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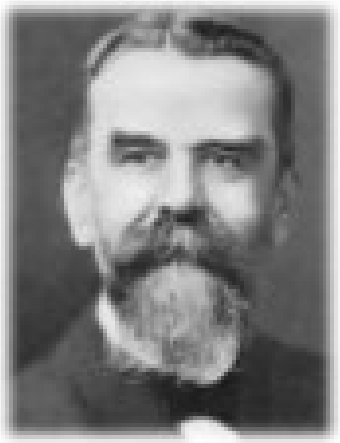
The 1st book
of Genesis



By Prof. E. F. Ströter

1846 –1922

(Please note: The term "from eternity to eternity" is rendered as eons).

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The first book of Moses

By Prof. E. F. S t r ö t e r

1. First chapter

If we undertake, in a series of lectures, to show and discuss the enormous mass of thoughts of the 1st Book of Moses, we are under the constraint to refrain from an explanation verse by verse and to limit ourselves to illuminating the whole chapter by chapter or section by section in broad outlines, in order to extract from this book what God has laid down for us in it for the knowledge of His thoughts and ways with mankind in the past and in the future.

Right on the threshold of the first book of the Bible we encounter thoughts, hints, statements in which every thinking, examining person clearly recognizes the contrast between human philosophy and divine thoughts.

It differs with its whole content from all other books, and stands in contrast to all systems that men have ever devised, in that it does not set the eternity of matter, of creation, but sets God before creation.

Before creation was, before heaven and earth were, God was according to the Scriptures. This truth is found nowhere else but in this book of God.

There is a deep, insurmountable gulf between God's revelation and man's thoughts, a gulf like between heaven and earth (Is. 55, 8.9). This is also the terrible root, the germ, the beginning of all the false ideas and teachings that people have made about God's relationship to the world, especially to the human world. For the Bible is quite clear about this, that the human world is intimately connected with the world of creation.

Also all thinking people are one in it: Man and creation belong together in one. Out of himself the man with his philosophy could only find that the creation is as old as God.

All philosophy equates the natural creation eternally with God. The next step is unavoidable: if the creation, the material, the visible, and God in addition, if all this has existed next to each other, then God has nothing before the creation; then a quite natural, unavoidable competition arises between both; then the material, to which also the human being belongs, has to mean as much as the divinity.

And the next thought is this: from the very beginning there is an irreconcilable opposition between the two. The whole forming and becoming is, if this line is correct, nothing else than a constant and never to end fight. Because as certainly the creation is eternal like God, it must have the same right of existence like God. Then God finds an insurmountable barrier: God will never be finished with it. Creation can never be dominated, penetrated by the Godhead.

Here are great, gaping contrasts between the finest paganism and revelation. It is touching to observe how the deepest thinkers became perplexed when they turned to the Bible and here encountered such a completely different conception. Here it is said: "In the beginning was God", and not the creation.

Have we ever wanted to imagine what it must have been like where there was only God and no sun, moon and stars? Dizziness seized us, if we tried tothink it out. It is impracticable to think God and all creaturely away! These are thoughts, which we cannot pursue. But God's revelation says here simply and clearly: "In the beginning was God."

How then did Moses, this one man among all, among all thinkers and sages, arrive at this word?

Here the revelation separates itself from the beginning from the ways of all human thinking. In this book, from the first chapter to the last, the attempt is made to subordinate human thinking to divine thinking. All other thinking must be put aside.

God never thinks of bringing abouta connection, a mixing of His thoughts with human wisdom; He rather declares war on it. He allows only His thoughts to be valid. He never makes a compromise; least of all that He relied on the thoughts of men.

It is almost frightening that we have been taught and educated to consider human philosophy as indispensable, as essential. Therefore, we do not recognize preachers of the word, theologians, who have not had a philosophical education and have not passed good philosophical examinations. Without that, they must not put God's word into their mouths.

But here is a man who lets the spirit of God informhim about processes and thoughts which would have remained hidden to the human spirit without that.

"In the beginning God created." This places God's existence before that of creation. God never came into being, but He is the creator of all things. Joh. 1,1 ff. we find the same truth in a different light. And Col. 1, 15-17 is said concerning the great Son: He is before all, even in range; everything exists through Him, even the kingdom of darkness is guaranteed by Him. He is also first on the ground of the new creation (v. 18).

These are very clear, simple lines. With this it is said at the same time that the whole universe, the visible and invisible creation, from its coming into being, is absolutely subject to God's unrestricted rule, overlordship, disposal - a truth that we so easily pass by. This is because we are born rebels and live in a world where the opposition to Him has become the natural one, an enmity against God.

We imbibe this not only with our mother's milk, but in our mother's womb. We know only a world that is infested with rebellion against God. That is why it is so easy to teach us to think that this hostility is natural, something self-evident that cannot be thought of in any other way.

This is certainly the case, and we would never be withGod again if He did not come to our aid. So it is extremely important to let us say as forcefully as possible in view of the innate hostility: **"In the beginning God created heaven and earth".** In vain we look for traces from which it could be inferred that God has given His absolute rule out of His hand, except temporarily for the decision of deeply incisive questions of education.

The Hebrew language has only one word for being and becoming. So we are entitled to read further: **"And the earth became desolate and empty".** We ask: how did it come to be? The Scripture gives us information about it.

Is. 48,18 says that God did not create the world to be empty. The original creation cannot have been brought forth in the state of desert wasteland, of the wildest confusion, of chaos. Also Jer. 4, 23-28 is suitable to let light fall on our place. The prophet sees a mighty judgment of God's wrath coming upon the land and the same condition comes out as here.

If the earth did not come outdesolate and empty from the hand of the creator, but it became so afterwards, then the conclusion is justified that it became so as a result of a judgment of God. And how could the earth have come into such a state?

Not by the fall of man; because man was first put onthe newly created, newly ordered earth. This is a re-creation, a new creation. Since we now know of no other creatures endowed with reason than the angels, only the conclusion remains that this desolation and desolation must be a judgment on the fallen angel of light and presumably highest prince of angels, to whom the original earth of light will have been subordinated as his own dominion.

This answer would reveal to us many a mystery and solve many a puzzling question. For example, the questions: Why is it that in the Scriptures Satan, the enemy of God and man, plays such a strange role, that he is treated with such far-reaching consideration, despite his hostile condition and behavior? Where does it come from that the god and prince of this world has such natural access to the new beautiful world that God has created? How is it connected that he can enter into such close contact with men and creation, and that the Scriptures do not distinguish him at all, but only call him "the old serpent"?

All such questions would be answered if we could say that Satan existed before the human world. Of course, the scripture itself does not give us any explicit information about this. But if this assumption is correct, then a certain clarity would come into the connections of these things.

Also some of the main concerns of the educated would be eliminated if the primeval creation was far, far behind verse 2 - The earth has gone through quite terrible. It was the scene of collapse and destruction, which must have beenhorrible and of immense length and extent. Calculations made, e.g. concerning the coal deposits, leave no doubt that the earth must have been there as a body of immense length of time before mankind.

Was it now in former times, before it became desolate and empty and before God started to transform it into a dwelling of man, a dwelling of the prince of this world? Then we understand why after the outrage of Satan such great catastrophes occur, why the earth had to be burned through by such fire, have also room for the millions of years, of which our scholars write, before it was afflicted by such terrible judgments. Thus some difficulty would be removed and a quite natural solution would be found for the relation between the results of exact science and this report.

At the same time something else, which lies much deeper and is more far-carrying. If this assumption is correct - we want to express ourselves very carefully; however, we may extend this line quite confidently - if this earth was once the dwelling of a completely different group of creatures and was subjected to such a terrible judgment, but is not given up by God in spite of this judgment, and if He thus puts such a precious key into our hands, which opens up many thoughts of God to us: then it is nothing with the assumption that the new creation, fallen again and dragged into sin and indebtedness, is given up to destruction.

There is no end of the world in which one thinks of a complete destruction, shattering, annihilation of what exists - and only a few beautiful, dear souls would go to heaven.

But if this earth in itself is proof that God has not abandoned it to ruin without salvation in spite of the fall of its prince, but has recreated it, then we may confidently draw the conclusion that God will not abandon His plan with His new creation and mankind, in spite of the second fall of man having again disturbed God's plan. It is certainly permissible to conclude from the lesser to the greater here as well. How should God ever leave His mankind where it has fallen into?

Before we take a few glimpses into the new creation that lies before us, very briefly just a note about the word: **"the Spirit of God hovered over the waters."** This is one of the most precious words in this context.

Unfortunately, we know the Holy Spirit too little in His relations with the rest of creation. He has also let us say little about it. This is quite consistent with the wonderful modesty of the Spirit. He only wants to glorify the Son in the whole present time; He only talks about Him, not about Himself, as our Lord expressesit Joh. 16,14.

But this word has no retroactive power. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not speak about himself. He does it here quite clearly, carefully. Thus He inspired the holy writer to write: "the Spirit of God hovered over the waters."

There was no human being there yet; so we are switched off. It is delicious that there are relationships where we are switched off; we, who are so firmly bound to the way of always thinking of the dear I in everything that comes from God. It is good to see that the spirit also has other relationships than with its own dear self.

An overview of the six-day work is spread outbefore us. How do we have to think about it? We all know that a hot battle is raging in this field. It cannot be said that it has led to victory. Theology and science get at each other's hair and fight at every opportunity.

We do not want to proceedscientifically or theologically, but in the way that is most conducive to the child of God. We have nothing to do with disputes, they are none of our business. They will never come to an end, even if the battle would rage for ten thousand years. There is no

talk of "reconciliation" at all; if one would believe God only that, then one would not get excited at all.

The matter is this: It is clear that if God had wanted to give a scientific report about all the processes that took place at the new creation, He would certainly have been able to do so. He could have given a much better theology and cosmology than any professor, or than all of them together.

He just didn't do it. Why not? Because He was concerned about one thing: He could never and would never doviolence and coercion to the human spirit and thinking.

If God had given a detailed and incontestable description of all details, of all processes with the creation through Moses or someone else, then nothing would have remained to the human spirit for a discovery, for own activity. Then everything would have been fixed and ready. Because all human activity stops opposite all proofs and facts.

Let's take the simple example that 2x2 = 4. There is nothing to do with the fact; it is fixed once and for all, concluded there. If God had delivered what has to be considered scientifically as an incontestable report, then the dear gentlemen would have nothing more to do than to declare: 2x2 is 4. Then, of course, the human spirit would never have come into the position to raise itself once in a presumptuous way above everything what is God and divinity and to ascribe to itself the greatest and most powerful, but also never to make itself completely bankrupt at the same time in the very simplest things of the life.

Because science has not yet found an answer to the simplest questions: Which came first - the egg or the hen? What is life in the blade of grass? What is growth? What is light, life, mother love, child loyalty, obedience? In these very simplest questions, man today is as perplexed as ever.

God has to leave the very widest space that does not force, gag, rape science. That just is so great in this Mosaic creation account that it does not rape.

The researchers with their real science prove it. Textbooks, which were considered unimpeachable twenty years ago, are waste paper today, papers to be tamped down. God always brings something new, which overthrows the old. For example, the radium. With what is science, one must do quite slowly. However, with everything what one has found until today, Moses has still been right.

One has laughed about the fact that Moses says that there waslight before there was a sun. Today the science is clear about the fact that there could have been light very well before the sun. The northern lights, for example, have nothing to do with the sun. Very well there can have been a light cover over the earth; before a sun irradiated it from the outside.

The creation is a fact, which makes neither the faith nor the research superfluous or impossible. There are many things that science cannot bring under its rubrics. Can motherly love, filial piety, friendship be treated scientifically? Who can scientifically define the noblest gifts and powers? There is simply no such thing.

On the one hand, God has given free scope to the activity of the human mind, to science, leaving His deeds to its judgment; and on the other hand, He has not made faith superfluous. God knew how to put His thoughts and mysteries into a form that is sweet food for faith. Science cannot interfere with faith; it does not need it. One must stand on this point of view, and then the report becomes great.

It has been seen as something unfortunate that God abandons us where it is necessary to counter the objections and assertions of science with biblical evidence. But 1 Cor. 2:5 says, "That your faith may stand, not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

If God had given us a scientific report, what value would faith have?

It is most glorious that faith is independent of all scientific evidence; that it believes, trusts, reckons with God, and never doubts that God is right in the very end. God has been able to wait until this day, and so can we.

But if one had to admit now also, there could have been light before there was a sun, this does not make the least. Because God and His truth do not depend on the determinations of the science. Otherwise all moral deeds would cease. But if it stands in such a way that I can take up a word opposite God, even if it cannot stand before the judgement seat of God, then God has provided with this report for the fact that the faith comes everywhere on its costs.

How might God have shown Moses these things? How could He authorize him to write about these things before all research? Moses was brought up in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, who in some respects knew more than we do today, and from whom we still learn today.

But still, God had to authorize him to write downthis report. How He might have done that, Dan. 2 could serve as an example.

Nebuchadnezzar saw a human image, a superman. What does it mean? He had forgotten the dream, and when Daniel recalled it to him, he still did not know its meaning. The image was a vivid depiction of prophetic history over the course of millennia. Historical representation it was not, however the pictorial representation has its correctness.

Was the time of Nebuchadnezzar golden, as he ruled powerfully and autocratically? Certainly! Then came the time of the Medes and Persians; that was only silver, because there were laws, which could not be broken also by the king. Then came the brazen age of the Greek-Macedonian and the iron age of the Roman rule. And finally the present age of popular rule, in which clay and iron are mixed: constitutional government, parliaments, police, military, etc. The world has really adjusted itself in this way. This representation is not scientific, one may not bring it on the catheder, but it is nevertheless correct!

Then we see in chap. 7 the same argument in another form. Here we find four animal appearances - impossible zoological figures. Is the representation scientific? No! But is it correct? Yes! Almost all kings and states bear animals in their coat of arms; there is one kind, one being in them all. Animal they act and are more or less.

This is a divine representation of real conditions; and so we may well imagine that God will have similarly given Moses the account of creation; or even how God showed him on the mount the tabernacle, ark of the covenant, and other accessories, with the instruction, "See that thou make it in their image, which thou sawest on the mount." (Exodus 25:40)

Then follows the account of the separation of land and water, sprouting of greenery, arrangement of the celestial lights, creation of the sea and land animals, and finally man.

These are all great images, vivid plastic representations of their succession - a masterpiece of reporting in which room is left for both: for scientific research and for faith.

Just as we are completely independent and free from scientific research and historical results with our faith, science should have the freedom to conduct its research independently of faith.

History has proved Daniel and God right about that dream image and its interpretation. Science will confirm in the same way what Moses wrote about the new creation. Strictly scientifically his report is not, but he is right nevertheless.

2. Second chapter

In verse 1-3 of this chapter first the completion of the creation and the rest of God from His works is thought of. But then also the sanctification of the seventh day, whose rest should be a shadow of God's rest, as it is also emphasized in Hebr. 4, 4.10. The question of the meaning of the Sabbath arises of its own accord.

