord threatened them with punishment through the Egyptians under Shishak. The people were moved with fear and humbled themselves, and accordingly, God tempered the punishment He had prepared for them. In 2 Chronicles 12:7-9 it is written:

And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem *by the hand of Shishak*.

Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

It was the hand of Shishak, according to history, that despoiled the Temple, but it was in fact the hand of the Lord, according to biblical revelation: Shishak was merely serving the Lord, though he knew not the Lord whom he served.

Later on, we find another emperor, Cyrus, who never acknowledged God and yet found himself called upon to fulfill His will. "Is there a God beside Me? [...] Who saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure [...]" (Isaiah 44:8,28). And the Word of the Lord continues (Isaiah 45:1,5,6):

Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him [...].

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, *though thou hast not known Me*:

That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. [emphasis mine]

Notice particularly the emphasized words: for Cyrus was not a worshipper of the true God. He was a pagan and honoured the gods as convenience required wherever he happened to be. Yet for all this, Cyrus acknowledged subsequently that he owed his dominion to the Lord God and had received a charge to build the

Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:23). He did not know God in a personal way, and therefore he was merely a servant in the hands of an overruling Lord who by him "performed His pleasure."

Years before this, one of Israel's godliest kings, Josiah — after he had performed many great things for the Lord — engaged upon a venture which was not at all according to the Lord's will. The circumstances surrounding this incident are illuminating. In 2 Chronicles 35:20-24 it is written:

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the Temple, Necho King of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not.

Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

And the archers shot at king Josiah [...]. His servants therefore took him, [...] and brought him to Jerusalem, and he died.

So ended Josiah, in spite of the warning of an Egyptian king who clearly in this was acting as a servant of God.

A few years later, Nebuchadnezzar was likewise an instrument in the furtherance of God's purposes. "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant [see Jeremiah 25:9 and 43:10]: and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all the nations shall serve him and his son, (and his son's son,) until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him" (Jeremiah 27:6,7). This passage reveals much. It also shows who disposes events and therefore declares who alone can predict the future. God's omnipotence is behind prophecy, not merely His foresight. He, like the Lord Jesus, claims this predictive power as proof of His control of history: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9,10). So likewise in John 13:19: "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He."

Nebuchadnezzar had become great "because of God," and not "because of Nebuchadnezzar." This fact Belshazzar learned to his shame, for "the God in whose hands" were all his ways he had not glorified (Daniel 5:23); and it spelled calamity.

In the case of Ahitophel, we find another example of how God overruled a man's intentions. This example is a striking one (though not an exceptional one) in that Ahitophel had good intentions. In 2 Samuel 17:14 it is written, "For the Lord

had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahitophel to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." It is hard when we read such passages to resist the temptation to anticipate some of the conclusions which follow later and to begin making comments on the strangeness of God's actions at times! But here we must again be content with pointing out for the present how a man is overruled that God's purposes might stand, even when the intentions overruled were intrinsically good.

In the "natural" goodness of his heart, Pilate would have let Jesus go. And it would have been difficult at that instant to do anything but commend his determination. But it would have been wrong from God's point of view – the only point of view that could count. And so Jesus replied, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). Pilate thought he had power (verse 10), and so he did! But it was borrowed from God, who could alone sustain it. That is why Peter says quite simply, "Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Do you know who was king when Peter penned these instructions? The date of his epistle is somewhere about A.D. 60, and from A.D. 37 to 68 Nero was emperor in Rome! It is doubtful if there has ever existed such an inhuman beast (Adolf Hitler not excepted) – and yet Peter is still required to pen these words, "Fear God. Honour the king." We cannot, must not, divorce these two commands. They stand or fall together by all that has already been declared from the Word of God. God appoints kings.

It is the plain statement of the Scriptures that "all are His servants" (Psalm 119:91). The inclusiveness of this would be hard to understand if, to be a servant, it was also necessary to be a *friend*. However, this is by no means the case; it is sometimes necessary for the Lord to use His enemies to fulfill His purposes. Thus in the early days of the church, when its numbers were few and its resources, humanly speaking, were very small, one might have thought that God would arrange for a Constantine to be emperor in Rome. On the contrary, He saw fit to appoint as emperor men who were almost completely corrupt and who persecuted the church unceasingly.

Similarly, when Israel first entered the Promised Land, they were opposed at once by powerful enemies whom the Lord could easily have removed beforehand, but had not done so. These enemies are used to serve God's purposes in two quite specific ways, as will be seen by reference to Deuteronomy 7:22 and Judges 2:22. We should not be surprised therefore, in our personal experience, to find when we have been clearly led to a new undertaking that there is opposition where we might least have expected it in the circumstances. Since the opposition may very well be indirectly of the Lord, we should try to discern what the Lord (not the enemy) is after!

In 2 Samuel 7:14 men of the world are referred to as "the rod" of God: in Isaiah 7:20 the king of Assyria is God's "hired razor"; in Jeremiah 47:6,7 Pharaoh is termed the "sword of the Lord"; in Isaiah 10:26 the Assyrian is spoken of as the "scourge of God." By such agencies are the saints perfected, for "whom the Lord loveth, He scourgeth" (Hebrews 12:6).

David says, "Arise, O Lord, [...] deliver my soul from the wicked which is *Thy* sword: from men which are *Thy* hand, O Lord, from men of the world which have

their portion in this life [...]" (Psalm 17:13,14). When David speaks of the comfort of God's "rod" and "staff," he may have had in mind, as we have customarily supposed, the protective devices which a shepherd carries: but he may also have been discerning enough to see that the chastening of the Lord is proof of His care for us. Indeed the Hebrew word *paqadh*, has the dual meaning of "visiting, caring for" and "punishing." Asaph says in Psalm 76:10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." That is to say, God does not permit the hostility of men to go beyond the point where the outcome of it will cease to be any longer to His praise. Such "vessels of wrath" are also termed "vessels of dishonour," possibly because their work is one which they, being sinful, take delight in. As such, their just dessert is destruction (Romans 9:21,22).

Subsequently we have to consider how God can punish men in authority for their wickedness and, at the same time, use them as they are and make them serve His own ends. God is no man's debtor. The same Lord who borrowed Peter's boat for a while, as He addressed the throng that pressed upon Him, afterward repaid him with a draught far beyond the carrying capacity of his little craft! And it will be found that God is also careful to repay the unsaved who serve His purposes even when their motives are entirely selfish. Nebuchadnezzar was used by the Lord to punish the wickedness of Tyre; but so impoverished was the city that the king gained little or nothing from the spoils of war. Ezekiel put it this way (29:18-20):

Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus [...]. Yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon: and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for Me, saith the Lord God.

Nations are constituted of people over whom kings usually appoint lesser authorities. Paul deals at some length in one passage with the matter of the attitude we should hold toward them. He writes "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth what God hath ordained" (Romans 13:1,2).

Paul then adds the rather strange comment (verse 3) that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. This observation comes unexpectedly, since one tends to assume that it is only good people who have cause to fear the kind of ruler Paul had in mind. But actually Paul is saying that a good man has no need to fear evil rulers no matter how wicked they are, provided that he fears God more. When he says, "Do that which is good and verily thou shalt have praise of the same" (verse 3), I do not think he means that we should expect praise of the ruler, but that we may be assured of the praise of God.

The fact is that we ought to be subject because wickedness exists everywhere and must, therefore, be restrained, and such authorities are appointed specifically to do this as God sees fit. Since they are His agents in this capacity, to refuse them is to refuse God Himself.

It means, in effect, that always we must look past the immediate agent to the Presence whose hand is being revealed. When we begin to learn to do this, we may carry with us unconsciously that other-worldliness which so challenges the world about us. This is one aspect of walking in the Spirit. But we must distinguish between attitudes which are prompted by the fear of man instead of the fear of God. Who fears the Lord need have no other fear.

And so Paul writes to Titus (3:1), "Put them in mind to be subject to the principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." We cannot really excuse ourselves with the plea, "Well, the whole government is rotten anyhow!" It could perhaps never be as rotten again over so long a period as it was under Nero and his predecessors in the days of the early church. Probably that is one reason why God called Nero to "serve" at such a time – for He was revealing His will at that time with respect to just such evil circumstances; we today can never claim that our age exempts us because of its wickedness and corruption.

I think there is a distinction which must be made between "respect" and "honour." Paul closes this little section of Romans 13 by saying (verse 7), "Render to all therefore their dues; [...] fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." As I understand it, respect is based upon proper acknowledgment of the dignity of an office: honour is something based upon the worthiness of a man who holds the office. A wicked judge or an unfaithful bishop, provided they are both duly constituted, must be respected as judge or bishop, but one need not necessarily honour either of them as men. Both Paul and the Lord Himself respected a reprobate high priest because he was high priest. In fact, God was still pleased to speak by revelation through one of these unworthy officials (John 11:49-51).

So much, then, for those in authority over us, for those who for one reason or another have the power to coerce us. In spite of persecutions, of restrictions upon liberty, of the multitude of ways in which evil men have brought tribulation to the saints, such men are still servants of God, however much they may suppose themselves to be free and however much we may suppose them to be the servants of Satan. All things still work together for good to them who love God. I believe we shall find in eternity that God's omnipotence is of such a kind that the most wicked deeds of man will prove to be the source of the greatest glory for God – the supreme example being the crucifixion of the Son of God. Where there is no suffering, there is no glory.

Ordinary Folk

But what does the Word of God reveal regarding ordinary mortals, like you and me, whose individual importance would seem to be so small? Well, if we begin with one of the earliest books of the Bible, we find Job saying, "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble [...]. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Turn from him, that he may rest till he shall accomplish as an

hireling his day" (14:1,5,6). As a hireling: his very existence is spent upon borrowed time. He makes great plans and dreams great dreams, and his energies are bent apparently at will as he struggles for the goal. Indeed, "there are many plans in a man's heart; yet the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Proverbs 19:21). As the same wise man elsewhere observed and was instructed to write for us, "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Yea, the very preparations of the heart in man and the very "response" are from the Lord (Proverbs 16:1). And we ask in amazement, Who then is free? What can these things mean? Nor is it the first time it has been asked, How can God find fault when a man's actions are predetermined and he cannot do otherwise? (Romans 9:19).

We turn elsewhere, supposing that perhaps in these proverbs Solomon was exaggerating, only to find Jeremiah saying, "O Lord, I know that the way of a man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). And so Solomon is found saying again, "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Proverb 20:24).

There are times when we are conscious of this strange compulsion, and involuntarily we exclaim, "I really don't know why I did it – or what got into me." It is the universal testimony of men in times of great crisis that their actions often seem to spring, as it were, from sources deeper than themselves. Sometimes they say, with Luther, "I can do no other, so help me God!" This "restraint" upon the course of our lives makes it impossible to say truthfully, "If I had my life to live over again I would do differently." This is almost certainly false, because it is not ultimately left with man to direct his own steps when the decision to be made is vital.

Now, in the ordinary plans and business of the day Jeremiah reminds us (Lamentations 3:37), "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord did not command it?" It is just this habit of thought, based entirely upon the assumption that our actions are determined by our own wills and that we can therefore plan with considerable certainty, that is condemned in the New Testament: "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow [...]. For that ye ought rather to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that" (James 4:13-15).

So He who in many ways has so ordered His purposes as to take into consideration our usefulness in furthering them, nevertheless can declare forthrightly, "Yea, before the day was, I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand; I will work, and who shall hinder?" (Isaiah 43:13).

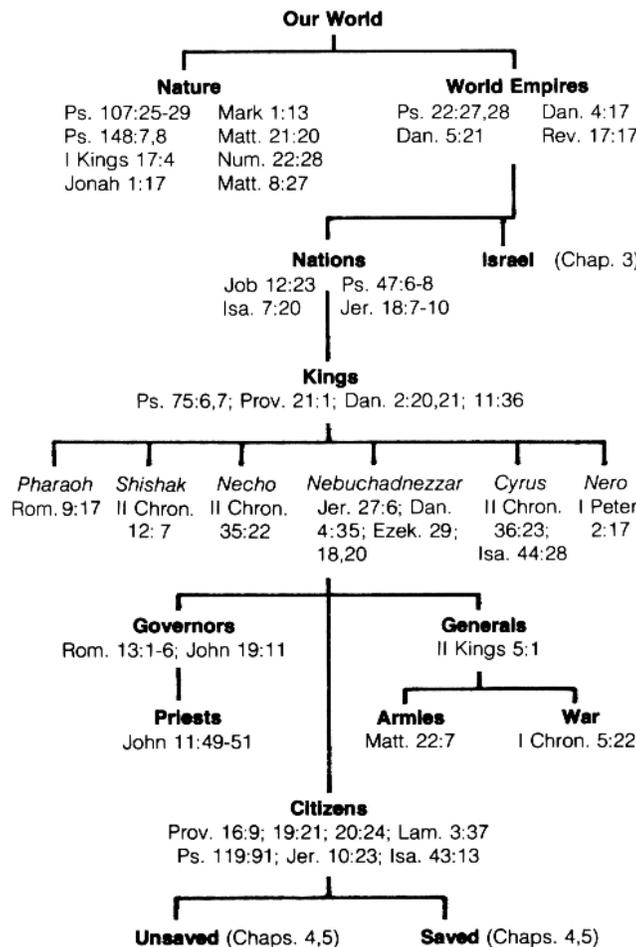
Even a glance at the passages which are tabulated in chapter 4 will reveal clearly that both believers *and* the unbelieving are completely in the hands of God the moment God finds it necessary to overrule their actions. Of course, we find ourselves faced with the question of election – and there are not a few to whom this aspect of theology seems cold and harsh and entirely contrary to the Christian spirit in its emphasis. But we must let the Word of God decide the issue for us, if possible.

In these last few paragraphs we have begun to tread on delicate ground. It is not difficult to believe that God has overruled kings and princes in a general kind of way; this seems remote and impersonal. But as we pass down the scale, it almost

seems as though Scripture becomes increasingly "fatalistic" in its philosophy. Two problems arise out of this which put us on the defensive. The first is *the sense of injustice* which we feel very deeply when we are told that God has overruled us to such an extent that we seem to be mere automatons. If God so overrules our actions, in what sense can we ever be held morally responsible? Paul stated this very explicitly – perhaps quoting someone who had disputed with him: "How in the world can God find fault with us when He never allows us to do anything except what He wants us to do?" Or, to put it in the words of the Authorized Version, "Why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19).

Now, the problem raised here is not merely punishing men for evil deeds, but also rewarding them for good. If men are not to be punished for evil deeds, can they be rewarded for good ones? Undoubtedly God does punish and does reward and, therefore, men are presumably morally accountable. What exactly is the nature of this moral accountability? How is it to be squared with the clear statements of Scripture about the omnipotence of God in the affairs of men? The Bible has a full and satisfying answer to this problem, and we shall explore it in chapter 5. In the next chapter, however, we shall see how God overruled in the history of Israel.

In the meantime, we have advanced the tabulation of passages so that it may be set down as follows:



Chapter 3

The Omnipotence of God in the History of Israel

If we exclude prophetic statements which are yet unfulfilled, the history of Israel begins with and ends with very clear evidences of the omnipotence of God. The choice of Jacob as opposed to Esau is revealed in Romans (9:11-13) to have been based entirely upon the will of God and not upon the worthiness or otherwise of the individuals concerned. The history of Israel ends (with the above proviso) with the rejection of their King, an act whereby they committed national suicide, a state of "death" in which they will remain as a nation until that future time arrives when they shall be "born in a day" (Psalm 22:31; Isaiah 66:8). This suicidal act is stated in no uncertain terms to have been according to the specific and deliberate will of God (Acts 2:23; 4:27,28).

Between these two events there intervened some fifteen hundred years of history, of which about one thousand years is outlined in some detail in Scripture. This outline is for the most part a sorry tale, a record of great resolution, great deliverances, repeated failure, and increasingly catastrophic judgment. On the face of it, this history refers back to a nation, but in experience it applies now to each one of us personally – the essential difference being that we are helped daily by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, whereas they were not. It is the experience of every child of God that his life is as luminously full of divine interferences as Israel's was. A study of the history of God's Chosen People has a direct bearing upon the ways in which God deals with us. Such a study reveals the surprising fact that God predetermined, not only their triumphs, but many of their most critical failures.

When the time of their divinely promised deliverance came, the only man who could sign the warrant of release was persuaded not to do so, and God said, "It was I who strengthened his vacillating will." When they should have been united, they were divided, and God said, "This thing is of Me." When they should have possessed their possessions, they were prevented from doing so, and God said, "This is My will." When great leaders were sent to restore their independence such men sometimes failed them miserably, and God said, "I brought this about."

It seems strange that God should encourage and discourage at the same time. Yet this is what Scripture reveals, and the best way to learn to understand it is not to deny it, but to study more carefully what Scripture says, for the fact is

undeniable. Indeed Isaiah may have had this in mind when he refers to "His strange work" (Isaiah 28:21).

Let us examine briefly those points in Israel's history which reflect this circumstance. As already stated, the history of Israel begins with the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau. The Word of God says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). This is revealed to be a decision made by the Lord before either of the two children was born. The decision was in fact a reversal of the normal procedure, because Esau was technically the firstborn (Genesis 25:25) but this circumstance was set aside through an action on the part of Jacob that was utterly despicable, wherein he tricked his aging father into giving him an irrevocable blessing and thus became legally the firstborn (Genesis 27). It seems strange indeed that the purposes of God should finally be fulfilled by such a wicked device; yet as we shall see, the same pattern of events appeared again at the end in the Crucifixion.

In the course of time, Jacob raised a large family including twelve famous sons. When the ten oldest of these sons grew up, they revealed something of their father's disposition, showing little hesitation in taking advantage of a situation even at the expense of a brother. An opportunity presented itself for selling Joseph, whose essential goodness was unfortunately not enhanced by any very great sense of modesty. His high opinion of his own destiny challenged his brothers to make sure that he would be quite wrong; to make certain that he would never become master of them as he boasted he would (Genesis 37:2ff.). So they sold him as a slave to some Midianites who were on their way to Egypt (Genesis 37:27,28).

The rest of the story is familiar enough, but what we may have overlooked is the fact that all the essential attendant circumstances were divinely inspired. In due course, famine brought Joseph's brothers into Egypt, where he was now Prime Minister. After a series of incidents which deeply stirred their consciences, Joseph revealed himself to his brethren and then made this observation when he saw their concern (Genesis 45:5,7,8):

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life [...]. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth [...]. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.

Notice particularly how specific Joseph is, reiterating three times very distinctly that God had sent him. It is perfectly true that this was their doing really, for they willed to do it; yet the deed exactly fulfilled the purposes of God who thereby brought good out of evil. Later on, Joseph made this clear when he said (Genesis 50:20), "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good [...] to save much people."

How often does that one little phrase "but God" change the perplexing circumstances of His children! Joseph has often been looked upon as the most perfect type of the Lord, and it is significant therefore that the Lord also was sacrificed – a far, far greater evil – which nevertheless God meant "unto good [...] to save much people."

Nor is this all that Scripture tells us about this event, for the famine itself was no accident. Psalm 105:16,17 reveals that God not only foresaw but sent the famine: "Moreover, He called for a famine upon the whole land: He brake the whole staff of bread." There is something very deliberate about this passage; the reiteration of the word *whole* suggests that God left nothing to chance: there simply was nowhere else to go for food.

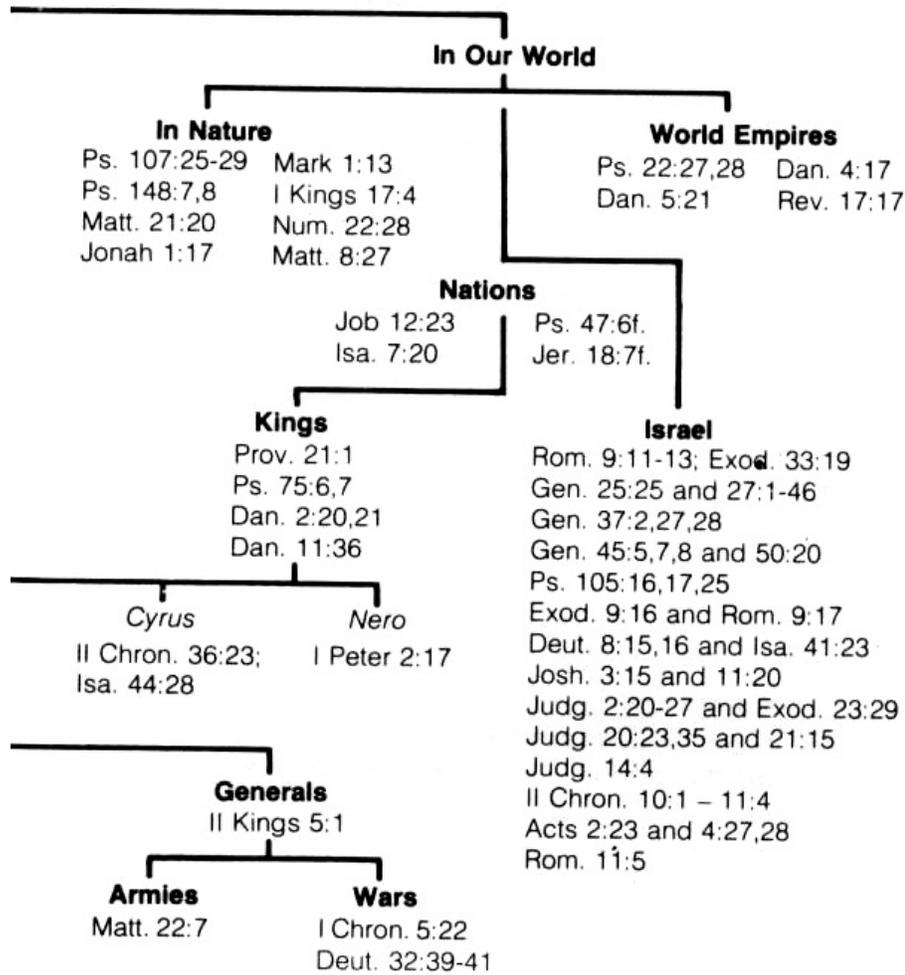
Joseph passed on, but the Israelites multiplied greatly in their new temporary home. Yet it was not God's plan that they should remain there, and so as Psalm 105:25 points out, God raised up quite deliberately a spirit of anti-Semitism in the land. It seems such a devilish form of nationalism that one would hesitate to imagine that God could ever be responsible for it. Yet it is written, "*He* turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants."

And so God raised up Moses as their great deliverer. After a display of His power, God directed Moses to speak to Pharaoh to let His people go. In view of all the preparations clearly blessed of God, it must have been no surprise to Moses to find that Pharaoh was sufficiently impressed by the judgments falling on the land to be only too willing to be rid of these unpopular people. But what must have been his surprise when again and again Pharaoh changed his mind, refused to let them go, and added to their burdens!

Here is a strange paradox. This Pharaoh was not a strong man, but God did not intend to take Israel out easily. In order to show His power, He strengthened Pharaoh to resist His own will. This was the reason why Pharaoh vacillated (Exodus 9:16). In the New Testament (Romans 9:17), the reference back to this event makes it very clear that *God* was behind Pharaoh's resistance – not Pharaoh. In fact, the Greek word translated "raised thee up" is more specific and means "energized."

Although this Pharaoh received his appointment to his high office according to God's plan, Romans 9:17 does not, I think, have reference to this aspect of the situation, but rather to the circumstance of Pharaoh's repeated change of mind. Pharaoh was quite unaware of this, presumably. He merely found in the morning that a renewed confidence in his own power had come with a new day and, rejoicing in it, he made the most of it—until once more frightened by the consequences. One might say, "Did God have any right to punish him?" The answer, I think, is that God did not punish his *actions*, for he was not responsible for them, but He did punish his *motives*. And so He brought Israel out with a great display of power, after an experience which served in a very real way to unite them and give them a sense of nationhood.

There followed the journey through the wilderness, a wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, a great and terrible wilderness indeed, as experience was to prove. But why such tribulation, when after all it was God who had brought them out? Deuteronomy 8:15,16 gives the answer: "[...] that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." Although it was their sinfulness that brought these evils upon them, yet they came by God's design that He might do them good. God is able to do good and evil at one and the same time (Isaiah 41:23).



Saved (Heb. 12:2)

Repentance: Rom. 2:4; II Tim. 2:25; Jer. 24:7; Acts 5:31; 16:14; Lam. 5:21; Ps. 65:4; Ezek. 11:19; Acts 11:18

Faith: I Peter 1:21; Phil. 1:29; Acts 18:27; I Cor. 3:5,6

Salvation: John 1:11-13; Eph. 2:8; II Thess. 2:13

Eternal life: Rom. 6:23; Titus 1:2; John 10:28.* *Gifts:* Heb. 2:4; I Cor. 12:4-11

Grace: Eph. 3:7; 4:7; Rom. 15:15; I Cor. 1:4; *Position:* Rom. 8:29

Duties: Eph. 2:10; I Thess. 2:4; Isa. 26:12; John 15:16; Acts 13:36; Mark 13:34

Handicaps: Exod. 4:11; Jer. 1:6,7; II Cor. 10:10; 12:7-9. *Talents:* I Cor. 12:18

See also Jer. 50:20; Matt. 13:11; I Peter 1:2.

