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Messianic Mountaintops

by

MARTIN NAUMANN

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IN NOMINE JESU

"In Jesus' Name." These soft, quiet, submissive words, intoned at the beginning of every chapel address by Martin Naumann, always prepared the way for the richly substantive, solidly Scriptural, profoundly theological, yet simple messages that followed. He was so completely at home in God's Holy Scriptures and worked with such childlike, yet mature and manly, trust in what God was saying through the prophetic and apostolic Word that students and faculty alike sensed immediately the authority with which he spoke. Like many a great preacher and teacher his style was his own; but the message carried all the weight of Isaiah, Paul, Jeremiah, Moses, John, for it was their message which he delivered so surely. To open up the Scriptures and explain how "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms" concerning his Savior, this was his great art. Those who sat at his feet, in lecture room or chapel, remember how their hearts did burn within them because of his great, God-given ability to expound God's Word. He spoke and lectured as one who not only lived out of Scripture's content but who lived closely with his God day by day.

Messianic Mountaintops is a fitting bequest to all who knew and loved him. When he died so suddenly on Maundy Thursday, 1972, it seemed quite appropriate that he should be preparing his Good Friday sermon for Trinity congregation, Springfield, on the familiar words of Jesus from the cross, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Born in Wisconsin (1901), reared by missionary parents in India, educated at Milwaukee (Concordia College) and St. Louis (Concordia Seminary), pastor in Germany (Saxony and Bremen) and in Illinois (Altamont), Dr. Martin J. Naumann (affectionately known as "Martin of tours" by his colleagues because of his role in planning, leading, and promoting his beloved Bible-land seminar extension courses) enriched the life and pastoral preparation of many students at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, from 1948 until his timely death (God's time is always right was one lesson everyone learned from Brother Naumann) during Holy Week, 1972. He was a truly cosmopolitan sort of man with countless friends on every continent and, not least, in heaven. The familiar *requiescat in pace* does not seem adequate in the case of a man for whom *theologia crucis* was the warp and woof of life, home, classroom, pulpit. Then, as now, here was a man IN PACE CHRISTI!

Eugene F. Klug

INTRODUCTION

"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Jesus Christ, who spoke these words, tells us what we are to do and why. We are asked to search the Scriptures. The reason? There is eternal life in them, says Jesus. How so? They point to Jesus as the cause of eternal life.

Christ's words are as clear as anything can be. Nevertheless, every man is by nature so completely blind that the Scriptures are utter nonsense to him. Yet, he desires with all his heart a blessed immortality. Everlasting life was the wish of the men the Savior addressed with this directive, and the Scriptures were known to them as giving the key to an everlasting life. However, when the Lord put Himself into the center of the Bible, the blindness of his enemies confronting Him could not and would not see Him there.

A similar blindness to Jesus as the center of the Holy Scriptures plagues some students and admirers of the Bible. Christians will scarcely deny or doubt that the whole Scripture, "even" the Old Testament, speaks of Christ. However they think of finding Christ in the Old Testament in only certain small sections or a few Messianic oracles. Some people have at times acted, in searching the Scriptures, like a prospector searching the sands of a river. He sifts and washes the sand and hopes to find a gleam of precious gold, perhaps even a nugget. They cherish the Bible as indeed a wonderful gift, but think that they must pick the Messianicity out of it as a child picks raisins out of a cake.

The title *Messianic Mountaintops* is intended to serve as a corrective to the habit of interpreting only certain passages or sections of the Old Testament as Messianic. Even though we select the outstanding prophecies of the Old Testament, we want it distinctly understood that these are not the nuggets or raisins, but are to the whole of the Old Testament as are the peaks of mountains to the whole massive range.

Traveling in a mountainous region, the tourist might want to know what the peak that towers majestically above him is called. Although in some parts of the world the people living there might not even have names for their mountains, you will find that in the Alps the people have a special name for every peak and will point it out to you. Among these hundreds of peaks the *Montblanc*, the *Zugspitze*, the *Jungfrau* are well known. However if you should single out a certain peak and say, "That is the *Zugspitze*, and what surrounds it is nameless," you would be wrong, for the whole immense surrounding mass and solid block of granite is an integral part of the *Zugspitze*. Self-evident as this is in regard to the concept of mountains yet the Old Testament, the massive and immutable rock of God's Word is by some considered hardly anything more than the history of a people or at most a witness to some acts of God. The Messianicity of the Old Testament is regarded as only a small part or feature of the literature of the Jews.

However, no serious student of Scripture, who takes at full value Christ's word to the people of His time can escape the conviction that all of the Scriptures is indeed Messianic in character. To be sure, he may come upon passages that must be understood as statements about Jesus Christ and His kingdom. He admires and is moved by the pay dirt of prophecy. Nevertheless he must not consider them only isolated golden nuggets, few in number, embedded in the sands of Israel's history. They must not be separated from the environment of which they are an inseparable part. He must not break them loose but keep them attached to the firm base and integrated in the Messianic Bible of which they are the salient features. Men like Wilhelm Vischer in his *Witness to Christ in the Old Testament* helped to revive an interest in the Old Testament that was in danger of being lost in a flood of speculations and higher criticism. The anti-Old Testament bias of National-Socialist anti-Semitism had to serve to arouse Christians to a defense of the whole Bible. The destructive work of some of the criticisms leveled at the Old Testament was evident even in the writings and speeches of the deceivers of the German people. "The Great Deception" of Franz Delitzsch was echoed and amplified by the "Loud Speakers" of a tragic era of the very people to whom God through Luther had given the Bible in their own language. His sermons should set a pattern for the evaluation of the Old Testament. "There is no word of Scripture that does not point to Christ!" is his concept of the Messianicity of the Holy Scriptures. Luther, forced into the Scriptures as a *doctor Biblicus*, found Christ in them, not occasionally, but everywhere. Vischer has coined a phrase which is virtually a paraphrase of the saying attributed to St. Augustine: "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old lies open in the New." Vischer says: "The Old Testament tells us *what* the Messiah is; the New tells us *who* the Messiah is."

The interpreter of the Bible practices the universally accepted procedures necessary to get at the intended meaning of anything spoken or written or pictured, whatever it may be. However, we must note one crucial difference: the Bible as the Word of God demands that he who interprets it believes it to have absolute authority. Ever so many, however, are unwilling to accept the self-testimony of a person, as does God, as true because he asserts that it is. What could be called a vicious circle is, however, in the case of the Bible the hermeneutic circle into which the believer has been placed and out of which he cannot go without being unfaithful to the Scriptures. This is not, as has been said in criticism, a belief in the Bible instead of in Christ. This view of the Bible is taught to the believer by the One in whom he believes, Christ. In order to show the relation of Scripture to Christ we should like to propose a simple demonstration.

The demonstration involves the acceptance of miracles. We must recognize that the great gap in the theories and practice of science is the miracle. Modern science, by its very nature and methodology, cannot find room for miracles. It therefore says neither no nor yes to them. It relegates them therefore to the realm of faith. Unfortunately there are those theologians who regard the findings and nonfindings of modern science as valid criteria for interpreting the Scriptures and

therefore reject miracles as factual and classify them with the world-wide miracle stories old and new. It is evident that in this view everything of a supernatural character from Genesis to Revelation has religious and moral value only for a possible truth to be searched out in the same way as is done with myths, fables, and other non-factual literary genres.

The central miracle is that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"—God and Man in the person of Jesus Christ. His symbol is the cross. All systematically articulated statements on this miracle cannot make it more "reasonable" for man. The incarnation is that miracle with which all of Scripture is concerned and through which all the threads run from Genesis to Revelation. This wonder of wonders, this God-Man Christ, is confessed by those who believe in Him as their God and Lord. In saying this, we are enunciating another miracle: the creation of faith—the miracle that the acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior is not possible for anyone by means of his own natural reason or intuition or knowledge. The message of Christ brings men to spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit. As little as Lazarus, dead and decaying, could raise himself from death, so little and even less is it in the power of natural man to come to Christ and believe in Him. Faith is a miracle enacted in the heart; faith is a miracle that we can see, feel, confess, admire in our own hearts. Faith in Jesus Christ is the portable miracle. A man should take time out and withdraw into his own privacy for meditation, prayer, and contemplation to consider this gem, the miracle in his own heart.