There is no mention of a regulation here at all. There is also no syllable that God commanded to observe the seventh day permanently as a holiday. It is only mentioned that God has sanctified it.

This is the precious background that people can have a share in the rest of God: "He who has come to His rest ceases" to create. This rest is to find its image in the Sabbath, which in turn is a shadowy model on the rest of faith. Viewed in this way, it is to be compared to a vessel with delicious contents.

However, this does not mean that it should be regardedas a template that should be valid for all times. As soon as the believer from the nations has recognized the connection of things, he forgets to see something binding for him in the observation of this day.

Let us leave it to the Jews to observeone day before another; to us believers of the Gentiles all days are equal, and let no conscience ever be made of our observing such a day (Rom. 14:5, 6; Col. 2:16, 17).

The Israelite believers in the Christian communities observe this day out of the context of their people.

The shadow has found its partial fulfillment in the rest of God to which we have entered. But much, the most and most delicious of God's rest, is yet to come in that time when Christ will have brought back what was lost to us through the Fall.

The Sabbath was given to **the people of Israel. They are** to make it an everlasting covenant for all **their** generations. It is an eternal sign between God and the children of Israel (Ex 31:12, 13, 16, 17; Ezek 20:12, 20). To a holy people, land, places, buildings, tithes also belongs a holy day. One people, one land, one place, one temple out of many, one day out of seven: this is marking of Israel.

But nowhere is there a trace of transfer of the Sabbath commandment to the peoples of the nations and Christians of the nations in the writings of the apostle to the nations. For believers from the nations, all land, all places, every house, all property and every day, not just a fraction of all these things, are to belong to the Lord.

In addition to this one meaning for Israel, however, the Sabbathhad another meaning for that people, a national, social, and agricultural meaning that affected not only the individual but the whole people and land.

If one wanted to **introduce** the idea of the Sabbath, then one would have to **carry** it **out.** Then you would have to celebrate not only one day out of seven, but also the seventh month and the seventh year, and return the land to its original owner on the fiftieth year. For the Israelites had, as it were, a Sabbathism that permeated the whole of their lives.

There we see again how people dealquite arbitrarily with what is recognized as the will of God. What fits, that one takes; the remaining one throws into the wastepaper basket. The Sabbath wants to be imposed on us, because it fits very nicely into a system. But one does not want to know anything about the seventh month, the seventh and the fiftieth year. This may be useful, but it is not consistent and true to conviction. From this one can see self-made pickiness: one has made something according to one's taste. So there is no question of a command of God to observe the Sabbath. If there were such a command, then we would have to bow to it for the sake of our conscience.

With verse 4 - 7, to which verse 18 - 25 are addedas supplement, a new important section of the report about the creation begins.

Two accounts we have of the creation of man, as we have four Gospels, and of these three belong together, while the fourth is very distinct from the first group. We have two clearly differentiated accounts, written from quite different points of view, but complementing each other, as is the case with the Gospels, without contradicting each other.

In the middle of the fourth verse begins the account, which stands out from the first by bringing a new name for God - **Yahweh**. This name has nothing to do with "Lord" but with "to **be**" or "**to become.**" The word God, **Elohim,** indicates a majority not of gods, but in the essence of God, to which ch. 1:26 also leads us. In "Yahweh" there is a form of being, whether in relation to past, present or future, and it is therefore a name that a man could not have thought up.

The first report has to do with the relationship of the creator to the creation. There is no mention of a special, closer relationship of God to the last created beings and of the relationship of these beings to the preceding ones. The human being takes a place in the same panorama at the end, although standing on the highest level.

The second has to do exclusively with God's relationship with man. That is why God also receives a new name. This is the most natural explanation for the change of name. In the name is shown how God stands to mankind. We may rejoice in every translation that does not keep the "Lord" of the Luther text, but brings the name **Jehovah** or **Yahweh.** It is better even if one does not understand what the meaning of this name is. It means: "**I am who I will be**", as one can easily find out from the Scriptures.

In the section verse 4 - 7 now it is reported what has become of the creation which God has called into existence on the third and sixth day. It is a matter here of determining the special relationship of creation to man and of man to God. The history of man's temptation grows out of man's relationship to creation. God first created what would later lead to his temptation, what would be a starting point for it. The plant world needed indeed the care for growth and prosperity, in the beginning, however, God had to **create** it before. Here now we find the description of the plant world, from which the temptation came.

First, let us contrastsome features of the two accounts. In the first report we read: "God created man in His image". There was nothing said about dust, also nothing about a living soul, a living being. Simple, plain, great it says: man is created in the image of God.

In the second report the same fact is illuminated from a completely different side. Here it is described how God went to work, in which workshop man was formed, which materials God used for it. He uses the dust of the earth. The expression earth dumpling appears coarse, clumsy; in the Hebrew Bible the finest of the earth is spoken of.

From the finest components of the earth, from earth dust, God forms man and blows into his nostrils the breath of life: thus man becomes a living soul.

Very far this designation is from the one in the first report. It is exactly the same as the one for the animals, as we read ch. 1,30: "and everything that has a living soul."

Nevertheless, we do not need to look for our ancestors in the monkey box; because the enormous, never to be bridged distance between the two living beings animal and human being confronts ch. 1,24 clearly: **"The earth** bring forth living beings". The origin, the life in this part of the creation comes completely from the earth, while the soul, which is the characteristic of man, comes completely from God.

He takes dust from the earth, but does not say to it: "Bring forth a man whose image is like ours. God Himself, as the creator, artist, master craftsman, takes the dust into His own hand and builds the human body, and with the breath of His mouth He animates this being with life.

So we see the enormous distance between the living souls of the animal world and the living soul of man - opposites from the ground up, and yet also close relatives. We want to be careful not to be driven into a false spirituality out of opposition to Darwinism and thus to blur the close relationship set in the Bible.

When materialists say: man is an animal, then one is inclined to reply: no; he is purely spiritual. We think so deeply of the animal creation; we know them only in their fallen state, subject to vanity, as rebels against us, which we must control with bridle in bit and put in irons, otherwise they do not obey. By virtue of our being we have no power over them; only by cunning and

violence are we able to raise ourselves to rule over them - a distortion of the way it originally was. In their natural disposition we do not know them.

According to Romans 8:19-23, she has been subjected with us in hope, not voluntarily, for our sake, for the sake of the Son of Man. But she will also be set free with us. We know her only after the fall; therefore there is a poor feud between her and man, while he should be her ancestral lord, as man was before God in the garden.

These are the only things we know. Some features of the scripture, however, let us suspect their real purpose. For example, when we read Rev. 4:7, how lion, ox, eagle and man stand before the throne of God. What do they have to do there? Let us beware of a false spiritualization of the nature of man.

We keep both reports: man is created in the image of God, but according to his outward existence he originates from the earth. He belongs to it as well as to God through the breath of His mouth.

The original soul life of man has received its form of existence by the fact that the breath from God was breathed into the dust of the earth. But the whole bears the great heading: Image of God. Because just in the corporeality of the human being must lie a kind of the representation of the divine figure.

The first thing we encounter when describing man is simply the material. The breath is only **one** side of man; we do not want to eliminate that. It would be wrong to take refuge in one-sided spirituality in fearful timidity before corporeality.

The profound distance between the biblical account and all philosophical ideas starts just here. Let us take the highest Greek thinkers. They let humans come into being by natural procreation of the gods, by intercourse of the gods with humans. Therefore poets came to the saying: We are of divine gender. According to their conception, however, there is commonly a constant feud between god and man, the basic idea of which is: the gods are envious of man.

The well-being of people is considered a sin; then comes the vengeance of the gods. Not because of evil deeds, but because people want to have it good like the gods, so because the gods are envious, people are afflicted by the gods.

The gods of the Greeks are carnal, very carnal, sensual people, who cannot do enough in sensual, erotic passions. And how these Greek thinkers are admired by our German poets! Our people are being led into such a swamp!

The noblest conception of God and man we find in this report, in which the creation of man is set as indissoluble unity in the breathing of the life spirit from God into the structure from dust. This has not been changed at all since then, but it is rather determined once and for all that by means of this being God wants to come to the creation.

Just as man must be nourished with food that comes from the dust of the earth - and this relationship has never been broken even after the destruction of the original relationship - just so we have the guarantee, guarantee, that God wants to bring the whole earthly, material creation to glory.

Here we have the key to the great revelation like Romans 8, where verse 17 takes us to the highest level: "If then we be children, we are heirs also, even heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if we suffer otherwise withal, that we may be also exalted withal unto glory." And where does it go then? Not to the angels, cherubim and seraphim, but it goes on to say, "For the eager waiting of the creature awaits the revelation of the children of God."

We have been taught by song and lecture to dream only of the fifth heaven. The Holy Spirit, on the contrary, does not go away from the earth at all, but straight into the creation: the creature stretches out its neck for the revelation of the children of God! Let us stay on the ground that God puts under our feet in the creation account. Or let us take Psalm 8, which, immediately after speaking of man's high destiny, goes to the sheep and the oxen. This is the way of the Spirit,

though it doesn't sound like it as we are trained. On the ground of this dust earth, God will pour out all His glory.

This is also the key to the whole glory revelation of God in the future. We are worse heathens than we know in our ideas of heaven and glory. We have been contaminated to the bone in our views because we have made a marriage covenant with philosophy. We have been poisoned with the Greek thinking about heaven and the hereafter, of course without corporeality, because that belongs to the devil!

All this has been calmly transplanted into the Christian way of thinking. One wants to have a bliss of pure spirituality. This has become dominant in the widest circles of Christianity.

That the spirit of the living God enters into a connection with the dust of the earth, which has been the dwelling of an already fallen angelic power, but is to be brought out of the curse and destruction, -- that is the goal of the new creation of our God. Man is the guarantee that God wants to and will bring back the creation, also that of the demonized world.

From this follows already one of the enormous basic features of the legislation, namely that there should be only **one** image of God in the world, the man himself. What a memory of God man carries in himself! God has made his image, which is to bear the same features as we encounter in the nature of God. These features should be expressed in the life and work of man.

How much did He care that this should be especially prominent among the people in whom God wanted to take up theidea of redemption. Israel should be His special property (Ex 19:5,6) and man should be His only image. From the beginning, everyone should live in such a way that no one but God can be worshipped.

The section v. 8-15 deals with the establishment of the garden in Eden. Its centerpiece speaks of the watering of Eden, the garden and the wider land, about which we have nothing to say in particular. Only a reference to a secondary circumstance is permitted. The gold (v. 11.12) has a wonderful magic; it has a close relationship with the noblest part of creation. Accordingly, there is a cursed and a holy hunger for gold. Go after the smells like the metals.

These are interesting, attractive studies, investigations. In the Mosaic cult, great emphasis is placed on fragrant incense. The wise men from the east, who had a high spirit of wisdom, otherwise they would not have gone the way, brought gold and incense. Compare passages like 2 Cor. 2:14-16; Eph. 5:2.

Stench belongs to sin. Our nature is stench; God's nature is sweet smell. The most precious and fine design of earth dust, fragrance like gold and precious stone, is used in Israelite worship. Thus gold and precious stone are used in the tabernacle and temple. The high priest wears it on his head and chest. And Rev. 21 describes in shining colors New Jerusalem's coming glory and splendor.

But now to the main content of this section. **Paradise is** unmistakably a creation, a work of God, which has nothing to do with heaven. It is on the same line as the creation of man, who is destined for paradise and is placed in it to **build** and **preserve** this product of divine activity.

Building is an activity of human forces. Unemployment and laziness therefore do not belong to the original state of man. Neither is it to be concluded from the events after the Fall that work is a curse of sin. The curse lies only in the fact that man must work in the sweat of his brow, that he has to deal with an unwillingness in creation which does not stretch its fruits out to him, but which he must wrest from it. Work is his originally ancestral inheritance, a trait of his God-image.

But preserving is an unmistakable indication of a possible hostility, of a hostile attack. The preservation is only mentioned when there is a danger that something could be stolen or destroyed. The conclusion is here quite inevitable that in the order not only a dangerthreatening the paradise but also the man is indicated.

The task was to protect the wonderful creation of God, the paradise, against hostile powers, which were expected to make an attack on the creation of God. Therefore, man must have

received a certain instruction from God. For the later fallen one should not be left with the excuse that this danger had come upon him unawares. God gave to man clearly to understand that hostile beings were there, against which he must arm himself. For the primitive man had a completely different way of understanding God than we, whose mind has become so dull, so thick. Here already we find the call to watchfulness, which later confronts us so often and clearly. It is clear to whom the exhortation to watchfulness is directed (2 Cor. 2:11).

However, there is still more in this word. The intention of God to restore the creation destroyed by Satan's fall and the execution of this intention by man must inevitably have been known by the one to whom it was meant. So we have to imagine that this project of God appeared to the enemy as a very special challenge to now undertake the cunning attack to expel the man from the paradise who had received the certain order to preserve the garden.

If on this line the great campaign plan of the original Lord of the earth is to be sought and found, then we understand it a little better that he took the same procedure with the second Adam.

It starts with the food. The first instruction is: "You shall eat". Eating is one of the most wonderful processes in the life of man. It is the most extraordinary thing in the world, but it can be troublesome attimes. However, this eating of food taken from the earth has a deep meaning. Through the process of eating and drinking, we are constantly reminded of our complete dependence on the surrounding creation, from which we cannot escape, no matter how much we may sovereignly, self-importantly despise it. For we, the fallen majesties, must now have flesh and blood, cannot live from our own fullness of life. Our life is intimately bound to this creation.

But this also has a reverse side, which is just as great and wonderful. By taking in these plant and animal substances, the other components of creation are raised to higher levels of existence; they become a part of our life; they are raised to the level of the community of human life, and thereby also to the level of the highest, the divine life.

We see that the Son of Man cannot use a stronger expression than that of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (Jn 6:53-57), but from this we also see what deep meaning is attached to the process of eating in Scripture.

This would also be a recommended special and particular study. We would be overwhelmed by the frequency with which food is mentioned. How large a part of the cultus, the order of worship in the Old Testament is meat eating. The Israelites are commanded to eat and drink before Jehovah. Noah and his descendants were given the meat diet as a task. This goes on throughout the Scriptures.

The only, plastic, vivid, concrete, sensual act that Christ gave through Paul to His waiting, believing congregation, which otherwise absolutely walks by faith and not by sight, is an act, an act of eating and drinking, in which they are to proclaim the Lord's death.

From all this, we realize how many deep, delicious relationships lie there.

On this ground, then, is the enemy's line of attack. He has enteredit and pursues it not only at the first Adam, but also at the second, here, however, without success. He approaches him still under more favorable circumstances. Not in paradise, where there was no talk of hunger and where he had been warned, but in the desert, where he had starved, the tempter approaches him with the self-evident admonition: eat, eat! Surely that would not have been a sin! There we see how these lines run clearly.