*Cf. also Acts 13:48: being ordained to life, they believed.

When Israel finally reached the border of the Promised Land, one would have thought that He who said, "I have brought thee out that I might bring thee in" would have made the way clear for them to pass immediately over Jordan into victory and rest. Instead we find their enemies strengthened against them and their entry an occasion of great conflict. Even the river they had to cross was in flood at the time (Joshua 3:15)! But Joshua 11:20 reveals why: "It was of the Lord to harden their hearts [the hearts of these kings already in the land], that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly." Is this fair? Is it justice that they should have been encouraged to defy His purpose? We must leave any attempt to answer this until the last chapter.

At any rate, these kings found themselves strangely united and defiant against what must have seemed to them a pretty large force, whose reputation as warriors had gone before them.

But these kings were not there merely to prove the faith of the Israelites. God had other purposes also. While in Judges 2:20-23 it is revealed that some of these kings were left unsubdued as a consequence of Israel's failure, it is also clear that God had His own purposes in not giving them total victory over their enemies: "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: that through them I may prove Israel [...]."

It is also revealed in Exodus 23:29, however, that God had been concerned for Israel's welfare in other ways. There was an unforeseen danger in any victory too quickly achieved: "I will not drive them out from before thee in *one* year; lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee." This seems to be reflected in many of God's dealings with us individually. There are possessions which it is promised to us to possess in His name, but we do not always have them when we feel we should because of factors He foresees. Logically the children of Israel might have questioned His goodness in not subduing all their enemies for them when they had definitely been led to advance. But understood in the light of subsequent history, these setbacks turned out to be blessings.

Now when this people—chosen to glorify His name and to bear witness to the Oneness of the Godhead in a world completely given up to the grossest forms of polytheism—finally did enter officially and victoriously into the land, wherein it was intended they should establish a centre of pure worship, then we might surely have expected that harmony among themselves would have been one of the most essential things, and certainly according to the will of God.

But this is not what happened. When a division occurred between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of their brethren, the people sought the Lord that He would heal the breach somehow, and they were quite willing to do something about it. As Judges 20:23 tells us, "The children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him." Now these people were humble, for they wept before the Lord: they were patient, for evidently it was an all-day prayer meeting ("until even"): their request was stated specifically, and they received a specific answer in the affirmative. There was real oneness at this prayer meeting because they said, "Shall *I* go up to battle?" There was also a genuine sense of concern for Benjamin, for they referred to him as "my

brother," unlike a certain New Testament character who referred to his own brother as "this thy son" (Luke 15:30).

So they went up against Benjamin confident that having sought the leading of the Lord, nothing could possibly go wrong. But it did—they were thoroughly routed!

The Benjaminites were finally defeated, of course, for as verse 35 points out, "The LORD smote Benjamin before Israel": but only in His own good time. A breach at such a time must have seemed like a most serious division within the church of God at a critical period. Yet strange to say, this breach was of God's making, not Israel's, for Judges 21:15 says, "The people repented them for Benjamin, because that *the Lord had made a breach* in the tribes of Israel." Whoever the inspired scribe was who penned these words, he was not instructed at the same time to say why. Evidently the Lord had a reason. But by revelation He stated His responsibility. Of course, if one does not believe that Scripture is to be taken seriously, then one simply ignores this kind of problem. But half the delight of studying the Word of God lies in finding answers to such problems—supplied in due time from some other part of Scripture.

Many are distressed over the disunity in the ranks of evangelical Christianity. But very wisely His Majesty King George VI in his 1946 Christmas broadcast remarked, "[...] Opinion striking against opinion provides the spark which lights the lamp of truth." Though he was not referring to the church specifically, his words are still applicable: it may be a sign of vitality that we have these divisions, and it is certainly a sign of genuine concern when we are willing to refer to those who disagree with us as "my brother."

At any rate, under the Judges, Israel struggled to achieve complete unity and nationhood. Some periods were times of great advance, others of terrible retreat. So much seems to have depended upon their leadership. One such leader in particular seemed to promise much for the well-being of the nation, if the circumstances of his birth were any indication. This was Samson. Yet at that very point in his experience when he might have provided the very leadership Israel so clearly needed, he fell disastrously short of God's requirements of true holiness. When Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman, he was not merely proposing an alliance with an alien to the Covenant; he was even contemplating an alliance with a member of one of Israel's most persistent and powerful enemies.

Naturally Samson's parents, being godly people, anxiously sought to enlist the Lord's help in preventing Samson's evil intentions from being realized. Yet their good intentions were foredoomed: In Judges 14:4 it is revealed, "But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, that He sought an occasion against the Philistines." The fact that Samson's actions turned out to be part of God's will did not in the least lessen his punishment for what he did. He was punished because he did not do it for the Lord's sake, but entirely to please himself. Thus it turns out that *a man may be punished for doing the Lord's will*. We shall say more of this later. In the meantime, while Samson suffered greatly for his choice, the evils which resulted turned ultimately toward the fulfillment of God's own good purposes. It was all part of God's plan.

Such insights into how the purposes of God were fulfilled in the history of Israel are intended to give us a better understanding of not only their history, but also of the Lord's dealings with us, for these things are recorded for our learning (Romans 15:4).

In due time, nationhood was achieved under Solomon and a genuine measure of respect from the peoples around. The Temple was built and the worship of the one true God established in the midst of polytheism. This was Israel's Golden Age. But it was short-lived. A new and much more serious division—evidently deep-seated—between the northern and southern sections of the kingdom came to a head, largely because of lack of humility on the part of Rehoboam. In 2 Chronicles 10 the details of this man's folly are outlined. It seems possible that the division between Israel and Judah might have been avoided, or at least delayed, if the king had listened to the counsel of the older and wiser men of the community. But he was too proud and took their advice as a challenge to his authority. What is chiefly important for our purposes is the statement of verse 15 which reads, "So the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform His word."

This seems a strange statement, and as though God foresaw it, the circumstance is reaffirmed in 2 Chronicles 11:3,4. Rehoboam was determined to re-establish the unity which his father had achieved so gloriously and which must have seemed so appropriate, for only in one place could the Lord's testimony be maintained, and that was in Jerusalem. The northern tribes must not be allowed to set up an independent centre of worship. But God said, "Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house; for this thing is done of Me."

The breach that resulted was never healed until both Judah and Israel went into captivity. In exile the nation was once for all purged of the slightest tendency toward polytheism or idolatry, and in due time many of them returned to the Promised Land to wait for their Messiah.

The Old Testament revelation was now complete. A few centuries later the stage was set for the coming of the Lord. Any number of coincident circumstances signalled the appropriateness of the times. The philosophy of the Greek world had proved the inadequacy of human intellect to give any final answers; yet the Greek language itself had been sharpened into a vehicle perfectly suited for a new revelation that was to be written for all nations to read. In the Roman world, the establishment of law and order had not preserved morality, thus showing the inherent wickedness of man, wickedness which could not be annulled merely by the restraints of a highly sophisticated legal system. On the other hand, communications throughout the Roman Empire prepared the way for the spread of the new, pending revelation.

There was an air of expectancy in Israel. Surely God would at last speak to the nations through the Chosen People, who longed for and expected the promised King who would restore their independence and mission.

But the rejection of their Messiah when He came was the equivalent of national suicide. To those in Israel who were believers, it must have seemed for a day or two

as though two thousand years of history had suddenly lost all meaning. Had God been forced to change His plans?

No, God had not changed His plans. Although Peter could not possibly have foreseen the real significance of his words, the Spirit of God directed him in his first exposition to the children of Israel to make it quite clear that there had been no mistakes and that God had not changed His mind. As Peter said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Notice here that it was by the predeterminate counsel, not merely the foreknowledge of God; and notice also that in spite of this fact it was by "wicked" hands that God's counsel was achieved. Peter attempted to make this even clearer in Acts 4:27f., and he made the moral responsibility more comprehensive and all-inclusive when he said:

For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do exactly what [so it means] Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.

It is difficult to think how this could have been any more explicitly stated. Even Peter's opening words, "for of a truth," seem deliberately to underscore what was to be revealed. So ended the first great era of the history of the Chosen People.

What a dismal record of failure the nation's history had been! Even the New Testament seemed to recognize this aspect of it all (Acts 7, especially verse 51). Founded by an act of deception, well-nigh destroyed at the first by a total lack of brotherly love, decimated in the wilderness because of unbelief, halted on the very threshold of the Promised Land because of cowardice, misguided in their campaigns against the enemy through presumption, plagued by petty discord whenever some real victory was in sight, sometimes failed in times of special need by their most promising leaders, almost ruined by civil war at the very moment the fulfillment of their calling appeared to be in sight, and then carried away into a foreign land in a captivity that seemed to end all their aspirations as a people. But here purged of idolatry, and then united together in a new way by years of Roman oppression, they succeeded only in agreeing to crucify the very King for whom they had prepared themselves over a thousand years. What a record of opportunity ruined by faithlessness and misguided zeal it all seems to have been. *Yet*, God was in it, working out His own good purposes in His own good way and in His own good time.

The casting off of Israel was the blessing of the Gentiles, and they are only cast off for a season. As Romans 11:19 tells us, the original branches were broken off *in order that* we might be grafted in; and in order that, in the end, the blessing of the Gentiles might lead to the reconciling of Israel bringing them into a new relationship which would not otherwise have been possible. For Calvary was both a necessity — if sin was to be forgiven — yet impossible but for that very sin! Had it not been for their rejection of their own Messiah by the Chosen People, there would have been no ground for forgiving them (or us) for all the other deeds of

wickedness and selfishness and faithlessness. So inscrutable are the ways of God. As Paul burst out in his wonderful conclusion to the eleventh chapter of Romans:

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For all things are of Him, and through Him, and to Him, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.



Chapter 4

The Omnipotence of God in Personal History

Any consideration of the omnipotence of God in the lives of individuals soon becomes a consideration of predestination. To many people the idea that God would coerce anyone is repugnant, an invasion of our right of self-determination. Fortunately for us, God *does* ignore this right at certain critical points, especially in the matter of our salvation – for otherwise none of us would be saved. Some people seek to escape the force of this by saying that God's plans are not based upon His predetermination of our actions, but upon His foresight of what those actions will be in any given circumstance. Yet such a view would surely rob God of the right to make any plan according to His own will, leaving Him only with the right to accommodate His plans according to *our* wills – wills which are fundamentally sinful.

I believe Scripture makes it clear that God has intentions of His own which we are predestined to fulfill exactly. His foreknowledge enables Him to use us to serve these purposes in the best possible way and for our own best good, but this foreknowledge is not the basis of our election. The basis of His choice of one individual for salvation rather than another rests solely in His own good pleasure. To suppose otherwise is to invite the dangerous and wholly unscriptural idea that there is some moral or spiritual superiority in the elect which singles them out and makes them more particularly worthy of God's favour (1 Corinthians 4:7). But Romans 9:21 assures us that this is not the case. It is of the same lump of raw material that sinner and saint alike are molded; the choice must rest entirely with God, and the basis of it is hidden from us. 1 Peter 4:10, in the original Greek, tells us that *a* gift, some gift (not *the* gift as in the King James Version) is given to every individual. Such gifts are used of God to fulfill His intentions whether as redeemed or unredeemed people. Some vessels are appointed for more and some for less honourable use, and together we all combine our labours, saved and unsaved alike, to the working out of His Master Plan. Certain parts of this plan seem to require that a man be unsaved, some that he be saved. The Lord's children are challenged to make sure that both their calling and their election to salvation are sure (2 Peter 1:10). Election to salvation should not be confused with a calling to a life work.

Four Stages in Salvation

There are four stages in the salvation of a man's soul which are clearly recognized in Scripture, yet which in experience are not always so readily discernible. The first is repentance,¹ the second faith, the third salvation, and the fourth eternal life. Each of these is stated specifically to be a gift of God.

Paul assures us that it is not the goodness of man, but the goodness of God that leads to repentance, for the material out of which God makes saints is exactly the same material as that out of which He makes vessels of dishonour.² That's why he warns against any boasting as though the saints were basically any different from other people initially.³

This gift of repentance first granted to Israel is in some way related to the exaltation of Christ⁴ but the same gift was later on likewise granted to the Gentiles.⁵ The graciousness of God in granting this gift to men otherwise utterly opposed to Himself is the basis of Paul's plea that we also should be gentle with those who set themselves in opposition against us, peradventure God will also grant them repentance as He granted it to us.⁶

I think it was Spurgeon who once said that he would not preach another sermon but for his conviction that a man's response resulted entirely from the grace of God and according to His will. It was only because the Lord had touched her heart – and for no other reason – that Lydia became the first European convert.⁷ Whether a person be Jew or Gentile, the turning to God is always because of God, and not because of man. As John put it so emphatically, "It is not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man," but of God that a soul is saved.⁸ John also said that it is not of blood either – that is to say blood relationship as an Israelite was not enough to predispose a man toward God. It was because God gave them a heart to know Him that Israelites became true Israelites with a new spirit within.⁹ Such people were blessed, not because of any inherent goodness, but because God chose them to draw them near to Himself.¹⁰

Repentance, according to the meaning of the original Greek word, means a change of mind. Esau sought with tears to change his father's mind, but he could not change the mind of God.¹¹ Judas changed his mind, but it was not "God's changing," only his own – and therefore it could not bring any blessing. Indeed, it brought only anguish of soul and suicide.¹²

Until one realizes that repentance means only a change of mind and has nothing necessarily to do with sorrow for sin, it must always be rather confusing to read in

1. Romans 2:4

2. Romans 9:21

3. 1 Corinthians 4:7

4. Acts 5:31

5. Acts 11:18

6. 2 Timothy 2:24,25

7. Acts 16:14

8. John 1:13

9. Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19

10. Psalm 65:4

11. Hebrews 12:17

12. Matthew 27:3,5

the Old Testament of the many occasions upon which God repented (see, for example, Exodus 32:14 and 2 Samuel 24:16). What is intended is that God changed His mind, not that He had found He had made a mistake. Why would He change His mind? And does such a change of mind imply an indecision? The fact, though it may appear strange at first, is that when God "repents," He is bearing testimony to His own un-changeableness. God's attitude toward wickedness is unchangeable, and so is His attitude toward holiness. In the face of each He responds with absolute consistency. When, therefore, a wicked man changes his ways and becomes a holy man, God's attitude to the same individual, being absolutely consistent with His own nature, also changes in response.

Humanly speaking, this action can only be described as a change of mind – which, of course, it is: and yet God is unchangeable. Thus, when Israel was wicked and the people deserved punishment, God's attitude was one of condemnation. Whenever Israel was revived through the ministry of some man of God, then the Lord's attitude was one of commendation. Such a change of attitude, usually expressed in some such words as "and God repented Him of the evil He had thought to bring upon Israel," is actually a testimony to the unchangeableness of God. Sometimes in our zeal we may persuade a man to repent, to change his mind toward God, but as Jeremiah says, only if God turns us unto Himself are we really turned.¹³

It is not enough to change one's mind and to take a more humble attitude toward God, for repentance alone does not bring salvation but only suspension of judgment. Nineveh repented and "was spared."¹⁴ But it was not saved, for it came later under a devastating judgment that wiped it out as a city once for all. Similarly Peter speaks of the long-suffering of the Lord in delaying the final judgment for the same reason.¹⁵ Salvation is based upon an act of faith, not merely repentance. But like godly repentance, saving faith also originates entirely with God. Those who were helped by the ministry of Apollos were not merely people who wanted a new religion in a world that was tired of the old, but people who had already believed "through the grace of God."¹⁶ Later on, Paul tried to make sure that the Corinthians would not attach too much importance to his own ministry or to that of Apollos, who seemed to be such an outstanding expositor of the Way of Life. Even though many had been blessed by them both, it was really God who had given every one of them the faith they had. It was God who gave the increase, even though it was Paul and Apollos who had been the instruments.¹⁷

That salvation is a gift of God hardly needs to be emphasized to anyone of evangelical faith. It is not in the consummation of this total transaction with the Lord that we are likely to make any mistake about man's independence. It is chiefly in the initial stages that the issue is debated, in the first signs of a change of attitude and then the expression of faith. Thus, while some people are disposed to argue that it is up to man to repent and believe, almost anyone will agree that once repentance and faith are expressed, then the rest is up to the Lord.

13. Lamentations 5:21

14. Jonah 4:11

15. 2 Peter 3:9

16. Acts 18:27; Philippians 1:29; I Peter 1:19-21

17. I Corinthians 3:5,6

It may be objected that God "commands" men to repent and believe, and that such a command would be meaningless unless it were possible for a person of his own free will to fulfill it. But the same may be said of the Ten Commandments, which are in fact encompassed by a single command, namely, that we are to love the Lord altogether with all our strength, all our mind, all our soul, all our heart—totally. We cannot do this, of course, apart from the empowering of the Holy Spirit and even then only for a limited time until the old nature re-asserts itself. We are commanded to do it, nonetheless. It is not what God anticipates we shall do, but it *is* what God requires of us and it is proper that we should know what the requirement is.

There is more need, therefore, to stress the omnipotence of God in the first stages than in the last. However, Scripture is quite explicit as to the fact that salvation is a gift of God, as will be seen from the following references: John 1:11-13; Ephesians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

The same applies, naturally, to the gift of eternal life, as shown in these passages: John 10:28; Romans 6:23; Titus 1:2.

Because He has chosen us, and not we Him (John 15:16), He is in every sense the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Any graciousness that we may have is a gift from Him: as for example, Romans 15:15; I Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 3:7; 4:7.

Any talents that we may happen to have are given to us entirely "according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:4), a fact elaborated upon in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, where it is stated that they are "divided to every man individually as He wills" by the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, our position as a child of God in the body of Christ is exactly what God is pleased to make it. 1 Corinthians 12:18 excludes absolutely no one in this category: "But now hath God set the members *every one* of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him."

Our duties and responsibilities are similarly by God's specific appointment. See, for example, Mark 13:34 (to every man his work) and John 15:16. Even more specific is the statement made in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This was equally true in the Old Testament, as acknowledged by Isaiah (26:12): "For Thou also has wrought all our works in us."

Even what seem to be our most crippling handicaps may be by God's appointment. Note the case of Moses who was lost for words (Exodus 4:11), and Jeremiah who lacked maturity (Jeremiah 1:6,7), and Paul whose presence was almost contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10).

These passages are so familiar that the force of them is often lost upon us. But I venture to say that if anyone will take each passage and examine it carefully, word by word, he will be amazed to find how little of our achievements can be credited to ourselves. *Does this mean we are really little more than puppets?* I think the answer to this question lies in an understanding of what the word *fruit* means in the New Testament. This is properly the subject of the next chapter, but it may help to point out here that though the responsibility of appointing the good *works* that we should walk in is God's alone, He holds us responsible for bringing forth the *fruits* of those

good works (Colossians 1:10; Jeremiah 17:10), namely, the response of the soul in the doing of them.

In other words, for the fulfillment of His Master Plan God appoints each of us duties (which are appropriate to our station in life), and these we shall do. But in the doing of them we may become better men or not better men — depending upon our own response to circumstance. Fruits are not souls saved (notice the wording of 1 Corinthians 9:1), but spiritual qualities reflected in personality, as clearly set forth in Galatians 5:22,23, and resulting from these appointed tasks. In the long run, the worker is more important than the work; what our deeds do to us is of more importance with respect to ourselves than merely having done the deeds. God is primarily seeking to make saints, not executives or even leaders.

From beginning to end, we are His workmanship. Our salvation, our station in life, our talents and handicaps, our duties and responsibilities, our good works — in short, the total circumstances in which we find ourselves — are all designed or permitted in order to contribute to God's great purpose of making saints to His own glory.

God's Rule Over the Unsaved

But what of the unsaved? To what extent does God rule in their circumstances? Surprisingly enough, Scripture has quite a bit to say about them.

It is natural that in the Master Plan of God there must be some tasks to be performed which, if they are to be done with thoroughness, paradoxically could only be done by people who also delight in opposing the will of God. This seems a strange statement to make, but it can be illustrated very clearly from Scripture. The perfecting of the saints is inevitably associated with the trying of the saints. Peter speaks of the trial of our faith. The Old and New Testaments both show how such testing is effected, namely, by unbelievers who take delight in their own skepticism and seek to undermine the faith of others. They suppose they are acting as entirely free agents, whereas in fact they are probably indirectly inspired by Satan.

Satan may suppose that he is accomplishing some measure of victory against the Lord. Scripture takes it one step further and shows that Satan is working only by permission and that such permission is granted for no other reason than the ultimate glorification of God in the perfecting of saints. Thus, in the Old Testament, false prophets were sometimes appointed to tempt Israel to serve other gods, and the strength of their appeal was reinforced by miracles which God Himself permitted. But such permission was not given without first a warning to the children of Israel that their devotion to the one true God would now and then be tested by this very means. This happened also in the New Testament, where even heresies were introduced that they which were approved of God might be made manifest by contrast.¹⁸

Of course, such heresies did not develop apart from the individuals who introduced them, and undoubtedly those early saints would never have received such men had they been aware of their character. But Jude says that these men crept

18. Deuteronomy 13:1-3; I Corinthians 11:19

in unawares—yet not without God's permission, for "they were before of old, ordained to this condemnation." ¹⁹ Such men became "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" to those associated with the children of God who had not really humbled themselves. It was to make such people manifest that these men were appointed.²⁰

To many men the way of salvation was offensive. These men were worldly wise, wise in their own conceits. From such men God has deliberately hidden the truth for so it seemed good in His sight.²¹ Israel as a nation—for reasons we can only dimly discern—was somehow blinded and hardened in heart against any recognition of their own Messiah.²² This blindness continues in our own day. Its continuance appears to be the result of a deliberate action on the part of God,²³ that through it He might in the end have mercy on a greater number of people, the Gentiles in the present, Israel in the future.

There is never really any word spoken against the Truth; nor is there any wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord, no matter how serious the situation may appear at any given moment.²⁴ When the Lord states what He is going to do, there is none that can deliver out of His hand and none who can prevent it; when such plans involve the actions of wicked men, not all the prayers of all the saints can deflect such men from completing their evil work.²⁵ Nothing, nothing in the universe, could have prevented the wickedest deed in human history, the Crucifixion, because it was an essential part of God's Master Plan.

We are not concerned to attempt here any rationalization which would, as it were, tone down the implications of such passages as these. They are by no means the only such passages (see, for example, the wording of Matthew 18:7 and 2 Peter 2:12). All we can do is to hold fast to the few statements of Scripture associated with passages like these which seem to indicate, in a general way, how God will one day completely justify His own actions. As Paul says (Romans 9:22), "What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: only that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had aforehand prepared unto glory?" In the meantime we must also remember that the "vessels of wrath" and the "vessels of mercy" are both made from the same lump.

Many people have sought to evade the force of these statements in Scripture, which seem to make the Lord responsible for so much of the wickedness of man, for false prophets, for accusers of the brethren, for unbelievers, and for other classes of men who have resisted the Word of God and the work of the Church throughout history. As a rule this involves employing softer language or transposing words or phrases in the text in such a way as to change the meaning of the sentence radically. Possibly this is justified in some of these verses, but it is not justified in all of them and the force of some, at least, is unquestionable. The general impression one gets

19. Jude 4

20. 1 Peter 2:8

21. Matthew 11:25

22. John 12:39,40

23. Romans 11:32

24. Proverbs 2 1:30

25. Ecclesiastes 7:13

is that the actions of men are so predetermined, at times, that they cannot possibly be held morally responsible for them. Yet in a few of these verses they *are* held responsible, because they are said to be "wicked." We must therefore turn now in the final chapter to an examination of this most critical of all issues, the grounds upon which God bases His judgment of men who, for all their wickedness, may simply be fulfilling His will.



Chapter 5

The Omnipotence of God and Human Responsibility

O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation.

I will send him against an hypocritical nation and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? [...].

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent [...].

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? [...]. As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up [...].

Isaiah 10:5-18

This passage is a beautiful illustration of how God uses wicked men to perform an evil work for the ultimate good of His people, yet for which the performer is justifiably punished.

Consider a few of the phrases in this passage that are significant in this respect. In verse 5 Assyria is God's rod, the instrument by which in His anger He will chasten Israel. Thus in verse 6 it is the Lord who sends him and the Lord who gives him the appointed duty of despoiling and humiliating Israel. However, in verse 8 it is pointed out very clearly that the Assyrian monarch had no idea that he was being used as the rod of God; in his own mind he was a triumphant king acting as an entirely free agent – though paradoxically he could have done nothing else! But because he chose to do what he did with complete willingness, indeed with vast enjoyment, he was acting as a free agent. As such, he was entirely culpable. So what was punishable in the man? His deeds? Or his motives? Verse 12 shows that it was his motive; the choice of words to make this clear is important: "I will punish the *fruit* of the proud heart of the king."