This leads to another question: Where do I go to come to know this Christ? How does the truth of the Cross come to me? On what authoritative fact do I stake my hope of life eternal? Another miracle. This miracle, no less a miracle than the two miracles spoken of above, is the miracle of inspiration. It is God's gracious will and way that He had holy men record the message of His will and plan of salvation in writings which today are called the Holy Scriptures, or the Bible. God's creation of the Bible is comparable to the miracle of God's Son becoming man. God's will is invested in human language, and via this medium His will is disclosed to human beings. This language, that is, the very words, is therefore perforce a divine Word with divine authority. It is the Word of God in the fullest sense—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three primary authors. That is why the Scriptures name one or the other in various passages, with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and Savior of the world, also acting and in the center as the one who vicariously suffered and died and rose again and ascended on high and is due to appear on Judgment Day as the God-Man.

By faith in Christ we are made God's obedient children and are led into the circle of His infallible Word. "Search the Scriptures, they testify of me," is Christ's directive. Heeding this advice, we, too, from the vantage point of the New Testament look back into the Old. Doing this, we shall know Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah.

The New Testament writers are our guides and teachers for understanding the prophecies of old. Both Scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments, are given by the one and only author, God, and the Scriptures are therefore necessarily self-interpreting, self-illuminating, and self-testifying.

Every new attempt at getting at the meaning of Scripture by isolating it into fragments which are often supposed to be without relation to each other is a mistake. The whole canon is the context for every part of it. A student who ignores the whole of the Scriptures when he deals with a specific part of them is myopic, much like the six blind men of Hindustan feeling the elephant—all partly right, all entirely wrong.

If we want to know the meaning of a statement by Isaiah concerning God's plan of salvation we will be well served to remember how Christ and the apostles showed that it was fulfilled in the New Testament. It is not a question of how much or how detailed a knowledge the men of the Old Testament had concerning the coming of the Messiah. They probably were better informed than we see at first glance, for there is much evidence that they knew God and His will intimately. Their knowledge grew with the unfolding plan of God, and it was not an evolution of theology but an unfolding of God's plan that they saw. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

A ship approaching a city bears passengers who at first are unable to distinguish details of the city, but the same passengers, having visited and seen the city, will, when leaving it again, see it as it appeared to them on their approach but will now know that what looked to them like a high mountain is in reality a certain building. So the prophets of old saw the fullness of time afar and described what they saw, sometimes in outline, sometimes in more detail, but when the fullness of time was come, the witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Christ could point to places and events of Christ's life as having been foreseen by the men of the Old Testament. We, having the records of the New Testament pointing at the Old, cannot say that we do not know what the men of the Old were talking about. They were telling what God had showed them and we today find their testimony gloriously Christological and marvelously Messianic.

I. ADAM

Genesis 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.

This Genesis statement has rightly been called "the first Gospel," "the Protevangel." But it was not, as has been said, sometimes with tenderness, the first little star in the pitch-black darkness of the night of sin and death that had come on man. No, not a small light, although a tiny light will be seen the clearer, the darker the night. Not just a glimmer, but rather the full burst of the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings. The promise of God did not grow from a germ of a seed to a mighty tree. The promise of God and the grace of God was never a "more or less" matter. It is as great as God's full majesty; indeed it is God's glory. *Soli Deo Gloria* is sung not only of the majesty Isaiah sees in the temple but always includes also the absolution he receives in the same temple from the same vision. This is God in the fullness of His glory: "God who justifies the ungodly."

Just so, the ungodly pair of sinners stood convinced and convicted by God and by their own knowledge of sin with the certainty that they must die, just as Isaiah knew that he was "undone"; they knew it in spite of the promise of Satan: "Ye shall not surely die." Wildly the human heart panics, grasps at anything, at lies (since it now was kin to the Father of Lies), at half-truths (according to the example of the Perverter), willing to sacrifice anything to ward off the inevitable, willing to sacrifice the mate, willing to make even God the scapegoat in the excuse, "The women thou gavest me . . ." Man here justifies the awful accusation Satan makes when God speaks of the faithful Job: "All that a man has he will give for his life . . ." Adam and Eve, who put themselves above God, know, of course, that they have failed. Their flight from God began when they made themselves aprons and when they hid themselves from God among the trees of the garden; their flight from God continues in the twisting and winding lies in imitation of the motion of the serpent. All to no avail. God will not argue with the sinner. The sinner here has fear of God, but the nature of man is now such that he cannot trust God. Had Adam trusted God, he would have cast himself at the feet of his Creator. So black and dismal is the day, just as before God said, "Let there be light," only that over this darkness of sin hovers the Evil Spirit and not the Spirit of God that hovered over the primeval dark deep.

Again God said: "Let there be light!" And there was light. No, not some little star, not some large star, not a moon to govern the night of sin, but the sun of grace and mercy.

As God turns to the serpent and speaks to it in the audience of them who had heard the serpent have its say, His voice crackles with divine wrath, but almost as if Eve's last word had given God the

answer. Eve had said: "The serpent beguiled me and I ate." This was no excuse but an explanation. There is truth in this but not the truth that justified calling God a liar. Yet God takes up that part of the word and curses the Liar from the Beginning: "Because thou has done this, because thou hast lied, tempted, beguiled, tricked . . . , therefore . . ." We need not pity that beautiful creature of God, the serpent, whom God had created and who was included in the "Very Good" of the last day. At least we need not pity this creature any more than all the creation which was now made subject to vanity because of man's sin. The snake, or whatever type of animal it might have been (sometimes this one is called a dragon or something like it), this serpent or any like it feels no pain at having to crawl on its belly, nor does it feel degraded before all other animals. Who, then, or what is meant? Against whom is the curse directed?

At this point we should look at an important characteristic of the Holy Scriptures. The third chapter of Genesis may be a good illustration of the fact that the Biblical writers usually do not describe things or circumstances or even actions in detail, but present us with what is more important and more revealing, namely, the *words* spoken. The act of eating the forbidden fruit is actually described simply with the words "he ate" or "she ate," just as in the murder of Abel a single word describes the act. But what leads up to an act, the word and the thought—that is the real unfolding of drama. The indolent mind of modern playgoers or television viewers wants action more than anything else, but the serious dramatist knows that the real action is in the dialogue, the word. The reason why a good drama, especially the classical one, is not appreciated by some is that it does not depend on color of scenery and motion or actions but on the swift passage of thoughts that speed and meet, that collide or fuse, that set up the conflict that fascinates. Thus, we find here no answers to the questions, What does the serpent look like? What is the color of its skin? What is its size? What did the Tree of Knowledge look like? What was its fruit? Apple? Fig? No answer. Because the action would be no more dramatic if we knew these things. In fact, they would, like stage scenery that is too gaudy, detract from a drama. Similarly, the Holy Spirit lets us hear the words. Listen! Listen to the dialog that leads to the act! Listen to the words. Listen to what the serpent says, and you will know why the drama is so vital and intense. The words are not animal words. They are the words of the Archliar, the words of the Fallen, the words of the Enemy of God and man. The conversation tells all, and therefore we too know who is meant when God addresses the serpent.

Believing Bible interpreters have always recognized Satan. Although God is at times presented as speaking to Satan, as in the prologue to Job or in the temptation of the Son of God, yet here God does not do him who hid in a serpent the honor to address him directly, but speaks to him through the serpent. Satan is the spirit who comes to mind when we see a serpent slithering through the grass. Satan is that despicable poisonous thing that feeds on all kinds of dirt and filth. Wanting to be like God, this spirit must crawl on its

belly and lick dust eternally. The prophet Isaiah, when he speaks of the New Kingdom and peace for all creatures, says: "And dust shall be the serpent's meat." This "Serpent" knows no better future. This Dark Existence does not use the name of the covenant God. It is the Lord God, Yahweh Elohim, who reveals His divine gambit against Satan.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman." God acts to break up the unholy alliance of Eve and Satan. After all, the bond of sin is bondage even though Satan had pretended he was showing Eve the way to freedom. Satan came as "an angel of light" promising the *sicut eritis Deus* (ye shall be like God), that is, "with my help you can shake off dependence and the laws of God. Join me in my 'happy' estate; make a covenant with me." So Eve, and Adam with her, by one act forged the chains of darkness and by such sin lost forever the power to break away from the Lord of Darkness. What a triumph of hell, what a jubilation and infernal laughter there must have been. In the play "J.B." by MacLeish, the actor taking the part of Nickles (Satan) in one scene breaks out into a fiendish laughter that chills the bones. The hour of darkness was here and now, as it was in the darkness of Golgotha. And it is at that point and in that situation that God says: "I will not tolerate this condition, I am putting, I am establishing the opposite and a counter-covenant to the one just made. I am going to break it up." This declaration is enough. God gives His word and promise.