According to our conventional thinking, food is something very material, grossly sensual. But for this very reason - let us underline it - it is something very tender. It is indeed something shameful, because we are dependent on the surrounding creation for our livelihood. However, even our clothes we have to borrow from it, not to say steal - if we want to cover our shame; and nevertheless, even there God speaks of a garment of salvation and righteousness that he has wrought.

Precisely because food is something material, sensual, it is something very meaningful willed by God. Creation and humanity should never be torn apart, but remain together for eternity. Man came into the possession and enjoyment of creatures so that he might raise them to the highest height, to the likeness of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Why did God not choose another activity that would give a nobler conception of consecration than that which takes place under eating and drinking? Because it is the most outstanding activity of our fallen being. It expresses our indissoluble connection with the surrounding creation, on which the redemption of creation is based.

We are not dealing with angels. Certainly they are ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who are to inherit blessedness (Heb 1:14). But our service is to the creation itself. They are only servants; the dominions come from the dust. The greatest glory is due to those from the dust. **H i e** lines of glory run. Let us seek paradise also for the future perfection of God's thoughts not in heaven but on the new earth.

Verse 16 and 17 we find the first commandment, "You shall eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat."

Which kind the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil were, is beyond our judgement and knowledge. One tried to interpret this part of the words allegorically, symbolically. But this is to be rejected, because it stands in opposite connection to the first part of the commandment.

This compels us to assume that the expression may and must stand in its quite natural meaning. It is the natural taking of fruits that were supplied by the tree, tree fruits that were to serve as food.

Why should these fruits from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil not be grasped in the same way as those of the other trees? There are deep secrets here. Our knowledge is fragmentary; we must therefore be modest. But it is certain that for the man, who was created by God, a completely different knowledge was accessible, which he ate into himself. Because in this way he came to the knowledge. God also knows evil; we are not left in the dark about this. He knows about evil, its origin, its height and depth, as no creature can know better. So there must be a knowledge of evil without the slightest communion **with** evil.

So there are two lines here: a divine one, since God has the most perfect knowledge of evil without ever being touched by it, and another, ungodly one, which means real, experiential knowledge of evil. God recognizes this when He speaks of the knowledge of good and evil.

We are not able to judge to what extent the tree could communicate a knowledge of good and evil to man, nor how far man would have come in the knowledge of good and evil if he had remained obedient. It is certain, however, that the tree received its name not only because man came to an actual, experiential knowledge of evil by eating its fruit, but also because man could have gained a divine knowledge of good and evil from it through obedience, without enjoying the fruit. This is not subject to any doubt.

Not only after this event the tree has received this name, but **at the** tree the man could have learned to remain sinless and to acquire further knowledge remaining sinless. How? - I do not know, and except God probably nobody. But that such a knowledge could have been achieved in this way, our report vouches for it. And here we come across another important point: the creation of the garden and that tree happened with reference to the existing evil.

Cognition is a very one-sided concept in our country. It has been developed only on one side. We have become accustomed to calling only what we can processintellectually. The Scriptures use the word in a different way, more comprehensive, greater. Jesus says Joh. 17,8: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, who alone are true God, and whom You have sent, Jesus Christ".

Knowledge is in the scripture not only or not at all an intellectually grasping and processing. Yes, one can work oneself to pieces over many things with the intellect, which are not to be

recognized so at all. There the word must have another meaning, namely that of a vital, effective absorption into our personality. Not a fruitless occupation with the intellect, but entering into a vital, fruitful relationship with God - that is knowledge according to the Scriptures.

We find a parallel illustration of this right at the beginning of our book, chap. 4,1, where the word is used of the first conjugal union. In the biblical concept lies the closest conceivable relationship to the recognized object. If we keep this in mind, it becomes clear to us that cognition is not a dead occupation of the mind, but a complete mastery, violence, power over the object.

According to God's plan, this animate, animated creatureis called to recognize, control and cope with good and evil in such a vital, life-effective way that God can finally deal with evil through it. To recognize means to cope, to manage; not to be overwhelmed by it. According to the plan, the intention of God, there should not always be a discord in creation, and we humans should not always stand before evil as before an unsolvable riddle, but He wants to achieve a final solution of evil through man.

It is worthy of God and according tothe disposition of man that in view of the evil that has penetrated into the universe and into creation, a goal should be set in man for the evil by overcoming, dominating knowledge. What the consequence would have been if man had remained obedient is beyond our judgment.

However, the fact that things have turned out differently does not mean that God has now abandoned His original plan to completely dissolve evil through man and with man through living knowledge. That never occurred to Him. Rather, the name of the second Adam, who was a man born of the flesh, in the form of sinful flesh, i.e. real man, except for sin, vouches for the fact that what He has planned will come to pass without any compromise.

This view is also based on the fact that the second Adam, the Son of God, to whom God clearly expressed His pleasure, with His very first step taken on this path to confront evil, achieved victory with His overwhelming realization.

There we meet the resounding success of the knowledge of good and evil, guided only by the expression of God's will, on the same line as it is drawn here. And in the victory we find the seed of the final victory.

Verse 17 we read further: "For the day you eat of it, you will die of death". This death occurred immediately after the fall. Not in its entirety. According to the body Adam did not die immediately. The death occurred however immediately, because it does not extend only to the body. The whole man fell to death; he was a child of death at the same moment. This must be clearly distinguished. As Rom. 8,10 tells us, that we, who have the firstfruits of the spirit (. 23), walk in newness of life (Rom. 6,4), although the body is dead because of sin.

"But if Christ be in you, ... the Spirit is life, for righteousness' sake." Then the highest kind of life has taken possession. The life in us is **S e i n** life, but the body is dead because of sin. Just as on the ground of the new life the new life can exist next to the old, which is actually death, so there on the ground of the natural creation death entered, while the bodily and soul life continued.

But this life is a constant, progressive dying, as it is also with us. We no longer know a **life** at all. The whole apostolic language is based on this view. See Eph. 2, 1.5.

In the first account we read ch. 1:31: "And God looked on all that He had made; and, behold, it was very good".

So there the judgment is made about the whole, in which is written: "He created them, man and woman". So the woman is included in the judgment: "it was very good".

The second report puts the creation of the woman only apart from the creation of the man. The thought should not arise therefore that God has improved, corrected. The creation of the woman lay from the beginning in the thoughts of God. He knew that it would be better, more correct for the purely male created man and his state of being, if he also shared the sexual

relations with the whole creation. For therein lies a mystery, as Paul explains Eph. 5, 23-32. The relationship of man and woman is an image of the relationship of Christ and His church, which was decided from eternity in the divine counsel. The later creation of the woman is to be understood from the point of view that God makes the duality for the execution of His thoughts. In the light of the original thought of creation, we realize that man alone should not be the ruler.

In verse 19 and 20 we now see something great: God leads the animals before man. This was an actual installation, bestowal, introduction into his rulership and the formal process of taking it over.

There the meaning of the word "to know", to have insight into the innermost being of a creature, meets us brightly. At that time man, in his unfallen state, had a degree of insight into the whole of creation such as we can now hardly imagine, let alone possess. Man possessed the faculty not only of immediately grasping clearly, surely, distinctly by mere sight what thought God had put into the various, very numerous creatures, but also that of expressing it in a single word. For that is what the name meant.

Therefore, also in this direction, a thorough study of this chapter is of such fundamental importance. Here are laid down the terms with which the Holy Spirit will then work. We meet here the first use in the divine revelation of what is so familiar and common to us, of the name and the naming.

From the very beginning, we see the tremendous implications of this. Life depends on the name of God, as Jesus tells us Joh. 17, 3.6.26. The whole glory of which the Lord speaks in this chapter is included in His name.

We must first have this concept properly coined instead of reckoning with our worn-out ideas. They are nothing but wretchedness. We educated people, highly gifted thinkers often bear nonsensical names. To recognize the essence of a creature or a human being and to express it in one word is something that none of us is able to do now. Do you know with the name Ströter or Knoll what is in the man? Yes, with the handkerchief and inkwell we can still, but with the creatures of God -- !!! Do we imagine with oak tree, ox, sheep, what God may have thought? This ability comes again; but here the man had it already.

Recognition means power. Sinful mankind, which no longer knows and recognizesits own sin, has realized this. That is why they try to seize knowledge at any price. But we lack the ability to recognize correctly.

The view for the thoughts of God, which He has woven into the creation, is lost to us; we have died for it. It must first be generated anew by the word of truth. Only then do we begin to recognize how we are recognized, but only piecemeal.

So man recognized the nature of the animals, and God was satisfied with the name he gave them and which they should bear. If only Adam had written downa list of names for us! However, the wish is foolish; because we would have no insight into the letters and sounds of his language. If we realize that we have lost that ability to express in one word comprehensively, exhaustively, satisfactorily for God, the content of each creature, then we get a somewhat correct idea of the horrible case into which we have fallen through the one sinner's one sin.

We all see there the deep poverty, the inner atrophy of the great disposition. The striving for the attainment of such a fortune is there, but how incapable, powerless we are to hunt for what has been lost to us through the fall. From the outset, judgment is pronounced on all purely spiritual endeavors with which one tries to help oneself. They are all vain and in vain. We study zoology, learn to order, to classify, to categorize, to give Greek, Latin, Hebrew names that it only buzzes, and still we have no clear knowledge of things.

Do we find in a book of anatomy an insight into the thought of God with the creature? No semblance of it! If a redemption would lie on this way, then one should be able to tell us what God has thought e.g. with the dog. We must honestly confess that we know nothing and will remain

ignorant. *Ignoramus, ignorabimus.* All attempts to work oneself out of corruption is to work oneself to pieces, to grind oneself. If only it would serve that we would become bankrupt of ourselves!

The following v. 21-24 deals with the miraculous creation of the woman from the rib, i.e. the side of man.

First, a short word may precede. From the processes with creation of the woman in connection with the creation of the man and the establishment of his dominion over the creation, we win a clear proof for the fact that we have to reckon with longer time periods with the "days" of the creation.

The first report gives us an overview of the six periods under the designation of days. According to him the man was created on the sixth day, but before that already the land animals. After the second report, however, it is describedfurther that the creation of the woman is preceded also still by the presentation of all animals before the man. Even if we take into account the quite extraordinary talent of the man who could see through the nature of the animals in an instant and find an appropriate name for it, nevertheless a day of 12 hours does not want to be sufficient to let all the animals pass by and fly. In addition then before the creation of the woman the sleep of the human being comes, which must have lasted some quarter hours, if not hours. The opinion is quite justified therefore that the day was longer than 24 hours. That would be also completely in agreement with the other use of the word day in the scripture.

It is also used of fixed days, like Sabbath day, Day of Atonement etc.. However, we often find it to designate quite extended periods of time, as in the expressions Day of Salvation, Son of Man, Last Judgment, - periods of time that are incalculable. Here also belongs the word that before God a thousand years are like a day (Ps. 90,4), even if we do not want to accept this as a fixed measure.

So we see that God takes the man's helpmate from his side. We think of the Greek legend, according to which Pallas-Athena sprang from the head of Zeus. The woman does not spring from the head, but from the side.

Christ is the head of every man, and every man the head of his wife. In this is expressed the basic law of the relationship in which man and woman should stand. The woman is not a second head, standing beside the man to exercise leadership. She is taken from his side and stands sideways, close to the man's heart.

It is not spiritual relationships that take place in the head, but real, heartfelt relationships in the deepest sense of the word that are involved here. In the way God proceeded in the creation of the woman from the man and in the relationship resulting from it, the thought concerning the church and its relationship to Christ is formed: flesh from his flesh, bone from his bone (Eph. 5, 22-32). The most intimate unity and community of life imaginable is to be expressed here.

The wonderful institution of marriage is based on this. At the same time, however, it is the order of creation, which in itself has no religious significance. Marriage has nothing to do with the relationship of man to God; it is the relationship of man to man, whereas religion has to do with the relationship of man to God. Marriage is not on the ground of religion, but only on the ground of creation as such. It has to do with the relations of the highest creature to his fellow creature, to the helpmate who is to share his position with him.

Of course, there is no denying that this relationship may develop into relationships that can create the greatest difficulties, depending on how one or the other part relates to God.

Paul has grasped the fundamental importance of marriage. Sometimes the inner divorce through the conversion of one or the other part occurs only after the consummation of the marriage. Then the resulting difficulties may well be borne with the Lord, but they are often borne heavily. He says: If the unbelieving part wants to separate, let the other let him go (1Co 7:15); the believer is not bound in this case.

It is deplorable that state and church institutions do not recognize this valid reason for divorce. However, Paul also stated very clearly that it is a great risk and one of the most precarious things when a person enters into marriage with an unbeliever. If there is not complete agreement between husband and wife on this ground, the relationship is an immensely difficult one and means struggle and strife and hardship for the two.

The depth of the apostle's understanding of the fact of mere carnal intercourse is determined by the fact that, according to his view, the actual essence of marriage exists only in the physical union. He even speaks of the relationship with the harlot: "he who is attached to the harlot is one body with her" (1Co 6:16). He also refers to the illicit relationship of conjugal intercourse as an image of the delicious relationship of Christ and His members. In this relationship between man and woman lies and remains the basic meaning of marriage.

One of the most dangerous aspects of today's Holiness movement is that this fact has been set aside and the abstention from conjugal intercourse has been declared to be a higher state of spiritual life. Spiritists also forbid conjugal intercourse. The dear holy brothers should learn something from this. See 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

In verse 25 we have a communication for which we lack personal judgment today. We are not able to feel this way even in the most intimate relationships. Those had nothing to hide from each other, nothing to cover in their physical condition or in their spiritual relations with each other. That has become so completely different.

3. Third chapter

A good part of this chapter is about the serpent, which was "more cunning than all the beasts of the field". Whether it is to be counted among the animals brought before the ruler of the new creation or among the creatures that existed from before?

If one sees skeletons of extinct classes of animals today, e.g., those of the giant dinosaurs, one gets the impression that there must have been monsters who were there before the sixth day-work; for their remains reach into strata where there are no human bones.

The conclusion is therefore obvious that they are remnants from earlier periods and that to these also the snake belongs. We do not want to put too much weight on it, although such an assumption does not seem to be without reason. If it belonged to the new creation, then the serious question would arise: how could Satan put himself without further ado into the possession of a completely innocent animal belonging to the new creation?

In any case, we are confronted with very peculiar relationships. In Satan we are confronted with a being of the highest order, an angelic prince, albeit a fallen one, to whom Scripture pays a respect that astonishes us.

Thus, the archangel Michaelmust not pass judgment on him, but only say, "The Lord punish you!" (Jude 9). This being must have belonged to the highest dominions, throne holders in the angelic world, before there were humans, even if it has suffered terrible loss since then.

From all that we know from the Scriptures about Satan, a great talent and disposition shines out. Under all circumstances, however, the mystery remains a very deep one, how such a being could take possession of another being created from the earth and how this could come into the power and dominion of that fallen angelic prince. The Scriptures leave us in the dark about this fact.