The importance of the distinction between actions and motives cannot be overemphasized. David, who longed to build a Temple for the Lord, was not permitted to because he had been a man of war (1 Chronicles 28:3), yet he received credit because it was in his heart to do so (2 Chronicles 6:8). Jonah by contrast refused to go to Nineveh to "build a Temple of the Lord" there; but he ended up in Nineveh. And though he was responsible under God for what must have been the most successful evangelistic campaign ever completed in the Old World, Jonah was afterward reproved as a most unworthy individual.

Jonah's experience exactly illustrates a statement made by Paul regarding his own ministry. In 1 Corinthians 9:16,17 Paul pointed out that though he did preach the gospel so successfully, he had nothing to glory of: necessity was laid upon him. Then he said, "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." By this I take it he meant us to understand that preaching the gospel was a responsibility committed unto him, and he could not avoid it – whether he did it willingly or unwillingly. But if it was done willingly, then this necessity became voluntary and, as a free-will act, it was rewardable. He found himself in much the same position as Balaam who, in Numbers 23:19ff., simply stated the fact that what God had told him to say, that he *must* say (verse 26). This incident illustrates a further point, namely, that wherever He sees fit, God overrules not merely the actions of men but even their words. Thus Caiaphas spoke the word of God (John 11:51) because of his position as high priest that year, though judging by his enthusiastic support of those who sought to destroy His Son, he certainly was no friend of God.

This brings us to still a further point, which is that the servant may do the will of God without understanding it, but a friend of God may go one step beyond and choose His will. But he chooses it only because as a friend he is permitted to know it. This is the import of John 15:15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." The point is beautifully illustrated in the case of Abraham, of whom God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Genesis 18:17) – which is in perfect keeping with the fact that, according to James 2:23, Abraham was called the Friend of God.

The same essential distinction between servants and friends is to be found also in Psalm 103:7, where it is written, "The Lord made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." This is not merely a play on words; in Hebrews 3:9,10 the fact is reaffirmed, for it is written that the Israelites of old saw His *works* for forty years but they did not know His *ways*. Moses, because of his nearness to the Lord, was able to see not merely *what* God was doing, but *why* He was doing it; with this deeper insight he could enter willingly into God's plans and participate in a way that was entirely different.

So often we suppose that it is enough to have done the Lord's will, but it is rather a sobering thought to discover that those who with apparently complete justification could say, "We have done all that we were commanded" (Luke 17:10), still had to admit that they were "unprofitable servants." It is even more sobering to find out what may happen to servants so described (as shown in Matthew 25:30): "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness [...]." It is evident from

Matthew that strict fulfillment of the Lord's will according to the letter, may not be enough to earn His commendation.

As I understand the Word of God, in all that concerns the Master Plan, man's freedom is not a freedom of *action*. He cannot decide to do or not to do. The sin of the world is not that it fails to do the will of God; the sin of the world is that man does not *choose* the will of God—except where it happens to suit the individual's own selfish desires. In such cases, the fact that it is the will of God is completely incidental. In Isaiah 10 the king of Assyria was glad to do what he did because it suited his own purposes, and in this sense he *was* choosing to do the will of God—which was to punish the people of Israel. But it is not in this sense that "choosing" brings any reward. It is only when the choice is deliberately made with the full realization that it is God's will, that any reward would be appropriate. There is no prayer in Scripture that the Lord's will may be done; it is done. There is only a prayer that His will may be done as it is in heaven, i.e., with all the same expedience and complete willingness.

Some parts of God's will involve the performance of deeds which can only be described as evil. Such deeds are just as much a part of God's plan as the good deeds. The Crucifixion was one of these. What men were condemned for was not the deed itself, but the motives which prompted it. They had no intention of deliberately fulfilling the will of God: they sought only to give expression to their enmity against Him. This was their motive. The wickedness of a deed is always in the motive, not in the deed itself. The deed itself may be either evil or good, depending upon the effect it has on others. It is wicked or righteous, depending entirely upon the motive which prompts it and, therefore, its effect upon the doer himself. Motives reveal the state of the soul, and in Scripture they are sometimes referred to as the fruits of our doings.

There is a very essential difference between a deed itself and the motive behind it. The centurion who was ultimately responsible for carrying out the Lord's crucifixion performed an evil thing. But judging by his subsequent acknowledgment of the Lord's true identity, one might assume that he took no delight in what he was called upon to do. The evil act which he performed was not, therefore, a sinful one, though it was certainly an evil one. Nor, incidentally, is a good deed necessarily a righteous one. It is for this reason that evil deeds will no more keep men out of heaven than good deeds will take them in.

It is highly important to recognize the difference between evil and sin, and between goodness and righteousness; and it is equally important to recognize the difference between a good man and a righteous man, a distinction which Scripture is careful to observe. When Paul was writing to the Romans he said, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die" (Romans 5:7). And in this judgment I think we would concur, for experience tells us that most people are much more kindly disposed toward a good man than toward a righteous man. A good man can shield a friend by telling a lie, and though we may know it is a lie, we still think of the man as good. But a completely righteous man would be forced to tell the truth whatever the cost, either to himself or his friend.

In the Lord Jesus, goodness and righteousness blended perfectly so that everything that was good in Him was also perfectly righteous. But this is not so with us at all. What appears to be a good deed may be no reflection of righteousness whatever, for such deeds are frequently done with ulterior motives. By the same token we cannot judge evil deeds either, for sometimes the motives which prompt them are righteous. Consequently the Lord continually distinguished between deeds and motives, commending what the Pharisees condemned, and condemning what they thought was righteous. They could not understand the basis of His forgiveness, because they supposed He was thinking in terms of actions. He would forgive an act which to them was unforgivable. In reality He was not forgiving the act at all but the doer, and what He was forgiving was the motive which had made the act a sinful one. This is always what condemns and this is always what needs forgiveness.

The difficulty of judging the true significance of any deed in the light of eternity is so great that Paul was prompted to write, "Judge nothing before the time" (1 Corinthians 4:5). The fact is that an evil can become a good and yet the person responsible can be punished. If an example from a secular situation is allowed, the problem can be illustrated as follows: Suppose that in some small community in the Northwest Territories of Canada there exists only one small hospital with very limited resources and only one qualified surgeon. A man is brought into the hospital suffering from severe exposure and with a gangrene foot. The attending physician decides that the foot must be amputated if the man's life is to be saved. The surgeon is called in and, after examining the patient, recommends to the doctor that it would be wiser to amputate mid-thigh and not just the foot, since circulation of the lower limb seemed badly impaired. The physician concurs and the operation is performed. The patient recovers completely, and an artificial limb restores him to an almost normal activity. As far as the community is concerned, and as far as the subject himself is concerned, a man who might have lost his life remains a useful citizen. The saving of his life was a good thing, but the loss of a leg was an evil thing, yet the evil was necessary that the good might result.

Some years later, the surgeon mentions to a friend, quite casually, that in looking back upon this particular operation he came to the conclusion that the amputation of the foot might very well have been sufficient to save the man's life. But at the time he was a young man and had already amputated toes and even feet of men suffering the same affliction, this being not uncommon in northern latitudes. He admits to his friend that he was in a way seeking justification for trying out his skill as a surgeon by performing an operation which was a little more difficult and dangerous than those he had already performed. In a way he had persuaded himself at the time it was a safer thing to do: but looking back upon it, he realizes now that there was an element of pride and a desire to strengthen his reputation as a surgeon.

The operation itself was successful, which was unquestionably a good thing for the patient. Nevertheless, the operation was made more evil than it probably needed to have been because of a young surgeon's pride. An evil which was necessary that good might result became, therefore, also a sinful act, which it might not have been if only the motives had been right. And this aspect of the operation

would never have come to light, except in eternity, but for the confession of this surgeon in his later years. How difficult it would have been to judge according to appearances.

The amputation of a limb is an evil which may be justified by circumstance, but I do not think that a wrong motive can ever be justified. The only thing that can be applied here is forgiveness. It seems to me that in the New Testament, justification is applied only to deeds and forgiveness is applied only to motives. Thus the selling of Joseph was justified in the end because it brought salvation to those who had done it. For all that, this act was justified only because of the suffering of one who was innocent— who thereby paid the price. The crucifixion of the Lord was also justified because of the end result; but this result was achieved only because of the suffering of One who was innocent. We who crucified the Lord need forgiveness; but the deed itself was justified. It goes without saying that God never needs forgiveness: but Scripture plainly tells us that He may be justified (Romans 3:4).

There are many illustrations in Scripture of this principle of justification. It should be mentioned in passing, however, that while the Old Testament Scriptures laid the foundations for the New, it is in the New Testament that we find the real presentation of theological doctrine. In the Old Testament many words do not have the precision which they are given in the New Testament. In the Old we find *principles* are established; in the New these principles become the basis of clearly formulated doctrines. It is in the New Testament that we find the word *justification* implicitly defined.

One of the most beautiful illustrations is given in Paul's letter to Philemon. A runaway slave believed Paul's word in Rome and was wonderfully saved. Paul insisted that he return to Philemon who was his rightful master, but he was careful to make strong recommendation that Philemon should not penalize Onesimus even though he had the right to do so. The apostle underscores this plea by pointing out to Philemon that Onesimus is now not merely a servant, but above a servant, "a brother beloved." He then significantly suggests that the slave's running away may really have been a blessing: to Paul, to Onesimus, and not least to Philemon himself, "for perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever" (verse 15). I think it is not unimportant, in view of what has been said of the unprofitable servants in Matthew 25:30, that Onesimus, according to Paul, was in time past "unprofitable, but now profitable" (verse 11).

There is another somewhat similar illustration of this principle in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. As a matter of fact, I suspect that there is somewhat more to this story than is usually recognized: at least, I should like to suggest the following thoughts. The prodigal son went away from his father and ultimately became lost. In due time, having come to the end of his own resources, he determined to go back to his father and confess his sin. The story of his reception at home is familiar to everyone, but it should be noted in verse 24 that something began that day which by implication had not been known before in the household: they *began* to be merry.

Meanwhile the older son, when he had discovered what was going on, was angry and would not join in the family's happiness. He said to his father (verse 29), "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy

commandment; yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." It is apparent from verse 31 that the father did not dispute his son's claims.

Now, this may be reading too much into the text, but it looks to me as though the Lord was trying to show what would be the attitude of a man who had never been lost and, therefore, never needed to be redeemed. This could mean that the prodigal son was ultimately in a far happier position, and his flight from home an evil which turned out to be a good. But he still needed forgiveness, and the cost of his squandering had to be made up in the end by his father. This is another case, then, in which a deed is justified and the doer is forgiven, and the experience is a great gain. If man had never fallen, he might have been almost as unappreciative as that son who stayed at home. There are some who have believed that the real meaning of Romans 8:20 is this: that the creation *was made subject* to all that was entailed in the fall, not willingly – i.e., not because this was entirely man's free choice – but "by reason of Him who hath subjected the same *in hope*."

Evils do not always result directly from sin. When the disciples came upon a man who was born blind, they were in a quandary. God had stated as a simple fact that the sins of the fathers would be visited on the children (Deuteronomy 5:9 and Exodus 20:5). At one time this was thought to be a very barbarous concept, but we know now that a child's character can be influenced to a surprising extent by parental behaviour. However, the children of Israel came in time to believe that this meant that whenever a person suffered, they should blame it not on themselves but on their fathers! Jeremiah was instructed to correct this, and he said, in effect, "It used to be held that the fathers had eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth were set on edge. But now you must realize that when a man's teeth are set on edge, it is his own fault" (Jeremiah 31:29).

This sounds reasonable enough, but once again the simple truth was distorted. It came to be believed that whenever a man suffered a misfortune, he could blame nobody but himself, he himself had eaten sour grapes. The result was that nobody had any sympathy whatever for the sufferer unless the sufferer happened to be a loved one. This explains the callousness that lies in the background of some conversations recorded in the New Testament. It also explains why the disciples were so perplexed: a man who was born blind obviously had not done something wrong himself to merit the condition, and Jeremiah had said that his parents were not to be blamed either. So who did sin? Who was responsible? The surprising answer which the Lord gave is recorded simply and without apology: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:1-3).

It is difficult for us to conceive of God imposing upon men any kind of affliction when they do not deserve it. And yet Scripture is full of illustrations of it. For example, some might be disposed to argue that Job's afflictions were, in a way, a punishment for a certain measure of self-righteousness. But I think Scripture has gone out of its way to show that this is not so. With remarkable insight, the afflicted man refused to accuse God of any injustice even while insisting upon his own innocence. In reply to his wife who encouraged bitterness, he said, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). This might be thought to have been the misguided apology of an exceedingly

discouraged man for his stubborn faith in God. But Scripture adds this comment, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Does God really do evil, then? Consider Amos 3:6: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not appointed it?" Some Bibles suggest this should be translated, "And shall not the LORD do somewhat [i.e., do something about it]?" This is possible, but the Hebrew does not require it; there are plenty of other Scriptures to justify the text as I have rendered it. The verb is *'asah*, "to appoint."

Consider Lamentations 3:38: "Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?" Or Isaiah 45:7, where it is written, "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Again and again in the Old Testament we read of evils which the Lord brought upon Israel, or evils which He planned to do if they continued in their wickedness but which their subsequent repentance rendered unnecessary. The real difficulty in accepting these statements at their face value results from a *confusion of evil with sin*. Evil is merely an event in its historical perspective – not in its moral perspective. When God does evil in Scripture, it is evil in the sense only that it appears to be an undesirable thing.

This distinction between evil and sin – and between goodness and righteousness – is interestingly pointed up when we remember that while we are never to tempt the Lord – that is to say, we are never to test His righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:16) – we *are* invited to test for ourselves His goodness (Malachi 3:10). Similarly it is important to realize that it is good works and not righteous works which God foreordains for us to do. They only become righteous works when we choose them (Ephesians 2:10), and in precisely the same way it is evil works and not wicked works that God foreordains shall be done by the vessels of dishonour. These only become wicked when the doers of them take delight in them.

Paul observes with proper insight that though he gives all his substance to the poor (a "good" indeed – for them), yet unless this is done in love, "it profiteth *me* nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Such an act is good whether done in love or not if it supplies a need: but without love it cannot be a righteous act; without his really wanting to do it, it is not a moral deed at all. Without love, the fruits of the good work would not appear. Hebrews 10:36 is careful to point out that doing the will of God itself is not enough. Merely fulfilling His will does not guarantee any reward; nor by the same token is there necessarily any punishment for doing an evil thing when it is part of God's will.

The point of all these somewhat cryptic statements is that there is nothing unjust on God's part when He punishes men even though their punishment seems to be associated directly with doing His will. The reason why this is so must be clear from what has been said above. An evil act in which a man takes delight becomes a wicked one. It is the wickedness which is punished, not the act. This answers a question put to Paul, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). As a matter of fact, a man may even be condemned for having done a good work. The children of Israel were told to destroy certain of their enemies utterly. But in the "goodness" of their heart and supposing themselves to be wiser than God, they spared some of them. They did not spare them because God told them to, but because they wanted to. Undoubtedly, from a human point of view, we would judge such merciful action

as good. But it is sobering to read in Matthew 7:21-23 how there will be in the final judgment those who come before God and expostulate, "Lord, Lord, we have done many good works in Thy name." But Jesus will say, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity [...]. I never knew you." Notice carefully that they were not accused of doing evil, but of acting sinfully, i.e., working iniquity.

Although it is probably true that Christians are specifically called upon only for the performance of those elements of God's plans which involve good deeds, there is at least one incident in which this was not exactly the case. The incident is a beautiful illustration of how God's judgment is determined.

In 2 Samuel 24:1, the Lord was angry with Israel and had decided they must be chastened, so He moved David to "number" them. This directive found an immediate response in the pride of David's heart—for he was anxious to find out just how many subjects were really under his domain, i.e., how great was his kingdom. It is not altogether unlike our temptation to count "souls saved." The people shared in the king's reflected glory and were equally keen to know their own numerical strength.

In spite of a warning (verse 3), the census was vigorously taken. But as soon as the returns were all in, both the king and the people were punished severely (verse 15), and David's heart condemned him deeply as he realized what had really prompted him to take pleasure in numbering the people.

When Paul had tried to make some of these points clear to the Christians in Rome where law played such an important part in the minds of thoughtful people, there was considerable criticism. They said, in effect, "If good comes out of evil because of the grace of God, then let us do evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8). Paul also put it in this way: "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory—why then am I to be judged as a sinner?" (Romans 3:7). In other words, if when we do something evil God turns it to good and acquires greater glory thereby, how could one possibly be wrong in doing an evil thing? Well, if the judgment of God hinged upon deeds, this might verily be true. And God might be left without any basis for judging the world (verse 6). But God's judgment is not based upon deeds at all; it is based upon motives, and therefore, whenever it is necessary for the fulfillment of His own purposes for some evil deed to be performed, in His omnipotence He can predetermine that it shall be so without in the slightest degree surrendering His right to condemn the doer if he should take pleasure in the evil.

As we have seen, on the other side of the ledger there are many good deeds which are part of the Master Plan. For the most part, I think, the children of God are foreordained to do only good deeds. These are the "good works" of Ephesians 2:10. But God has a second purpose here which is not in view in His dealings with the unsaved: in the performance of these appointed good works, the children of God should be made better in character—should, in short, "bring forth the fruits thereof." If we would be strictly accurate, we ought rather to say that these fruits will be brought forth by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23); but the process by which the Holy Spirit achieves this in us is our response to what God appoints for us to do for Him. However, this is not the only way by which Christian character is perfected. The evil things which we do are also used whenever God allows the consequences of

them to result for our edification. Then such consequences are not to be thought of as punishments, but as being permitted by God in His graciousness that we might be made better. As F. L. Chapell put it so pointedly:

God's purpose in calling us to be labourers together with Him during this present age is not simply that the apparent work which He sets before us may be accomplished. It is, rather, that, in the accomplishment of this work we may be prepared for our chief and ultimate work in the age to come. For this reason the present age is disciplinary rather than executive. We are disciples, that is, students, more than we are workers at present.

God is engaged not so much in making executives as in making saints.

Some Conclusions

Summing up the essentials of my thesis in this paper, I would draw the following tentative conclusions:

1. God's will is done by the saved and the unsaved alike.
2. God's will in this sense is His intention. It is represented in the New Testament by the Greek noun *thelema* as distinct from what He would like, which is represented by the use of the Greek verb *boulomai* (contrast, for example, Acts 22:14 and 2 Peter 3:9). His intention is always related to His Master Plan.
3. On all occasions in which a man's actions relate to any aspect of this Master Plan, such actions are overruled. The freedom he does have lies only in the attitude he takes toward what he does.
4. Wherever man's actions are not related to this Master Plan, presumably man is a free agent.
5. Each individual has an appointed contribution to make, and this contribution will be made. As Augustine rightly observed, "Man is immortal till his work is done." This is reflected in such passages as Job 14:6 and Acts 13:36.
6. In the purposes of God there are some good things and some evil things that must be done. The good or the evil nature of these things is determined by their historical effect; the righteousness or sinfulness of these deeds is determined by their motivation. The moral responsibility which attaches to them hinges upon the condition of the heart when they are done. Credit or blame are not determined by the acts themselves. Whether a man is rewarded or punished is not dependent upon the evil or the good which he is called upon to do.

7. While God works in the world to fulfill His will, He works in the Christian to choose His will (Philippians 2:13).
8. The sin of the world is not that it does not *do* the will of God, but that it does not *choose* the will of God.
9. A good deed done from the heart becomes also a righteous one. Even the unsaved may be rewarded, though such rewards are in this life (Matthew 10:42). An evil deed done from the heart becomes also a sinful one.
10. When the wickedness of man no longer contributes to the glory of God, it is restrained (Psalm 76:10).

Finally: God works in His children not only to do His will but also, knowing it, to choose it (Philippians 2:13). Our new relationship to Him makes such knowledge possible (John 15:15) and *when we do by choice what God has appointed by decree we act freely in spite of the compulsion*. The slave who freely chooses slavery remains a free man (Deuteronomy 15:16,17). Our bondage to the will of God in Christ becomes a new freedom, for His will is perfect and perfect obedience to a perfect will is perfect freedom.

Nevertheless, we only see through a glass darkly



Part V

THE CONFUSION OF LANGUAGES

Introduction

This paper is concerned with the circumstances surrounding an event which has this unique feature: it proved to be the last experience to form the basis of a tradition thereafter shared by all nations and subsequently carried by them to the ends of the earth. All nations have in common traditions of Eden and the Fall and of the Flood and of the building of the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues. But after this, they seem to have parted company and shared no more. Clearly Scripture is recording something here that profoundly affected human history.

Certain questions arise, which are the subject of this Paper. These questions may be summarized as follows:

1. Is there any evidence that mankind did at any time within the last few thousand years share a single language, as seems to be clearly implied by the wording of Genesis 11:1?
2. If mankind did for several thousand years from Adam to Noah speak one language, have we any way of determining either from Scripture or elsewhere what particular language it was?
3. Is there any indication that the "confusion" of which Genesis speaks did actually take place suddenly, as opposed to what seems to be a more or less normal tendency for languages to diverge from one another in the course of time?
4. If such evidence exists, does it shed any light on the *nature* of the confusion that occurred, because confusion could have arisen in two distinctly different ways. A people could still be speaking the same language and using the same word forms, but could have begun suddenly to attribute different meanings to the words they used – for example, when the modern biologist speaks of a *cell* he means something very different from the same word as used by a prison guard. Thus, the word itself has remained common to both, but each has attributed a different meaning to it; in this sense, the "confusion" is in the mind, not in the tongue. The other alternative is that individuals would continue to think of the same things – for example, an opening in the wall – but one would begin to call it *une fenêtre*, and the other a *window*. Unless each knew the other's language, their conversation would come to a halt – and with it cooperative effort. In this case it is not a confusion of mind, but a confusion of tongue. In short: which took place, or did both occur and was the whole human race involved, or only a segment of it?

These, then, are the basic topics of this Paper.



Chapter 1

The Original Unity of Language

So long as Adam and Eve were considered real people, originators of the human race, and so long as their first appearance was not set back beyond a few thousand years from which time the world's population began a fairly rapid multiplication, there seemed no reason to doubt that the whole race had maintained for some time a single language. It was assumed that the faculty of speech was part of Adam's original endowment and the art of conversation had never been lost, so that no entirely new starts were needed. At the same time, it was recognized that such great diversities of speech as are now observed among nations could hardly have arisen in so short a time unless some very serious disruption of natural processes of development had occurred at some point along the way. The record of the Confusion of Tongues at Babel seemed a most reasonable explanation of this diversity.

When, however, according to scientific theories the first human couple were set back in time, not merely thousands of years, but hundreds of thousands of years; and when the picture of population growth thereafter was of exceedingly small families of scarcely human creatures scattered in dreadful isolation over the globe, developing their own embryonic forms of speech in total independence of one another through eons of time – then it seemed meaningless to speak of mankind in any real sense as ever having shared a single form of language.

There was another objection to taking the story seriously. According to Ussher's chronology, the Flood occurred only about 2500 B.C. If we follow the Septuagint, we gain only a few centuries at most. But many scholars, particularly the Higher Critics like S. R. Driver, were fond of pointing out that there are inscriptions from the Middle East considerably antedating 3000 B.C., written in the languages which the story of Babel tells us did not arise until some time after the Flood.¹ They therefore concluded that the story of the Confusion of Tongues is dated far too late, proving it to be nothing but a myth fabricated long after the event it was supposed to explain.

However, as so often has been the case, the issue hinges upon the accuracy of our dating systems – that is to say, our interpretations of biblical chronology and our reconstruction of the chronology of secular history in antiquity. At the present moment we cannot be absolutely sure of either, and the finality of Driver's

1. Driver, S. R., *The Book of Genesis*, Methuen, London, 1904, p.133.

conclusions must be called in question. Or to put it another way, we do not know for sure that such inscriptions in these languages really do antedate Babel. The issue has to be settled, if possible, by some other means.

All that can be said at the present is that evidence exists in pre-dynastic times in Mesopotamia of the presence of three linguistic stocks: to use V. G. Childe's words, "'Japhethites' (known only inferentially from a few place names): Semites (speaking a language akin to Hebrew and Arabic): and the dominant Sumerians."² As far as the date is concerned, Childe points out that Sumerian (Hamitic) was being written in Sumer before the close of the Uruk phase which according to Meek, would be sometime before 3000 B.C.³ Meek states that dates before this are largely guesses supported only by cross-datings and cultural synchronisms. He says the earliest dynasty to be attested by actual inscriptions is the first dynasty of Ur which cannot be dated much earlier than 2700 B.C. We simply do not know enough about the Middle East pre-dynastic times to be able to establish conclusively just how early these three distinctive language groups first made their appearance.