We are not unaware of the higher-critical method (it has been around for a long time) that fails to see the greatness of the promise. We know of the attempts to de-realize the truth of this Word of God. Promise of everlasting enmity between mankind and serpents. Promise of a superiority over the poisonous fangs of snakes. Is that the great moment that is to light up the dark day of the Fall? Ascribed to an author long after Moses, visualizing some unknown sage of the Hebrews that felt by such a story he might warn his fellow Jews against joining the snake worship of their time? Can you believe it?

How could Eve stand up against Satan? Read on: "And between thy seed and her Seed"—not only Eve, but also one of her children is to participate in this war on Satan—but can this Seed win if Eve herself has fallen? Read on again: "He, the Seed, shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." According to God's plan, the Seed of the Woman was to encounter Satan, the Serpent, and crush his head, destroy Satan's works and deliver mankind, not in some easy, offhand act or bloodless battle. The Serpent's power is so terribly daring as even to attack the Seed, the Son. Again it is pure fantasy to explain that herein is described man's war against vermin. We may ask, Did man ever attempt to fight serpents, poisonous adders, by stepping in bare heels on their heads? If that were all the hope that is contained in this word of advice, "when you see a snake, step on it," the writer must be a sad prophet that puts this into the framework of Genesis three . . . Besides, where is the evidence of a war or enmity of serpents against man?

In contrast we have Scripture to interpret Scripture. No span of time or space can remove the promise from the fulfillment. No page or pages of books of Scripture draw a line or raise a barrier between Genesis and Revelation. Here there is no doubt left either as to who the Serpent is and who conquered him. The Holy Spirit, the author of all of the Word of God, said nothing in Revelation or any book or any part of Scripture that in any way differs from any other. Therefore we know the Eden promise to be the great and glorious light that shone in the darkness of the Eden lost to man to give man hope. Not just a glimmer of hope, but the full promise of God that made life beyond Eden tolerable in spite of painful childbirth, agony of labor and disappointment, thorn and thistles and bread salted with the sweat of man's brow. *Tolerable* is the right word. Man can now bear it, this life on earth cursed for his sin, for man knows God did not curse him but blessed him with the promise of a redemption by the One who certainly possesses a power greater than that of any of God's creatures and yet be Eve's son.

Serious-minded souls ask: How do we know that Adam and Eve understood? The answer is right in the same chapter. When God had said with solemn emphasis that man was to return to dust from which he was taken, what seems to be Adam's reaction to this? One that he could only have had by receiving the promise of victory over Satan in faith and trust in the Word of God. What does the next verse tell us? This is probably, next to the merciful words of God, the most tender scene in the chapter. Adam turns to Eve and says: (we beg pardon if this is too human a paraphrase) "Dear heart, we have been against each other. You have been the Devil's handmaid instead of my helpmate and I have said ugly words about you to God. But, through God, this day is a day of salvation and life, and in order not to forget it, I am going to give you a new name. I'm not calling you 'woman' anymore. You are now to have the name 'Life,' for through you God has promised life and salvation in your Seed."

To anyone who thinks this interpretation farfetched, we can point to the changes of names solemnly decreed at other points in the story of salvation. Abram becomes Abraham; Jacob becomes Israel; LoAmi becomes Ami; and *death* becomes *life* . . . Nor is it exegetically permissible simply to shrug off the literal translation of Eve's words, five verses later. Chapter divisions are not fences but are often misused as such. There is no great gap between what Adam said to Eve and what Eve said when her firstborn son came into the world. The literal translation is still the best one: "I have the man Yahweh" . . . Poor Eve? She is so mistaken in the identity, but so right in her faith that one of her children was to be the Savior. Happy Eve!

Adam and Eve, we see, had much more than a dim star of hope guiding them through life till they finally arrived back in Eden, in the eternal Eden described in Revelation in so many terms borrowed from Genesis. Adam and Eve had the Word, a light unto their feet, the daystar from on high. No dim theology theirs, to grow only gradually into a knowledge of a divinity. No constantly changing or ever evolving religious concepts for them. They had revelation. It is

not for us to ask how much more God told them, how many hours God spent with them during the days following the expulsion, what all was implied in the making of garments for their nakedness from the skins of animals that had to shed their blood for them. If we were of a mind to speculate, we would imagine that Adam and Eve were, no doubt, well instructed by God, that they heard more and knew more than is apparent in the short chapter three. They had the Word of God, the Word of Life, not in a minimum of revelation but more like the broad base of the pyramid of promises that culminated or came to a point in the final fanfare of fulfillment on the fields of Bethlehem bathed in the glory of the Lord: "Unto you is born this day a Savior which is Christ the Lord . . ."

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If you prefer a modern, sophisticated interpretation of Genesis three, we warn you that the same exegete that will "demythologize" the verses in this chapter will invariably, especially when pressed for an answer, also demythologize the birth in Bethlehem. Check it yourself.

II. NOAH

Genesis 9:20-27:

Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;
a slave of slaves shall he be to his
brothers."

He also said,

"Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.
"God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave."

The flow of centuries of human history begins after the Fall and is no less complex than is contemporary history. The Scriptures do not intend to present a complete record of man and his way on this cursed planet. The Scriptures give glimpses of events and tell of names of people that are important in view of the plan of salvation that unfolds in the history of the world—a part of it—a most vital and important part. Genealogies with births and deaths spanning hundreds of years pass before our eyes, and lest we forget goal and aim of the life of man, the Holy Writer turns our eyes back to the light of God's promise to the first parents. Eve's exclamation has a parallel in Lamech's joyous sentence: "This one, namely Noah, will bring us rest and comfort (peace) from the earth which God has cursed." The name Noah and the meaning it is given by Lamech indicate that Lamech longed for the rest of victory and peace promised in Paradise. This name shares the character of other names of Biblical people. Customarily, we give a name a strictly etymological meaning; the Biblical names are often given with an ear to the meaning that the sound of it may suggest. Here there seems a melting of both meanings: Rest and Comfort. There is something of a play on words, if not a pun, here. The comfort was to be over against the work and particularly the toil of our hands. Surely Lamech was not predicting that this son would give some release from the toil of man by providing mankind with the "wine that rejoices the heart of man," nor did Lamech think of the coming event of the flood in which Noah would prove the agent of God's rescue of the remnant that was to remain on earth. Lamech was tired of the constant battle for existence and the sweat and toil of labor which never could satisfy the heart of man living off the soil that the Lord had cursed. But Lamech knows of a promise of help, and his faith in that promise attaches itself to a person.

In this Lamech is not quite as mistaken as Eve was in seeing in Cain, the Man, the Lord. But Lamech had divine guidance and probably saw the fulfillment of his predictions in that his son became a preacher of righteousness in his day. What righteousness would Noah preach if not that given to man by God's grace and forgiveness? Noah found grace in the sight of God, not only at the moment that the Deluge came, but in God's sight as a believer, as Hebrews 11 plainly states that "by faith he judged the world and received that righteousness that comes by faith." The world about to feel the second cursing for the sin of man had been given a preacher to prepare it for its doom or salvation. The preaching of the righteousness of God has a tremendous either/or effect. To some it is a savor of life unto life, to others a savor of death unto death. As it was in days of Noah, so will it be before the Final Day. There will be preaching of righteousness, but the Son of Man will not find much faith. The Word, spoken to men will judge them in that Day, as it judged them in the days of Noah. Noah, as well as the believers before him, knows of the wrath of God, knows of sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. He is the high priest that offers up sacrifice after the Flood, for Noah knows that the wrath of God is not assuaged by the Flood, nor does he forget that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; but above all he knows that God is the God of grace who blesses Noah and the world after the flood, not for the sake of any number of atonements by sacrifice, but in view of the promise of the conquest of Satan and sin by the coming Seed of Eve. In view of this salvation in Jesus Christ God had patience (*anochē*) in the time of Noah.