Right here at the beginning we see that the scripture knows the possibility that highest spirit beings can put themselves into the possession of a corporeality. With this we meet the first

case of possession, even if it is not about a human being, but about a creature standing under the human being.

From the account Matth. 8, 28-34 about the possessed man, where the spirits had takenpossession of the one body so en masse, we see that the spirits prefer to go into a herd of swine, verse 31, than to have to wander around bodiless.

We place these facts next to each other and conclude from them that with these dreadfully deeply fallen beings not only the possibility is open to put themselves into the possession of other beings, but that even a very strong desire for it seems to be present, otherwise the desire to drive into a herd of pigs would be incomprehensible. The quite uncanny urging, rushing of these fallen spirit beings to incarnate themselves in some way, leads to the conclusion that they have been disembodied by the fall in a way most painful for them. Their understanding of the value of corporeality, their strong inclination to corporealization would be inexplicable if they had not been innately in possession of a corporeality, however fine.

It is similar to us when we leave our physicality; however, we only take off this cover for a while, our undressing is only of short duration.

Their understanding and inclination for corporeality cannot come from the creation of man and the formation of his body, but only from the fact that they must have had a corporealitybefore. It is true that the Lord says of the sons of the resurrection, "They shall neither be free nor allowed to be free, but they shall be like the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). However, this does not mean the cessation of corporeality, but only the cessation of sexual relations. Now, if they are equal to the angels, these must also have corporeality and the later fallen angels certainly did not make an exception before the fall. So the angels know corporeality.

An example of a corporeality of finest kind we would have e.g. in the comet, whose tail, through which one sees other celestial bodies shining through, is of the main material kind.

It is believed that our earth was originally a fiery or gaseous body, which gradually condensed and got a crust. This view may well be correct. If we think of angels with gaseous bodies and the ability to compress them and make them visible, we can imagine that there would be angelic beings who could live in the sun just as easily as we do on earth, for whose existence it would not matter to endure even thousands of degrees and who would feel as comfortable as we do at 14 degrees. We point out that asbestos does not burn.

But the scripture now shows that the angels have a body that can condense, make visible, audible, tangible. Thus the angel of Acts 12,7 strikes Peter at his side. The ability to do this is certainly not to be denied to them.

The story of temptation is of fundamental importance for knowledge and faith. To get to know this meaning and the light that falls from there on the emergence of sin in mankind is of quite inestimable value for us. One can see here, too, how important the organic context of Scripture is, and how indispensable it is for everyone who wants to enter thoroughly into the truth of God, that he should not pass by and neglect, a thorough study of just these original teachings that we get here. For only from a fundamentally correct knowledge of the origin, nature and essence of sin in mankind is a correct understanding of redemption possible. Here the Word of God reveals to us the very first germs, beginnings of evil in mankind.

The enemy's attack is an attack on man's position on the word of God. The very first word that the serpent addresses to the woman is, "Should God have said?" It is most significant for us to grasp that the enemy's main attack is first and foremost to make man question the word of God. As he succeeded in this, the next step was easy, the transgression already given.

We see clearly from this that the only security of a man of God is to remain in the word of truth. The enemy does not want to bring man into wickedness, misery, distress or transgression in the first place; that comes only in the second place. He was quite sure of his cause: he would bring

him there without difficulty, if he only succeeded in getting man to commit himself to even a slight deviation from the Word.

So that's where his whole effort went from the beginning, to put a question mark after a clearly spoken word of God: "Should God have said?"

In verse 2 and 3 the woman speaks the truth, but she allows herself a very small exaggeration of the divine truth, which at first sight does not look so dangerous. She adds something to what she has quite correctly understood and correctly reproduces.

There was nothing in the ban about them "not touching". That is a very small increase and aggravation that it allows itself. This is also of deep psychological significance. It is a phenomenon that can still be observed today, that we humans are inclined to allow ourselves such seemingly harmless exaggerations, which are quite consistent with the word of God. This has remained with us until this day. It is painful to observe how dear men of God fall into deep error by allowing themselves very small emphases, aggravations, one-sided accentuations of certain lines of divine truth, which seem to be quite based on agreement with the word of God, without it being possible to say that it is a break with the truth.

The "you shall not touch it" is quite compatible with the "you shall not eat it". But it is not a chaste treatment of the Word of God, even if it is quite different from a conscious denial.

The woman does not deny anything. She emphasizes clearly and firmly: "we eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God has said, eat not of it. This is entirely on the lines of what they heard from the mouth of Jehovah their God. For surely the woman was there when God gave them the commandment.

From the second part of the answer it is clear that the prohibition to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not given earlier than after the creation of the woman. In any case, she had a clear knowledge of the content and meaning of the prohibition, otherwise she could not have said as much as she did.

Therein lies the danger that the woman remains with the truth, but not completely, so that the enemy gains a handle for the pursuit of his further goal. He now managed to deal with the woman without difficulty.

Let us not forget that even the slightest deviation from the truth, be it a small transgression, be it a small emphasis on a truth, weakens our position and puts us in danger of falling into Satan's power. This is what happened to the woman, and she was very easily overcome by the more distant things with which the serpent comes out.

Now the enemy may allow himself to contradict the word of God straight away, to present the truth as a lie in the most impudent way (v. 4): "You will by no means die of death". Yes, he goes v. 5 even further by bringing forth a blatant accusation of God, of envy against the creatures.

It is a most remarkable trait that in the pagan legend of the gods, even among the so highly educated Greeks, the envy of the gods plays such a prominent role. We see again what origin this is: it is satanic. Let us honestly admit that the enemy has succeeded only too well in sinking this dark suspicion against God deep into the human heart.

It is one of the damages that children of God suffer from long, long after their conversion, and in which, after decades of experiencing the love, faithfulness, and kindness of our God, we find ourselves again and again trusting Him with evil. We find in ourselves a deep suspicion of God, as if what He does is not born of pure love after all. Who of us is innocent of this? This terrible distrust is the channel through which Satan can sink poison into us, just as one sends morphine into the body through a small hole and poisons all the blood.

Satan teaches the woman the thought: The effect of eating the fruit of this tree will be that you will become like God. But he wants to withhold this from you, because he does not want you to have it. We can imagine to some extent, even if not in all depth and clarity, which echo this thought must have found in the heart of a creature, in which the highest conceivable disposition

was just on this line to become like God. With great cunning Satan moves exactly on this line and he makes it comprehensible to the woman that this ancestral disposition would be satisfied if she would only follow him and his instruction, if she would only follow him and his instruction; he could show her the straight way to it, while God envy and ill will wanted to withhold it from them.

V. 4 is a denial: "You will not die." In v. 5, however, there is a great truth move in which Satan moves on thoroughly divine lines in accordance with divine thoughts. This is of supreme importance. In all these things he has not changed his procedure, his mode of attack upon the children of God. Nor could he change it; for he had to bring out the best weapons at his disposal right at the beginning.

The enemy makes an extremely skillful use of a great moment of truth. For man was predisposed to be in the image of God (chap. 1,26). There the features of Satan coincide with the features of God. Only the way to it was different. There is also no doubt that man should reach the knowledge of good and evil like God, but only as God knows it, without evil having become a part of his being, so that he would not have become evil himself.

So the satanic method is not to deny the truth, but to leave it lying and only to teach man: I lead you another, safe way. This has remained his way to this day, as we can observe around us.

It would be one of the greatest deceptions to think that Satan reveals his nature only in the case of gross, cruel unbelief and denial of the divinity and redemption of Christ. He understands this, too, but only in part can we weigh and estimate him according to this. No, he still moves on the line of truth with the same skill as then; and how he knows how to present great truths next to the denial of some truths and to whisper to us: I will lead you into it. With thousands of years of experience in human life, he knows how to present them in his own way, and he has achieved a cunning skill in this.

But the basic features have not changed. Whoever grasps them is already armed in it. He will find confirmed that basically Satan has not learneda new method, but that he knows how to apply his skillful method in an extremely increased and refined way. In the basic procedure Satan has remained the same.

It is a delicious realization to know that in the nature of Satan there are not unimagined depths that he could bring out for us still unprepared. "We are not unaware of what he has in mind" (2Co 2:11).

Here we must worship and praise God that He not only allowed, but also ordered and arranged it in such a way that right at the beginning Satan had to reveal his nature. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the attempt 4000 years later: towards Jesus he uses exactly the same method as here.

Let us make this clear in detail and observeit in the effects of Satan's words, which are reported in v. 6: "The woman saw that it was good to eat of the tree": this is lust of the flesh; "and lovely to look at": this is lust of the eyes; "and desirable, because he made wise": this is pride and arrogant nature, which long for nothing more than to gain wisdom, knowledge, insight.

All this is in accordance with what is written in 1 John 2:16. Let us put this baseline underneath and observe which procedure the enemy takes when attacking the Son of God in the wilderness (Matth. 4, 1-11): it coincides perfectly. The attack on the second Adam shows that Satan has not learned anything since paradise and that there are no hidden depths in his nature.

The first temptation is a side piece to the doubtful question to the woman: Should God have said? The request to Jesus: "If you are the Son of God, speak that these stones become bread!" makes a question mark against the word at the Jordan: "This is My dear Son", which God audibly sounded (Matth. 3,17). "Speak that these stones become bread" means nothing else than: satisfy the needs of the flesh.

Surely it would not be a sin to be hungry or to make bread, as there at the feeding of the five thousand, but it would be a sin to satisfy the needs of the flesh at one's own pleasure without instruction from one's Father or even at the instigation of Satan.

The second temptation amounted to persuadingJesus to make a grand spectacle: "If thou be the Son of God, let thyself down!" He was man in order to feel the magic of showing people something they cannot do, to show them how He is superior to them, to sit majestically before the people and reveal His ability to rule over the forces of nature.

The last temptation: "I will give you all this", served the hope of life, the satisfaction of human ambition to want to be great; and indeed it moved on the ground of promise, because Satan knew that the kingdoms of the world have been transferred to the Son of God: You shall be ruler of the world; I will show you the way to it without suffering.

It is delicious that God knew how to make the enemy reveal all his power right at the first attack, to show all the weapons he had at his disposal. In the whole course of history there is essentially nothing new to be found. This is immensely comforting and delicious. With this, God has let us see into the ability and the power of this hostile being. Satan has learned, but basically his method has not changed.

This gives us a powerful defense against unjustified ideas of Satan's power. He is not an unfathomable creature, and there are by no means depths and heights hidden in his nature that can be compared even from a distance to those of God. Even if he is superior to us in insight and talent, he is still a limited creature.

Through philosophy and theology and the whole preoccupation of the human mind with this subject, ideas of the great importance of the God of this world have unfortunately flowed in unnoticed, which are not justified according to the Scriptures. In fact, in most circles, people have given in to the idea that Satan is a complete rival of God in all respects, who can do so much that he is at most only a very small piece behind God.

Still others have the opinion even of the arts of Satan that they have to fear more from him than from God. If we say otherwise, it is not to say that he should be diminished in any way; we only want to warn against biblically unjustified ideas about his power and depth. These are great, but they have their limits and boundaries. God has granted us the privilege of being accurately informed about them, so that we should not be left in the dark.

It also introduces us to the nature of this world (1Co 7:31), which is not of the Father (1Jn 2:15,16). By world the scripture understands here and there the building of creation and everything that is on it (Ps. 46,3; 1. Joh. 2,2), sometimes also mankind (Joh. 3,16); but essentially the ungodly urges and desires that the god and prince of this world has planted in the hearts of men, so that the life and activity of men carries the basic features of the worldly, carnal nature, of sin.

And now the fruit of the horrible act of eating the forbidden fruit v. 7: "Then both their eyes were opened, and they perceived that they were naked; and they plaited fig leaves together, and made aprons". Immediately death occurred. That was good, because dying included the possibility of salvation. Quite unmistakably the people were in an indescribably precious, blissful state, in the state of complete innocence and harmlessness, since they never had to be ashamed. That was now gone forever.

"Both their eyes were opened". It has been assumed, and perhaps with some justification, that with the fall not only an internal process had taken place, but that an external change had also occurred in them.

The first humans were created in the image of God, and since God wore a garment of light (Ps. 104,2), they also must have worn a garment of light that was removed by the fall. We do not want to delete anything from the word, but I do not find a hint concerning a garment of light of the two

people here. We want to limit ourselves therefore to what is written here: "they became aware that they were naked".

If with this word a completely new condition concerning the outward appearance should be indicated, then it would be hardly conceivable that already before the temptation history (chap. 2,25) the same words would have been used; and another meaning of the words here and there is not to be assumed after all.

The next step is of great importance. What they do now is the counterpart of what is said of God Jehovah v. 21. The note: "they plaited fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" indicates that this procedure of covering their nakedness, of hiding their nakedness from each other, must have seemed to the people the highest thing of which they were capable.

If this assumption is correct, if all their insight and knowledge did not point them to any other way than the one they took, then this is a clear proof that the possibility of a pleasing sacrifice, the way to be allowed to approach God, never came from the fallen man's mind and thoughts.

The proposition has been put forward that the idea of creating an approach to God through bloody sacrifices is found everywhere. This proposition may stand; but the conclusion must be rejected that man has the inherent capacity to have come by himself to the thought of finding a way of approaching God by the offering of the blood and life of an innocent victim.

It can be seen that a belief in sacrifice can be found among all peoples, but it does not go back further than after the expulsion from paradise; for there, immediately after the fall, man received from God a tangible, clear visual instruction on how he could approach his God in a manner pleasing to Him and cover his nakedness.

Here we have the fact that fallen man, with all his great gifts and knowledge, which he must have had, and which he certainly will not have lostall at once, did not find the way to God.

History lets us clearly perceive a decline of knowledge. In the past, it was considered a proven science that man had striven from a crude primitive state to climb to the heights we occupy today. The latest researches have knocked the ground out of this belief. Most researchers are convinced, compelled by the remains of earlier generations, that the further back in human history they are led by excavations, the more plausible evidence of higher culture they find.

It is undeniable that a decline has taken place in the spiritual life as well as in the carnal life. This irrefutably confirms that there is nothing with that view.

The earliest generations were on a higher spiritual level than ours. Our researchers take off their hats to the history of perished peoples, to buildings which they cannot imitate. These are honest testimonies, but they are concealed.

We do not have to think of the consequences of the fall as if everything had been lost with one blow, but gradually a weakening will have occurred. This can be seen in the art of writing as well as in the history of culture. Only through the Gospel has an upward movement occurred, because the conditions have become healthier.

In front of us is drawn in simple lines what man is able to achieve by his own ability to let himself be seen in front of himself, in front of others and in front of God. This is the basic question: what is man's relationship to his fellow man and to God? Man reveals it here as his first and deepest need to hide himself properly from his fellow man, to veil, to hide his own being.

To solve the next question: how can a sinful man appear before God? He found no other way than to make himself aprons. This corresponds to the highest human level; to the higher and solely appropriate divine level, it required a divine revelation and a special intervention.