Without concerning themselves too greatly with the dating of the Confusion, many conservative Christian scholars toward the end of the last century occupied themselves rather with the evidence for the veracity of the Genesis account by a study of ancient Middle Eastern languages. But before considering some of their findings, it seems appropriate, first of all, to examine the conclusions of a very famous non-Christian scholar, Max Muller. He, while denying that any light on the subject could be derived from the biblical story, was quite willing to admit – indeed, to argue – that there was nothing unreasonable in the idea of there having once been a single language shared by all men.

Max Muller's position is set forth in his classic two-volume work, *The Science of Language*.⁴ He was probably the greatest authority in the world, and it is doubtful whether his erudition and breadth of knowledge have ever been equalled. His opinion is all the more significant from our point of view in that he took pains to demonstrate that his conclusions were based on a scientific study of the subject and quite uninfluenced by his attitude toward the Old Testament. In fact, toward the end of the first volume he expressed the view that the Mosaic records must now be stripped of any claim as inspired writing!

Because of the weight of his authority, I should like to give a brief resume of his conclusions.

In the first volume, his analysis of languages from all over the world had led him to group them into categories which he terms respectively the *radical*, the *terminational*, and the *inflectional*. Although he showed these to be fundamentally distinct and different, in answer to the question, "Can we reconcile with these the admission of one common origin of human speech?" he answered, "Decidedly, yes!"⁵ Muller continued subsequently,

2. Childe, Vere Gordon, *What Happened in History*, Pelican Books, London 1946, p.81.

3. Meek, T. J. *The Present State of Mesopotamian Studies*, Haverford Symposium on Archaeology and the Bible, 1938. pp.159, 167.

4. Muller, Max, *The Science of Language*, Scribner, Armstrong, N.Y., 1875, 2nd edition, revised, 2 vols.

5. *Ibid.*, p.329.

Now it has been the tendency of the most distinguished writers on comparative philology to take it almost for granted, that after the discovery of the two families of language, the Aryan and Semitic, and after the establishment of the close ties of relationship which unite the members of each, it would be impossible to admit any longer a common origin of language. It was natural, after the criteria by which the unity of the Aryan as well as the Semitic dialects can be proved had been so successfully defined, that the absence of similar coincidences between any Semitic and Aryan language, or between these and any other branch of speech, should have led to a belief that no connection was admissible between them.⁶

What he was saying, if I may be permitted to emphasize it, is that there is so obviously a family of languages which is called Aryan (this is part of our Japhetic family) and so obviously a family of languages which is Semitic, that they must be held as quite clearly distinct from one another as families, showing superficially not the slightest tendency to blend into each other. Whence comes the impression that derivation of one family from another is impossible? The two bundles of languages are so securely and tidily wrapped up that there are no free elements left which could serve to relate them to one another. Nevertheless Muller confessed that he had found quite inconclusive the oft-repeated argument that the existence of such distinct families made it impossible to derive them from a common source. His answer, though phrased perhaps rather quaintly, was nevertheless to the point:

If you wish to assert that languages had various beginnings, you must prove it impossible that language could not have had a common origin.

No such impossibility has ever been established with regard to a common origin of the Aryan and Semitic dialects, while on the contrary the analysis of the grammatical forms in either family has removed many difficulties, and made it at least intelligible how, with materials identical or very similar, two individuals, or two families, or two nations, could in the course of time have produced languages so different in form as Hebrew and Sanskrit.

But still greater light was thrown on the formative and metamorphic processes of languages by the study of other dialects unconnected with Sanskrit or Hebrew [...]. I mean the Turanian languages. The traces by which these languages attest their original relationships are much fainter than in the Semitic and Aryan families, but they are so of necessity.⁷

The term *Turanian* may not be familiar to most readers. From a biblical point of view it would be fair to substitute the term *Hamitic* just as *Aryan* may be equated with *Japhetic*. Thus referring further to the Hamitic branch, he continued:

6. Muller, Max, *ibid.*, p.332.

7. *Ibid.*, p.333.

To myself the study of the Hamitic family was interesting particularly because it offered an opportunity of learning how far languages, supposed to be of a common origin, might diverge and become dissimilar by the unrestrained operation of dialectic regeneration.

In a letter which I addressed to my friend, the late Baron Bunsen, which was published by him in his "Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History," it had been my object to trace, as far as I was able, the principles which guided the formation of agglutinative languages, and to show how far languages may become dissimilar in their grammar and vocabulary, and yet allow us to treat them as cognate dialects. In answer to the assertion that it was impossible, I tried to show how it was possible, that, starting from a common ground, languages as different as Mandshu and Finnish, Malay and Siamese, should have arrived at their present state, and might still be treated as cognate tongues [...]. I felt justified in applying the principles derived from the formation of the Hamitic languages to the Aryan and Semitic families [...]. If we can account for the different appearance of Mandshu and Finnish, we can also account for the distance between Hebrew and Sanskrit. It is true that we do not know the Aryan speech during its agglutinative period, but we can infer what it was when we see languages like Finnish and Turkish approaching more and more to Aryan type.⁸

Evidently Muller's views met with violent opposition. As he put it:

In my letter on Hamitic languages, which has been the subject of such fierce attacks [...] I had preferred the term of "group" for the Hamitic languages, in order to express as clearly as possible that the relation between Turkish and Mandshu, between Tamil and Finnish, was of a different one, not in degree only, but in kind, from that between Sanskrit and Greek. "These Hamitic languages," I said, "cannot be considered as standing to each other in the same relation as Hebrew and Arabic, Sanskrit and Greek. They are radii diverging from a common centre."

I endeavored to show how even the most distant members of the Hamitic family, the one spoken in the north, the other in the south of Asia, the Finnic and the Tamulic, have preserved in their grammatical organization traces of a former unity; and, if my opponents admit that I have proved ante-Brahmanic or Tamulic inhabitants of India to belong to the Hamitic family, they can hardly have been unaware that this, the most extreme point of my argument, be conceded, then all else is involved and must follow by necessity.⁹

8. *Ibid.*, p.336.

9. *Ibid.*, p.338.

I should like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that he distinguished the Hamitic group from the Japhetic and Semitic families. As we shall attempt to show, there is some evidence that the confusion of languages was in fact limited to the descendants of Ham only, so that as a group they bear a somewhat unique relationship to one another which differs from the Japhetic and Semitic families.

To sum up, Muller set forth his views in two paragraphs as follows:

Nothing necessitates the admission of different independent beginnings for the material elements (i.e., vocabulary) of the Hamitic, Semitic and Aryan branches of speech: nay, it is possible even now to point out roots which, under various changes and disguises, have been current in these three branches ever since their first separation.

Nothing necessitates the admission of independent beginnings for the formal elements (i.e., grammar) of the Hamitic, Semitic and Aryan system of grammar from the Semitic, or the Semitic from the Aryan; we can perfectly understand how, either through individual influences, or by the wear and tear of speech in its own continuous working, the different systems of grammar of Asia and Europe may have been produced.¹⁰

And having said this, he concluded:

The Science of Language thus leads us up to that highest summit from which we see into the very dawn of man's life on earth; and where the words which we have heard so often from the days of our childhood – "and the whole earth was of one language and of one speech" – assume a meaning more natural, more intelligible, more convincing, than they ever had before.¹¹

While Muller was concentrating upon the more familiar languages of Europe and Asia, others were beginning to discover underlying relationships between the languages of the New World. Thus for example, Sir William Dawson observed, in terms which are perhaps a little too sweeping and yet in some respects more fully justified today than when first uttered:

It is a common popular statement that the languages of the American continent are innumerable and mutually unintelligible. In a very superficial sense this is true: but more profound investigation shows that the languages of America are essentially one. Their grammatical structure, while very complex, is on the same general principle throughout. But grammar is, after all only the clothing of language. Its essence consists in its root words, which bear a definite relation to the mental habits and vocal organs of the speakers and

^{10.} *Ibid.*, p.340.

^{11.} *Ibid.*, p.391.

very often equally definite relations to the things spoken of. Now multitudes of root words are identical in the American languages over vast areas some of them with precisely the same senses, and others with various shades of analogical meaning. If we leave out of account purely imitative words, as those derived from the voices of animals, and from natural sounds, which necessarily resemble each other everywhere, it will be found that the most persistent words are those like "God," "house," "man," etc., which express objects or ideas of constant recurrence in the speech of everyday life, and which in consequence become most perfectly stereotyped in the usage of primitive peoples. Further, a very slight acquaintance with these languages is sufficient to show that they are connected with the older languages of the Eastern continent by a great variety of more permanent root words, and with some even on grammatical structure. So persistent is this connection through time, that pages might be filled with modern English, French, or German words, which are allied to those of the Algonquin tribes as well as to the oldest tongues of Europe, Basques and Magyar, and the East.¹²

Some of this linguistic evidence was carefully tabulated in a series of learned papers presented before the Royal Canadian Institute by A. F. Chamberlain.¹³ It is true that a few of his statements need serious qualification, but the very extensive lists of words common to a wide range of Mongol languages in the New World and the Far East cannot be lightly dismissed. No one can fairly review the evidence he presents, even making allowances for some errors in transcriptions and some wrongly reported spellings, without coming to the conclusion that both the East and the New World were peopled by tribes (including the Eskimos) who derived their language from a single source.

The Hamitic "family" of languages (using the term in the biblical sense) is clearly very extensive, including as it does the Mongol group, the African, certain languages of Europe (Basque, etc.), and the languages of Oceania. Within the Mongol languages are to be found the native tongues of all the American Indians, North and South, as well as the Far East. An early edition of *Chamber's Encyclopedia*, referring to the views of Max Muller on the subject of philology, pointed out that the Mongol group includes within itself some languages which carry us through the Middle East up into Europe and into Finland:

Max Muller classed them in two great divisions, the northern and the southern. The northern division falls into five sections, the Tungusic, Mongolic, Turkic, Finnic and Samoyedic. Of these, the Tungusic dialects which extend north and west from China are the lowest in organization, being, some of them, nearly destitute of grammatical forms, as the Chinese. The Mongolic dialects are

12. Dawson, Sir William, *Fossil Men and Their Modern Representatives*, Hodder and Stoughton Montreal, 1883, p.310.

13. Chamberlain, A. F., "The Relationship of American Languages," in *Canadian Institute*, Series 3, vol. 4, 1885-86, p.57ff. and subsequently.

superior to Tungusic. The Turkic occupy an immense area and are extremely rich in grammatical forms, especially the conjugation of the verb. The most important members of the Finnic class are the Finnic of the Baltic Coasts and the Hungarian language or Magyar. The southern division comprises among others the Dravidian of South India, the Tibetan, the Tair or the dialects of Siam, and the Malaic or Malay and Polynesian dialects.¹⁴

You will note that reference is made here to languages from Oceania. It may be remarked in passing that Kenneth Macgowan has proposed possible links between the languages of the Australian aborigines and the American Indians. He says:

P. Rivet, following many a student from Leibniz to Thomas Jefferson, proposed to trace the origin of the American peoples through comparing their languages with those of the Old World. In 1925 he came up with something more than the usual random identity between words. Indeed, the parallels which he drew between the present speech of the Tshon of Patagonia and the Australians seemed to R. B. Dixon to be impossibly close (i.e., to be fortuitous) after centuries upon centuries of separation from one another and of contact with other peoples.¹⁵

The relationship between all the languages which were used by people right around the Pacific Ocean was pointed out long ago by Sir William Dawson when he observed:

Mr. Edkins in his remarkable book, "China's Place in Philology," has collected a large amount of fact tending to show that the early Chinese in its monosyllabic radicals presents root forms traceable into all the stocks of human speech in the Old World. And the American languages would have furnished him with similar links in affinity. In investigations of this kind, it is true the links of connection are often delicate and evanescent: yet they have conveyed to the ablest investigators the strong impression that the phenomena are rather those of division of a radical language than of union of several radically distinct.

This impression is further strengthened when we regard several results incidental to these researches. Latham has shown that the languages of men may be regarded as arranged in lines of divergence, the extreme points of which are Fuego, Tasmania and Easter Island: and that from these points they converge to a common center in Western Asia, where we find a cluster of the most ancient and perfect languages: and even Haeckel is obliged to adopt in his map of the affiliation of races of men a similar scheme. Moreover,

14. *Chamber's Encyclopedia*, under "Philology," in vol.VII, 1868, p.485.

15. Macgowan, Kenneth, *Early Man in the New World*, Macmillan, New York, 1950, p.169.

the languages of the various populations differ in proceeding from these centres in a manner pointing to degeneracy such as is likely to occur in small and rude tribes separating from a parent stock.¹⁶

More recently, Homburger has pointed out that African languages may also have once been derived from a single root. He wrote:

In the so-called Cushite Zone of North-east Africa, in the Nile Valley and in all the Sudan from the Nile to the Atlantic Ocean, there are a few "countries" in which the clans and tribes speak languages which are easy to recognize as being distinct from one another: such as Nubians, Kanue (Boru?), Hausa, Mande, Wolof. But the differences do not prevent the recognition of common elements; a careful study has led most linguists to the conclusions first formulated by me in 1913: all Negro-African languages have a common basis.¹⁷

S. L. Washburn has recently suggested that such concepts may give us a fresh insight into the prehistory of Africa. Thus he remarked:

In teaching Physical Anthropology this year, the most helpful idea that has come to me is Greenberg's classification of the languages of Africa because they show the interrelationship of a group of languages in Eastern Africa which goes contrary to the traditional thinking of Physical Anthropology and which fits a whole block of the information better than the Physical Anthropology classification did. The incidence of sickle cell anemia, a hereditary disease in East Africa, fits Greenberg's linguistic classification and not the traditional Physical Anthropology classification.¹⁸

Many years ago a Spanish Jesuit, Hervas, wrote a famous *Catalogue of Languages*, which was published in six volumes in the year 1800.¹⁹ He proved by a comparative list of declensions and conjugations that Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Amharic are all but dialects of one original language and constitute one family of speech, the Semitic. He also perceived clear traces of affinity in Hungarian, Lapponian, and Finnish, three dialects which seem to be now classed as members of the Hamitic group. But one of his most brilliant discoveries was the establishment of the Malay and Polynesian family of speech extending from the island of Madagascar east of Africa, over 208 degrees of longitude, to the Easter Islands. Many years later, Humboldt arrived at exactly the same conclusion. In

16. Dawson, Sir William, *The Origin of the World*, Dawson Publications, Montreal, 1877, p.288.

17. Homburger, L., "Indians in Africa," in *Man*, Feb., 1956, p.20.

18. Washburn, S. L., in A. L. Kroeber, *An Appraisal of Anthropology Today*, University of Chicago Press, 1953. p.84.

19. Hervas, *Catalogue of Languages*, 6 vols., published in Spanish, 1800.

ancient Egypt we seem to have a case of linkage between Hamitic and Semitic. As Vere Gordon Childe put it:

Many philologists regard the Egyptian language as a compound or hybrid speech in which a Semitic strain allied to Assyrian or Hebrew has been grafted into an African Hamitic stock such as is represented in purer form, for example, in Berber [...].

Junker on the other hand would explain the Semitic analogies in Egyptian by the assumption that Semitic and Hamitic had a common origin.²⁰

Childe would go one step further, suggesting a relationship between the languages of Egypt and Sumer:

The hieroglyphic script itself, though its elements consist of purely Nilotic plants and animals, agrees so strikingly with the Babylonian in its curious combination of phonetic signs with ideographs and determinants, that the two systems must somehow be interrelated.²¹

An even more remarkable linkage was noted by A. H. Sayce when he pointed out:

Attempts have been made to show that Sumerian was akin to the language of China, and that between the first Chinese emigrants to the "Flowery Land" and the pre-Semitic inhabitants of Chaldea there was a linguistic as well as a racial relationship.²²

There is even evidence in support of the view that links between Semitic and Japhetic languages are revealed by a careful study of Hebrew, although, for reasons which do not concern us here, the idea of deriving Japhetic languages from something akin to Hebrew has been scouted. In 1890 Benjamin Davies published a well-known Hebrew and Chaldean lexicon based largely on the works of Gesenius, in which he presents much that surely indicates such a relationship.²³ In his lexicon perhaps every fourth or fifth root word in Hebrew is translated into English and then accompanied by a list of words from other Indo-European

20. Childe, Vere Gordon, *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, Kegan Paul, Trench, London, 1935, pp.8-9 and 303 note 5. The possible links between ancient Egyptian and Indo-European were interestingly explored by John Campbell, "The Coptic Element in Languages of the Indo-European Family," in *Canadian Journal*, Toronto, New Series, vol.76, July, 1872, p.282-303.

21. Childe, Vere Gordon, *ibid.*, p.126.

22. Sayce, A. H., *The Races of the Old Testament*, Religious Tract Society, London, 1893, 2nd edition, p.61. Also see S. L. Caiger, *Bible and Spade*, Oxford University Press, 1936, p.2. Indeed T. Pinches wrote in 1882 ("Recent Discoveries in Assyriology," *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol.26, p.178): "Oppert, H. Rawlinson, Lenormant, Delitzsch, Hommel and Sayce all maintained that Sumerian was closely akin in grammatical structure and language to the Mongol, Turkic, and Finnic languages of later times." Also see G. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, 1933, p.72.

23. Davies, Benjamin, *A Compendious and Complete Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Bradley and Co., Boston, 1890.

languages which seem so clearly cognate that one wonders why other scholars have not followed up the cues provided. Most modern linguists, Christian or otherwise, tend to repudiate any such idea. But a study of Davies' work would seem to make it necessary for them to explain how such parallelisms could exist, not merely for a few possibly borrowed words, but for a vast number of words which are basic to any vocabulary: numerals, personal relationships, household objects, things of prime and immediate importance for individual survival or well-being, and so forth.

It seems clear to me that if Language A is related to Language B, and Language B can in turn be shown to be related to Language C, then Language A must of necessity be considered as related to Language C. This seems so obvious as hardly to need stating. Relationships are acknowledged, as we have seen, between Hamitic and Semitic and between Semitic and Japhetic, and yet there is a tacit denial of any possibility that Hamitic could be related to Japhetic or, in other words, that all languages are related: A, B, and C. Thus J. H. Greenberg in a symposium paper stated:

Genetic relationship among languages is, in logical terminology, transitive. By a "transitive" relation is meant a relation such that, if it holds between A and B, and between B and C, it must also hold between A and C.²⁴

Yet Beals and Hoijer seem to feel there is no evidence whatever to support the contention so clearly implied by the conclusions of the many scholars who have written about fragments of the total picture. As they put it:

Consequently, though it is possible that all modern languages go back to a single source, their divergencies today are so great as to provide no evidence of such a relationship.²⁵

However, J. B. S. Haldane, writing in *The Rationalist Annual* (and one could scarcely accuse either the author or the publisher of Christian bias) made the statement:

Existing languages are very different from one another, but a number of recent workers have found similarity between languages of quite different families. Rae and Paget in England and Johannesson in Iceland [...] and Marr in the Soviet Union have claimed to have traced the ancestries of many different languages to a common source [...].

24. Greenberg, J. H., "Historical Linguistics and Unwritten Languages," in A. L. Kroeber *An Appraisal of Anthropology Today*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, pp.274-75.

25. Beals, Ralph L., and Harry Hoijer, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, Macmillan, New York, 2nd edition, 1959, p.594.

Workers have found connections between quite dissimilar languages, such as the Aryan group, the Semitic group, the Chinese and Polynesian.²⁶

Among the members of the Semitic family it is comparatively easy to establish an essential unity for their original form of speech. Though the Indo-European family of languages has diverged somewhat more extensively from their assumed original than the Semitic, nevertheless they also are quite clearly a single family. J. L. Myers remarked:

Though the Indo-European languages differ far more widely from one another than even the most distinct of the Semitic group, they all possess a recognizable type of grammatical structure and a small stock of words common to them all, for the numerals, family relationships, parts of the body, certain animals and plants, etc., from which it is still generally believed in spite of much discouraging experience in detail that it is possible to discover something of the conditions of life in regions where a common ancestor of all these languages was spoken.²⁷

It may, in fact, be said—if some over-simplification is permitted—that Indo-European languages have tended to change by simplifying themselves;²⁸ Semitic languages have tended rather to preserve themselves with little change; and those which comprise the Hamitic family have tended to proliferate or multiply—often to an almost unbelievable extent, as we shall show. To put it another way, the "confusion" is greatest among the Hamitic languages, very much less among the Japhetic languages, and virtually absent from the Semitic.

I shall never forget the thrill I experienced when I first came across a paper by Major C. R. Conder which was published in the *Transactions of the Victoria Institute* some years ago.²⁹ Although he was not an accepted "scholar" in the formal sense, he was nevertheless one of those rare individuals for whom the mastery of a new language seems to be child's play. He spent the larger part of his life in the Middle East, surrounded by the three great families of languages. He acquired familiarity with them all.

26. Haldane, J. B. S., "The Origin of Language," in the *Rationalist Annual*, Watts and Co. London, 1952, pp.39-40. See also A. Johannesson, "Gesture Origin of Indo-European Languages," in *Nature*, Feb. 5, 1944, p.171, and July 8, 1950, p.60.

27. Meyers, J. L., *The Dawn of History*, Home University Library Series, 1927, p.195. C. S. Coon supports the view that the term *Japhetic* is a perfectly proper one for the Indo-European family of languages; see his *Races of Europe*, Macmillan, New York, 1939, p.175.

28. See Robert Lowie, *Social Organization*, Rinehart, New York, 1949, p.33, where the author is showing that evolution cannot usually be applied to the development of language, since it frequently proceeds from complex to simple, i.e., in reverse. See also C. Kluckhohn (*Mirror for Man*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1949, p.149): "In contrast to the general course of cultural evolution, languages move from the complex to the simple."

29. Conder, Maj. C. R., "On the Comparison of Asiatic languages," in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol. 27, 1893-94, p.203ff.

Far from being overwhelmed by the diversities of them, Conder became increasingly convinced that these three families could by sufficient examination of their basic vocabularies be shown to have originated from a single root. Although most linguists today would smile at such an undertaking, he set forth in his paper what he believed to be the evidence that there are some 400-450 basic root forms in each of the three language families, and that of these about 170 roots, all connected with the most ordinary ideas, are common to all three. About one third of these are still traceable throughout the entire range of Asiatic languages, in Sumerian, Egyptian, Indo-European, Semitic, and Mongolic alike. He considered himself incompetent to review the evidence from the languages of Africa, with the exception of Egyptian.

Because most readers would not be in a position to examine his paper personally, it seems appropriate to give here a few quotations which sum up the evidence as he saw it. Of the Aryan (Japhetic) languages he wrote:

The labours of such scholars as Fick, Curtius, and others have reduced the Aryan languages to a list of about 450 original roots, but it has been perceived by Max Muller that this enumeration errs rather on the side of excess than the reverse. In an interesting paper on the "Simplicity of Language," he claims that the list may be yet further condensed to an original enumeration of not more than 150 roots, which, by subsequent variation and by the building up of words, has produced the enormous totals of modern vocabularies.³⁰

Of the Mongolic (Hamitic) languages, Conder had this to say:

Three great divisions of this group of languages may be recognized, (1) the Mongol proper, spoken over a wide extent of Asia, (2) the Turkic in the steppes of Central Asia; and (3) the Finnic and Ugric in Europe; but all these divisions are intimately connected, by vocabulary, by grammar, and by the identity of suffixes and pronouns; they are all remarkable for agglutination, and for the almost entire absence of inflection, save when Aryan influence has tended to cause such an advance. The labours of Castren, Donner, Bohtlingk and Vambéry, and of many other distinguished scholars have established a comparative study of dialects and languages, reaching from Siberia to Hungary, which, though less perfect than that of the more-studied Aryan languages, is equally based on sound scholarship and research. The number of roots to which the vocabularies are reduced is even smaller than that of the Aryan system, because they are more easily divided from their added suffixes, and are found to be almost entirely monosyllabic. Vambéry enumerates about 200 roots for Turkic speech, and these recur in the other divisions of the group.³¹

30. *Ibid.*, p.213.

31. *Ibid.*, p.216.

Of the Semitic languages he wrote:

A Hebrew dictionary contains nearly 1500 roots, but out of these not a third in all are perfect, that is to say, consist of three consonants forming two syllables. The rest, called quiescent, defective, and double, are either formed with a vowel, or are monosyllabic in the imperative which is the true root in every language. The perfect roots [...] represent an advanced stage in language, such as will not be denied to be that reached by Semitic speech. These perfect roots are, in some cases as we shall see, the same in sound and meaning found in Aryan languages; and in many cases they can be resolved into an original monosyllable with a suffix, much as in other languages. Thus we find *Bad*, "separate"; *Badal*, "separate"; *Badak*, "cleave"; where the suffixes *l* and *k* have evidently been attached to the old original root *Bad*, which may be compared with the Aryan root *Bhid*, "to divide." Such indications, and others which need not now be detailed, may incline us to suppose that the original roots of Semitic languages were monosyllables, and that the present structure arises from the preference for secondary roots, as more distinctly conveying a special signification [...].