In this new world under the promise of the beautiful rainbow that spans the scene before Noah's eyes, Noah continues to be the leader of this new humanity. Noah continues the created orders of God. He is father, patriarch. He is high priest. He is prophet. As prophet, priest and king, he represents God's orders and it is this fact that permits us to understand the story of a renewal (repetition) of falling into sin, this time by one of Noah's own sons, and the subsequent curse and prophecy.

Here, too, the Bible does not undertake to pinpoint day or hour, environment, circumstances. Only what is absolutely essential is mentioned. How much time has passed? How far has the cultural development advanced? There is no dating possible. Of course, Noah is not the first farmer, nor must we nominate him as the inventor of wine. If anything, we see in this mentioning of farming and vineyard a sign that things have settled down to a normal life. We can imagine that many years have passed. There is the community of this family. Shem, Ham and Japheth are probably themselves heads of their tribes or families. The supreme authority is Noah; he is the great father of mankind on earth and he is the prophet. He is no supersaint, no painted ideal, as Luther called it. He is human, he might have been careless, he might have been overcome by a fault. The treatment of his drunkenness, straightforward as the report is, does not indicate that Noah's drunkenness, which was real, in any way justifies the contempt and ridicule his son shows concerning Noah. Again, Scrip-

ture avoids the unessential matters. The point here is that a son of righteous Noah rejoices at the chink he has found in the armor of this hero of God. Hard on this comes the prophecy of Noah who had awakened from his wine-stupor. Noah found out what his younger son had done. The word "younger" here can mean as much as unripe, or delinquent son. Before we occupy ourselves with the meaning of Noah's prophetic sentences and in order to appreciate the fury of the pronouncement against Ham and his son, we really should ask, What was it that Ham had done?

God's created orders are for life; indeed, indirectly and teleologically as well as theologically speaking, they are for LIFE, that is, they include more than biological existence, more than governing the span between birth and death. God's created orders, established for man, who was made in God's image, are sacred and essential for the plan of Salvation, for the consummation of the family of the Father in heaven, who is the true Father of all. Marriage, fatherhood, governmental authority, and the office of priest and prophet are not simple by-products of a cultural development of man. They are the holy, sacred, untouchable orders by and through which man lives and lives forever. Sex as a source of life eternal sounds ridiculous in our day, and yet the original command to fill the earth is meant as a missionary blessing of God that indicated that the children of Adam and Eve, all begotten in the natural order of marriage, should show forth the glory of the Creator.

So do the seraphim sing: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth; all the earth is and should be full of God's glory." We hear the same song of the angels on the fields of Bethlehem about God's glory in the highest heaven and on earth peace and good will. From there to Christ's command to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel, the Good News, is no great leap. It is simply the continuation of the command and blessing of the first chapter in the Bible and the challenge of the Seraphim: Fill the earth with God's glory.

These sacred created and established orders are all signally and horribly violated by Ham. He despises his father. What says the Law? Horrible the sight of a disobedient son executed and not given the honor of burial but left out in the open where the vultures pick out the eyes. Too strict? Too horrible? No, Ham enters the list of delinquent sons who have no hope in this world nor in the next. Ham despises his father in a way that indicates that he has an unclean satisfaction in the nakedness of his father. We find it difficult to understand the Old Testament concepts of nakedness. No doubt the everyday dress was not as complete as it is in our day. Nakedness was normal for work. We see from the command of God to build an altar without steps that the nakedness of the priests might not be uncovered and from many other indications relating back to the original nakedness of the sinners Adam and Eve that sex was to be kept sacred and inviolate. Within God's orders, love and sex are intimate and holy. Even outside God's Biblical orders, because of God's law implanted in man's nature, sex is felt to be sacred even to the extent that in heathen cultures phallic objects were worshipped. It is bad enough

that Ham should laugh at the nakedness of another, worse yet that he did this concerning the nakedness of his father. Worse yet, he despises his ruler.

When we consider that the father has the power of life and death over his son and that the father is God's representative on earth, we can readily see how heinous Ham's crime was. But consider still further: Ham knew Noah also as his priest, his spiritual father. Noah was known to him as a preacher of righteousness, as a prophet who did proclaim by word and deed the coming judgment of God in the Flood. Ham, no doubt, had heard sufficient sermons and preachings from the mouth of this great prophet to know the truth. Is it not for that reason we can almost see the triumphant sneer and the unholy happiness at the sight of the prophet drunk and uncovered? He told his two brothers outside. The Scriptures need not describe the words or quote them.

With Ham's demeanor, Ham's derogatory words, no matter what they were, Shem and Japheth could not agree. They ostentatiously, almost with solemnity that was stern reproof for Ham, back into Noah's tent and cover him. They, the two, agree that Ham is outside their circle. Shall we use our imagination and hear Ham as he tells it around in the families of his brothers and above all in his own family? Do we need to imagine how he involves his son Canaan, who seems to have agreed so much with his father that Noah curses Canaan, perhaps reluctant to curse his own son, who had been blessed directly after the Flood? Ham and Canaan despise all the orders of God. Father, king, priest, prophet—all these orders fit for ridicule? For that reason the curse has not only universal but also lasting validity. Noah, awakening out of the drunken stupor, is transformed not by his personal feeling of disgrace but by the wrath of the Spirit of God into a prophet whose vision reaches farther than any view from Mt. Ararat into all the world and to the end of the world.

There was a time when interpreters saw in Ham's curse the prediction of the plight of the black people and evidence that God has destined the black man to slavery. The blackness of skin is not a curse. The blackness of the soul is cursed. What does Noah mean by the repeated emphasis on the servitude of Ham and his children? It is not races that are mentioned. No serious anthropologist would divide the races thus. Even if we knew of any racial characteristics of Hamites, Japhetites and Semites, surely the distance of time and history makes it hardly possible for us to find a reasonable cause for the origin of races and colors. But there is a Scripturally sound view we may have of the prophecy of Noah.

Noah's word sees all humanity (after all, he could probably see the whole human race of his time at a glance from his tent) there. He sees far into history. By the Spirit's gift he predicts in a summary statement the destiny that divides all men of all times into three classes. These are not the social or the physiological descendants of his three sons. The racial implications of Noah's statements have been over-emphasized, the circles are more cultural than racial. More important, the divisions Noah envisages are religious. The family of Ham and Canaan is a spiritual family.

There have always been and there will always be to the end of time the religions that worship fertility and sex. They abandon God's order of marriage and family in favor of uninhibited, unrestricted sexual relations, which they call free love. The Bachanalia, the Orphic rites, the Ashera-Astarte-Venus cults of ancient times and the contemporary freedom without order and love without law. Love and order were created by God as Siamese twins; one cannot be separated from the other without mortal danger. Love without order turns to loss of life and personality; order without love turns to murder and oppression. Any self-chosen freedom turns into slavery to sexual passion.

They who follow the Hamite or Canaanite model will lose their dignity and an honorable place in the world. By enslaving themselves, they have no future but are condemned to slavery, to being sub-human. When immorality becomes a national way of life, the nation as a whole is weakened, sometimes critically. Why, for example, did the glory of Greece decline? Why did Rome fall? What is the downfall of modern political units today? Servants of servants will they be. The term *servant* is however too good. *Slaves* is a better term for the depraved generation, slaves of sin, slaves of their naturally base natures, and by an inexorable law of God damned to failure and slavery.

There is another statement with lasting content, a statement which indicates the progress of the Messianic plan as it is revealed in God's dealings with generation after generation. "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem." After learning of the curse descending on Canaan we expect to hear that Shem in contrast, would receive words of praise and blessing. However, we note that the God of Shem, the God Yahweh, the God who keeps His promises made in His grace is here called the God of Shem and is blessed, that is, praised. The great contrast is between praising and cursing. There is only one way to speak of God, the way of praise—and this praise is not that of the teacher telling the student that he has done good work, but the praise that describes the greatness, holiness, justice, mercy and all the other glories of the heavenly Majesty. God is never spoken of otherwise; any other speech or description of God is the opposite of praise; it is blasphemy. Theology means speaking of God in praise.