Verse 8 and 9 show us that and how God seeks Adam. It is not fallen man who goes out to seek God after losing Him, but the holy God who goes out to seek. There the lines lie so simply; and again we see the profound, gaping difference between revelation and religion.

Religion means human searching, human efforts, events to get along with God again. Here, however, we are confronted with the first and only possibility that God begins. This is not religion,

but God's action. Religion is a human act; it shows how man thinks about and arranges the reunion with God.

Revelation, on the other hand, tells us that the beginning is God seeking, speaking. This is precious, wonderful, that He does not abandon the deeply sunk, dead man, but goes after him. "Where are you?" - that is the simple, penetrating question that holds up to him his terrible situation, reveals it. What have you gotten away with? How far have you come?

Adam answers, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid." In contrast, how delicious it is to know that "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but ....of love" (2 Tim. 1:7; cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5, 6). God teaches us through Word and Spirit that God is love. To reflect onthis, to accept this love: this is recovery, recovery. The religious person knows no other feeling than that of fear. Deep down, this is justified; he cannot stand before God as he is.

Adam conceals his sin. He only talks about the effect; he does not reveal the sin itself. But God does (v. 11) with the question, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you not eaten of the (forbidden) tree?" No man repents of himself; to uncover and reveal himself before God does not occur to him. But God sends His Word and shines it into our inner being, and then what is inside comes out.

"The woman whom Thou hast set before me gave me of the tree, and I did eat," is Adam's apology (v. 12). So this is truly human: we are born inAdam's image. The first thing with us is to blame others. Adam should have maintained his position; he was the head of his wife. He allowed her to take the first step and said nothing against it. Certainly, the woman introduced sin (1Ti 2:14); she did not pass the test; she should have kept the word of God chaste.

However, man should have been careful not to put all the blame on his wife; he shouldhave warned, dissuaded. Or was he not there? If the serpent had waited for a favorable moment to speak alone with the woman, the situation would have been somewhat different, however, he would not have been free of guilt even then, because he had also eaten.

God, in a sense, addresses Adam's thought process by turning (v. 13) to the woman with the question, "Why have you done this?" But she also applies the same procedure: "So the serpent deceived me that I ate." Recognizing the factual situation, the Lord proceeds according to it.

Now the first, heaviest, mighty curse hits the serpent (v. 14). It is most remarkable that only the serpent is spoken of, the devil is not mentioned; and from the wording it is not at all clear that behind the serpent there is another being. Serpent and tempter represent a unity of essence; no distinction is made between the two. Also not with the curse. "Cursed be thou before all cattle," it says, not: before all fallen angels and creatures. -- I do not understand this, but I bow to the fact that God does not single out a duality in these basic things, but uniformly singles out and curses the tempter as a serpent. In may well not explain it.

One says: one part of the curse is on the beast, the other on the devil, pointing to v. 15 and other passages of Scripture. Thus: "The seed of tares are the children of wickedness; the enemy who sows them is the devil" (Matth. 13, 38.39). Jesus calls the hostility of the Pharisees to God dragon seed, poisonous worms, vipers (Matth. 23, 33). He tells them: "You are of the father, the devil" (Joh. 8,44). To him the enemy is only the devil.

So also here it is said: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed". That here not only the crawling serpent is to be thought is obvious, although with all peoples a fear, a horror of the serpent announces itself, even with those, which went to the worship of the serpent, because one regards it for a divine being, to which adoration is due.

And there is something even more strange: Moses has to lift up a snake, the sight of which is supposed to bring healing to the Israelites who were bitten by the snakes; and the Son of Man refers to this (Deut. 21:8,9; Joh. 3:14), just as God also made Him who knew of no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

These are wonderful connections, but I cannot explain them. Great and mighty is the curse; but in the whole narrative we find no division, no dualism, but the serpent and Satan are united, as hardly anywhere else in Scripture.

A unified creature confronts us, even if with the curse a double one is certainly meant. We must not think under "your seed" only of animal beings, which pursue the female seed hostilely. We have the right to say that with the serpent Satan is meant, as also with her seed humans are meant and not serpents.

The whole expression betrays only that in the creation of God between the part, which belongs to the animal world and the part, to which the fallen angels and demons belong, quite peculiar relations must have existed. About the how, however, questions arise for which there is no residual answer. It will remain one of the pieces in which we will have to learn in future ages.

Verse 15 has always been recognized asthe first gospel that came from the mouth of God, just as we are told in v. 9 the delicious fact that God's plan never was and never is to leave fallen and lost man to himself, but God goes after him and seeks him.

However, this first precious step of God finds only here its brilliant representation and explanation of what God intends to do. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed"; a strange form, in which these salvation thoughts of God meet us, but which is commanded by the circumstances. Man can never be loosed from the bonds of evil in any other way than that this enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is set by God.

The end of this enmity is clearly stated. It shall be unceasing, perpetual: "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel. In this it is said that the promised Holy Woman will bring this enmity to a victorious and triumphant end, and that He will be the One in Whom all the machinations of Satan will be completely destroyed, as the Scriptures also clearly declare.

Not only John says that the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), that therefore all evil, all corruption that came into the world through the enemy will be removed through the Son, but also the other side is emphasized, that Christ through the cross made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers and put them in the pillory (Col. 2:15). According to the judgment of all the writings of the N.T., Christ shall have a complete, final triumph over all the powers of darkness.

Only after this word is spoken over the serpent does the Lord turn to sinful men with His severe punishments of judgment and cursing, starting with the woman, since sin began there (v. 16): "I will cause you much pain when you conceive; you shall bear children with pain; and your desire shall be for your husband; and he shall be your master."

A whole lot of thoughts arise from such a word. That which, according to God's original intention, should be the most precious and magnificent thing for man and also for woman in their whole disposition, the bringing forth of a new creature, which should stand in the same line of creation as the original act of God in the creation of man, that is, the bringing forth of a new creature in the image of God, becomes here the occasion of deepest pain and deep shame.

For this shines outfrom the whole divine law that everything that comes from the body of the woman and has to do with the bringing forth of the new creature is regarded as something unclean. Since one otherwise so easily goes around the confession of sin, God has set a constant reminder of the transgression, which one should not and cannot pass by. Imposition of the deepest shame on what should be the highest joy is before us in our verse.

The apostle Paul reminds us of another side of the same process when he writes about the woman in 1 Timothy 2:15: "she will be saved through childbearing. For the fact that no unconditional curse and no unconditional depravity is pronounced on female life is a truth that has been expressed most clearly in the life of the people who have probably entered most deeply into the thoughts of God, and who in their whole life and thinking have developed these basic lines

most, the Jewish people. For there also the other side of childbearing, the hopeful one, has reached a height as with no other people.

It was also justified; because the promise of the woman's seed, which would put an end to the serpent's seed, forms the basis of all promises, as they were given later to Abraham and David, namely that from their loins the promised one should come forth.

Thus the promise was limited. The line no longer runs on the ground of the general mankind; it runs from now on on the ground of a special people and a special sex. We do not perceive among any people on earth, not even among the female sex, that childbearing was considered greater than in Israel, in spite of all the references in the law to shaming. This is a significant fact, from which we see that in this people, despite imperfect knowledge, these truths have been deeply absorbed into its everyday life.

Here it is explained quite clearly: "Your desire shall be for your husband; and he shall be your master". With it a side of the relationship between man and woman is pointed out, which is to be led back after this word to the imposed curse, in which thus unmistakably a certain curse effect lies.

Now it is remarkable that in the Gospel, on the ground of the highest Gospel, this fundamental relationship finds an application that is overwhelming. While Paul says in other places that the husband is the head of the wife (1Co 11:3) and that it is not the duty of the wife to take the position of the husband, but rather to be subject (1Co 14:34; 1Ti 2:12; Eph 5:22; Tit 2:5), it is the same apostle who in an indescribably delicious and certainly divine way knows how to exploit this relationship to a relationship between Christ and His church.

It is something quite wonderful that we read inEph. 5, 23-25. It remains that the man is the head of the woman, but only as an image of the fact that Christ is the head of His church. But that Christ so loved His church that He sacrificed Himself for them, Paul now applies this in such a way that he says to the men who are the head of the wife: "Love your wives". God has thus understood in His own wonderful way to transform even the curse effect into a very great blessing.

On the other hand, we experience an indignation against this basic law of God, a rebellion against the thought that it is God's will if the man takes the position of the head, as we can hardly imagine it more strongly in the modern women's movement. The natural sense wants to eliminate that God-willed arrangement in every conceivable way; that is why one is so anxious to create social conditions in which there is no longer any trace of divine thought.

With the pronounced curses, God has not given the word of a vile desecration and bondage of the woman, although it has become the consequence of the fall. But God knows how to turn it differently. As surely as He writes: "The woman shall be saved through childbearing", so surely He writes: "Husbands, love your wives". On this line, not on the line of arbitrariness or the complete reversal of the circumstances, lies the divine solution and lifting of the curse; and then what would be a curse is no longer a curse.

There are also other questions that come to mind. For example, how it relates to the fact that in the prophecies of the restoration of the people of Israel a great multiplication is promised, e.g. in Isa. 60, 21.22: "The smallest becomes a thousand, and the least a mighty nation". By the light I am commanded, I cannot see that this multiplication will be brought about in any other way than by natural procreation.

These are not children of the resurrection, for it is said of them that they will neither be free nor let themselves be free (Luk 20:35), and there is no mention of natural contact with them (Isa 62:5).

Spiritual children were also thought of in those promises, without being able to provide any real proof of it. It is kept open to us the possibility to think that in future time, when really the curse will be lifted, another, a painless and painless multiplication will occur. This would be an inevitable conclusion from Is. 65,20. There we can only speak of natural offspring, of children who

are naturally conceived and born. On this side there will be a real deliverance from the curse, which is not to be transferred to the heavenly being, but which will show itself on the ground of the natural way of childbearing. There will then be a humanity that will live and multiply according to the original thought of God to an extent of which we have no idea.

In this assumption we are strengthened by the perception that the promises, which God gave to Abraham, are so magnificently predisposed that something similar to it canhardly be eliminated. Let us consider for once very simply what is said in the three promises of the increase of Abraham. "Thy seed shall be **as the stars of heaven**" (Genesis 22:17). We interpret this to mean the heavenly seed, the spiritual offspring; for it is hardly to be supposed that the same thing should be said each time in the case of the three seeds.

Something different is said in these words than in the first promise (Genesis 13:16), "Your seed shall be **as the dust of the earth,**" which limits us to the immediate descendants of Abraham on Israelite soil.

And now still thirdly: "Your seed shall be **like the sand on the edge of the sea**" (Genesis 22:17). Here as still often in the Scriptures the sea is a picture of the world of nations. These words point audibly to the peoples and nations that are to be born of him.

The promise of the stars in the sky is therefore to be written on the account of the faithful descendants of the present, the congregation of Jesus Christ; the other two, however, remain limited to the earth, and there we find such great language: sand and dust.

"dust that cannot be counted". Until today, however, Israel can be counted. Their number has never been great until today. Israel has been and remained all the centuries until today one of the smallest peoples. What do the (today Israel: six/seven) millions mean compared to the Christian nations? There is no comparison at all!

In view of that word we must either understand ourselves to assume that God has taken his mouth too full in an exaggerated way, or we have to count on a literal fulfillment on the ground of completely new living conditions which can and will exist on the new earth.

The conclusion of God's thoughts is not that of transferring His elect from Israel to heaven, but with them a whole new relationship will take off on the ground of mankind.

In their gathering into their land we only have to see a starting point, not the goal of God. From then on, the execution of God's thoughts will take place through the ages, in which God intends not only to make everything good again, but to make grace known in an overflowing way (Eph. 2:7). Then it will turn out that God will understand to overwhelm and close death and what is connected with it in a way that is completely beyond our comprehension.

And only now (v. 17), strangely enough, the curse is directed at the man, but not so much at himself as at the earthly kingdom fromwhich he springs, which is said to be unsatisfactory in its results. We call attention to the fact that of the three creatures only the serpent itself has been cursed, the man and the woman not. Only of her it is said: cursed you shall be. Only pain is caused to the woman, and sorrow to the man because of his cursed field. All this sounds as if God wanted to emphasize from the beginning that He was determined to go a very wonderful way, a way of redemption that He had thought up, invented, decided in His heart, in which the innocent part bears the guilt of the guilty.

Man does not go away empty-handed. The curse word over the field means heavy punishment for man, deep shame and constant reminder that he has fallen. It is the deepest shame that man, who has just been born, must return to the dust; and this does not stop even when our bodies have become temples of the spirit. Even then the deep, deep shame, the shameful experience that the body turns to dust - shameful! Nothing is spared us!

It is not man who is cursed, but the field. What did the field lack? Romans 8:20 sheds bright light on this passage.

The whole creation is subjected to transitoriness for the sake of Him who subjected it to hope. With this, it is wonderfully true that God, with these basic lines, cannot avoid letting the mysterious ways of His will of love shine through. He understands it as no human being could have done. And if one has gained an understanding for the thoughts of God, then one does not understand how ever a human being could fall into thinking that this history was purely invented by man.

From our inner sense of justice, we would have to say: if a holy and perfect man had also cursed, then he would have cursed the serpent, woman and man. God does it differently. Not woman and man are cursed, but the field. Who of the people would have thought of putting the innocent under the curse?

The man is threatened: your activity is not natural; it will be full of toil and discomfort. It has remained so to this day. The only activity of man that is free from them to a certain extent is when a man of God enters the service of God and lets himself be guided by the spirit of God; then the Lord says: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light". There is no toil and discomfort there; that is the only activity where the curse is absent. And if it must be said that thorns and thistles are not absent, there is a completely different work in this area than in any other area of life.

"With sorrow shalt thou feed thereon. Thorns and thistles shall it bear unto thee" (vv. 17.18). This indicates that thorns and thistles do not belong to the original creation, but are only fruit of the curse. It is a peculiar and difficult territory that we are entering. If some think of a formal creation of the devil, they are hardly right.

But how we have to imagine that these hostile, harmful, hindering things have come into being, nobody can say. Perhaps, however, we have to transfer the effects of this curse also to the animal world, to those beings which are only there to torment us, to make the life annoying, to spoil, as for example the insect swarms. One would like to move somewhere, if only the vermin were not!

It is not easy to find the key, to discover the formula, how it was possible that such corrupting powers could penetrate into this creation in order to bring home to man his transgression in a special way. Anyway, the thing is not as it should be. And that this curse constantly renews itself is undeniable. Here, too, there will be a tremendous upheaval when wolf and lamb will walk peacefully together in the pasture (Isa. 11, 6-10; 65,25), when there will be no more danger from the animal world, when we will no longer be exposed to destructive influences.

In these scriptural passages it is about natural men, not about resurrection men; otherwise it would be an absurdity to speak so. They speak of the future arrangement of things on earth (as also in Is. 65,20 ff), in which people with a natural body will have a part. A removal of the curse and of death is promised to us. Some features are unmistakable; thousands of questions, however, remain open until the Lord comes.