The Semitic languages are singularly rich in distinctions of meaning, and in the addition of new roots formed from the old, but those which remain clearly traceable to one old common form are so numerous as at once to reduce the vocabulary by considerably more than half, and in the end it would appear that the original roots are not more numerous in Semitic than those of other families of speech.³²

He concluded:

To compare the nouns of one language with those of another will generally be unconvincing, but when we are able to compare the roots whence these nouns are formed, and from which the verbs and other parts of speech also spring, we are following a method safer, and more likely to lead to real conclusions. . . .

Turning to a consideration of the simple roots consisting of one consonant and one vowel, which run through all Asiatic languages, and from which it would seem probable that the more complicated classes of roots are built up, we find that they are easily arranged in seven classes, according as they refer to the sensations connected with various organs, 1st, life or breathing with the nose; 2nd, light, sight, and fire, with the eye; 3rd, sound, with the ear; 4th, movement, with the leg, 5th, swallowing, eating and drinking with the mouth; 6th, holding, and striking, with the hand; and 7th, work,

32. *Ibid.*, p.219.

which however is not very clearly distinguishable from the preceding class. A final class of roots which, with two exceptions, are secondary (having two consonants) refers to love and desire.³³

These simple forms are then listed, examples being taken from the following languages: Sumerian, Egyptian, Aryan, Hebrew, Assyrian, Arabic, Turkic, Finnic-Ugric, Mongol, Cantonese (dialect of Chinese), Proto-Medic, and Susian. Then 172 root forms are examined in the eight classes to which he refers, each root being traced through virtually all the listed dialects or languages in every case.³⁴

It may seem that 170 root forms is a very small fragment of any language's total wealth of words upon which to base any very decisive argument. But it is widely recognized that the significance of the size of a sample is not dependent upon its size *per se* but upon the character of it. One drop of blood can speak for all the rest of the blood in a man's body. A propos of this, it is interesting to find A. L. Kroeber commenting upon a paper on this very subject, observing:

The relationship between the form of a word and the meaning, except in the case of a few onomatopoeic words, is completely arbitrary, and if you get between two languages more than a certain small percentage of words of definitely similar sound that have definitely similar meaning, that fact must have a significance, and the significance is that of historical connection.³⁵

The links between the three great families of language, as Conder perceived them, are not of the genealogical type – that is to say, they do not prove the derivation of one family of language from another: for example, Japhetic from Hamitic. What they do indicate is that all three were probably united as a single language until something occurred to begin their independent development, from which time onward they diverged in characteristic ways.

We may conclude this chapter, therefore, with one further brief quotation from Max Muller:

The assertion so frequently repeated, that the impossibility of classing all languages genealogically proves the impossibility of a common origin of languages, is nothing but a kind of scientific

33. *Ibid.*, p.221.

34. *Ibid.*, pp.233-52. Benjamin Lee Whorf, whose investigations into the basic roots and conceptual ideas of native American languages gained for him wide recognition in the field of metalinguistics actually concluded that "probably quite all the present known native vocabulary of Nahuatl (the Aztec language of Mexico) is derived from the varied combination and varied semantic development of NO MORE THAN THIRTY-FIVE ROOTS" [capitals his]. He stated his firm belief that "it now begins to seem very unlikely that their number will be increased." Yet he is very quick to point out that the total vocabulary which grew out of these root forms is every bit as effective a vehicle for communication as any Indo-European language. (*Language, Thought and Reality, Selected Writings*, edited by J. B. Carroll, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Wiley, New York, 1956, p.13.)

35. Kroeber, A. L., *An Appraisal of Anthropology Today*, University of Chicago Press, 1953, p.61.

dogmatism, which, more than anything else, has impeded the free progress of independent research.³⁶



36. Muller, Max, *The Science of Language*, Scribner, Armstrong, N.Y., 1875, 2nd edition, p.176.

Chapter 2

The Original Speech of Mankind

If it is once admitted that mankind formerly spoke a single language, it seems logical to go one step further and attempt to identify what kind of language it was.

Probably most readers are aware of the fact that rabbinical commentators, early Christian writers, and, until comparatively recently, modern Christian scholars generally accepted the view that this original language was Hebrew. It is true that a few of the early Church Fathers challenged this, but such great names as those of Augustine, Jerome, and Origen can be quoted in support of it; the few like Gregory of Nyssa who argued against it failed to influence the general Christian public, so that it became the accepted opinion throughout the Middle Ages and to the recent past.

Were it not for the offensive tone of his book, one could recommend the well-known work of Andrew White entitled, *A History of the Warfare of Science With Theology*, for its survey of this subject.³⁷ To him, the very word *Orthodox* is equated with the word *ridiculous*, and he has no argument other than ridicule against many ancient and quite reasonable beliefs held by Christians. He does not face squarely the evidence upon which such beliefs are founded, nor does he seek to provide an equally cogent or reasonable alternative. It is this unhappy circumstance which renders an otherwise massive piece of scholarship a most unfortunate display of narrow-minded and ill-considered dogmatism. What is perhaps even more unfortunate in the context of this Paper is that not a few contemporary Christian scholars have taken the same attitude toward the view that Hebrew could have been the language of Eden.

I should like to make it clear that I am not proposing that *Hebrew* itself was necessarily the language of Eden, but rather that the language of Eden was a language of which Hebrew may well be the closest modern representative. The point I am seeking to establish is that some form of Semitic was the original from which in the course of time were derived, not only all the members of that family (Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, etc.), but also the Japhetic (Indo-European) and the Hamitic.

The line of reasoning which I propose to follow can be stated briefly thus:

37. White, Andrew, *A History of the Warfare of Science With Theology*, Braziller, New York, 1955, vol. 2, p.175.

1. That the names of the immediate descendants of Noah (as set forth in Genesis 10), by whom the earth was re-peopled after the Flood, were the real names which those people originally bore and are not merely transliterations; that they are still traceable, though in modified forms, very extensively among their living descendants who, however, have no recollection of their meanings; and finally, that these names as given have meanings in Semitic but not in Japhetic or Hamitic languages.
2. That in Genesis 4, which deals specifically with the history of man from Adam to Noah, there are a number of references to persons, places, and events that throw unexpected light upon the subsequent history of both Indo-European and Hamitic people even down to the present time. But this light is obtained only if the key words in these references derive their significance from their meaning in Semitic.
3. That if a Semitic form of language was the language of Noah, and therefore presumably of Adam also – then assuming that Adam learned to speak because God undertook to converse with him – the language of heaven must be of the same nature. It will be shown that Scripture lends some support to this conclusion.

The Names of Genesis 10

A word or two may be in order, first of all, regarding the question of whether the original language was specifically Hebrew or only some form of Semitic speech. Judging by Laban's use of Aramaic in Genesis 31:47, it seems likely that Abraham's *parents* spoke Aramaic. But by the time of Jacob, two generations later, a form of Hebrew seems to be in use, if we are to judge by the name he gave to the monument of stones set up when he parted company with Laban. Since Laban was the older of the two, one might be forced to conclude that Aramaic was the older language.

Franz Delitzsch, basing his arguments upon the supposition that Abraham himself did not originally speak Hebrew but rather Aramaic, remarked:

We must regard as better grounded the position of the Syriac, Aramaic, and Persian writers that Syriac (i.e., Aramaic) or Nabatean was the primitive speech, and that in the confusion of tongues it was still retained as the language of Babylon (Chaldea).³⁸

While it may be a disappointment to some Christian readers to discover that Hebrew itself was probably not the original language, it may at the same time be reassuring to remember that our Lord Himself spoke not Hebrew, but Aramaic. This subject is dealt with fully by the well-known Orientalist, Edouard Naville, in his book, *Archaeology of the Old Testament: Was the Old Testament Written in Hebrew?*³⁹

38. Delitzsch, Franz, "Genesis" in *Commentary of the Holy Scriptures*, edited by Peter Lange, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, reprint, p.362.

39. Naville, Edouard, *Archaeology of the Old Testament: Was the Old Testament Written in Hebrew?* Robert Scott, London, 1903, 212 pp.

His conclusion is in accordance, save for some minor details, with the views of Delitzsch.

In passing, it may be of interest to note how the Jewish people themselves, catering to their national pride, treated the subject in one of their rabbinical commentaries. Quoting from Hershon, we read the following argument for Hebrew as the original:

The sacred tongue, Hebrew, was spoken by all till the generation of the Confusion of Tongues, for the world was created with the sacred tongue; but now each of the 70 angels took one nation and instructed it in a new language; but God instructed Israel in the Hebrew tongue.⁴⁰

The significance of the number 70 rests upon the fact that Genesis 10 uses a total of 70 names, equal to the number of Jacob's children when he went into Egypt. It is interesting that the Lord sent 12 apostles to preach specifically to the 12 tribes of Israel, but 70 to carry out a general evangelistic ministry without respect to nationality (Luke 10:8f. — "into *any* city").

Coming more specifically to a consideration of the evidence from history that the original language of mankind was Semitic, we deal first with the names of Noah's immediate descendants. There is nothing new in the observation that when a people habitually employ personal names for themselves and their children which have an undoubted meaning in some particular language, such a people originally spoke that language. A community with a large proportion of *-sens* is as clearly Scandinavian as a community with a large number of *vans* is Dutch or *-fils* would be French.

There is an instructive illustration of this in Ontario, Canada. One particular city known originally as "Berlin" was renamed "Kitchener" after World War I at the request of a number of its citizens. In the community, however, one finds many names which have an easily discovered meaning in German, but which have no obvious significance in the language now spoken by most of its citizens — which is, of course, Canadian. Surely it would not have been unreasonable for a stranger unacquainted with the past history of the city to observe that, since so many of the names were much more meaningful in German than in English, the original language of these people was indeed German. He would not be surprised, therefore, to find that their settlement was once named Berlin.

Jerusalem is as obviously a Semitic city as Peterborough is an English city, because the name *Jerusalem* is really a compound of two words having a meaning in Hebrew ("City of peace"), and Peterborough a compound of two words having a meaning in English ("City of Peter"). This is the principle. Of course, this is not always the case, since some names have been preserved in such a disguised form that no one has any idea of their original meaning; therefore they cannot for certain be attached to any particular language, so that there are many exceptions to the principle.

⁴⁰. Hershon, Paul Isaac, *A Rabbinical Commentary on Genesis*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1885, p.57.

However, it is this form of reasoning applied to Genesis 10 which lists the names of the descendants of Noah, that has lent strong support to the claim that Hebrew or some form of Semitic language was the original language of Noah and accordingly of mankind right back to Adam — assuming that no significant change took place in the interval between them.

Genesis 10 begins the genealogical survey with Japheth, and from Japheth are derived a number of descendants whose names have been preserved remarkably intact among Indo-Europeans. In the first place, the Greeks claimed as their father one whom they named *Japetos*.⁴¹ In fact, he was, according to them, the father not merely of the Greeks, but of the human race. The Aryans claimed as their original father one whose name is given as *Djapatischa*.⁴² Both of these forms are modifications of the original name *Japheth*. There is no doubt, I think, that in neither language did the name have the slightest meaning, whereas in Semitic the meaning seems to be derived either from the root *Yapah* which means "to be fair," or from the root *pathah* which means "to be extended or enlarged." Either of these is legitimate etymologically, and either would be appropriate provided that Japheth was, as is generally assumed, fair in complexion. It is not unusual for Hebrew names to have two possible derivations, both of which are appropriate—a fact which has sometimes led to much argument, as in the case of the word *Babel*.⁴³

While it is possible to trace with a considerable measure of certainty the descendants of Japheth whose names are given in Genesis 10:2-5, we limit ourselves to one or two for purposes of illustration here. This is the subject of another Doorway Paper.⁴⁴ One of Japheth's sons is named *Gomer*. This name is still to be found in slightly modified form very widely in the Old World wherever Indo-Europeans have settled. In antiquity his descendants preserved his name as the *Cimri*. In another part of Europe the word reappears as *Hiber-nia*.⁴⁵ In England the name appears in the word Cumberland. It is, in fact, possible to trace his descendants through history up into Europe, where they continued to retain the memory of his name in a number of forms, any of which is easily equated with the original form *Gomer*.

For the benefit of anyone who is not familiar with the kind of changes which may take place in words—and who finds it difficult, for example, to equate *Gomer* with *Cumber*—on account of the appearance of the *b* in the middle of it—it is only necessary to point out that the Latin word *numerus* becomes in English *numBer*. The additional consonant slips in for euphony. Replacing the initial *G* with a hard *C* is a common occurrence—for example, where the Semitic form *gamal* becomes *camel* in English. But in none of these subsequent forms can we find a meaning in the

41. See on this: M. L. Rouse, "The Bible Pedigree of the Nations of the World," in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol. 38, 1906, p.126.

42. Dods, Marcus, *Genesis*, Clark, Edinburgh, no date, p.43. The Indian Aryans were early referred to as *Yavanas*, undoubtedly from "Javan," a son of Japheth. See Wardour, *Mythology and the Law of Nations*, Burns, Oates, London, 1872, p.43.

43. In connection with the name *Babel*, see John Urquhart, *The New Biblical Guide*, where two possible roots with very different connotations are discussed.

44. Custance, A. C., "A Study of the Names in Genesis 10," Part II in *Noah's Three Sons*, vol.1 in The Doorway Papers Series.

45. This was the ancient name of Ireland, the initial *H* being a hard H like the *Gh* in English, making the original form probably *Ghiber-nia*.

language of the people who preserved the name. In the Semitic original, it is evidently derived from *Gamar*, meaning "to complete or finish."

One of the sons of Gomer was named *Ashkenaz*. With the assistance of historical notices from antiquity, ancient and modern place names, and various other means, it has been possible to trace the spread of the descendants of Ashkenaz up into Europe, where the name underwent certain changes in form, appearing sometimes as *Sakasene*, and more familiarly as *Saxon* and finally in the compound word *Scandi-navia*. Such identifications may seem dubious to anyone not familiar with philology. As already stated, the subject is treated more fully in another Paper; but it may be mentioned at this point that much of this is based on a thesis accepted by the University of Toronto, Orientals Department, for an Honours Degree in Oriental Languages. I mention this here because it has always rather intrigued me that the panel of judges of my thesis stated that they considered the one really new and significant contribution in my presentation was the section which dealt with the tracing of the descendants of Ashkenaz – and yet some of my scholarly Christian friends have since criticized it unmercifully!

Another descendant is given (in Genesis 10:4) as bearing the name *Elishah*. This name has intrigued ethnologists for several reasons, not the least being the fact that it is so strongly Semitic in form, yet it seems clearly to have been really the name of a Japhethite (i.e., an Indo-European) and preserved subsequently in the familiar word *Hellas*.⁴⁶ There are other possible identifications, but they need not concern us at the moment. It is sufficient to state that we have here a clearly Semitic name retained among a clearly Indo-European people in virtually the same form which has no meaning whatever except for a people speaking a Semitic language.

If we pass down the list into the descendants of Ham and thus find ourselves no longer in Indo-European circles, we still meet with the same anomaly: words with a meaning in Semitic preserved as a patronymic of non-Semitic people. Thus, for example, in verse 15 we have the name *Heth*, undoubtedly referring to the progenitor of the Hittites. Whatever else may not be said about the ethnology of these particular people, one thing is certain – they were not Semites. And yet their original progenitor bore a name which in Semitic means *terrible*. It does not appear to have any meaning in the language of his descendants as far as our knowledge of the Hittite language goes at the present time.

Such, then, is the kind of evidence which led not a few scholars of a generation or so ago to argue stoutly that Semite was the language used by Noah. The argument seems to me to be a powerful one, and those who ridicule it must surely find some way to account for the strange circumstance that nations who no longer speak a Semitic language nevertheless recollect in one way or another that their first "father" bore a name, meaningless in their present tongue, but full of meaning in a Semitic one. One must surely conclude, therefore, that Noah – and presumably Adam also – spoke some form of Semitic language.

46. This was early recognized by M. M. Kalisch, *Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament*, "Genesis," Longmans, London, 1858, p.242. J. Skinner disagrees (*International Critical Commentary: Genesis*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1951, p.198), though pointing out that the Targum of Jonathan supported the identification.

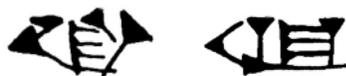
Incidental Light From Genesis 4

The events set forth in barest outline in Genesis 4 have always fascinated Bible students, because Scripture has somehow succeeded in epitomizing here the history of a period of something like two thousand years. It is done in a matter of only twenty-six verses, of which approximately a third are taken up with the record of a conversation between the Lord and Cain. The text is so familiar in fact to many of us that we fail to recognize how much is actually crowded into these few sentences, how factual it all is, how obviously myth is totally absent, how vivid are the characters presented to us. The beginnings of so many things are here.

One of these beginnings is stated simply in verse 17: "And Cain knew his wife: and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch."

The subsequent history of this city we do not know: but of the *name* of the city we know a great deal. Without entering into too much detail regarding changes in pronunciation which occur in the course of the development of a language, it seems necessary to point out here that the sound represented by the letter *N* is often reproduced (strange as it may seem) as an *R*. The *Ch* sound which terminates the name Enoch may be replaced by a *K* or *G* or *Gh*. These changes are common. When cuneiform was being deciphered for the first time, it soon became apparent that some of the cities mentioned in biblical antiquity were still in existence as mounds, and very often the natives in the area had preserved the original name in a modified form. An important city in antiquity appeared under the name *Uruk*, and a study of cuneiform soon revealed that this could equally well be pronounced Unuk, which was recognized at once by Sayce and many others as identical with the biblical word *Enoch*.

One feature of cuneiform writing was the use of what are called *determinatives*, signs placed before or after certain words to enable the reader to distinguish between names of cities and names of people, or names of deities and names of mortals, and so forth. Thus, if a city happened to have a name which was also the name of a famous man, it was customary to use a determinative to let the reader know whether one was referring to the man or to the place. In the case of a man's name, the determinative was put in front of the word; for a place-name, the determinative came after the word. As noted below, the determinative for *place* took the following forms: one on the left or, in earlier times, the other on the right:



Both forms of which were pronounced *KI*. The interesting thing about the city Unuk, or Uruk, is that the determinative was omitted. It is the only instance in which this is so.⁴⁷ The reason for this sole exception to the rule was not apparent at first; then it was realized after considerable study of cuneiform texts that the word had come to mean *The City par excellence*, a special city, special for historical reasons. As such, it was not considered to stand in need of any distinguishing

47. See on this: J. Urquhart, "The Bearing of Recent Oriental Discoveries on Old Testament History," in *Transactions of the Victorian Institute*, vol. 38, 1906, p.48. Also W. S. Boscawen, *The Bible and the Monuments*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London. 1896, p.94.

determinative. The "specialness" lay in the fact that it was the name of the first city ever to have been built; as such it was the prototype of all others and came to be referred to, to all intents and purposes, as "The City" – in somewhat the same way that people tend in England to refer to London as "The City."

Now, obviously the city which Cain built and named after his son Enoch must have been destroyed by the Flood, so that the physical entity itself probably disappeared, though it was subsequently refounded. If the rebuilders had followed our pattern, they might thenceforth have called it "New Uruk"! But though the original city was lost for a season, the name and its special significance were never lost sight of, for in time the *name* Uruk ceased to be a name at all and became merely a word meaning "city."

In later cuneiform this city was known as *Ereck*, and at the present time the site is known by the local people as *Warka*. This may seem a very different word, but it is not really so. And this is not the end of the story.

The city concept was not common to either Japheth's descendants or Shem's, and both these people borrowed the idea and the *term* from the Hamites. The word they borrowed was *Ereck*, or *Warka*, a word which re-appeared in Asia Minor in *Perg-amos*, for example. It travelled up into Europe in a number of slightly variant forms, becoming in due time *burg* and, of course, such other variants as *burgh* and *borough*. It is interesting, too, that in Greek this word took the form of *Purg-os* (πύργος) meaning "tower," i.e., a place of ascent. In view of the fact that in Genesis 11 the people of Mesopotamia made the unanimous decision "to build a city and a tower," the association of the two words in subsequent history is remarkable. Nor does the association end here, for the word *tower* came into other Indo-European languages in the form of *tour* and its cognate in English, the word *town*.

Such is the intriguing history, not only of the city idea, but of the very word which conveys it, and this word may be traced in an unbroken line right back into Genesis 4, into pre-Flood times, to the first city ever planned. We are, therefore, back to the second generation from Adam. And the word *Enoch* – which has no meaning in the languages of those people who made particular use of it in subsequent history – does, however, have a meaning in Semitic, namely *teacher*.

The second illustration I should like to use takes us on a rather wide excursion of ancient and modern history. Probably the most famous son of Ham is the man named *Nimrod* in Genesis 10, whose name, it had been expected, would turn up somewhere in the enormous collection of cuneiform tablets now available. But disappointingly, the name *Nimrod* has not appeared yet, so far as one can gather from the relevant literature. However, I have seen it stated that according to Brunnow's *Classified List of Sumerian Ideographs*, one particularly famous name, *Nin-gir-shu*, may also be read as *Nin-mir-rud*.⁴⁸ As is well known, many readings of cuneiform ideographs are merely alternatives, some signs having at least a dozen different sound values. It is possible that *Nin-gir-shu* is, therefore, in fact *Nin-mir-rud*, i.e., *Nimrod*.

48. I am unable to verify this. However, the Sumerian word *Nimru* means "leopard," a rather interesting finding in view of Nimrod's reputation as a mighty hunter. Furthermore, according to Rene Labat (*Manuel d'Epigraphie Akkadienne*, Paris, 1952, p.159), the sound value *Mir* may be read also as *Gir*, so that *Nimgir* may be read as *Nimmir*. I am aware that a good case can be made for identifying Nimrod with Marduk, or Merodach, an early Babylonian deity.

Now, the father of Nimrod was Cush who was in turn the son of Ham. The name *Cush* is found in a number of localities, one of them Africa. In an article which deals with the magnificent Nigerian Bronzes from Africa, K. C. Murray, speaking of the Yoruba people who originated these bronzes, said:

Legends concerning the origins of the Yoruba seem to deal with the establishment of a ruling dynasty. It is believed that in the second millennium B.C., a people known as the Kishites (Cushites?) began to enter the Horn of Africa from Mesopotamia and later gradually spread westwards [...]. According to the account by Sultan Bello of Sokoto, the Yoruba were of the Tribe of Nimrod.⁴⁹

It is customary in reading cuneiform to replace the weak letter *N* at the end of a syllable by doubling the next consonant or by lengthening the vowel that precedes it. Thus *Nin-gir-shu* would tend to be pronounced as *Nigger-shu* or *Nyger-shu*. It may well be that we have here not only the origin of the word *Nigeria* (pronounced with a long *I*), but even of the form *nigger*, for the native of Africa. The only representations of Nimrod of which I am aware are those given by Hyslop, where he is shown as Negroid.

According to R. E. Dennett, the Yoruba tribe claims that the founder of their race had a wife whose name meant "Child of Brass."⁵⁰ And if we go back a little further in the line of Noah we finally arrive at an individual who was said to have originated the art of working metals, iron and brass. In Genesis 4:22 his name is given as *Tubal-Cain*; although the name does not appear in this form in antiquity. R. J. Forbes, one of the outstanding authorities on metallurgy in antiquity, points out that Cain means "smith."⁵¹ And according to the same author, one of the tribes long associated in the ancient world with metalworking was the Tibareni,⁵² whom many scholars identify with Tubal, the *L* and the *R* being interchangeable.

We may go one step further in this when we discover that the name of the individual who came to be constituted as the god of the Tiber (a clearly related word) was Vulcan. To my mind, there is little doubt that *Tubal-Cain* is the earliest form of the name *Vulcan* which in its later stages was merely shortened by the omission of the *Tu-*. In his commentary on Genesis, Marcus Dods points out that everything is so faithfully perpetuated in the East that the blacksmith of the village *Gubbatea-ez-zetun* referred to the iron "splinters" struck off while working at his forge as *tubal*.⁵³ Is it entirely a coincidence that we should refer to an iron worker as a *blacksmith*, in view of the fact that these Hamitic people, themselves probably black-skinned, seem to have been the initial workers in iron?

Now, the traditions regarding Vulcan are rather interesting. He is, of course, associated with fire and the working of metals, later appearing as the divine smith

49. Murray, K. C., "Nigerian Bronzes: Work from Ife, in *Antiquity*, March, 1941, p.76.

50. Dennett, R. E., *Nigerian Studies*, London, 1910, p.75.

51. Forbes, R J., *Metallurgy in Antiquity*, Brill, Leiden, 1950, p.97.

52. *Ibid.*, p.88.