Shem needs no special credit for having Yahweh for his God, for Shem is elect. "I shall be your God and you shall be my people," says God to Israel, Shem's descendants. Who are the Shemites that here are extolled over the Canaanites? Indeed there is an Israel according to the flesh, but it is truly Israel only as it has Yahweh as its God and worships Him alone. Israel without Yahweh is LoAmi, that is, "not my people." With God it is the spiritual Israel, that is, simply said, all believers. They have the blessings of God who is blessed by them. Noah sees the spiritual rather than the physical descendants of Shem as God's people, to whom in the end all nations must bow, to whom the Lord will give "the necks of their enemies," who will have to submit to them in the end. It is via Shem that Abraham receives the promise still more concentrated and defined: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!"—in Shem's family, where the

attitude Shem has shown toward his father would continue and God's orders would be respected. Blessed is Shem, for his God is the one who gives and maintains life. Blessed is the God of Shem, who is the God of mercy.

Now what about that next sentence? "Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave." As is often the case in prophecy, we come to a climax. Something of future history, something of Japheth's history is to be related to Shem's future. As the two brothers showed a united front against the Hamite attitude, so God was going to bless them together. However, here the name of God is the general name Elohim, not Yahweh, the covenant name—as if the prophet wanted to speak of nations that are not under the self-same covenant as Shem. All nations have an innate knowledge of God's orders (Romans 2:15). Noah here again uses a play on words: May God give room to Japheth. *Japheth* may be related to the word for "open." May God open to Japheth territory and land.

This paranomasia is very frequent in Oriental usage, also in the Hebrew way of naming things, places, and people. In spite of the fact that the language of the patriarchs is not really known to us and the language problem arising after the Tower of Babel has dimmed our knowledge, yet there seems to be a play on the name *Canaan*, which may be related to the word "to be humbled." Again the word *Shem* can mean "name" and at the same time means "fame." Names in the Biblical times were not only the identifying sign as in our day, when the confusion between so many Wongs, Schmidts, Browns, and Millers makes additional distinctions necessary. In ancient days names were descriptive. Japheth is rewarded as will all nations be rewarded when they live within God's created orders, when they respect father and mother, for the Lord has given the promise: "that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth." Japhetites may be the races that populated Europe, but necessary evidence is lacking. The promise is, however, that Japheth shall have room and furthermore that his people shall dwell in the tents of Shem. Here we can see the Messianic implications. If Shem is representative of the true people of God, who dwell in the tent of God's covenant, what is the meaning of Japheth's being blessed by sharing the blessings? Could it be that Noah's prophetic eye sees the Gentile nations coming to the light of Israel's rising? What else could it mean except that the descendants of Japheth, people that are not given to the Canaanite worship of sex and uncleanness, would be the proselytes and would come to the true spiritual heritage of Jesus Christ? After all, we, too, are sharing with the patriarchs, with the Israel after the spirit, all the blessings of the covenant of grace. We are dwelling in the house of the Lord; we are the Israel of God.

Ours is not to ask how much did Noah understand of what he was saying, how much of the dimensions of God's revelation was he consciously aware of. Ours is the gift to be able to look back to this promise and see it in the fulfillment, for neither Noah's genius nor

his anger at Ham nor his joy at the filial faith of the two sons caused him to speak this solemn oracle. It was God's Spirit who had preached through him before the Flood that now preached in and through him after the Flood. Like a panorama of history the general rule for life and success under God is spread before us. A people, individually or collectively, that disobey God's ordinances, especially in the area of natural orders, have no promise of lasting success and superiority, but wherever people know and obey God, there blessings and superiority will come to them, indeed, there will come the supreme blessing of the covenant of God, a united humanity in Christ, the one great Shepherd of souls. Under the covenant of grace nations and people will be blessed with life, yes with LIFE.

III. ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:1-3:

Now the Lord said to Abram,
Go from your country
and your kindred and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.
And I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you,
and make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and him who curses you I will curse;
and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

With the story of Abraham begins a new period of history. After our review of the nations dispersed by God's judgment at Babel, our eyes are focused on one man and on God's dealings with Abraham as a descendant of Shem. God speaks as the one who was blessed as the God of Shem. Abraham hears the word of the covenant God. The story begins when He gives both a command and a promise. God gives promises which are temporal and physical. He gives promises which are also spiritual and Messianic. It seems that God asks for much—everything! God's demands reach a climax, as is seen in Genesis 22, when God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

There are three items that are mentioned here. God asks Abraham to leave or abandon certain securities and each seems to be drawing closer to the very person and existence of Abraham. He says to him: "Go now!" This is the emphasis: "Do go!" He says: "Leave your country" (the Hebrew is *eretz*); "leave your relatives" (the Hebrew is *moledoth*); "and leave your father's house." And we are told (Hebrews 11:8), "He went, not knowing whither he went." According to verse 5, he knew the general direction but not the goal, especially not the specific inheritance God was going to give him.

It is easy to find the promises as given in Genesis 12:1-3 in other parts of the life story of Abraham. These promises are repeated in many parallel passages all through the history of Israel. Thus Canaan became the Promised Land.

But to appreciate God's promises, we must study more closely His demands. The demand that God makes on Abraham is particularly severe, especially when God Himself outlines the triple tie Abraham will have to sever. We must remember what the situations were in those days: leaving your country meant practically putting your life on the line. There were no passports nor any particular protection for foreigners and strangers. As soon as you came into a country where you were not at home, you could be considered legitimate prey for anyone. Any alien could be taken and killed, and there was no judge, tribe or judicial power to avenge the death of

such a person. This fact explains, too, why Abraham later on was so afraid to go into Egypt. Anyone could kill him and take his wife Sarah.

God's command, "Leave your country," means: "Depend completely on Me; leave everything that seems secure to you, and go out into the wild blue yonder." He also says: "Leave your relatives; leave your tribe." The *moledoth* was the tribe by which the individual was protected. The tribal laws and responsibilities were considered sacred in those days. In our day and age, we have protection by law and can travel far and wide, and even though we might have no near relatives in foreign lands, we can simply turn to the law, to the police, for protection against any evil or any wrong that may threaten us.

In ancient days the tribe, the family, took care of its members. Any wrong done to a member of the tribe was avenged by the tribe, as is evident when we consider the practice of the blood feud that was legitimate in those days. Governmental power was invested in the chiefs of the tribes.

The third demand that God makes of Abraham is "Leave thy father's house." This demand was getting very close and very personal. Abraham's existence consisted not only in having a home country and being a member of a tribe, but especially in his role as member of a family. "Leave your father's house" was the worst thing you could do in those days.

We are reminded of the story of the prodigal son, where the prodigal son leaves home, which is actually represented to us as a special act of ingratitude, an act of daring, an act of prodigality. This is the fact that is emphasized here when God says to Abraham: "Give up this, give up that, give up whatever is precious to you." This is what God asked of Abraham. "He that loses (or gives up) his life shall gain it," Christ tells us. The general principle in God's kingdom is that when one gives up, he actually gains. Abraham is to give up everything that might hinder God's plans and Abraham's salvation.

Only in form is Abraham's call peculiar to him. Essentially, it is a call repeated over and over again whenever anyone is called to be God's own.

In Abraham's surroundings idolatry was rampant. In Joshua 24:2 we read: "Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.'"

God calls Abraham away from or out of a situation. This is characteristic of every call of God to man. For heeding this call God promises to bless Abraham. The faith that he puts in God is evident when we remember that the same blessings are given to Abraham later on, when God asks him to give up Isaac, his only son, whom he loves. In Genesis 12, he is asked to give up flesh of his own flesh, in faith and by faith.

We are reminded of Psalm 45, verses 10-11, where God speaks to the Church: "Hearken, O daughter, consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thy people and thy father's house; so greatly shall the king desire thy beauty. For He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him."

But for all that which God asked Abraham to give up, God promises greater things. God promises Abraham a sevenfold blessing. How many blessings God promises depends on how we count the various stanzas or verses here. We could say He gives him three, four, five, or seven blessings, but we prefer to use the number seven, because it is the covenant number or the number of the relations of God to man. "I will make of thee a great nation" is the first. The second: "And I will bless thee." The third: "I will make thy name great." The fourth: "And be thou a blessing." The fifth: "And I will bless them that bless thee." The sixth: "And I will curse him that curseth thee." And the seventh: "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The first promise is: "I will make thee a great nation." The word used here, the Hebrew word *goy*, is used usually when speaking of a heathen nation, but here and in Genesis 35:11, Exodus 19:6, it is used also to compare Israel with the great nations of the future.