Verse 19 draws a line under the previous calculation.

In our opinion, we would expect that v. 20 should read: "mother of all mortals". But life prevails here, and there it is unmistakably pronounced for our thinking and faith that the last result of the judgment and curse imposed by God on creation is not death, but life.

Often a word is sufficient to give us in it quite naturallyand naturally far-reaching conclusions. Thus it is said here of Eve in her fallen state with a divine way and determination at least as a continuation of the revelation of the spirit: "she became the mother of all living".

It has thus pleased the spirit to reveal to us that the seed of the woman, when it is thought of in such a comprehensive, death-devouring manner, is sufficient to interpret the name of the mother of mankind as the mother of the living. In this alone lies the justification for Eve getting this name, while we would rather expect a name of the opposite. The predominance of the life gets in him a great prophetic, exemplary expression.

In the following (v. 21) we encounter another word that is highly significant. It refers back to the report of fallen man and his inability to find a way of approaching God (v. 7), since man, with his high knowledge and natural insight, is not able to put on a garment that would have been pleasing to God. Fall, curse, and intimation of victory over death and curse are alluded to. In this verse it is illustrated how the fallen, sinful man should appear, in which clothes he should wrap himself.

The important activity of dressing has a deep meaning according to the Scriptures, which shines out from the way God speaks of it; e.g. in the A.T., Is. 61,10, in the N.T. Col. 3, 9.10. That there is a deep meaning in the clothing of man, all cultural peoples confess; the opposite we find with the primitive peoples.

Lack of clothing or relapse into natural bodily nakedness always means sliding down to a very precarious low. A quite alarming phenomenon is the cultivation of the naked among today's cultured people. Here we see the terrible fall of an over-refined, over-cultivated mankind, which descends into the deepest swamp of depravity.

We see in our verse what deep meaning lies in the simple scriptural statement that excludes nudity not only in art but also in social intercourse. Who keeps this in mind and then sees what wants to naturalize in the life of the peoples, he cannot superficially pass over such phenomena, as it often happens unfortunately also in believing circles.

When God made skirts from animal skins, this is a vivid illustration, a representation of what the gospel consists in, a gospel of an innocent, unblemished sheep or lamb, an innocent creature that must lay down its life for the sake of man, so that he may clothe himself in its righteousness to stand before God.

If we were to think of a procedure, worthy of God and appropriate to the circumstances, simple, resounding, transparent, clear, luminous, how man might again draw near to God and attain communion with Him, truly, we could not imagine anything simpler, more fitting than the action of God in this allegorical way.

This is a splendid warning against the curious question: Where did the Lord take the skins from? Of course, from where we still take them today, from the lamb or sheep. And that the man, who could not even think that an innocent animal had to lay down its life so that a garment could be obtained from its skin, received such an instruction from God, that is not far-fetched, that is on the line of the lamb being led to the slaughter, Jesus Christ: His garment is my garment; He lives in righteousness and that becomes mine through His death.

These basic lines are there and we see no danger to bring in here something that should not be said. If man has not been taught here about the right kind and meaning of animal sacrifice, then we are missing the key for the sacrifices of the two brothers Cain and Abel (chap. 4, 3.4).

One wanted to find a difference in their inner state of mind, in their attitude, but no characteristics are mentioned; there is no hint that Cain was worse than Abel. A difference is found only in the position to the sacrifice and in the kind of the sacrifice; Cain brings a sacrifice from the cursed earth, Abel has approached God by blood; the one sacrifice originates from the faith in the blood of the lamb and the other not.

Unfortunately, many go to church and make it cost something, but they deny the basic fact that the blood of Jesus Christ, the innocent Lamb, makes clean from all sin.

That there is an effective way on which man can stand before God, God first had to show, to reveal; and this He did, not by many words, but by deed, by visual instruction. Man would not have thought of this on his own. This shows that the idea of sacrifice cannot have originated in the human spirit, but has its origin in the original revelation. If it did not originate there, then where else?

It would be a gaping hole in the context if sacrifice hadnot been implied by God before the first sacrifice, that of the first sons, who after all were conceived insins. Without this conclusion, the history of the sacrifice would lack its inner justification.

In the saying: "Man has become as Our One", (v. 22) we have the first sample of a divine holy, but depressing irony. Traces of such are still more detectable in the word of God. In this holy irony there is always a kernel of truth. So also here: Yes, man has achieved something, has come to something, which we also have; he has attained a level of knowledge which we occupy, but what has it cost him and what a terrible situation has it created for his whole existence! The word cannot be taken in any other sense; the meaning is clearly expressed.

The following words: "Lest he put forth his hand, and break also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever! Has one interpreted genuinely pagan in the sense of the envy of God: Satan is right, God did not grant them the God-likeness and also the immortality. Thus the blinded human mind can judge, and perhaps it cannot do otherwise. But we recognize in the words a proof of divine mercy.

If man had eaten from the tree of lifein his fallen state, then he could not have been helped by death; then he could never lose the corporeality and never discard the dead life; he would have remained in this terrible form and shape.

If this view is correct, then precisely the punishment that struck man for sin, and which God indicated from the beginning, is the precious possibility of our complete redemption. Adam was a dead man from his fall, and from then on we are of death.

Physical life is also a constant dying from birth. Even at the highest stage of life, we constantly carry the germ of death within us. We have never moved away from being a victim of death in an instant. But precisely because death has penetrated to all people, because we can come out of our present state through death, because our fallen state is subject to exhaustion, that is why we find the possibility of redemption on this line.

Death is knocked out in the miraculous counsel and will of God for open redemptive ability and possibility.

If man, after his expulsion from paradise, is to work the soil from which he was created (v. 23), this proves that man was not taken from the dove of paradise, but from the field that lay outside.

The kerubim with the rounded sword (v. 24) are not only to prevent man from accessing the tree of life, but also to keep access to the tree open, implying a possibility of return.

4. Fourth chapter

If we look at this chapter in terms of sequence, we realize that we are not looking at a chronological order of eventshere.

It is not to be thought that the begetting and birth of Seth (v. 25) and his son Enos (v. 26) took place only after the birth of all Cain's children, of whom we read v. 17-24, and occurred only after everything had happened that was reported before.

From the words of Cain after the murder of Abel it is clear that there must have been a not insignificant descendant of Adam at that time, because the Bible does not know anything about a mankind who were not Adam's sons.

With the longevity of that time one can easily imagine that already before the murder a significant number of descendants of Adam must have lived on earth; otherwise the words of Cain would be quite incomprehensible. Nobody could strike him dead who was not there.

So a greater posterity was there. This insight is enough to recognize that we must not consider ourselves bound by the reported succession.

We find here a relation similar to that of the first chapter to the second: in the second creation account we find what was already established in the first chapter, but it is further elaborated there. Something similar meets us here. It is not a historical account of the successive events, but a fundamental instruction on the line of truth that was of such far-reaching importance for mankind.

Therefore, all that happened to Cain's posterity is told first; and all that relates to Seth and his posterity may, according to the mind of the Spirit, wait quite quietly until the great fundamental laws are established: how did the Lord instruct the first men concerning the Atonement, and how did they stand to it?

In this respect, the story of the sacrifice is indissolubly connected with the previous chapter. Therefore, this story of the first sacrifice and its consequence is reported before everything else. What a disturbance of the context we would have if we would think of v. 25 and 26 inserted between chap. 3 and 4. We would have an awkward, inappropriate interruption. The mere sequence of time must not have a say where the factual connection is concerned. - This is to reassure those who might be disturbed by the question: where did Cain take his wife?

To confirm what has been said, let us take a tangible example from the NT. The letters of the Apostle Paul followed in a completely different order than they are joined together in the Bible. The Epistle to the Romans was not the first one he wrote, but one of the last ones to the churches; and the letters to the Thessalonians, which are at the end in the Bible among his church letters, were the first ones he wrote.

It pleased the Spirit not to adhere to chronological order in the biblical order. Objectively, we recognize it as justified that no other letter than the one to the Romans had to have the priority to beplaced at the head of the letters.

The Gospel begins in the Gospels and continues in the Acts of the Apostles, which ends in Rome. Now what is more factually correct than that this conclusion is followed by the Epistle to the Romans, apart from the fact that it is the foundation for all that follows; it forms the great, mighty ashlars on which everything else rests.

The Epistles to the Thessalonians are fully important witnesses of what Paul said in young-established churches of the nations. But they, which were his first letters, stand at the end of the church letters in our Bible, because they report about the end of the present age, the conclusion of the church, and about the beginning of the new one, of which very little is to be found in the Epistle to the Romans.

So, the Holy Spirit has givenpriority to the factual order over the temporal sequence, which is not as important and valuable as the latter.

Thus the history of sacrifice begins here factually immediately after the expulsion from Eden. Not as if it would be the first sacrifice after the expulsion - we want to beware of such a view - but the whole consequence of the way how God's instruction has been received shall be presented. For that it has been inherited is not subject to any doubt. Men have certainly walked along this line for a considerable time. Adam goes this way, and that Cain will have gone it, we can think.

But as it still happens today that people who walked in simplicity of life come to say to themselves overlong: I no longer go along with history; I know better now; so Cain, in his opinion, may have come to the advanced view of serving God in a more worthy way than with a blood sacrifice.

The simple way of faith gradually no longer appears to him as something natural. This is a much more acceptable and plausible explanation than the assumption of an immediate apostasy.

Usually, apostasy is the end of a development of thought inside a person, not an immediate result, a sudden decision.

Cain: the acquired, possession, offspring. In this naming we have a trace of the original ability of the people to recognize the essence of things and to express it in one word, although at the same time a clouding of this recognition by the sin runs under here. Eve definitely recognizes in Cain an offspring, a possession, and in it a divine truth, which moves on the line that from the woman a seed should be born, through which the promise will find its fulfillment or its prelude. Only also the misunderstanding, the deficient knowledge of the woman is expressed, to have already in Cain this fulfillment. This was a mistake, even if very forgivable, because how could she have an insight into the ways of God extending into the millennia to fulfill His certain promises?

It is important that right here at the entrance the believing certainty is testified that God has given certain promises for which there is also a fulfillment. Only it was a poignant, extremely painful error for Eve, *if* she had it, to think that in the *first* Son of Man the promise of God's grace and mercy was already realized.

It was not the first Son of Man who brought salvation, as God never achieves his goal through the first, but through a second. But then mankind had to wait four thousand years for the second Son of Man.

Cain was first forerunner of God's prophecy, but he fails. Just as Eve could think of herself as the source of all future life and be called the mother of life, she could also think of Cain, the first man born of woman, as the promised savior who would bring restoration.

However, this did not happen with the first, but with the second. Right on the threshold of the great revelation of mankind and salvation, an important key for the understanding of the entire revelation is given in this, that not in the first, but in the second, the purpose of God is carried out.

Cain was a first, but he fails completely; Abel is a second and thus the first example of The One who was to come - the one who was innocently murdered for the sake of faith, the second in the line of human history. We have here the first sample of what is presented to us in Acts 7 as the most valuable key for the understanding of God's ways of salvation, which we also want to use resolutely.

"A man have I gained with Jehovah", actually: "a man, Jehovah". If this reading is correct, then Eve's error would come out quite clearly. Not Jehovah, but a murderer she had won.

Eve gave the name Abel to the second son after his birth (v. 2), i.e. breath, nothingness, frailty, not only after his death. It would be a nonsensical idea, in spite of the first Bible interpreters, who are used to deal with these original reports quite arbitrarily, to assume that Abel had received this name only after he had been murdered in the bloom of his years.

By virtue of the inherent ability of the first human beings to perceive the things of God, the Mother could see an imminent danger for the one just born and how in him the frailty of the human race would be expressed in a shattering way.

A longer period of time will intervene between the choice of occupations and the sacrifice of the two brothers reported in verse 3 and 4. "Abel brought of ... their fat pieces." Strange: recently I read in the otherwise delicious work of a theologian of the old believing school from the seventh decade of the last century, it is not to be supposed that bloody sacrifices were made in such gray ancient times. This is what theological scholarship can do!

Where would Abel have gotten pieces of fat if he had not slaughtered an animal? What is closer than that a shepherd made a bloody sacrifice? When enlightened children of God are bound by scholarship not to recognize the simplest things, one becomes enraged. I have suffered horribly from this. It is a fundamental truth that is at stake here, the one great question: How can man, born of sins, stand before God?

Those people were much truer and more correct representatives of humanity than we are. Adam and Eve knew a state of complete sinlessness and as *such* they did the original fall. This does

not exist with us. It is true that we speak of innocent children who have not yet done anything evil. But the Scriptures declare: "The thinking of man's heart is evil from his youth" (chap. 8,21); "folly is in the heart of a boy" (Prov. 22,15); man is born in sins (Ps. 51,7; Job 14,4). This also appears very early.

Adam and Eve did not know this, that they would have come into the world poisoned with the inclination to sin; but with the brothers it was so, and such are the representatives of mankind born in sin. Therefore, in the case of Cain and Habel, the question is clearly raised and answered: How does man born in sin relate to God and by what means can he stand before God? This question, taken objectively, must first be answered before the rest of the story can follow.

It concerns here the solution of a riddle which has moved the mankind on the deepest until today. In it the clear justification is found for the fact that the temporal order had to give way to the factual order.

A clear testimony of the Scriptures about the sacrifice of Abel we find Hebr. 11,4. First of all we have to determine what faith is. One says: a state of mind. Certainly the mind is also involved in faith; but if nothing else could be said, it amounts to saying that even our faith, by which we stand before God, is nothing more than such a state of mind, and then where do we end up? Eternal divine truths are thus dissolved to a certain inner condition, state, depressed to a personal state of mind. It depends on this whether we are pleasing to God or not.

What does believe mean? We are left with one conclusion when we consider what each case in Heb. 11 was about. It is never a matter of personal inner or outer condition. In each case God has spoken; otherwise there would have been no faith.

Faith means accepting the Word of God and acting on it.

Noah is given a specific mission. Did he hold a prayer meeting for fourteen days beforehand so that God could talk to him? Build an ark! Is the order, no matter whether the people think you are crazy or not. The ark is the only salvation from ruin. He was corrupt, like others; not a hair better than them. He proved that after the flood. And yet there was a great difference; but not because he was better than others, but simply because he followed the word of God.

It is said that Abel had a good, pious heart. Who among us would like to say that about himself? He was also not a hair better than Cain. Scripture knows nothing of this. If there was one among men who had a good heart, he would not need a sacrifice. But it would throw the whole gospel over the heap if man would be good by nature (Ps. 53,4). Such an assertion would hardly be credible if it did not really happen.

Abel believedthe word of the slain lamb; therein lies the whole mystery of his acceptance with God. This lamb was an indication of the greater sacrifice that was to follow.