53. Dods, Marcus, *Genesis*, Clark, Edinburgh, no date, p.26.

of the Roman *Tubilustrum*.⁵⁴ He is said to have been a cripple, having been thrown out of heaven by Jupiter as a punishment for having taken the part of his mother in a quarrel which occurred between them.⁵⁵

In Genesis 4:23 there is the rather extraordinary story of how Lamech took vengeance on a young man for wounding him. Lamech's son was *Tubal-Cain*, perhaps none other than Vulcan, subsequently deified. In the brief account in Genesis, it is stated that Lamech had two wives, one of whom was named *Zillah*. Let us suppose, for a moment, that it was with *Zillah* that Lamech quarrelled and that *Tubal-Cain*, the son of *Zillah*, took his mother's part and got into a fight with his father, Lamech. Whatever happened to Lamech is not clear, although he appears to have been wounded; but *Tubal-Cain* himself was injured sufficiently to become thereafter a lame man. Moreover, it is customary, in a society where polygamy is allowed, to name the child not after the father but after the mother, since this obviously assures better identification. In early cuneiform one of the curious words which has puzzled Sumerologists, is *parzillu*, the word for *iron*. Now, surely this word is none other than a masculinized form of two Semitic words, *Bar Zillah*, i.e., "Son of *Zillah*." In the course of time, because the ending *-ah* tended to be reserved for words of feminine gender, the word became *Parzillu* or *Barzillu* with a correct masculine termination.

Putting all these things together, one has a remarkable series of fragments of tradition in which there is a continuity of name-forms, all related in meaning or association and wrapped up in a trade of very ancient origin, associated with a deity who had the strange experience of being ejected from his home and rendered lame for taking his mother's part and who thereafter lent his title, "Son of *Zillah*," to the Sumerian people as their word for *iron*. Furthermore, these same Sumerian people—in spite of paintings in which they are portrayed in reconstructions as having had bronzed faces—always referred to themselves as black-headed ones,⁵⁶ and are indeed spoken of by other people as black-headed,⁵⁷ while their relatives in the Indus Valley were similarly termed black and noseless (!) by the white Aryans who conquered them.⁵⁸ The very name *Ham* means "burned" or "dark," and though his descendants were certainly not all black (witness the "yellow" Mongols, "red" Indians, and "brown" Malays), it seems that the traditions of iron working were kept particularly within the circle of black people: so Africa became the instructor of Indo-Europeans in this art, and metalworkers refer to themselves as "the Hamites" or, to use the original, *al Hami*, which in due time came to be identified with their art as *alchemy*, whence our chemistry.

Such, then, is the light which this very early story in Genesis seems to shed upon much that is otherwise strange—and even absurd—in ancient tradition. That there is a basis of fact throughout is clearly confirmed by the very continuity of the blacksmith's art. Yet only in some form of Semitic language does one find any

54. Forbes, R. J., *Metallurgy in Antiquity*, Brill, Leiden, 1950, p.90. Also H. J. Rose, "The Cult of Vulcanus at Rome," in *Journal of the Royal Society*, vol. 23, 1933, p.46

55. See T. Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable*, Heritage Press, New York, 1942, pp.7-8.

56. Kramer, S., *From the Tablets of Sumer*, Falcon's Wing Press, 1956, p.60.

57. Thus Code of Hammurabi, Deimel's Transcription (1930), R. 24, line 11. Sennacherib's Prism (Col. I, line 15) refers to the related Canaanites in the same way.

58. Piggott, S., *Prehistoric India*, Pelican Books, London, 1950, p.261.

meaning to the venerable name *Tubal-Cain*, or any light upon the origin of the hitherto mysterious word *Barzillu* or *Parzillu*, which soon ceased to be a Semitic word at all.

The story of Lamech is not myth, but fact; its special significance here is predicated upon a Semitic original.⁵⁹

The Language of Heaven

It may seem absurd to suggest that spiritual beings in heaven converse in any kind of language such as we are accustomed to use: language as we know it by reason of its very nature places limitations upon the communication of our thoughts to one another. Surely no such limitations exist in heaven. One cannot imagine that God the Father would in this limiting sense "speak" to God the Son, though it might be conceivable that the angels would speak to one another and be spoken to by God. There may, of course, be some entirely different way of communicating, of which we know nothing at the moment, but which might bear some relation to the fact of inspiration — for example, the kind of inspiration which leads to prophetic utterances and so forth and could be by a process of telepathy. Scripture notes a number of conversations in heaven between God and angels and even among angels themselves, as in Job 1:6 and Daniel 10:21. In the latter instance there is a suggestion of something in the nature of verbal argument.

At any rate, God has spoken to man, and it is perhaps not without significance that when He did so — whether in writing as in the giving of the Ten Commandments and upon the wall of Belshazzar's palace, or in direct conversation as when He spoke to the First Adam and to the Last Adam, and even through the Last Adam to man (in Aramaic) — the language is always some form of Semitic. It might be argued that this was inevitable, since the Hebrew people had been chosen as God's intermediary in the matter of His self-revelation. This could be a quite sufficient explanation but for two circumstances which may possibly have special significance: (a) the original name which Adam applied to his helpmeet, and (b) the new names given to two New Testament converts.

A word should be said, first of all, about the significance of names. This is the subject of another Doorway Paper,⁶⁰ but it may be said that in almost all other societies than our own, a personal name is not merely a useful label for identification purposes, but is the personal identity of the individual. This principle of identity originates in antiquity. One of the earliest cuneiform tablets of special interest to Bible students deals with the Creation story and describes the time before the earth was formed — i.e., had no existence — as a time when the earth "was not named." The couplet reads:

59. J. C. Jones points out with force that the very form of Lamech's song preserved the characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry, namely, atrophic parallelism (*Primeval Revelation*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1897, p.339).

60. Custance, A. C., "The Importance of a Name," Part V in *The Flood: Local or Global?*, vol. 9 in The Doorway Papers Series.

Time was when Heaven above was not named,
To the earth beneath no name was given.⁶¹

No name, no real existence. An unnamed object is not a real object; an unnamed child is not a real person. Barbarous though it may seem to us, Eskimo mothers sometimes had to practice infanticide; but they sought to avoid it *after* the child had received a name. A nameless child was not yet a real human being at all, and its destruction was not considered a serious matter. Until the child was named, it was a thing, not a human being; it really had no soul.

The story of Adam's naming of the animals brought to him is much more significant than we are apt to suppose, because the names that he gave to them were not merely labels, but summations of their "personalities." By these names he indicated his recognition of the fact that not one of them was a proper counterpart of his own being and therefore could not be a true helpmeet for him. When he awoke from the deep sleep which subsequently fell upon him, and when he saw that God had now brought to him one more of His creatures, he at once perceived in her a true helpmeet. By the name which he gave to her, he demonstrated his realization of her relationship to himself. Her original name was not *Eve* (a name given to her later on) but *Woman*.

It happens that the word *woman* is a translation of a Semitic word which is the feminine form of the word for *man*. Man is *Ish*, woman is *Ishah*. In no other language does it appear to be true that the word for woman is the feminine form of the word for man. Compare, for example, the Latin: *vir* for man, *mulier* for woman; the Greek: *aner* for man, *gune* for woman. In English the word *woman* is a broken down form of an original "woof-man," which meant "the man who weaves."⁶² In Spanish the forms *senor* and *senora* may seem at first sight to be parallel, but *senor* is not really the word for "man" nor *senora* the word for "woman." They are more exactly titles of courtesy like "sir" and "lady" in English. This exceptional circumstance in the story of Adam and Eve is in itself some evidence that Semitic was the form of speech which Adam employed, since it would seem only natural that the first human being should have named his helpmeet by a modified form of his own name.

Now, just as a name is equated with existence, so a new name is equated with a new existence. This concept is widespread, and in many other societies a person who changes his status will usually adopt a new (and often secret) name. And a person who is ill for an undue length of time will try the remedy of changing his name, thereby becoming another individual and ridding himself of the sickness attached to the old. Some instructive instances of this in recent times have even been reported from our own mental institutions.⁶³

Jacob received a new name after a spiritual struggle of a very marked kind, and thereafter he appears to have been called by either the old or the new one, perhaps depending upon whether it was the old man or the new man who was in view. The nation which sprang from him seems to have been treated in the same way. Thus,

61. Barton, G., *Archaeology of the Bible*, American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, 1933, p.287.

62. So Worcester Unabridged Dictionary, under "Woman." Other suggested alternatives are: *Chamber's*, *Wif(e)-man*, also *Womb-man*. But all agree that it is not formed by making the word *man* feminine.

63. Bettelheim, B., "Schizophrenic Art: A Case Study," in *Scientific American*, April 1952, p.32.

while the Word of the Lord was sent unto Jacob, it lighted only upon Israel (Isaiah 9:8). Similarly, in that great and terrible day of tribulation it will be Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) but only Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26). One such Israelite was Nathanael, called by the Lord "an Israelite indeed" (John 1:47), as though to point up the distinction. In Isaiah 45:4 Jacob is merely a servant, whereas Israel is His elect bearing a new relationship to Himself.

Of course, both the names *Jacob* and *Israel* are Semitic words, so that the new name was not in this respect in a different language. But in the New Testament we have two people receiving new names: *Peter* (which is Greek), and *Mark* (which is Latin), being given also Semitic names. Peter was later re-named *Cephas*, which is Aramaic; Mark was re-named *John*, which in the original is a combination of two Hebrew words. Like Jacob, Peter did not always "realize" his new name, except that Paul consistently so referred to him in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (1:12; 9:5; 15:5).

Paul himself received a change of name, and the time of the change is significant. It was not coincident with his conversion. In Acts 9 Saul was converted, but is still being referred to as Saul in Acts 13:2. However, in Acts 13:9 we read this statement: "Then Saul (which is also called Paul) being filled with the Holy Ghost [...]" Thenceforth he is never again referred to by his old name.

I would gather from these few fragments of light that the new Name we are to receive, which is hidden at the moment, will sum up in a unique way our whole new personality in Christ and will probably have its meaning in Semitic—the language of heaven, where our citizenship is. One or two people apparently were so manifestly and enduringly changed that their new Name entirely replaced their old, but I suspect that Satan is not able to discern the new person and therefore does not know the new name (which is secret—Revelation 2:17), so that his accusations against us are against the old man and not the new man, against the one who has already been judged and who to all intents and purposes is dead in the sight of God.

Henceforth, then, as citizens of heaven we quite appropriately have a new name in the language of heaven, whether our present name is in English or Chinese or African. In fact, I think there is a very real sense in which those who are redeemed do learn to speak a new "language," God's language. Although we obviously do not speak Hebrew or Aramaic, nevertheless the language of heaven it seems to me does become meaningful to us, though in a special sense, so that there may be times when we can be used to interpret to the world what God has spoken. The Chosen People were His instruments in a unique way, appointed to do this very thing in the world, i.e., to speak for Him. Possibly a Semitic form of speech is the ideal vehicle for this purpose, and thus God saw to it that Israel should never entirely lose the knowledge of it.

Those who have studied Hebrew will agree, I think, without hesitation that it is one of the most remarkably pregnant languages for conveying deep spiritual truths. This pregnancy results in part from the fact that it has so many words with dual meanings. For example, the word "to forgive" is the same as the word "to lift up"; the word for "chasten" is the same as the word "to care for"; the words "to see" and "to provide" are the same; and also the words "to believe" and "to be

established." This kind of dualism makes the language full of significance for the Christian.

Conclusion

These are only suggestive thoughts, and the argument is evanescent. To one who is already convinced, these are strong confirmations, but they will carry little or no weight to those who are skeptical. In closing, I cannot refrain from telling a rather beautiful little story which has since been repeated on a number of recent occasions but is actually to be found in a commentary on Genesis published toward the end of the last century. It wonderfully illustrates the universality of the language of heaven:

Two believers from different countries met at a conference and observed in one another the unmistakable evidences of their common faith. They approached each other with outstretched hands in welcome and, though quite unable to speak a word of the other's language, communicated perfectly when the one said, "Alleluia!" and the other replied instantly, "Amen!"⁶⁴



64. Quoted by Joseph S. Exell in *The Biblical Illustrator*, vol. 1: "Genesis," Nisbet, London, no date, p.507.

Chapter 3

The Confusion of Language: Ancient and Modern

It has already been pointed out that while Indo-Europeans have tended to develop their languages by a process of simplification, and Semitic peoples have tended to preserve their languages more or less unchanged, the Hamitic peoples have proliferated their languages to an extraordinary degree. Some will object to the first observation and argue that Indo-European languages have diverged widely. This is true, but the divergence has been a very orderly one – orderly enough in fact that there is no longer the slightest question as to their derivation from a single source at the beginning. But so diverse are the languages of Ham that even yet there are many who argue against the possibility of ever convincingly demonstrating their essential relationship as a family.

Loomis Havemeyer has emphasized this diversity between languages of the Indians north of Mexico, for example. He says they may be divided into fifty-nine different groups – and adds:

Each one of these groups is made up of numerous dialects, sometimes as many as 20 in one stock, so that it is impossible for an Indian from one part of the country to make himself understood in another district by means of his spoken language. It even happens that tribes only a short distance apart are not able to converse.⁶⁵

For all this, he comments, "Yet some few things seem to indicate that at one time far in antiquity these numerous families may have had a common beginning."

Frequent reference is made by travellers to the fact that Hamitic peoples separated in point of time by only a few decades and geographically by as little as a single river may nevertheless be quite unable any longer to understand one another's speech. Cunningham Geikie notes that:

Among the one hundred islands occupied by the Melanesian race, there are no less than two hundred languages, differing from each other as much as Dutch and German. Among some races of Central Africa, Barth tells us, the want of friendly intercourse

⁶⁵. Havemeyer Loomis, *Ethnography*, Ginn and Co., New York, 1929, p.265.

between tribes and families has caused so many dialects to spring up as to make communication between them difficult. On the river Amazon, Mr. Bates found several individuals in a single canoe speaking mutually unintelligible languages. It is in fact impossible to fix an approximate period for the rise of such new forms of speech.

If there is nothing like literature or society to keep changes within limits, says Max Muller, two villages separated for only a few generations will soon become mutually unintelligible. This takes place in America as well as on the borders of China and India, and in the north of Asia. Messerschmidt relates that the Ostiaks, though really speaking the same language everywhere, have produced so many words and forms peculiar to each tribe that even within the limits of ten or twelve miles, conversations between them become extremely difficult.⁶⁶

Referring to these same islands, the Melanesians, Bishop Selwyn remarked upon their diversity of languages, saying that "nothing but a special interposition of the Divine power could have produced such a confusion of tongues as we have here! In Islands no larger than the Isle of Wight, we find various dialects unknown to each other!"⁶⁷

Geikie speaks of the absence of literature as being a cause of rapid change, and undoubtedly this is true in part. However, it is not the whole answer, because it is found, for example, that a syllabary of ideographs (i.e., the basis of written language) may in the course of time come to be given entirely different sound values by two different communities who nevertheless continue to use it.⁶⁸ The written form remains largely unchanged, but the interpretation may change radically. In a very simple way this is true in English where, for example, what is written as an *L* may be pronounced as an *R*. Many English people pronounce *Psalm* as "Psarm"; in the New World the *L* may be left out entirely and the word pronounced as "Psam." When the Chinese syllabary was adopted by the Japanese, they attached entirely new sound values to the ideographs. Thus the symbol meaning "moon"  will be read as *wuek* in Peking, as *nguok* in Fukien, and as

66. Geike, Cunningham, *Hours with the Bible*, Alden, New York, 1886, p.126-27.

67. Quoted by D. M. Panton, *Dawn*, Sept., 1945, p.1095. R. M. Ritland mentions that in New Guinea several hundred languages may be found on a single island (*A Search for Meaning*, Pacific Press, Omaha, 1970, p.260, note 50). Theodora Kroeber, the wife of A. L. Kroeber, the dean of American anthropologists, in her beautiful account of the life of "the last wild Indian in North America," underscores the same phenomenon here too. She speaks of the six great linguistic superfamilies each made up of numbers of separate families of speech. "Five of these superfamilies were represented in California, and contained among them twenty-one basic languages which were for the most part mutually unintelligible [...]. But this is not yet the whole of the story, since the twenty-one languages further separated and elaborated themselves into a hundred and thirteen known dialects." Some of these in turn were as different as Swedish is from German, making their speakers unable to communicate. There were then twice as many Indian languages on record in California as there are counties in the state today! (*Ishi: in Two Worlds*, University of California Press, 1971, pp.15,16).

68. Hedderly Smith (*The Missionary and Anthropology*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1945, p.53) quotes Bloomfield to the effect that most languages were spoken throughout most of their history by people who did not read or write, yet such languages are just as stable as literary ones.

goat in Amoy. In all three cases the meaning is the same, namely, "moon," but the vocalization is altogether different. As Miriam Chapin said:

It follows that an Amoy reader can get the full meaning out of a page of Chinese without the remotest idea of how to pronounce it. If he has to read it out loud, he will utter totally different sounds from the man in Peking.⁶⁹

In the case of the English pronunciation of the *L* as an *R*, the underlying causes are subtle, though linguists have theories to account for it. In the case of the Japanese adoption of Chinese characters, it was merely a matter of convenience. When we go back, however, to Sumerian, the most ancient written language in Mesopotamia, a language which as we have already noted seems to be in some way related to Chinese, we come up against evidence of "confusion," the reasons for which are much more difficult to discern.

The kind of confusion I am referring to may be illustrated by considering a representative Sumerian ideograph. For example, the sign  may be vocalized as *ut*, *ud*, *udu*, *umu*, *um*, *tam*, *par*, *hish*, and a number of other alternative sounds! One of the problems of learning cuneiform is that the student not only has to memorize so many different sound values for a single sign, but also has to determine which particular sound the original scribe had in mind in any given instance. There are some rules governing this which help, but one still wonders whether a text may not have been exceedingly difficult to interpret correctly even by a well-educated Sumerian.

Now, if we revert to the events that took place during the building of the Tower of Babel – in which the Sumerians were undoubtedly involved – it may very well have come to pass that a situation arose where contemporary groups of people, who had joined in the undertaking and who shared a common cuneiform syllabary for keeping written records, began to attribute to the signs different sound values that were not shared by others in the community. Hence would arise the kind of "confusion" which the student of Sumerian finds in even the earlier cuneiform texts.

It is, of course, quite possible that God could have brought about this confusion of language instantaneously in a way which must be accounted as nothing short of miraculous. He did virtually the opposite instantaneously, as recorded in Acts 2. In the first case it was to render futile the efforts of men to reach heaven by their own means; in the second case it was to guarantee that men might reach heaven by God's means, thus undoing the curse of Babel and deliberately uniting men where they had formerly been deliberately divided. But if the "confounding" was not miraculous, the record certainly indicates something unusual. I suggest that these builders abandoned the project because their lines of communication broke down, for reasons which are not so much miraculous as they are rather exceptional – and are actually still subject to examination. The natural tendency of Hamitic peoples to diversify their languages almost endlessly is exceptional enough in itself. What made the events of Genesis 11 even more exceptional was that God somehow greatly accelerated this natural tendency.

⁶⁹ Chapin, Miriam, *How People Talk*, Longmans Green, Toronto, 1947, p.73.

From the tenor of these remarks it will be concluded that we are limiting our view almost entirely to the Hamites, as though Semites and Japhethites took no part in these events. As we have seen, there is evidence of the presence of Japhethites and Semites in Mesopotamia in very early times, so that these two must also have been there at that time. But there is a tradition that the people who decided to build a city and a tower to preserve themselves against too wide a scattering were the children of Ham only and did not include either Semites or Japhethites. In view of what has been said about the building of cities, and the fact that the city-idea was not originally native to either the Semites or Indo-Europeans, this tradition seems more than reasonable. In an early edition of the *Speaker's Commentary* there is an observation by Bishop Browne as follows:

It has been thought, though perhaps on insufficient ground, that "children of men," as in Gen. 6:2, designates the impious portion of the human race as opposed to "children of God"; and possibly the rebellious offspring of Ham.⁷⁰

We may be on safer ground, perhaps, when we find an extant version purporting to be the *Book of Jasher* limiting the building of Babel to the Hamites, though without actually saying why.⁷¹ The observation is presented to the reader with as little comment as is appropriate to what the original writer presumed to be a well-known fact. This interesting record must be quite old, for it is referred to early in Scripture, the first mention of it being in Joshua 10:13.

In support of the tradition that only Hamites were involved in the project, two other facts may be pointed out: (a) that neither Indo-European nor Semitic languages actually suffered any judgment of confusion – as the subsequent course of development of these languages has indicated; and (b) that those who were thereupon forcibly scattered abroad over the face of the earth (Genesis 11:8) were Hamites only, for there is evidence that the first pioneer settlers in every part of the world were invariably of Hamitic stock. Indo-Europeans have since been "enlarged" and in many parts of the world have followed and displaced the original settlers (as in North America, Australia, in very early times in India, and even in Europe). Preceding the Aryans were the Basques, the Magyars, and the Turks in Europe, and the Indus Valley cultures in India. Although he knew nothing of the latter, Prichard speaks of these aboriginal races as having spread

[...] through all the remotest regions of the Old World, to the northward, eastward, and westward of the Iranian nations, whom they seem everywhere to have preceded, so that they appear in comparison with the (Japhethite) colonies in the light of aboriginal

⁷⁰. Quoted by W. S. Smith, *Lessons on Genesis*, Church of England Sunday School Institute, London, no date, p.42.

⁷¹. Referred to by D. Woods, *The Bible Confirmed by Archaeology*, Covenant Publishing Company, London 1945, pp.8-9. On the authenticity of the *Book of Jasher* see the article by J. Kitto in his *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, Black, Edinburgh, 1845, vol. 2, pp.70ff., and the Schaff-Herzog *Religious Encyclopedia*, Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1883, vol. 2, p.1194. The Talmud supports this tradition: see H. Polano, *The Talmud*, Warne, London, no date, p.28.

or native inhabitants, vanquished and often driven into mountainous and remote tracts by more powerful invading tribes.⁷²

The spreading abroad of Semites is of even more recent date. It appears in fact that "confusion" of language is associated with the dispersion of the Hamitic people, but can hardly be applied to either Japhethites or Semites at all.

As a method of frustrating a united effort, the confusion of tongues seems almost perfectly suited. When Genesis 11:1 speaks of man as having "one lip and one words" (so the Hebrew), it suggests that the original unity of language was very complete, involving both pronunciation and vocabulary. Various interpretations have been placed upon these phrases, and some alternative translations have been proposed. I was rather interested recently to note in a Jewish commentary of a century and a half ago, written by a Russian rabbi, M. L. Malbim, that the phrase "of one speech" is rendered "of few words,"⁷³ indicating as Malbim suggests that the people had but a small vocabulary. The idea is a novel one, but what really amused me was to find that Dr. T. J. Meek, who was responsible for translating this portion of Scripture for the Revised Standard Version adopted the same rendering! It would be difficult to justify it from the original Hebrew itself, but if one believed that everything has evolved, including language of course, then the rendering fits very nicely into such a preconceived notion. Early man naturally had to have a simple form of language . . .

It might be difficult, on the other hand, if man did have only a few words, to see how a judgment taking the form of a confusion of language could be very meaningful. Other commentators have rightly observed that the confusion must have resulted in fact, not from the paucity of words, but from their multiplicity; such a multiplicity implies a fairly complex organization of society, the level of organization that would be required for such an undertaking. Can one imagine, for example, a tribe of Australian aborigines suddenly deciding to build a tower of very great height? Does not the nature of the undertaking indicate a high level of economic organization in the place and, therefore, a sophisticated language?

Moreover, even if Meek's assumption that this was a very simple society were justified, it would still be a mistake to suppose that a people who were in one sense "primitive" necessarily had a simple language, i.e., "few words." As a matter of fact, the opposite is often the case. Kroeber attributes this common misconception to the faulty understanding on the part of earlier investigators of primitive societies.⁷⁴ The point has been emphasized many times since, as by Kluckhohn, Coon, and Taylor.⁷⁵

It is widely agreed today that no language can be classed as "simple." Every language is completely adequate for the culture which sustains it and which it sustains. Nor do languages naturally decline — unless the culture declines. There is

72. Prichard, J. C., *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, Houlston and Stoneman London, vol. 3, 1836, p.9.