When Abraham looks roundabout and sees nations and people, he has the promise of God that God will make him "a great nation." *Great* means of course, first of all, multitudinous. Later on we have repeated promises such as this one, chapters 13:16, 28:14: Abraham's seed is to be as the dust; his children shall be as numerous as the dust of the ground, or as the sand, 22:17, 32:12; or as the stars in heaven, 15:5, 22:17, 26:4, Exodus 32:13, and so forth. He is to be a great nation—nationally great, and also great as concerning the spread of the nations, widespread—and also a famous nation. All this, when at the time Abram and Sarai were childless; Sarai was barren. Abram is promised that he will be a great nation. He starts off on his sojourn into the far country into which God would lead him to become a great nation there. We realize that only in faith could Abram set out to start a new nation. In faith only we can build God's kingdom. So this view of Abram becoming a great nation actually can be spiritually understood; Abram's nation includes great multitudes, according to God's intention. The plan of God was that Abram's children should be God's children, that he would be the father of the nation chosen as the one out of which the Messiah would appear. Therefore, we can translate it to mean: "I will make thee a great nation; I will build by you the kingdom of God." We have here the conjunction of all the temporal, material, and spiritual blessings which God gave to Abram.

Furthermore, God says: "I will bless thee." God will prosper Abraham. ~~Abraham's life shall be under God's benediction. Whatever~~ he attempts shall be accomplished. Abraham's prosperity later on is repeatedly mentioned in later chapters.

To be a child of God need not separate us, of course, from material blessings. Five times in these verses, by the way, blessings are mentioned. This is the essence of life. In Abraham, too, the curse of Genesis 3 is taken away. "I will make thee a great nation; I will bless thee." The blessing of God is that God puts Himself on the side of Abraham and guarantees Abraham that whatever may happen, wherever He may lead him, whatever the prospect might seem to him, nevertheless God is going to shed His benediction on him. We must remember that this is what had been pronounced over all creation, and especially over Adam and Eve. He blessed them: "Be fruitful and multiply." And here, when a new nation, a new humanity, namely, the humanity of the children of God, is founded by God in Abraham and by Abraham, God also pronounces the blessing, "Be fruitful and multiply," over this man and his future generations.

"Furthermore," God says, "I will make thy name great." The word *name* in the Old Testament is, of course, of greater significance than are names in our day. Today, names are only to distinguish one from the other; names in the Old Testament were always somehow descriptive. There is an imprint of Abraham's name upon thousands, and the name has become great and famous. The name *Abraham* means "Father of a multitude, father of a nation." He also has the name "Prince of God" (23:6). He is called "prophet" in chapter 20:7. He is called a "servant of God" in Psalm 105:6. His name is revered. One could ask the question, Where is there another name in the history of mankind that is as well known or is as much revered as the name of Abraham, except the name Jesus Christ? You would find hardly any other name that is used by so many people with respect.

The name *Abraham* is revered by the Jews, by Mohammedans, by all Christians. Even in heaven the name of Abraham is pre-eminent, because there he is to be chairman, or the father of the family of believers. He is called "the father of believers." Any that come to God from the north, east, south, and west, or heaven, will be sitting with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the heavenly table.

Furthermore, "Be thou a blessing." The Hebrew word here is an imperative. This involves a moral responsibility. The gift of God to believers is that their blessing is active in them. The blessed are a blessing, just as saying, "Ye are the salt of the earth," is to pronounce a blessing and give an assignment, a benediction, as always in the kingdom of God. Any assignment God makes, any office God gives which also confers His particular blessings and His particular graces at the same time gives us a responsibility. Honor and dignity are a part of God's assignments.

The next phrase, "I will bless them that bless thee," or to translate literally, "bless thy blessers." We note here immediately that in the next statement, "I will curse him that curseth thee," the singular is used, whereas here, when He speaks of those that bless, God uses the plural. This is an indication that there is to be more blessing than cursing, so that the blessings and the blessers are more important than those who curse. We have Melchizedek, in Genesis 14:19, bless-

ing Abraham, and we have many other passages that refer to the blessings of this patriarch.

"I will curse him that curseth thee" is linked with the previous blessing, the promise of blessing. Again we are reminded that salvation and judgment are both found in history. God has made Abraham His very own. To curse Abraham is to curse God. It is similar to the statement of Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."

This idea of the blessing and curse of Abraham suggests engaging in an interesting study of the whole Biblical story of the Jews. It seems to us that wherever anyone has shown kindness, friendship, and blessings to Abraham, this person always received some blessing. On the other hand, wherever anyone opposed Abraham or Abraham's descendants, a curse came upon him. This phenomenon, I believe, we can see also in history. It seems a curious fact (one that you cannot turn into a dogmatic statement) that wherever anyone, any nation, any people, any individual attacked or persecuted the Jews, no matter at what time of the history of the world, this persecution has been followed by a curse. The boomerang of the curse bounced back upon those who threw the curse against the Jews (a warning against all Christians not to be anti-Semitic). By the statement, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee," God reserves for Himself the blessing and the curse of God. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." This was the case, too, wherever the people of God rejected the very Anointed of the Lord. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They brought the blood of Christ upon themselves by their own cursing, saying: "His blood come upon us and upon our children." This is a tragic fact for the "people of God," for the Word of God still holds good, even though they curse themselves. "I will curse him that curseth thee." The nation, the people, anyone, especially the blood brothers of Christ, that curse Him, bring curse upon themselves, and later in history we find that many a time it seems that wherever there has occurred a movement against this people, God took it into His own hands to punish them that did so. The Syrians, the Babylonians, and other enemies who had wrought the vengeance of God upon the people of Israel, themselves also being enemies of the people of God, had to perish because of their action against Israel, even though this action was according to God's will.

Furthermore we read, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "Families" here means the same thing as our families, and these families of the nations were divided at the Tower of Babel. There is a great curse that lies upon mankind, the curse of enmity of Cain against Abel, the curse of enmity of man against man. This enmity divides all families of the earth and brings a curse upon all the families of the earth. But God does not want the nations to perish; He wants the world to be saved. That is why we have this great promise.

Luther said: "Now follows the great promise which one should write in golden letters and speak into all countries, praise and extol, namely, that 'In thee shall the families of the earth be blessed.'" This is the grand climax, even greater than the fourth blessing; this is the blessing which the Septuagint correctly translates *eulogēthēson tai*. Hengstenberg comments: "Only in the idea of the Messiah does the depth of the thought adequately display itself." Hengstenberg does not feel able to say that this prophecy pointed clearly to an individual. Our comment is that we cannot disregard or allegorize the fact that the Holy Spirit used the singular so that it matched the fulfillment. Yes, we categorically deny that the final fulfillment of this promise, the promise of universal blessing, is simply that many people call themselves blessed or bless themselves or feel themselves blessed by being related to Abraham, for the Apostle in his letter to the Galatians provides in a definitive manner the meaning intended here.

The Holy Spirit's words to Paul in Galatians 3:16 point directly to Christ. The Holy Spirit's interpretation, after all, is the final word in all interpretation. Scripture interprets Scripture. We read: "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Only God can bless all the families of the earth. It is a divine act, when a divine person, when the Messiah is the One who brings blessings to all people (not Abraham blesses all people, but the singular seed of Abraham), not the seed of Abraham collectively, speaking as all the people of Abraham, but one individual seed, one seed of which the Holy Spirit, concerning his identity, provides the information in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Psalm 72:17 tells us: "His name shall endure forever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."

How much of this did Abraham understand? We read in Hebrews 11:9: "By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise." We also read in the same chapter in verse 13: "These all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

Here we have the teaching of justification by grace through faith, by faith alone. Abraham no doubt understood much more than we can realize from this distance. Abraham received not only one revelation from God; Abraham was in frequent communication with God, God visited him, God talked for hours with him, certainly not just about the weather or cattle or whatever other topics were commonly discussed by the nomads and other people of that world. No doubt Abraham got a thorough theological education and revelation from God, as we can tell by the story of God's visit to Abraham.

Abraham obediently goes to Canaan where he does not begin to build a city to His name. He is waiting for another city, as Hebrews says, whose architect and builder is God. In faith, he begins to take possession of the Holy Land in the Name of God, building altars and preaching the Name of God.