This view is also corroborated by John. Which "works" does 1.Joh. 3,12 have in mind? Not the professional work! Is a husbandman a criminal, a wretched wretch? And the shepherd's profession the godly one? What nonsense would come out of it, if one wanted to interpret the "works" to the different profession. Other works are not reported to us in the Bible than the sacrificial deeds. These works are marked by the spirit of God: Cain's works were evil, his service was sin; Abel's works were just, because they were born from the consciousness: I am a curse-worthy man and can stand before God only in the blood of the innocent lamb.

For the fact that Cain did not come to the bloodless sacrifice with a leap, we find a confirmation in the word Jude 11 of the **way of** Cain. One does not go a way, one has invented it. Cain devised this way to bring God to his side; it was **his** way. On **his** way he undertakes to bring fruit from the field that was cursed, a product of the cursed field without atonement. He thus denies in all certainty that man may come before God only with a bloody sacrifice, with an atonement.

Abel, on the other hand, proved that the great revelation of God about the only way in which man couldapproach God was alive in him.

"The Lord looked" - "did not look" (vv. 4 u.5). We may think that Jehovah was personally present when these sacrifices occurred. We may well imagine that at a personal revelation, when the Lord showed Himself, the sacrifice was made (Judges 13:16-20). Our painters have tried to suggest the rejection and acceptance of the sacrifice by the direction of the smoke. In any case, the assumption is correct that a very close intercourse of Jehovah with the people took place.

We have much scriptural ground to interpret the words v. 14: "I must hide myself from Thy presence" in such a way that we find a presence of the Lord expressed in it. From Acts 3:20 we see that "face of Jehovah" means His personal presence. Thus, there is much to be said for the assumption that the people offered their sacrifices on the threshold of the paradise that was closed to them.

So also the Mosaic sacrifices were offered very near the cherubim, separatedfrom them only by a curtain on which the cherubim were pictorially represented. - –

We have to imagine that the paradise continued to exist on earth until the flood - only into it the peoplewere not allowed to come --, and that the sacrifices were offered in view of the throne bearers of the glory of Jehovah. Thus we would have a very plausible explanation for the fact that in the oldest folk tales of all culture peoples of glorious days of the past, of a glorious garden and of a tree with glorious fruits at it, as also of a snake at the tree is spoken.

For the pre-flood people had thus the possibility to receive constant refreshment of the tradition of the first fathers, because in a period of more than sixteen hundred years from Adam to Noah mankind was to be reproduced only in three generations. And it is natural that the new people on the new earth have brought over and have spread this tradition about the flood which was deeply impressed into their mind, although it became distorted little by little because the archetype was no longer present on which one could have corrected his thinking.

So Jehovah was personally present. And now we are told about the impression the sacrifice made, as well as the further effect: "Cain was very angry" (v.5); he got into deepest displeasure, ill-will. Nothing else is reported about Abel; only in Hebr. 11,4 a good testimony is given for his offering. In contrast, of the unbelieving, defiant Cain, who went his own way, it is reported how Jehovah, in spite of his insolent encroachment beyond the given teachings, nevertheless gets involved with him. This is quite wonderful. Instead of this, we would have expected in-depth words to be given here of an interaction he had with Abel. What a comforting significance it has that Jehovah becomes involved with Cain and gives him a revelation in spite of his unbelief and unwillingness.

"Why are you angry? Is it not so, if you do right, you may lift up your head" (v.6), is Jehovah's address. So it is not a question of a personal state of mind, but he is reproached: if you had gone the way of faith, i.e. of obedience, thus the right way, if you had done right, then you would be allowed to lift up your head.

There we see what righteousness means. Just such-minded people do not think of doing the right thing; they guard themselves against it. But with use of force they pave their own way. After all, they have done nothing wrong! How simple are the words: If you do right, you may look Me in the face. We see in this personal trial how kindly the Lord deals with Cain.

"But if you do not do right, sin is lurking at the door" (v.7). A very precious word, in which the Lord reveals to us at the beginning what sin consisted in and what the cover against its superiority is: If you do not actrightly in the biblical sense, if you do not walk the path of obedience, you will become its prey. - Also for us, the believers of the NT, our victory will depend on it. We can find protection against the power of sin only if we walk the right way, if we are obedient to the Word. Therein lies our preservation.

"Thou shalt rule over them" (v. 7)! This word, addressed by Jehovah to a born sinner and a manifest rebel, no longer shows the way of preservation and deliverance, but the way of triumphant victory over all communion with sin. It is not the change of condition that is spoken of;

even now the preservation, the victoriousness, is placed by the Lord on the line of the obedience of faith.

We repeat: there is no question here of Cain's personal condition, of his inner state; he remains by nature the wicked fellow that he was, but God shows him, who has devised a way in which he could approach God according to his rational thinking, a way in which he would have dominion over sin and victory over it, even though he remains a sinner. How simple and clear the lines are, if we only want to follow these things and learn the Abc! Then we will not become a prey to all kinds of currents and directions.

"Then Cain talked with Abel" (v.8). According to the context, there was undoubtedly talk of all these things; they must have deeply moved the brothers. In the ordinary text there seems to be a gap here; the seventy add: "Let us go into the field". There he slew his brother. This is unmistakably the ripe fruit of the way of Cain, which he took according to his own choice, completely rejecting and denying the divine way of salvation that had been shown to him.

Cainism inevitably ends in fratricide: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). Not only those are murderers who use daggers, axes and guns, who cut, beat and poison: he who hates his brother is a murderer.

But on no other ground has fratricide been committed so frequently as on the ground of religious quarrels. There have hardly been more wars fought over other questions than those of religion, and never in the whole history of mankind bloodier than over the religious question.

And at the root of this Cain spirit is the core question: how can a person stand before God? The Thirty Years' War, which disrupted our homeland and brought the nation down from thirty million to two and a half to three million, was horrific, but it revolved around this question alone.

All of Rome's terrible, continuing hostility to the Gospel is due to nothing other than Rome going the way of Cain; if it had power as it did six hundred years ago, it would still be building its pyres today. It has never given up the will to do so.

Cain can never become anything but a murderer; no other development is possible than murder and hatred. Where you walk the path of Abel in all simplicity, you are hated, persecuted by all the Cainites. They go to church, read the Bible, do all kinds of things in and for the church, but Cain hates the blood of Golgotha, hates it at the deepest level.

Whoever stands up with body and soul for the fact that salvation can be found in no other way, that there is no church, ordinances, statutes and teachings, no cultus and no culture, in short, nothing on earth that can save, but only the blood on Golgotha, is fought on this way until today. - There is never another solution to the question whether man can stand before God by his own works, by his own moral performance or by the obedience of faith, than the cross!

What Cain brought was apparently worth more than what Abel brought. Cain brought of the fruits which he had wrested with toil and sweat from the cursed earth; his gift was a significant moral achievement, compared to the gift of Abel. The sacrificed a life that had been freely given to him by God without achievement; he did not produce it, it was born to him. The lamb freely given to him Abel sacrificed, while Cain cost himself something for his service.

Whoever wants to bring something to God with his accomplishments is on the way of Cain; that is the characteristic of Cainism. All Cain's accomplishments will never make him love Abel. All worship runs on these two lines: either that of one's own achievement or that of salvation by grace based on the blood of the innocent, unblemished Lamb.

We now arrive at the curse on the first religious murderer. A wonderful language it is that Jehovah wields: "The voice of thy brother crieth unto Me from the earth. And now be thou accursed from the earth, which opened her mouth, and received thy brother's blood at thy hands." (vv. 9-11.) One helps oneself with such a figure of speech by pointing out that the Hebrew

language is a figurative language. It is. Let us not forget, however, that it is the language that the Holy Spirit has used with preference to bring the greatest revelations to our attention.

If one rejects the imagery of the East and consciously places oneself on the ground of the Occident, where one thinks soberly, and if one thereby wants to express the distrust that the Hebrew language is not quite reliable and not the best way to express oneself, then there is a good part of conceit in it.

But one also forgets that Jehovah has made use of the Oriental way of speaking to make the truth known to us. We have no right to present our way of thinking, our way of speaking, as the only exemplary one and to condemn the Oriental one as inferior. In the last analysis, all languages are pictorial languages. Some idea must have risen in us as a mental image and then one tries to bring it into the right version.

Thus, a speech is a whole series of images made by our mind and then summarizedinto words. This way of speaking must have been the first. Let us think of the Egyptians, whose writing consists almost only of pictures. The hieroglyphics give us a glimpse into the workshop of the human mind at a time when it was still fresher and lived directly in the things that God had created and could understand and interpret them better than we can.

At that time one of the oldest cultural peoples found it as something quite understandable that the language is pictures of the creation and creatures. A more beautiful way to make a language is not conceivable at all. We stand before it and call it hieroglyphics, betraying the inability of our mind. Our scholars have had terrible work deciphering them. It would not have become half so difficult, if we would still write and speak in a similar way in visible pictures and formations, as it is expressed there.

Therefore, we do not want to be stopped by this and we do not want to be hindered to attach importance to this word of God. The voice of the brother's blood must have been a voice that could not be heard with the human ear. But God heard it, that there a creature of His hand, in which He had put His life in a wonderful way, had to have his blood shed. For man's life is in his blood, and this blood has a very audible language for God.

That we do not understand it does not mean much, since even those people understood many things that are incomprehensible to us today. Our cognitive faculty is too much dulled to hear this language; but in all not yet completely depraved people there is a deep shudder of human blood. Even if we cannot speak of a scream, it nevertheless carries a language that shakes us very deeply, without being able to give us an account of it. A drama like Macbeth shows that even among us late-born people, human blood speaks such a terrible language. We know from prison crime reports that even very raw people who had a murder on their conscience, after they had been able to endure it for decades without confessing it, were finally driven to confess the guilt because it became unbearable for them; it was as if the blood had constantly screamed in their ear, so that they could find no peace until they had atoned for the crime with their blood.

But there is also a very wonderful connection to be considered, which has a great meaning for us, when we look at the blood of the innocent lamb, which was shed for the sin of the whole world. Scripture also uses the same language about Him; only it says that it speaks better than Abel's blood (Heb 12:24). If God heard the voice of the blood of Abel crying for vengeance, how much greater and mightier must be the significance of the voice with which the shed blood of His own Son speaks. Let us note that this blood speaks better than Abel's; that it is better understood by God, and that God allows Himself to be told by the blood of His Son even more than by the blood of Abel.

"Cursed away from the land" (v.12), Cain is said to be. There we see how closely Jehovah associates the earth with the innocent shed blood it drank within itself. We do not want to pass by such features, such statements of God thoughtlessly.

These words want to tell us something. Let us think how much human blood this cursed earth has absorbed from Abel's time until today, what a terrible blood guilt this is, how it cries to heaven and how it will once stagger like a drunkard from the shed blood (Is. 24,20). It is told about the Son of God that a warrior servant prevented His drops of blood from falling to the earth. We do not believe that it is so. This blood came to the earth; the earth drank this blood; and if it speaks better than Abel's, then God's answer is given. As certainly as the earth is involved and subjected to the curse of the man who transgressed so abominably, so certainly is it baptized with the baptism of blood from the side of the crucified. And this voice will be heard. God will give His answer with a complete redemption of the whole blood-soaked creation.

In verse 12, an aggravation of the curse pronounced onAdam is imposed. Not only is the earth to give the murderer a wholly unsatisfactory result, but "unsteady" he is to be: a first example for Israel, which finds no rest until it turns to Jehovah in repentance and contrition.

Cain's retort (v.13) is genuinely human: "My sin is greater than that it may be forgiven me." Earlier it was said so defiantly, "Shall I be my brother's keeper?" Now words sound so exceedingly despondent. The human heart is a defiant and despondent thing (Jer. 17:9). Cain's words are also a denial of the divine grace that met him so kindly.

As already pointedout at the beginning of this chapter, we find in verse 14 a clear indication of the presence of numerous people on earth, otherwise the words: "It will happen that whoever finds me will strike me dead" would have no sense. In the fifth chapter we will find even clearer traces of this.

For Cain's protection, Jehovah makes an arrangement for the circumstances ofthat time (v. 15) that contrasts with His arrangement for similar circumstances after the flood (ch. 9:6). Here God forbids blood vengeance, although no authorities existed. Later, however, we find blood vengeance even where there was an authority. In Israel it also existed and was recognized as rightfully existing; then for manslayers free cities were established, where they could flee from the avenger of blood.

Here, Jehovah clearly forbids avenging Abel's murder of Cain, whereas after the flood, guidance is given to Noah and his descendants for an authority to punish murder and manslaughter. There one can say: This is a contradiction! In reality, however, this is an instructive example of how God gives different orders in the different ages and rightly lets them exist.

Here the revenge is forbidden because it was in the plan of God to let Cain be unsteady. After the flood, God gives His good reasons for the different command: "Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall also beshed by man; for God made man in His image.

Jehovah made a sign to Cain, or more properly to Cain; He gave him an assurance of sparing, without any thought of a "mark of Cain," such as a brand on the forehead. The basic text does permit such an interpretation; but it actually offers only the words, "He set a mark for Cain," without any suggestion that it would be appropriate on his person. The purpose of the sign, however, whatever we may imagine it to be, and whether it was applied to him or merely given to him, was to assure him that no one would slay him.

The message: "So Cain departed from the presence of Jehovah" (v.16), presupposed a visible, local place of God's presence in those days after the expulsion from Eden. Cain dwelt in "Nod," i.e., curse, exile, trouble, east of Eden, where Paradise was. It remained on earth, but the access was closed for the people. It was not taken away before the flood. So it remained on earth until it was washed away by the flood.

What Paul saw was a face like John saw. He was raptured into paradise (2 Cor. 12:4), but he himself was not really there, because this paradise will only be established on the new earth.

So also the city of John was not there, not completed, on it is still being built; but John saw it coming from heaven. It could not have been a real body, but it could have been such a vivid

imagination, as if it was the thing itself, as Zechariah and Daniel saw the things so true, so real, as if they themselves stood before them.

So we are not at all forced to assume that the paradise Paul saw already really existed. He saw it like John, who had been transferred tothe day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10). He saw events that had not yet become history as if they were already real history. Paul saw paradise as if it were there without actually being there. But it comes again on this earth.

"Cain recognized his wife" (v.17). Where did Cain gethis wife? One behaves in many places in such a way, as if the salvation of the whole world depended on this question. We have already said above that in the biblical account not a temporal but the factual succession is observed.

For example, when chapter 5:3 says that Adam begat a son in his own image, Seth, there is no mention of the other children he begat before. Surely Adam could not have come into the world as an infant who had to develop. The scripture says nothing about Adam having begotten sons before the fall; most likely this happened only after the fall.

Here nothing else is spoken of than fallen men, already because there would be no measure at all for the life of immortality; that would be beyond one's own discretion.

But if a hundred and thirty years have passed until Seth, then there is room enough for Cain not only to have his wife, but also to fear the vengeance of the relatives.