73. See J. A. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Genesis*, Oxford University Press, 1929, p.97.

74. Kroeber, A. L., *Anthropology*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1948, p.233.

75. Kluckhohn, Clyde, *Mirror for Man*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1949, p.148: "In contrast to the general course of cultural evolution, languages move from the complex to the simple." Also, C. S. Coon, *A Reader in General Anthropology*, Holt, New York, 1948, p.148. 9, p.223; Griffith Taylor, *Environment, Race, and Migration*, University of Toronto Press, 1945, p.427.

a tendency, it seems, for cultures to decline especially when dislocated by reason of forced migrations or comparable factors; when this happens, the associated languages suffer also. It is in this sense that the proliferation of early Hamitic languages was both a cause and an effect of the forcible scattering of these people. At the same time, Kroeber points out that

Speech tends to be one of the most persistent populational characters; and ethnic boundaries are most often speech boundaries.⁷⁶

God's method of scattering the Hamites by dividing their speech forms was, therefore, a profoundly effective and truly lasting one. Moreover, this lasting quality, according to Bloomfield, may not depend merely upon literacy, but is much more deeply rooted. Even in our own day we see the persistence of native languages in spite of pressures tending toward their disappearance. This is true in Ireland, of course, and it has recently been demonstrated of the Basques, who were under considerable coercion from the Franco regime to abandon their native tongue.⁷⁷

Returning to the circumstances surrounding the initial confusion of languages, I was intrigued to note in a quite ancient commentary by Harwood, dated 1789, with reference to the words (Genesis 11:5), "the Lord came down to see the city," the following observation,

This is delivered (i.e., spoken) after the manner of men and here suggests to us, with what caution, as it were, God proceeds to judgment. The same is intended in Gen. 18:21. It always signifies that God takes particular notice of the actions of mankind and intimates His design of performing something extraordinary.⁷⁸

God's judgments are not the sudden impulsive reactions of an all-powerful and angry deity. Rather they are the considered, just, and exceedingly effective methods by which He takes the innate capacities of men which could be used for good and sees to it, when they are used for evil, that they will serve to make the punishment exactly fit the crime. What is the nature of this capacity of the Hamitic mind which God used? We have already observed that it was a capacity to diversify speech. Diversification of speech is what results: but why does it result? Why do people with this capacity tend to multiply their languages in this way? In what way do their minds operate differently from ours?

It has been known for many years that Hamitic people have a peculiar tendency towards concreteness of thought and are normally indifferent to or disinclined to the making of generalizations. This is strongly reflected in their linguistic forms. Let me illustrate what I mean by this.

76. Kroeber, A. L., *Anthropology*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1948, p.221.

77. See feature article by Iris Johnson, "Basques: Historical Enigma," in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Thursday, Aug. 11, 1960, p.9.

78. Harwood, Thomas, *Annotations Upon Genesis*, published privately, London, 1789, p.58.

In the language of the Yaghans, there are more than 10,000 words to indicate where one comes from or is going to, either north, south, east, or west, and from above, below, outside, or inside.⁷⁹ According to Bridges, other factors may require the use of an even larger number of words when the circumstances surrounding the coming or going of the individual referred to involve some specific time of day. In other words, if a man is coming from outside from the north, one verb would be used. If he is coming from inside (for example, inside a house) from the east, an entirely different word would be required. If the time of day of the event is changed, then another and entirely unrelated verb is used. And so it goes on with an almost infinite number of permutations and combinations, new forms being readily invented when the situation demands, each word unrelated in sound to the previous one, until the list accumulates to over 10,000.

Again and again this observation has been made of non-Indo-European languages. Every event is unique. The common factors in events which, once observed, could vastly simplify such vocabularies are evidently not noted. Livingstone in Africa remarked that a score of words might be used to indicate a variety of gaits.⁸⁰ One might walk leaning forward or backward, or swaying from side to side, lazily or smartly, swinging the arms or only one arm, head up or down, or some other way. For each of these modes of walking there is a particular verb form, a clear indication that the people who use these forms of speech have overlooked what is common to the situation — i.e., walking — and are preoccupied with what is distinctive in each.

The Lapps have a great many terms to denote various kinds of reindeer, not merely according to their species, but according to their age, whether sleek or mangy, starved or fat, frisky or docile.⁸¹ The word *reindeer* as a generic term does not form any part of these words as it would for us. There are 11 words for cold, depending upon who is cold, how they are cold, and why they are cold; 20 words for ice; and 41 words for snow in its various forms — yet no word for cold or ice or snow *per se*. They have not classified objects nor categorized experiences. Everything is known and felt as concrete, isolated, and uniquely individual. Moreover, it is a general rule that the more intense their interest, the more profuse their vocabulary. The Aymara Indians of Peru have more than 209 words for potato; the Arabs several thousand words relating to the camel.⁸²

So different, in fact, is the mode of expression in such languages that translation into an Indo-European language in any exact sense becomes exceedingly difficult, and in any case tends to occupy many more words. In the languages of North America, a blow with the fist would not employ the same verb as would be used to describe a blow with the open hand.⁸³ The Indian's emphasis is not upon the blow as such or the hand as such, but the whole event involving the attacker, the victim,

79. Bridges, Thomas, "Notes on the Structure of the Yahgan," in *Journal of the Anthropology Institute*, vol.23, 1893, p.53-80.

80. Livingstone, David, *The Zambezi and Its Tributaries*, Harper, New York, 1865, p.537.

81. Keane, _____, "The Laps; Their Origin," in *Journal of the Anthropology Institute*, vol.15, 1885, p. 235.

82. Tschopik, H., Jr., "The Aymara; Handbook of South American Indians," Bulletin 143, Bureau American Ethnology, no.2, 1946, p.501ff. As regards camels: actually 5,744 words, according to von Hammer: so Max Muller, *The Science of Language*, Scribner, Armstrong, New York, 1875, 2nd edition, revised, vol. 1, p.383.

83. Cassirer, Ernst, *An Essay on Man*, Yale University Press, 1948, p.135.

the circumstances, everything. In fact to him there is virtually nothing common in the two events, and to repeat the word *blow* or *hand* would, in his view, be to mislead the reader. This is what makes translation look simple enough superficially, but often be very difficult.

It follows from all this that such a way of viewing things, of naming objects, or of describing events invites the constant invention of new words and new modes of expression. Instead of playing upon a basic form with suffixes and prefixes, the creation of entirely new forms is the rule. Consequently any new undertaking results very quickly in a large addition to the vocabulary of the language. And the ease with which such enlargement takes place soon renders a fair proportion of the vocabulary of one group unintelligible to a neighbouring community.

By greatly accelerating this process, God could have easily seen to it that those who took responsibility for carrying out different parts of the program in the building of the city and the Tower of Babel very soon found themselves unable to understand one another – particularly since it was an unusual undertaking. In this way, the very novelty of the venture itself was the cause of its own abandonment.

Curiously enough, although this reconstruction of events is based entirely upon the much better understanding we now have of the form and structure of non-Japhetic languages, the far-seeing Dante in a way anticipated it. Here is what Dante wrote:

Almost the whole human race had come together to the work (of the tower of Babel). Some were giving orders, some were acting as architects, some were building the walls, some were adjusting the masonry with rules, some were laying on the mortar with trowels, some were quarrying stone, some engaged in bringing it by water, some by land; and different companies were engaged in different other occupations, when they were struck by such confusion from Heaven that all those who were attending to the work, using one and the same language, left the work on being estranged by many different languages and never again came together in the same intercourse.

For the same language remained to those alone who were engaged in the same kind of work; for instance, one language remained to all the architects, another to those preparing the stone; and so it happened to each group of workers. And the human race was then accordingly divided into as many different languages as there were different branches to the work.⁸⁴

What this amounts to in effect is the accelerated formation of a number of technical jargons involving in some instances the creation of highly specialized vocabularies, quite unintelligible to all except those who were members of the trade guild, and in other instances the attachment of entirely new meanings to familiar words which thereby came to signify something quite different to those who employed them.

⁸⁴. Quoted by A. Gode, "The Case for Interlingua," *Scientific Monthly*, Aug. 1953, p.82, from Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.

It can hardly be doubted that mankind is slowly strengthening his presumption today to take heaven by storm in a somewhat analogous fashion. What is hindering – increasingly – the realization of this presumption is the rise of a whole new series of technical jargons, once again involving in some instances the creation of an entirely new terminology and in others the attachment of specialized meanings to otherwise familiar words. Thus it comes about that those trained in one discipline have difficulty in communicating with those trained in some other. For example, the electronics expert and the architect may both speak of noise, but they are not talking about the same thing. The problem of inter-communication between disciplines has become one of the most acute and greatest hindrances to the further advance of man's conquest of his world, a greater hindrance indeed than even his lack of complete knowledge. It is as though God were once again setting limits to his ambition by the multiplication of languages.

William Temple had something like this in mind when he wrote:

The supreme usurpation is spoken of as frustrated by the confusion of men's speech. The ambition of Babel – to build a tower by which man should ascend to the throne of God – led to that name becoming a synonym for confusion. For man could achieve even the semblance of success in his titanic self-assertion only if he could prevent the outbreak of divisions and rivalries. The multiplication of tongues, each representing a special tradition and a peculiar hope, has effectively prevented man from achieving a godless contentment. Thus from the selfish ambition which essays the blasphemous task of establishing an independence of God and usurpation of His throne springs also the selfish rivalry which makes the effort ineffectual. Evil has at least this much of good about it that its own nature renders it self-destructive.⁸⁵

No matter how we look at it, the "confusion of tongues" seems to have been the most perfect means by which God could achieve His purpose, not only of preventing man from attempting what could only be to his own hurt in the end – namely, complete unanimity in any undertaking – but also of ensuring that the earth would be sufficiently settled that man could in time have dominion over every part of it. Because man is sinful, complete unanimity can only ever be achieved for evil, and the only such unanimity that Scripture recognizes is that which the Lord will destroy at His coming.

In conclusion, I should like to re-state what I have said about the nature of the confusion of language at the building of the Tower of Babel which made this event so uniquely appropriate in the circumstances. Hamitic languages have shown two lines of historical development which are in conflict: on the one hand (as in China⁸⁶)

85. Temple, William, *The Church Looks Forward*, Macmillan, London, 1944, p.175.

86. Needham points out that whereas the ordinary Englishman of today can hardly go back with understanding further than three or four hundred years in his own literature, to the literary Chinese the works of millennia are open. See Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge University Press, 1954, vol. I, p.40. This applies, however, not to the spoken forms, but only to the literary ones.

remaining virtually unchanged for thousands of years; and on the other hand, changing almost beyond recognition within a few generations. How are we to reconcile these two tendencies?

The answer to both anomalies is found in the special nature of the Hamitic mind. The divergent tendency seems to find expression whenever Hamites move into what is, for them, a new environment or whenever an entirely new undertaking engages their energies. On the other hand, as long as they remain stationary in one place, their languages are marked by an extreme conservatism. Thus it comes about that when migrations separate them, they readily invent new forms and new vocabularies which thereafter persist and make any re-union unlikely if not impossible. Thus boundaries between such separated groups become highly persistent. The end result is that while Hamitic languages do not seem to change by *development*, as the Japhetic languages and Semitic languages do, change occurs suddenly and such changes become exceedingly permanent – and divisive. The purpose of God to send forth the Hamitic people with their very strong bent toward practical things, which made them so peculiarly well suited as the world's first pioneers, was thus beautifully served by a judgment which was, as many of God's judgments are, in one sense actually a blessing in disguise.



PART VI

CAIN'S WIFE:

AND THE PENALTY OF INCEST

Whenever the evidence from Archaeology is unmistakable, it tends always to support the most literal interpretation of Scripture. Archaeology has not supported allegorical interpretations of Scripture but it has encouraged the most literal interpretation that the text will allow.

Introduction

Almost as far back as I can remember, I have heard casual critics ask, somewhat cynically, "Where did Cain get his wife?" To the answer "He married his sister, of course," the usual reply was, "That's not likely. The Bible expressly forbids incest and modern research shows that incest is deleterious."

Curiously enough, this question of long standing has a significance quite beyond the mere satisfaction of curiosity. It can be used to illustrate a number of important aspects relating to the accuracy and inspiration of Scripture and the reasonableness of the Christian faith as a whole.

For one thing, the findings of modern research, as we shall show, do not merely bear out the undesirable effects of consanguineous marriage—a fact entirely in keeping with the prohibition in Leviticus 18:9 introduced many centuries later than Cain—but also bear out the fact that as we retreat into the past, the cause of this currently deleterious result is progressively reduced so that with perfect reason we may extrapolate backward until we reach a time when such consanguinity would almost certainly not be harmful at all.

The second point is that Scripture does not leave us in the dark on the matter, but provides us with data capable of statistical analysis which shows that —while the writers themselves may not have been aware of the significance of some of the things they set down— they were nevertheless guided by inspiration to set forth the data they did record in sufficient detail that modern researchers into human genetics might, had they had sufficient faith in the Word of God and perception of its potential as a source of information, have at least anticipated certain current findings in genetics by merely studying it. Thus, far from being outmoded and childishly inaccurate, the Bible proves to contain information which, when properly understood, is completely up-to-date and scientifically of predictive value.

The third thing which we may observe is that problems of this kind can often be solved by an appeal to Scripture itself, provided we accept the basic principle that the *whole* of Scripture is a dependable source of light upon itself. In other words, the Bible is one Book, self-consistent, and most illuminating when it is most completely and wholly believed. It is safe to accept the whole, but not safe to pick and choose what one will accept and what one will reject. If we trust the record *throughout*, we are on safe ground and ultimately will find our faith vindicated.

Chapter 1

Cain Marries a Sister

In primitive societies it is a general rule that brothers do not marry their sisters. The strictest of taboos are applied to this particular form of incest. Yet, from certain points of view, close inbreeding — especially within a family of prominence — has something to commend it when considered from the social and economic point of view: both material wealth and wealth in the form of rights or privileges are by this means kept closely within the family. An excellent example of this was to be found among the Incas, where the right to marry within the clan, and indeed to any who were first degree relatives, was reserved for the chiefs primarily to protect the interests of the royal house. According to Felipe Huaman Poma de Ayala in his *El Primer Nuevo Chronica Y Buen Gobierno*, published in Paris in 1926, the formal Inca statement was:

We, the Inca, order and decree that no one shall marry his sister or his mother, nor his first cousin, nor his aunt, nor his niece, nor his kinswoman, nor the godmother of his child, under penalty of being punished and of having his eyes pulled out [...] because only the Inca is allowed to be married to his carnal sister [...].¹

In "modern" times the maintenance of rights within a family by this means is best exemplified in the royal families of Europe, the right in this instance being the right of holding dominion rather than material wealth *per se* — since many royal families are impoverished. But as is well illustrated in the case of the Spanish royal family, close inbreeding has had a very deleterious effect. Charles Blitzer, writing of this family, spoke of Charles II in the following way:

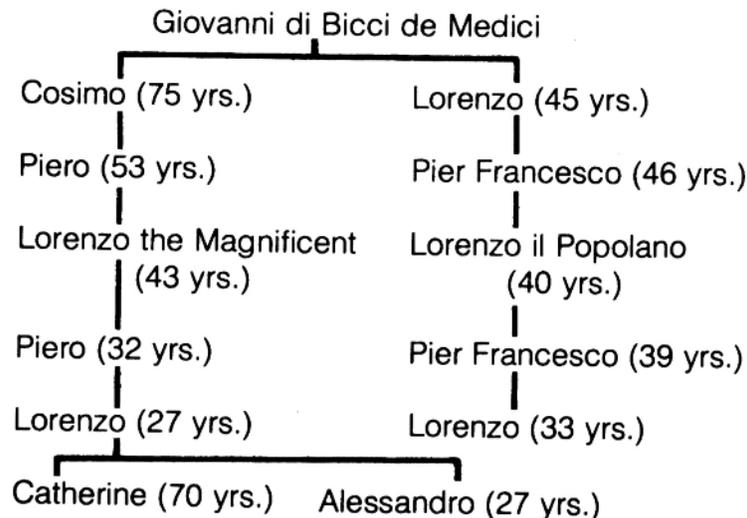
Charles II of Spain, the most grotesque monarch of the seventeenth century, had been a travesty of a king. Generations of royal intermarriage had culminated in Charles in a creature so defective in mind and body as to be scarcely even a man. He was born in 1661, the product of his father's old age, and his brief life consisted chiefly of a passage from prolonged infancy to premature senility.

1. Felipe de Ayala: quoted by Victor W. von Hagen, *Realm of the Incas*, Mentor Books, New York 1957, p.125.

He could not walk until he was ten, and was considered to be too feeble for the rigours of education. In Charles, the famous Hapsburg chin reached such massive proportions that he was unable to chew, and his tongue was so large that he was barely able to speak.

Lame, epileptic, bald at the age of 35, Charles suffered one further disability, politically more significant than all the rest: he was impotent.²

The Medici family – beginning with Giovanni di Bicci de Medici (1360-1429) and ending, in one line, with Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) who married Henry II of France—provides us with another instance where inbreeding clearly affected viability. The members of the family for successive generations traced through two lines lived shorter and shorter, with the notable exception of Catherine herself. These two lines are given below with their life spans indicated by years rather than dates, to simplify the figures.³



Other branches of the family seemed to have done very much better, a fact which suggests that marriages further afield led to the birth of quite normally viable offspring.

While it is customary to assume that close inbreeding has always a damaging effect, this is not strictly true—as is evident in the case of the Inca rulers, whose royal prerogative it was to marry sisters. Indeed there could conceivably be a connection between a ruling house and incestuous marriage, for genetic reasons. In antiquity and during periods when ruling houses were first establishing themselves, only such families as produced a line of particularly energetic and forceful individuals would be likely to come to power. It might very well be evidence of exceptional breeding (in the genetic sense) that a line could survive the potential hazards of inbreeding such as are involved in a series of brother-sister

2. Blitzer, Charles; "The Age of the Kings," in *Great Ages of Man*, Time Inc., New York, 1967, p.168.

3. Hale, John R, "The Renaissance," in *Great Ages of Man*, Time Inc., New York, 1965, p.168.

marriages. That a particular "house" could so inbreed successfully might quite rightly establish that house as an exceptional one from the genetic point of view. A Royal House may therefore have been any house which could successfully mate in this incestuous way and not witness any ill effects, while at the same time accumulating and consolidating its wealth and prestige.

At any rate, the Incas were a notable royal house and certainly practiced incest over a considerable number of generations without ill effect. As Murdock said:

The long line of Inca emperors reveals only one man of mediocre talents; all the rest displayed exceptional energy, resourcefulness, tolerance, and magnanimity in the conduct of affairs. Certainly no dynasty with a higher average order of capacity has graced a throne in the whole of human history.⁴

It is well known that the Ptolemies also married their sisters in order to maintain the integrity of material wealth and rights, and the experiment was not without success if Cleopatra is any indication. This notable woman represented the seventh generation of such brother-sister marriages. There is some evidence, I believe, that her young brother was showing signs of mental deficiency, a circumstance which, if it is true, might be an indication that the inbreeding process was just beginning to break down and the line was at the end of its genetic good fortune.

Other royal families, the Alii among the Hawaiians, for example, and the Singhalese must be counted among those who practiced this principle of brother-sister marriages.⁵ Against this background one may remember that among the common people such marriages were taboo. Primitive people are highly observant and quickly learn to avoid doing things which reduce the viability of their community as a whole. Experience taught these that the children of brother-sister matings were in one way or another apt to be less healthy than the children of those who married more distant relatives.

But it seems likely that these people also observed rather quickly that the wealth of a family was dissipated when the various children married at too great a distance in terms of blood relationship. Hence almost all such people laid down rules which, while forbidding marriage to a brother or a sister, also frowned on marriage to anyone who was only remotely related; in the latter case, the bride price paid by the groom or the dowry brought by the bride tended to pass out of the family's control. They therefore bracketed the range of relationship within which one might marry, avoiding the extremes. Indeed, in most cases the relationship considered ideal was the marriage of cousins, a practice almost universal among primitive people.

Now, the judgment made by the general public in such a case might very well have been firmly founded upon fact: namely, such a family was, in their genetic makeup, truly an outstanding one. This observation makes perfectly good sense when it is realized that through the centuries we have accumulated individually so much low-grade genetic material that when brothers and sisters marry, the same

4. Murdock, George P., *Our Primitive Contemporaries*, Macmillan, New York, 1951, p.417.

5. Alii of Hawaiians: according to Dr. Gordon Brown, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Toronto; Singhalese: Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Murray, London, 1891, vol. 1, p.50.

particular kind of low-grade material finds expression in the offspring in a reinforced way, in a way which will be examined a little more fully subsequently; the end result is that such children are apt to be much below average in many different ways. As we shall show, experience fully bears this out, and theory has reached such a point of refinement that geneticists can often predict quite accurately the degree of probability of detrimental traits that will appear in such children. Thus, when brothers do marry sisters without such deleterious effects, we have to all intents and purposes good evidence that quite by chance they have inherited a less damaged genetic constitution.

Although I do not have available all the information that would be required to substantiate what I wish to propose below, I think we may well have in recent times a good illustration of these general principles. I have in mind a very primitive people in South India known as the Toda,⁶ who practice polyandry — that is, several men (normally brothers) share one woman who becomes wife to them all. In writing of these people, George Murdock referred to them as a "race of superb men and hideous women." Elie Reclus, in his work on comparative anthropology titled *Primitive Folk*, also refers to the splendid character (within the context of their culture) of Toda males. And he added this remark, which is apropos:

Marriage between relatives has had no dire consequences in this tribe, which, though it has practiced the closest endogamy (marriage within the family) for centuries, possesses an athletic constitution and pleasing exterior, and is famed for the gentleness of its manners, and the peacefulness and tranquillity of its way of life.⁷

Although toward the end of the last century the Toda were apparently beginning to decline as a consequence of their contact with more highly civilized people and the breaking up of their own native customs, we have sufficient evidence from the studies of W. H. R. Rivers and others that close intermarriage had not proved detrimental to these people in the way that it habitually does among other peoples, whether primitive or highly civilized. Some fortuitous circumstance had therefore preserved among these people a genetic strain less damaged with the passage of time than most of us share. It is apparent, therefore, that not only so-called royal families but even whole tribes may closely intermarry with impunity upon certain occasions, while others cannot do so without disastrous results.

Let us therefore examine the factors which determine when brother-sister marriages will be harmful and when they will not: and in what form the degeneration is likely to show up. And let us consider why this effect results. It will be necessary to attempt to do this without becoming too involved in the jargon of the geneticists; thus some statements may be somewhat unsatisfactory from the point of view of the experts, an ever-present danger when oversimplification is required.

6. Murdock, George P. *Our Primitive Contemporaries*, Macmillan, New York, 1951, p.108.

7. Reclus, Elie, *Primitive Folk: Studies in Comparative Ethnology*, Scott, London, no date, p.200.

Inherited Potential

When a man and a woman are mated, each passes onto their children one half of the inherited potential they themselves have received from their parents. Present indications are that the characteristics which each will contribute to the child are carried by genes. For each character that a man or a woman may contribute to his offspring, there are usually two alternatives – or to put it another way, the potential is in duplicate and at the present moment chance appears to govern which of the two alternative contributions the individual will pass on. For example, a brown-eyed parent may pass on to his children that which will give them blue eyes instead of brown eyes like his own.

There are a very large number of alternatives, as for example the control of hair colour (fair or dark). Modern research into the nature of these controlling genes (and there are thousands of them in each individual) has shown that for one reason or another, these genes get damaged and appear in a condition which is called mutant. Normally a gene once mutated remains mutated, i.e., damaged, as it is passed through each successive generation. The inevitable conclusion of this finding is that the amount of material controlling inheritance becomes increasingly damaged in its nature with each successive generation. In other words, each generation may be expected to be less viable in some way than the preceding one, even though the damage may be so small as to be, to all intents and purposes, of little consequence.

Now, if a parent with a particular damaged gene complex passes onto a son and a daughter this damaged material, these offspring will both share damage at the same point (or locus) in their own gene complexes. Should these two marry, in their mating the particular segments of damaged material are bound to be brought together in a way that enormously reinforces their power to effect the growing embryo detrimentally. On the other hand, if such a son marries a girl from some other family who, although suffering genetic damage like the rest of us, has not inherited damage at the same place in the gene chain, the effect of bringing the two "damages" together is likely to be much less serious, for the areas of damage do not coincide. For this reason, marriages are safer from the physiological point of view when the two parties do not share the same kind of damage in their genetic make-up at the same locus.

At the beginning of this grossly over-simplified statement, I said that the amount of damaged material increases with each generation. It follows logically, therefore, that each previous generation has suffered less genetic damage. We can extrapolate backward in time until we begin to reach a point at which damage to the genetic material would be vastly less than it now is: logically, if we go back far enough, it would not exist at all. It is true that this may not be a straight line function, that the improvement in reverse may follow a curve which slows up in its approach to perfection and never quite reaches it. This is possible. There is no need to make this assumption, however. There is no reason at all why the first human beings may not have had a perfect constitution, in which case brother-sister marriages at the time would be absolutely harmless.