Note that Abraham is not presented as the impeccable, perfect, ideal patriarch; he is, rather, the father of those who fall and rise again. Not Abraham is to be glorified, but rather the Lord, whose strength is made perfect in weakness.

We are reminded of the statement in Genesis 9: "Praise be to the God of Shem," as we hear this important statement concerning the future of the people of Abraham.

After God has repeated His promise, God gives Abraham special revelations. Probably not all of them are reported.

In this connection, we note the blessing given to Abraham by Melchizedek. Next, in chapter 15, we see the covenant indicated by a vision with a prophecy of the future. Finally, in Genesis 17:1-14, we have the establishment of the covenant of circumcision with a repetition and confirmation of the promises of God.

IV. JACOB

Genesis 49:8-12:

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hands shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes; his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

The story of salvation goes on. Abraham saw his Lord's day and rejoiced. Isaac passed the promise on to Jacob, at first unknowingly and unwillingly, either forgetting or ignoring the promise given before the twins were born, but bowing in faith to the fact that Jacob had the blessing by God's guidance and will, which was not affected by the deceit nor blemished by treachery of man.

Now it is Jacob's turn to pass on the Messianic benediction to one of his sons. But who is it to be? Evidently Jacob had learned that God interferes even in man's secular pursuits in situations essential to the salvation of mankind. Had Jacob hoped he could bless his favorite son Joseph or his children with the blessing of the firstborn? Is that why he called Joseph with Ephraim and Manasseh to him even before the declaration of his final testament? He did dispense to him the double portion due his favorite son. Two tribes are to spring from one. And so it was. But even in this blessing of the sons of Joseph, Jacob frustrates the custom and logic of men. Instead of placing his right hand on the older, as Joseph intended by placing the sons so that the older one stands facing the right side of the grandfather, Jacob crosses his arms over, giving the younger the right-hand benediction. At this time Jacob himself is blind, as was his father Isaac, and must have had most vivid memories of what had happened so long ago. He even reminisces on the death and burial of his beloved Rachel. Jacob knows this is not a Messianic benediction although it is God's prediction and revelation to him. In history Ephraim becomes more important than Manasseh; for a time there are more tribes under Ephraim's rule than under Judah's. But the final prophecy is yet to come. This is reported in Genesis, chapter 49.

Jacob has his sons assemble, and they all must know by this time what it is all about. Again, as so often, the scene is not as important as what is spoken. No doubt, Jacob has a dwelling in keeping with his station as patriarch and father of the one next to Pharaoh in power. By this time the sons are doubtless themselves chieftains of large tribes (Jacob is now 147 years old). They "grew and multiplied exceedingly" even then (Genesis 47:27). It must have been quite an assembly there by the side of Jacob, who, we take it, was reclining on his bed as on a throne of pillows. In a solemn message Jacob called his sons together; he no doubt introduced his testament with the words as recorded: "Gather yourselves together,

that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." The two names used in this parallel address signify more than simply identification. They are reminders of what God has done. God has made Jacob, a trickster, into an Israel, a prince of God. The term "last days" or "latter days" has a ring of prophecy that sends out rays illuminating the future. The future is salvation future and this means fulfillment future—eschatology—having a goal and final accomplishment. Each tribe has a share in this future of the people of Israel, and one of these tribes will have the lion's share. It seems that blind Jacob himself is waiting and hoping for a sign and answer to the question: Who is the heir? The heir of Abraham's blessing was not Ishmael; the heir of Isaac's blessing was not Esau, the firstborn; the heir of Joseph's blessing was not the older Manasseh. Whom did God choose to carry on the line? Of whom should that blessing come which should be for all nations?

So then, the blind seer begins listing the names of his sons. First, Reuben. Usually, the firstborn son is the pride and joy of any father. For the sons of the time of Jacob it meant probably still more. The pride of the family, the dignity of dynastic succession meant much to the people of the ancient Orient. We can almost see the flash of pride and joy on Jacob's face as he thinks back to that happy day when Reuben was born. But the moment of remembrance of joy is wiped out by another dark memory, tragic, terrible, shameful. It's hard to picture something like this happening to Jacob. His firstborn reveals an unstable character, an irresponsibility that let him forget all sacred duties. Reuben commits adultery with his own father's concubine. The law of Moses later imposed capital punishment on such a crime. The sin is one against a father and against God's order that another man's wife is as sacred as that man's life. There can be no question. Reuben cannot inherit his father's blessing. The passing over of the firstborn is sad but just. The old man turns to the rest of the family to explain simply: "He went up to my couch."

The inner eye of Jacob turns to the next two, so similar in character, Simeon and Levi. To call them brothers is not a sort of superfluous statement. They were brothers in a special sad sense. They had joined in mass murder. In Jacob's testament they are cursed with a greater curse, it seems, than Reuben. Jacob relives the agony of the day when he was told that these two sons had slaughtered the men of a tribe with which a sacred and solemn covenant had been made, a covenant sealed by the sacrament and sign of the Lord Yahweh, circumcision. This very act of including the tribe of Hamor and Shechem into the family of Jacob could and should have been an event that could be likened unto the first sign of the universal mission of Israel. A gentile tribe is added to the people of God. Simeon and Levi violated not only their word; they desecrated the sacrament of the covenant by the very means of the covenant, so that, as it has been translated by some, "the knives of circumcision became cruel swords." Jacob wants nothing to do with such a dastardly blasphemous act. He curses their anger and promises them disin-

heritance and scattering among the tribes of Jacob. We can imagine the dead silence that follows Jacob's wrathful prophecy.

Might not the one next in line tremble? It is Judah. Read his life story, especially chapter 38—a dark and awful chapter of the son that leaves the country of his father and makes friends with gentiles, who shows a stubborn heart even when God strikes at his godless sons and takes one after another, who when widowed finds comfort in the friendship of Hiram and makes his business trips with him to celebrate fertility rites with a sacred prostitute. Surely Judah remembers; surely Jacob has not forgotten. But as Jacob turns his inner and enlightened eye toward Judah, there comes a flash of surprise and joy over the old saint. He cries out: "Judah, thou!" Jacob has found the mark. God's finger points to Judah. He is the one whom his brethren shall praise. With happy excitement he marks the man as the one he has been looking for. As the old Greek Archimedes runs through the street crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it," so Jacob knows he has found in Judah the bearer of the Messianic hope.

Why Judah and not Reuben? Why not Joseph or Benjamin? God's election and selection is always by grace and needs no reason but love. Our questions are always discords of doubt in the holy harmony of God's plans. Judah is by nature no better than Reuben, Simeon, or Levi. God gave Judah repentance as he probably gave repentance to the others for the sake of His Son. But all this for Jacob's search right now is irrelevant, for Jacob sees what God has planned for the salvation of His people. Jacob suddenly sees more than he had ever seen when he still had good eyesight, for Jacob sees the blessing to come to and through Judah.

The first sentence is a play on words, almost a pun. *Judah* is a name that means "praise." When Judah was born his mother Leah said: "Now will I praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Now Jacob realizes that the name "Praise" has become most significant, for he sees "Praise" will be praised by his brethren. This is prophecy of unusual significance. We have much, much evidence of rivalry and jealousy among the brethren of Judah. From the very beginning, the family of Israel was beset with one conflict after another—conflicts that continued to the end of the kingdom ruled by David and Solomon. Bloody battles were fought within the tribes. Would it be surprising if the fact that Judah was singled out for the honor of the firstborn, displacing three older brothers, would cause jealous strife? What Jacob sees is like Joseph's dream. He saw his parents and his brothers bow before him. Here father Jacob sees the other tribes bow down before Judah. He hears them sing praises to Judah. The history of the tribe of Judah is that of leadership and culminates not so much in the fact that finally all the tribes swear allegiance to Judah's son, David. It reaches much more of a climax in the eschatology of the final song of praise before the throne of great David's greater Son. Jacob tells what he sees. His prophetic sight penetrates the material and physical fact of a Judah to see beyond him and forward to a unique person and leader that is to be a son of Judah. Jacob does not try to explain time and circumstances, does not

try to harmonize what he has called the last days of the glorious future. Jacob speaks of Judah as the victor over all his enemies: "Thy hand shall be on the necks of thy enemies."

Not only is there no opposition found among his brethren but there will also be victory over all enemies. The term "necks of the enemies" is found in the eighteenth psalm and elsewhere as a phrase that refers to conquest and subjugation of enemies. To put one's foot on the neck of an enemy grovelling before one is an ancient way of describing total victory. Jacob sees Judah as a victorious hero cheered on by his brethren. Indeed the pre-eminence of dignity and of power that should have been Reuben's is here given to Judah. So great is the victor that at his victory his brethren prostrate themselves before him. The word for bowing is the same used for giving honor to a king or to God. The glorious Judah, the conquering hero, is honored with divine honor by his brethren, by his own people.

Who might this be? If we look into the future we see, beyond Judah, his son David, who became leader, victorious champion of Israel, whose praise was sung by the daughters of Israel in what we might call the hit tune of that day: "Saul has killed thousands, but David has killed ten-thousands." But when our eyes are fixed on David, he, too, one might say, fades or becomes translucent and we see the Son of David as the one who conquers all enemies and whose praise becomes the song of his brethren, his faithful people. Did Jacob realize all this? Certainly Jacob realizes one thing, that he is not speaking of the son standing before him. Time and space dissolve when God's light illumines the future. David's Son, the Christ, stands before Jacob as the great future Judah.

The next sentences describe the glory of this conquering Judah in terms most vivid and familiar to the people of Jacob's time. The entire prophecy abounds in allusions to the animal world. Naturally, our hero is portrayed as a lion. We see a progression and growth in this description that fits the history of the tribe of Judah. First the whelp of the lion, then growth into a mature king of beasts. Ezekiel says: "And she brought up one of the whelps, and it became a young lion and learned to catch the prey" (Ezek. 19:3).

The words of Jacob sound like one describing a scene and action to listeners that cannot see. Jacob, from his post as seer into the future, describes what he sees. Almost excitedly he addresses his son directly, and immediately also tells all of the listening audience what his vision is. Hardly is the whelp described when he immediately sees a young lion take his prey, dragging it up to his lair, feeding and then resting on his haunches, relaxed but ever ready to defend his domain. He sees also the mature lion in his full strength whom no one dares to rouse. The tribe's leadership, David's defeat of Goliath, the Davidic monarchy established and secured, yes indeed much more (Ps. 68:18): "Thou has ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Looking from the New Testament back to this prophecy, we realize the intent of the vision is to extol not so much the chosen Judah. Nor is the tribe and its vic-

tories the topic, nor is David the final point of reference, but rather the great Son of David, who is called the Lion of Judah.

Henceforth, as Balaam proves, Judah is the lion, the Ruler to Come, before whom the other tribes bow and before whom nations will fall down and worship, indeed, none other than the Son of God, before whom all knees shall bow, willingly or unwillingly. The reason why the brethren of Judah will worship him is that in him the glory of the Lord is revealed (Phil. 2:9-11): "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Thus the road of Judah is from victory to power and glory, from ascent to permanency. The next verse shows that this is the meaning of the lion picture.

The scepter is the sign of authority and power. The word translated "lawgiver" is probably a parallel to the word "scepter," a staff held between the feet and knees of the enthroned ruler. Among others, the statues of Tutankhamen show such a staff. The promise is easily understood: Judah is destined to have an eternal kingdom. To Judah belongs the promised blessing and no one is going to rob him of it. Balaam speaks of the same scepter in his vision of the star of Judah. Without straining our imagination too much we can easily understand this as an allusion to the sad event when Judah surrendered the signs of his authority as a tribal chief to Tamar as a token of the debt he owed her whom he thought to be a prostitute. Never again was Judah to surrender the scepter and throne till Shiloh come, unto whom the gathering of nations will be.

Only through a blind and stubborn denial of the light that the New Testament sheds on the person of the Shiloh to whom belongs the rule of all nations can there be any doubt as to whom is meant. *Shiloh* is used only once outside of the name of a place. When Joshua brought Israel to Shiloh Judah was not the leader. Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim. If this is a name of a person, and if it is descriptive as most names of the Old Testament people are descriptive, then the closest we can come to the meaning is *peace* or *peacebringer*. One of the oldest paraphrases of the Jews, a targum, simply translates: "until the Messiah comes."

If one insists on considering the word *Shiloh* to be the contraction of a relative pronoun and the word "to him," one might have a parallel statement in Ezekiel 21:27: "until he come whose right it is" or "until there come that which belongs to him." This is not impossible since Ezekiel speaks the judgment of God to come until he comes whose the kingdom is rightfully, and "I will give it him." In all attempts to explain the word *Shiloh*, the Messianic import of the statement is still clear. The Lion of Judah is the one to whom belongs the rule over the nations. The scepter has been dedicated by God to be and remain in the tribe of Judah. What the prophet Nathan told David and what Solomon knew was that the throne of the kingdom was established forever, no matter what the destiny of the house of David might appear to be.

The future of this kingdom is bright and glorious. How else could it be when the King is the promised Redeemer! Jacob's vision presents to him a scene representative of the glory of the kingdom. He sees the ruler Shiloh, riding the royal animal which in those days was the spirited ass, not the docile and lethargic donkey of our times. He sees him dismount and tie his beast to a choice vine. This is an unusual statement to make, an unusual thing to do. Whoever has choice select vines will guard and protect them against damage by animals. Walls and shelters were built for the purpose of protecting the vineyard. How dare this royal visitor tie his animal to the vine? In no time the ass has stripped the leaves and tender branches and tendrils from the vine and ruined it.

What does this mean? It is either this, that the choicest vines are so plentiful in the new kingdom, or that animals do not hurt nor harm anything. That would be Paradise, where everything is perfect harmony and fruit and food is plentiful. Legends of the Golden Age found in the mythologies of many nations can only be dim remembrances of the time when there was a garden of God where there was nothing harmful and all was plentiful. Grimm's fairytales include the story of such a land of plenty, where one can expect the cooked birds to fly into his mouth and where all fountains flow with choicest wines. All nations like to think of their fondest dreams turned into reality in some fabulous country and condition.

Hence we may conclude that Jacob sees the kingdom come to be a land of blissful plenty. So plentiful is wine that it can be used like water, and all that in a country where water itself is rare and precious. The Promised Ruler washes his clothes in wine. The blood of grapes stains his raiment. Who of us can avoid thinking of the question: "Who is this that comes from Edom and his garments stained in blood?" Is Shiloh the one who is to tread the winepress alone and crush his enemies with his feet till their blood gives royal color to his coat? Shiloh is victorious. He introduces the reign of peace and joy. The final glimpse the seer has of him is as he shares his victory with his brethren, as he celebrates with wine and milk. His eyes shine with the luster of life and joy. That his eyes are red with wine is not to be interpreted as the bloodshot eyes of the drunken but rather as expressing the flashing sparkling eyes of one who otherwise has been described as having eyes like flames of fire. His teeth are white with milk is another poetic way of describing the ruler of the land where milk and honey flow. It is possible that even at that time it was known that plenty of milk made for better nourishment and aided in the health of the teeth. Exuberant health and joy seem to be the picture here: the great victory celebration at which his brethren sing his praises and sit at the heavenly feast with the cup of salvation full up and rivers of pleasure flowing forever.

In summary, it is a kingdom of plenty in place of poverty; there is peace and plenty after a victory over all enemies; there is communion and happy fellowship at the table of the Lord, for it is Shiloh who has done all.

Although much of this is typically fulfilled in the history of Judah's children, and especially in King David, yet David is not the Shiloh, not the full consummation of Jacob's vision. David's earthly kingdom weakens and his dynasty is but a stump or root in dry ground. The kingdom is just a hut in a vineyard and all the hopes for material supremacy are dashed. And it was good that God did so, in order that no false ideas should lodge in Israel concerning Judah's blessing. But when the fullness of time came, the story of Judah took on new meaning: As Judah's mother praised God at his birth, as when David was crowned the people praised God as we see in a number of Psalms, even so heaven and earth joined in praising God when Shiloh was born. The very song of the heavenly hosts echoes the praise implicit in the name Judah: Glory to God! Peace on Earth! Because Shiloh is born. "He is our Peace." He says: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Truly no one else is promised to Judah. The letter to the Hebrews says: "Our Lord sprang out of Judah," and the last book of the Bible testifies that the Son of God and the Son of Man is the Lion of Judah.

Christ the great Prince of Peace is the theme of this section of Jacob's prophetic blessing. Clearly he speaks of His victory and of His kingdom.