Before we return once more to this aspect of the paper, let us look briefly at some of the present evidence for the detrimental effect of close-relationship marriages. The underlying causes for the deleterious effects of incestuous matings are pretty well understood and have been variously expressed. For those who have some knowledge of and interest in the more basic principles of human genetics, the following miscellany of quotations will perhaps be of value and, taken as a whole, state the case clearly enough. For example, Bentley Glass, in a paper which gives some consideration to the possibility of "improving" the human stock by inbreeding in the way this is done with plants, made the following observation:

Within the past three centuries human populations have increased enormously in size, and an approach to panmixia has become characteristic of the major races of the world population. The result of this has been to render man a highly heterozygous animal. Beneath the facade of dominant traits expressed in the phenotype of each individual, there lies concealed a great number of unmanifested recessive genes, kept in a heterozygous condition within the population. From studies of mutation in man, mouse, and *Drosophila* it is apparent that the manifestation of the majority of these recessives would be deleterious in most, if not all, environments. In fact, one quarter to one third of them are lethal when homozygous.

New lethal and deleterious mutations arise in each generation at an average frequency that is estimated to be of the order of 1 in 100,000 per locus per gamete, or higher. The number of different genes (i.e., loci) in man may be taken as 10,000 or perhaps even 40,000. It follows that at least one gamete in ten will bear a new mutant, nearly always of a lethal or detrimental sort. The effect of these is not normally evident, since they are kept heterozygous. Any return of the human population to closer inbreeding may be expected to bring these recessive traits to the surface [...].

Human pure lines selected for (say) intelligence would most probably be weak in vigour, low in fertility, and beset by numerous hereditary defects.⁸

From a mathematical point of view, the situation may be put in this way: matings among first cousins (as in Darwin's case, for example, or his sister Caroline's case) result in the offspring having identical genes in a ratio of 1 to 7.⁹ Many of these genes will be recessive mutants and therefore detrimental to the possessor when inherited homozygously. Mating of uncle to niece, or nephew to aunt, raises this ratio to 1 to 3. Matings among brothers and sisters raises this ratio, often disastrously, to 1 to 1.

Willard F. Hollander, in an article significantly titled, "Lethal Heredity," commented on this situation as follows:

8. Glass, Bentley, "A Biologic View of Human History," *Scientific American*, Dec., 1951, p.367.

9. Darwin's family: see Donald W. Patten, *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Age*, Pacific Meridian Publishing Co., Seattle, 1966, p.244, footnote 16.

Sometimes a mutation is so radical that nothing can be done to prolong the animal's life to maturity. This is what is known as a lethal mutation. Often it kills the animal while it is still an embryo. Most lethal mutations are recessive, however, and are carried unsuspected by normal appearing animals [...].

The quickest way to expose lethal traits is by intense and continued inbreeding. In man such matings are generally illegal or taboo; the experience of the race indicates bad results [...] the outcome is generally detrimental. When inbreeding begins, the heredity seems to be breaking down. All sorts of defects and weaknesses appear. The average life span decreases. After a few generations the family often becomes extinct.¹⁰

We shall have occasion to return to this latter aspect of the problem, but we may just note here Hollander's conclusion: "The abundance of hidden lethals and hereditary defects exposed by inbreeding must be seen to be believed. It seems safe to say that very few individuals of an ordinary mixed population fail to harbor one or more. Whence came this multitude of skulking malefactors?"¹¹ To this last point we must likewise return subsequently, for the perceptive reader may already have noticed that animals are afflicted with these imperfections as well as man and they cannot therefore be attributed in a direct way (at least insofar as animals are concerned) to a fallen nature. The fall of man may be the originating cause, but this cause cannot be applied directly to animals unless animals are included among sinners – though Scripture has intimations even for this [...].¹²

Under normal circumstances inbreeding, therefore, leads to a decline in overall vigour for a number of generations. In many cases the detriment is so severe that the line becomes extinct. However with very careful management such inbred lines, if they can be preserved through *ten* or *twelve* generations, tend to settle down in a modified form, i.e., with a somewhat different character. This different character may turn out to be a desirable one from the breeder's point of view, having lost certain of its former strengths and accumulating many new weaknesses, but having also acquired some new quality which the breeder had particularly in mind. This is true of corn, for example.¹³ If the inbreeding can be arranged from widely separated lines, the hybrids generally turn out to be more vigorous. This sounds like a contradiction. What is actually meant is that – by inbreeding one line in one

10. Hollander., Willard F.; "Lethal Heredity," *Scientific American*, July, 1952, pp.59-60.

11. *Ibid.*, p.60.

12. The wording of Genesis 3:14 ("above all cattle [...]") may quite justifiably be taken to imply that other animals for some reason were involved in this judgment, a conclusion which would presuppose at least some moral responsibility on their part. It could be argued that in Jonah 3:8 it is assumed that the animals were partly involved in Nineveh's wickedness, the animals also being dressed in sackcloth. The lamb for the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was to be a lamb of the first year, which again might suggest something analogous to an "age of accountability." The ox that gored a man was to be stoned to death, not merely slaughtered. It is conceivable that this was merely to punish the owner by rendering the slaughtered animal unfit for food, since it would not be properly bled: and the hide itself would probably be marred. On the other hand, it might be argued that the ox itself was being punished. Such passages as these are certainly not unequivocal, but they provide interesting possibilities for further discussion.

13. Inbreeding of corn: Gordon W. Whaley, "The Gifts of Hybridity," *Scientific Monthly*, Jan., 1950, p.12.

geographic locality until it is highly degenerate and perhaps barely surviving, and at the same time inbreeding another line in another geographic location until it too is degenerate—if the two inbred degenerate lines are now crossed, the resulting breed may be more vigorous than it would have been if the originals had merely been crossed without first producing the degenerate types. It is not necessary to go into the causes of this somewhat odd but most useful discovery, it is necessary only to include it in this discussion because one commonly hears the statement made that inbreeding produces superior stocks. This is true of plants and of some animals, and it is conceivable that it might be true of human beings. But in the process, the lines degenerate seriously or may die out completely.

On the basis of this theoretical understanding of what is happening, it might be supposed—and the supposition is borne out by experience—that in a small population which is multiplying there may appear at first an extraordinary diversity of types. Not all mutations expressed homozygously are lethal, but they are all likely to be more or less effective in substantially modifying the bearer's physical type. As Lebzelter pointed out, a small group of people will share a basically homogeneous culture but show great physical diversity, whereas a larger community of people (because mutant genes are less likely to appear homozygously) will show greater uniformity of physical type but allow a larger measure of cultural variability.¹⁴ This may very well account for the fact that early man seems to have proliferated types (forerunners of races) in a remarkably short time while at the same time witnessing an amazing measure of cultural conformity. This heterogeneity of physical type appears even within single families, as for example, in the Upper Cave at Choukoutien.¹⁵ Early human history may have quickly witnessed the emergence of all the racial types which we now think we can recognize in the modern world. There is no need to postulate tremendous eons of time. I prefer the word *emergence*: most people would prefer the word *evolution*, and on the basis of the above reasoning they would say, as Franklin Shull said, that "if a population is very large [...] evolution must be slow under these circumstances,"¹⁶ and on the other hand if the population is too small and inbreeding too frequent, the population is likely to die out, being overwhelmed by its own defects. Several royal families have suffered virtual extinction by this very process, and all because they sought to preserve family lines intact.

In some parts of the world there are isolated communities in out-of-the-way villages, even in otherwise densely populated areas in which inbreeding has proceeded for many years. In such communities there is a high incidence of deaf-mutism. W. L. Ballinger reported in one case that forty-seven marriages between blood relatives produced seventy-two deaf-mutes.¹⁷ In the same connection E. B. Dench remarked, "Consanguinity of the parents is among the most common causes (of diseases in the ear), and the great frequency of deaf-mutism among the inhabitants of mountain districts is probably to be explained by the fact

14. Lebzelter Viktor, *Rassengeschichte de Menscherit*, Salzburg, 1932, p.27.

15. Choukoutien diversity : see Franz Weidenreich, *Apes, Giants, and Man*, University of Chicago Press 1948, p.86.

16. Shull, Franklin, *Evolution*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1936, p.146.

17. Ballinger, W. L., *Diseases of the Nose, Throat, and Ear*, Lea and Febiger, Philadelphia, 1943, 8th edition, p.823.

that intermarriages are much more common among such people."¹⁸ Similarly in Sajous' *Analytical Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, it is noted that "several statisticians have proved that the closer the degree of relationship between parents, the larger was the number of deaf-mutes born."¹⁹

In *The Lancet*, a discussion was reported on the risk taken by parents who decide to adopt a child born of an incestual relationship. It was observed that,

[...] medical practitioners are sometimes asked about the advisability of the adoption of a child born as the result of incest. Such children will have an increased risk of being affected by recessive conditions. In order to get an estimate of the extent of this risk, in 1958 I invited Children's Officers to let me know prospectively of pregnancies or of new births in which it was known that the pregnancy or birth was the result of incest between first degree relatives.

These children were followed prospectively and anonymously through the Children's Officers. The children were known to me by number and correspondence referred only to the child's number. Thirteen cases of incest (6 father-daughter and 7 brother-sister) were reported to me in 1958 and the latest information on them was in midyear 1965 when the children were all 4 to 6 years old. I summarize here the information on these 13 children.

Three children are dead: one at 15 months of cystic fibrosis of the pancreas, confirmed at necropsy; one at 21 months of progressive cerebral degeneration with blindness; and one at 7 years, 11 months of Fallot's Tetratology (this child had an IQ of 70). One child is severely sub-normal, with much-delayed milestones, and was considered non-testable at age 4 years, 9 months, when she had a vocabulary of only a few words. Four children are educatively subnormal; the known IQ of 3 are 59, 65, and 76. The remaining 5 children are normal.

The risk of parents sharing a recessive gene will be four times greater in cases of incest between first degree relatives than it would be between first cousins.²⁰

So much, then, for the evidence. Incest today is clearly detrimental in a very large percentage of cases, the risk of defective offspring being so high that every civilized country legislates against the marriage of brothers and sisters. Yet it is a risk rather than a certainty, an important fact which shows that under certain circumstances it might be quite safe — though the circumstances under which such a union could be predicted safe are not known at present. Current genetic theory does, however, indicate that the number of recessive and damaged genes increases rather than decreases with each generation. It might be thought that if there is a steady increase, the complement of genes in each individual would be by now all

18. Dench, E. B., *Diseases of the Ear*, Appleton, New York, 1921, p.694.

19. Sajous, Charles E., *Analytical Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, R.A. Davis Co., Philadelphia, 1898-1929, documentation incomplete.

20. "Risks to Offspring of Incest" in *The Lancet*, London, Feb. 25, 1967, p.436.

damaged in one way or another. Indeed, if the factors which lead to such damage (certain types of natural and artificial radiation and some poisons, and so forth) have always been with us – a fact which seems likely enough for a very large part of human history – and if current theory about the vast antiquity of man are really sound (which I don't believe they are), one would have to suppose that the damaging process must by now have almost completed its task. But evidently, even in comparatively recent times, this is not the case, for as we have already noted, both Hawaiian and Incan chiefs successfully married their sisters, and somewhat before that the Ptolemies did so.

It seems to me, therefore, that the evidence does not on the face of it bear out the concept of man as already having thousands of successive generations behind him. The biblical record actually shows only 77 generations from Adam to Christ,²¹ and if we add to this the two thousand years since, we have something like 100 to 120 generations covering the whole of human history. Since the accumulation of defective genes is meaningful only in terms of their effect on succeeding generations, it is not altogether unlikely that the first human beings (namely, Adam and Eve) were indeed perfect, and that the damage started to be done following the Fall and has accumulated ever since at what seems to be a reasonable rate during these 120 generations, until we reach the present situation in which there are still *some* possibilities of successful brother-sister matings, though the odds are against it. At the rate at which these mutations occur in each generation, according to current genetic theory, one would not expect to find any undamaged segments of the individual's inherited stock of genes if the human race had been multiplying for thousands upon thousands of generations. We would all be so badly damaged by now that no brother-sister marriage could possibly succeed any longer.

On the other hand, taking the biblical story as it stands, Adam's sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4), of whom Cain was one and his wife another, need not have been carriers of any more than a mere token of damaged genetic stock. Such a marriage need not have endangered the offspring.

There is, surprisingly enough, direct evidence in Scripture that this interpretation of the events is strictly true. We are first of all presented with a list of immediate descendants for some ten generations from Adam to Noah who enjoyed what must be described as magnificent viability. Consider for a moment what was happening during this period of time. Prior to the Flood, man may well have been shielded against at least one source of danger to the genes, namely, cosmic radiation, by the existence of some kind of barrier in the upper atmosphere. There are many who believe that this barrier disappeared at the time of the Flood and could indeed have been related to that event. The pre-Flood population (both men and animals, be it noted) may therefore have suffered little damage to their genes throughout each succeeding generation while these environmental conditions existed.

Added to this is the fact that the population was multiplying during this time so that, even if some damage was occurring, it would become less and less necessary for any man to marry a near relative, thereby avoiding any reinforcement

21. Custance, A. C., "Genealogies of the Bible," Part V in *Hidden Things of God's Revelation*, vol.7 of The Doorway Papers Series.

of such gene damage. For this reason, there is little or no evidence that man, physiologically considered, was becoming an inferior creature – at least, insofar as his inherited vigour was concerned; and the same may well have applied to the animal world.

But then came the Flood, which reduced the world's population to eight souls, all of whom had now accumulated some damaged genes and were also first-degree relatives, i.e., Noah and his three sons. The sons and daughters of the next generation would therefore be also marrying near relatives, and one could only expect as a consequence that evidence of decreased viability would begin to show up, while the potential hazard from cosmic radiation would greatly increase. This could be the answer to Hollander's final query: inbreeding of a greatly reduced population, and exposure to cosmic radiation at a new level – both as a consequence of the Flood. This is, of course, precisely what did happen and precisely at a rate commensurate with the discovery of modern genetics resulting from experimental inbreeding. Within ten generations (compare Glass's figures) the life span of post-Flood individuals, insofar as they are represented by those whose ages are given in the Bible, had rapidly declined until it was only about one eighth of the pre-Flood period, thereafter slowly leveling off first to 120 and later to three score and ten.²²

All this makes perfectly good sense and accords very satisfyingly with modern findings, provided that one accepts the whole biblical record just as it stands.

It has been proposed by some who have due regard to the Word of God that Cain married the offspring of some other human creatures who were not descendants of Adam.²³ They argue this on the ground that Cain would not have expressed any fear of being killed by people who might find him unless there really were people outside his immediate family in Adam. But this assumption need not be made at all, because Cain would not necessarily have knowledge of whether there were or were not other people in the world; even if he had never seen any, he might very well suppose that there were, the supposition being all that was needed to make him afraid. He was simply a man living in fear of suffering at someone else's hand what he had caused his brother to suffer. He had no way of knowing whether there were or were not other people in the world: his conscience served to people it even if no other people had existed.

At the same time, very serious theological problems would arise if Cain had married outside the family of Adam, since his children and his descendants would no longer be strictly "in Adam." This difficulty has been met by some writers by proposing that the Flood destroyed all except those who belonged to Adam's family. It is possible, of course, that this is so, but this vast population must still presumably come to the judgment with all those whom the Flood destroyed, and how then will they be judged? It does not appear to me that the Bible allows for such a contingency. As I see it, the redemption that is in Christ was as applicable to Adam and Cain and all the rest of the patriarchs as it is to ourselves. Would we not then be faced with a kind of half-applicability to Cain's children, and a quarter-applicability to his grandchildren, and so on as the line was diluted – until

22. On this see Custance, A. C., "Longevity in Antiquity and Its Bearing on Chronology," Part I in *The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation*, vol.5 of The Doorway Papers Series.

23. See the next chapter, "Was Cain's Wife of the Line of Adam?"

there is no applicability at all? The very statement of the situation itself points up the theological problem that such a circumstance would bring about.

To some extent the above interpretation of the identity of Cain's wife has been held as an accommodation to anthropological theory which postulates sub-humans and near-humans at a period in time far antedating the "traditional" date for the creation of Adam. I do not know the answer to the present conflict between secular and biblical anthropology, although I am sure we shall see the answer in due time. However, I believe that the Bible itself has gone out of its way to try to make it clear that Adam really was the only *man* at the time of his creation and Eve the only woman at the time of her formation. Genesis 2:5 tells us that there was not a man to till the ground. Genesis 2:18 tells us that Adam was quite alone and that this was not good for him. Then in Genesis 2:20 we are told that although God brought creatures to Adam who might have been a potential mate for him, there was not found one that was suitable. Finally, as though the point had still not been made quite clear, we are told in Genesis 3:20 that Eve *became* (so the Hebrew) the mother of *all* living.

Almost any one of these statements by itself might be thought by some people sufficient to settle the issue. But surely their cumulative effect is about as conclusive as to the intent of Scripture as any such series of statements could possibly be. I believe, therefore, that the only position one can reasonably take in the matter of Cain's wife is that she was one of Adam and Eve's daughters, i.e., a sister of his, for we are told that Adam and Eve had daughters as well as sons.²⁴ From there on, everything makes good sense if one accepts the record as it stands.

One further point only remains to be underscored. This is the perfectly proper absence (if all that we have said thus far is true) of the slightest indication that Cain was contravening any existing prohibition against a brother-sister marriage. His action in destroying his brother is condemned in no uncertain terms, but there is no reference whatever to the existence of any prohibition against incest as appears several thousands of years later in the Book of Leviticus. This not only suggests that the prohibition did not exist, not at that time being required, but that the writer who recorded the events of Cain's life lived at a time when brother-sister marriages were still not viewed as sinful at all.

This absence of any condemnatory note, in a record which elsewhere judges its "heroes" in no uncertain terms when they contravene the laws of God, can only be reasonably accounted for on the grounds that this record as we have it is a contemporary or near-contemporary one and not something concocted by a self-righteous priestly community living some thousands of years after the event. Had they been members of such a hierarchy and had they been knowledgeable enough to realize that the prohibition was not necessary in Cain's time, one might

24. One further scriptural reference may be mentioned. In Acts 17:26 we are told that God derived all nations that dwell on the face of the earth "from *one*." In the usual Authorized version rendering the verse reads, "of one blood," but the best manuscripts do not have the word *blood*. This could therefore be taken to mean in the most literal sense that all nations have had their ultimate origins, not merely in Adam and Eve, but even more specifically — since Eve was taken out of Adam — in one man, Adam. This would leave even less room for any multiple-origins theory. I was interested to find this view reflected in the Jesuit commentator Henricus-Rencken's book, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1964, p.225.

reasonably expect they would have added in parenthesis at the appropriate place in the record some little note to the effect that "at that time there were no laws against incest." As the record stands, one gets the feeling that the writer was totally unaware of any potential hazard in brother-sister marriage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems to me that the circumstances surrounding the identity of Cain's wife have a significance in the light of Christian faith for the following reasons. First, we know from modern genetics why incestuous relations are most likely to be damaging to the offspring. But we also know that by chance such relations may *not* be damaging, a fact which demonstrates clearly that under certain circumstances brother-sister marriage might be not merely acceptable but greatly to be preferred from certain points of view.

Second, our present understanding of the processes of mutation, whereby the gene make-up of two proposed marriage partners has become damaged, also allows us to extrapolate backward into the past and say, with some measure of assurance, that the further back we go, the less likely are the offspring to suffer the consequences of inbreeding.

Third, the Bible supplies us with a piece of historic information – namely, the account of the Flood and how the world's population was reduced to eight souls – which provides a key to the sudden loss of vitality in terms of longevity which Scripture states immediately followed the re-peopling of the world.

Fourth, the events recorded in the first few chapters of Genesis indicate that inbreeding was either comparatively harmless or was carried out with decreasing frequency as the centuries rolled by from Adam to Noah. In the case of Cain and his sister, both of whom were siblings in Adam and Eve's family, the amount of genetic damage carried in the genes must have been very small indeed. At least this is true if we believe, as I do, that Adam and Eve themselves were created perfect at first, with no damaged genes.

In short, the circumstances are all of a piece. If we allow the record to speak for itself, and if on the basis of this record we draw these quite reasonable conclusions, there is a ring of truth which accords perfectly with the assured findings of modern human genetics; and this is illuminatingly illustrated from the subsequent history of, not only single families, but whole tribes of both civilized and primitive peoples, in both modern and more distant times.



Chapter 2

Was Cain's Wife of the Line of Adam?

At the time this is written, the official position of anthropology is that man is half a million or more years old. The actual figure is of no consequence—it is its order of magnitude that counts. The biblical chronology has been worked out by evangelical scholars like John Urquhart, Martin Anstey, Philip Mauro, F. A. Jones, and of course Bishop Ussher, who have concluded that the period which has elapsed since the creation of Adam is between 6,000 and 10,000 years. The conflict here between secular science and the Bible seems irreconcilable; one assumes that the data of one or the other are being mistakenly interpreted or that there were other human beings besides Adam who not only far antedated him but also probably survived to be his contemporaries.

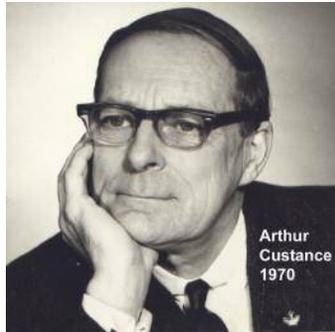
One of the earliest presentations of the latter alternative is to be found, curiously enough, in a book which was published before any fossil remains had been unearthed and actually labeled as pre-Adamite man. This book was published originally in 1862 and went through at least five editions. It was written by a Mrs. George J. C. Duncan and is titled *Pre-Adamite Man: Or the Story of Our Old Planet and Its Inhabitants Told by Scripture and Science*. The publisher was Nisbet and Co., London. Mrs. Duncan argued first that the evidence that this earth is very old was unquestionable, and she therefore adopted the view that the days of Genesis were ages. From this she concluded that the age in which Adam appeared may have seen many other creatures not unlike himself but not of his line; it was such creatures as these whom Cain feared would murder him and from among whom he took his wife. She also believed that they were sinful but "not after the similitude of Adam" (Romans 5:14). Some of these "people" may have been brought to Adam as potential mates but he, in his perfect state, did not accept any of them as suitable. Although such non-Adamic races may have multiplied considerably, they were presumably overwhelmed by the Flood. Nevertheless, some of their "blood" must be assumed to remain with us to this day, conveyed over the Flood in the family of Noah. Even in the time of Cain this extra-Adamite population may have been large enough that Cain would think to build a city as a defense against suspected attack. Such in very broad outline was Mrs. Duncan's thesis, and for a while it appears from newspaper reviews of the time to have been much discussed. Yet in the long run, very few Bible students took it up seriously—partly because it created some critical problems for the theology of redemption.

In 1871 a book was published anonymously, entitled *Primeval Man Unveiled: Or The Anthropology of the Bible*. The publisher was Hamilton, Adams of London, and the author was probably James Gall. In this volume the author — who had not at the time of writing it seen Mrs. Duncan's volume, though he acknowledges having seen it while his own work was on press — took the view that Satan was lord of a created order of beings who were angels in spirit but enjoyed also the possession of man-like physical bodies. When these beings were condemned and Satan robbed of his privileged position as lord of creation, these beings who acknowledged Satan's lordship were as it were, disembodied and reduced to that state which brings them to our notice in the New Testament as demons. This author therefore held that we might expect to find human-like creatures ante-dating the appearance of Adam. These again intruded unnaturally into the physical order through the agency of some of Adam's descendants especially at the time of the Flood.

Both these volumes are of interest; both were written by people who had great reverence for the Word of God and sought to bring to bear upon it usefully what they considered relevant findings of geologists and anthropologists. Of the two, it appears to me that James Gall created fewer theological problems. But at present I am persuaded that the attribution to fossil remains of (a) human status and (b) tremendous antiquity is not yet completely justified. Neither the methods of establishing genetic relationships of fossil remains nor the methods of dating these remains yet allow of absolute certainty. Until this certainty is achieved, it is too soon to decide the issue one way or the other; it is better to hold fast to a faith in the Word of God which has often been challenged in similar ways in the past only to be completely vindicated when sufficient evidence became available, as has happened so frequently from Archaeology. It is true that we may still be troubled with problems of *interpretation* of the Word of God. But if the past teaches us anything, it is surely this that whenever the evidence from Archaeology is unmistakable, it tends always to support the most literal interpretation of Scripture that can be allowed in the light of other Scripture. Archaeology has not supported allegorical interpretations of Scripture, but it has encouraged the most literal interpretation that the text will allow. At the present moment there is little agreement among anthropologists as a whole. They are still searching for a time-frame within which to arrange their data, a time-frame that is sufficiently dependable to compel assent among authorities of all schools. At present the diversity of opinion is considerable.

I am persuaded that the student of the Bible will do well to hold his ground in the meantime.





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