He gave his first son the name Enoch, the initiate. There is a deep meaning in this. We have here the strange phenomenon that the holy scripture names the descendants of Cain rather than those of Seth. These are two different lineages. The Cainites form a history by themselves. There it came to formations, events, manifestations, as they are deeply inwardly connected with the nature of the fallen man. We see how they build cities here at once. Cainism is out to establish itself on the earth.

He builds a city here, which we have to understand as an obvious rebellion and indignation against the judgment of God: "Restless and fleeting you shall be on earth" (v.12). This judgment looks like a severe judgment. On the other hand, it was a very merciful judgment, because God knew that this way of life of the dear fathers would have been much more beneficial than living in a city.

There is a contradiction on the part of mankind, the tip of which we will see in Babylon: the unfortunate tendency of people to congregate in large cities, which eventually becomes a terrible boil on the body of mankind.

If the people had kept a way of life as it is reported from Abel and Cain in verse 2, if they had lived as cattle breeders and bound to the sheol, then they would have drawn everything necessary for the life, but they would not have reached so far as with the city life. With its achievements, however, they have not made themselves healthy and happy, on the contrary, only unhealthy and unhappy. So that today one must wring one's hands and sigh: what will become of our masses in the big cities? How can we control the aspirations of the country people to the cities, who dance around the light like moths? One stands there powerless, like the sorcerer's apprentice in the poem. We don't know what to do or how to do it.

Later, when God gave an order for the formation of a commonwealth and state, He established the principle that every Israelite should live safely and happily under his vine and fig tree. The cities are tolerated only incidentally. The great masses are to cultivate the land. Hence the heavy use of meat production in Israelite worship. In all the adverse vicissitudes of life, the landed property was never to be lost; after fifty years it was always to return to the hands of the family.

Yes, if one could introduce such a thing, if one could divide up the landed property in such a way that every father of a family would be given a clod on which to settle, then the workers' question would be solved; then there would be no "disinherited," dispossessed, no proletariat living for rent and knowing no fatherland because it has nothing to own.

Just this is a very excellent ground for the fundamental thoughts of our time. And an educated proletariat is the worst thing imaginable.

However clever and educated people may be, it seems impossible to get out of this misery. In all countries, the landowners are resisting to the utmost to give up their land for division. The Americans had land enough; they could offer land for nothing. Where did it go? Land was there in abundance; but so was the sinister push to the cities. If one were to offer the unemployed in New York the most beautiful farms, where everything thrives excellently, cattle and grain in addition, then they would whistle at it: rather lie hungry at the gilded misery than go out to healthy work. That is what ails all mankind.

Founding cities is a satanic distortion and an anticipation of the great divine thought. For the goal of God is the wonderfully great building of a city for God. Enoch was initiated into this secret by Satan, whose ambition is to anticipate God and drive people to build cities. Here, the God of this world has accomplished something. However, the cities have become hotbeds of vice. And militarism has given tremendous encouragement to this process. When young men have been in the city for a few years, they have become unfit for rural life.

Mankind has been on this path since Cain, and despite all the warnings and admonitions through history, they have learned nothing. Despite our wisdom, we have no understanding at all for these warnings. We quietly continue to work in this way. Of course, it is not a sin to live in a big city. When we speak of nests and hotbeds of vice in big cities, we speak only of directions that have come in. But one of the most dangerous delusions is and remains urbanism.

In the genealogical register of Cain, the Holy Spirit has interspersed instructive remarks to mark the whole current. Already the names of the descendants tell us their course. Enoch means initiate. This may suggest something that we find everywhere in humanity up to the present day.

With every religion, so also with the Gospel of God, there are certain secrets connected, which are closed to the outsider, only the initiate knows them.

We understand what Paul writes "The spiritual man - even the religious man - hears nothing of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot discernit, for it must be discerned by the Spirit, in the Spirit. But the spiritual man understands all things, and is judged by no man" (1 Cor. 2:14,15). - "What we speak, nevertheless, is wise among the perfect, the mature, the initiated" (v.6). - "We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, that we might know the things given us of God" (v.12). - "God has made us know the mystery of His will" (Eph. 1:9).

In all deeper pagan religions we find such a distinction. In Israel it found a tangible expression in its cultus, which otherwise took place before the eyes of the people in the forecourt under heaven and could be observed with eyes and ears. The actual priestly service, however, did not take place before everyone's eyes, but behind the curtain, to which no other person had access. Then there was a higher, third level, for which only the high priest was authorized; a service that took place in the darkest part of the house, in the holy of holies. - We see, then, how different levels were provided by Jehovah Himself. There were truths for the general public and for narrower and narrower circles.

This is exactly how it is in Jesus' procedure with His disciples. His sermon is usually free, public. On other occasions, however, He takes His disciples aside and explains His word to them in a special way. There He had something to say not before the people, but only before the ear of His disciples. But also on the ground of discipleship the Lord forms even narrower circles. On special occasions He chooses only three. Thus at the raising of Jairi's little daughter, at His transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He wrestled with death. Moreover, John was His most trusted, His favorite disciple. So we observe that everywhere lines are drawn that did not originate from human arbitrariness.

On the Cainite line, however, it could not be about secrets of God, but about imitation of the enemy, satanic secrets. We know that in the ancient pagan religions there were secrets, mysteries. Even now, in the whole cultural world, even in Christianity, there are associations based on mysteries.

Let us consider the Masonic Order and related phenomena. The Freemasons claim that their order goes back to Solomon, who established the first master chair, and that the statutes were largely derived from the building regulations of Solomon's temple. Their views are everywhere on the ground of the spiritual religions of the people, which is entirely built on a Cainite basis. For it means here nothing else than a very pleasing Cainism: the good in mankind shall be brought to the highest moral perfection by development.

These are basically the thoughts also of modern Christianity. In the best Masonic lodges Christ is placed as high as in the pulpits, indeed they do not differ to the disadvantage of the contemporary theologians. But from the blood of Jesus Christ, from the sacrificial death of the Lord, from the basic human corruption, from which man can be redeemed only by Him who knew of no sin, but made Himself sin, one is far away both here and there. Both have boiled in the same cauldron.

The inclination to the mysterious, enigmatic, especially in the religious field, is deeply ingrained in mankind, and as soon as one brings such things, one captivates them. This is a reversal of the divine line and is moreover characteristic for the procedure of the prince of darkness. He did not set out to spread arbitrary lies, but to distort God's truths, so that the view for them is clouded, taken away. This seems to be indicated by the name Enoch, initiate.

Irad (v.18): means city dweller. The name shows how Satan's intention of city building had prospered. The removal from the intention of God he succeeded. That God wants to build a city is clear. He already had a city, but experienced little joy in it. That intention, however, will find its execution in the other and then He will have His joy in it.

Mahujael: the educated of God. Education is the magic of today. It is the same terrible lie with which the prince of this world wants to shackle the whole cultural mankind, that on the ground of education the real salvation is to be found and on this way the goal of God's image is to be reached.

Methusael: the man of God. We have here an intensification of the same thought - an aping of the goal that God has set for Himself.

Lamech: the youthful one. The name expresses defiance and manifest indignation. It does not mean anything harmless and healthy, but something titanic, Herculean - conscious enmity, openly expressed defiance against God, as Psalm 2 describes it.

According to verse 19 Lamech lived in double marriage (bigamy). The names of his two wives express lust of the eyes (Ada: the dainty one) and lust of the flesh (Zilla), and his own name expresses a hopeful insistence on his power, a worldly trinity (1 John 2:16).

Jabal (v.20): Nomad, wanderer, not a cultivator. His seed points to unboundness.

Jubal (v.21): The rejoicing one, is inventor of the music on string and wind instruments. The singing of both men and angels appears in the Bible as something willed by God. The matter is quite different with regard to music. It does not proceed in such a normal way. Everyone who deals with music will be able to testify that if on any field there is a very great dangerous charm and magic, then it is less on that of singing than on that of instrumental music. Singing, even by bad people, does not have the same captivating, enchanting, intoxicating influence as music. Let us consult our own experience!

It is noteworthy that Scripture places the invention of music in the lineage of Cain. Singing is not an invention, but a natural gift of God. Musical instruments, on the other hand, are an invention, an art. This art in itself belongs undoubtedly to the subduing of the creature. But to

what end? Music, properly understood, has a very high significance. It is often found in the service of Jehovah; there it is consecrated to the Lord. It is not only sung to Him, but also played.

In contrast, however, it is stated here that the first invention in this field was not for this holy purpose, just as our more recent inventions,such as the television and the airplane, are not due to the effort to glorify God. Those who indulge in such things are generally far from such a notion. Almost without exception, on the contrary, they amount to self-glorification.

That they are placed in the service of God is a precious freedom according to the scriptural word: "All is yours" (1 Cor. 3:21,22). The railroad serves the missionary as well as the liquor merchant. No one is to be blamed if he makes a journey by air, although one may see in the technique of flight itself a certain presumption of the human spirit. God has not only given permission to His own, or even instructions, as in the temple service, to glorify Him with cymbals, kettledrums and harps, but has also given Him full freedom to use inventions whose origin is ungodly.

The apparently God-willed subordination of the creature in the production of the instruments, which touch ear, mind, feeling most pleasantly and the arts mentioned in the following verse mean in the deepest reason a reversal of the divine thoughts, and with it all civilization and culture is characterized.

It is highly significant that, according to the Scriptures, people have the power to make existence on this earth, which is cursed for the sake of people, pleasant and beautiful, as if there were no other goal for people than to return to God's paradise, into conditions for which God has predestined them.

What does this ungodly, anti-divine culture mean but an open contradiction against God's thought that people should not seek satisfaction, happiness and well-being on this earth but in waiting, hoping faith in the future. The striving for culture is a decided objection against it, as it sounds to us in word and song: "We leave heaven to the priests and the sparrows"; or: "Rejoice in life, because the little lamp still glows; pluck the rose, before it fades."

The religion of this world wants beautification and glorification of this cursed earth. Thereupon all these aspirations are stamped; from this source they have emerged. It is of deep significance that these traits are not found in the lineage of Seth, but in the lineage of the Cainites.

In addition another, an almost uncanny circumstance comes. Cain is the first fratricide and he became the builder of the first city. It is an almost shocking fact, which has been shown in the millennia of the past and which is becoming more and more evident in our days of increasing progress, undertakings and achievements, with which one tries to make life ever more magnificent, pleasant and desirable, in our days of striving for ever more productive exploitation of the available forces, to shape life in such a way that one can really enjoy it, namely that we have all the achievements of our high civilization only at the expense of the lives of our brothers.

Never before has a metallurgical plant been put into operation, a glassblowing factory set up, or a large factory built without people losing their lives in its establishment or continuation. We encounter blood everywhere. The fact that we have glass is due to the fact that people have blown their lives out. The great advances in culture are paid for with the blood of others. That is unavoidable; it is like a curse that clings to it.

This is not to say that we are partaking of Cain's sin when we make or use glass, for example, because we have the freedom to use this world, but we should not abuse it (1Co 7:31). But it behooves us as men of God, who have eyes and senses for the lines and thoughts of God, never to lose sight of the fact that the Scriptures are right.

What is drawn here only in a few strokes has always been and remained effective everywhere: the deep inner connection between Cainism and what people are so proud of, but to which blood clings.

The only enterprises that do not require human blood are agriculture and animal husbandry. It is by no means inevitable on **the** soil, but it is on the soil of culture. There is a serious effort to reduce the number of victims, to lighten the burden by all kinds of operational precautions. This is certainly a pleasant thing. However, it will never be possible to completely eliminate the stains of Cainism from industrial enterprises. This remains a matter of expectation for that time when God's creation will have occurred, for which we have the guarantee from Jesus' mouth: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

5. Fifth **chapter**

First an explanatory word about the disposition of the sex table. Of all descendants of Adam in the line of Seth with only two exceptions the same formula is used: they lived so and so many years, begat so and so many sons, the lifetime reached such and such a high age and then they died. This fixed frame carries something shattering and again also something indescribably delicious about itself.

From the sons of Cain, achievements are reported that are very highly rated in the world's esteem. Nothing like this is reported of the descendants of Seth. They undoubtedly represent the more pious, God-fearing lineage. It is true that it was also drawn into the downfall, but in it the tradition of the faith and the knowledge of God has preserved fresh and awake up to the flood.

Methusala, the eighth of Adam, lived 182 years with Adam; the latter thus saw eight of the ten generations mentioned in the tablet.

Of the long life of those forefathers we can have no idea, but it is clear to us what it means for the freshness of the tradition. There was no danger that the accuracy and reliability of the original experiences that Adam had could be obliterated, but the traditions remained fresh through constant correction and renewal of the narrative on the part of the ancestors.

And further: Lamech, the ninth after Adam, lived 590 years with Noah and 90 years with Shem. But Shem himself lived at the same time with Nahor, Thara, Abraham, even beyond Isaac, so that the former tradition could also be inherited by the generations after the flood.

Adam (verse 3): the red one, man from the earth, of earth and earthy. A play on words with names.

Seth: Substitute. We repeat: there is no speech that other sons were not born before Seth. Only one descendant is always emphasized; the preceding and following ones are not mentioned. At the same time we can see how the years of life are designated.

The connections of the families were thus so close, intimate, that we can understand very well how in this line the original revelations of God remained in fresh vitality. While, however, from the Cainites the great cultural achievements are enumerated like city building, beauty care, music, art and education, loud traces of high-grade human culture, the holy scripture is completely silent about the achievements of the Sethites. There is nothing to report.

The only exceptions are Enoch and Noah. Enoch is reported, - not that he cleaned out this world and made himself comfortable in it, but - that he left it before the time; and this happened not on the basis of great achievements, by which he made life desirable for himself, but as a result of his walk with God (verse 22-24). That is all. There is no other testimony on this line.

And what Lamech prophetically says of Noah: "He will comfort us for the labor and toil of our hands, which comes from the ground that the Lord has cursed" (verse 29), is realized only because Noah was a pious man and lived a godly life.

With all the decay, God has understood to keep the tradition fresh. To the seventh of Adam it was still possible to lead such a close community life with God that he does not have to see the death, and with it he becomes an example of great prophetic meaning, of the preliminary admission before the judgment. Lamech, however, has the hope of a comforter and redeemer before the judgment, who would help over the flood.

So there was still a clear view of hope when the ruin had already risen to such a height that only an annihilation of mankind was left. There the son is born, who should build the ark and become a witness of the judgment over mankind.

While on the line of Cain the short but enormous traces of human achievements show up, on the line of Seth the traces of the revelations, the deeds of God have been preserved. These two lines run through until the flood. Also in the cultural world, which is self-sufficient and takes the mouth full, God finds people to whom He can open the eyes and give a clear view beyond the judgment in the tearing increasing ruin.

Of Noah it is said in verse 32: "When he was five hundred years old, he begat Shem, Ham and Japheth." Now it is not at all to be supposed that he will not have begotten children in the five hundred years before, or with Jared 162, and with Methusala 187 years. The probability is that sons and daughters were also born in these families before. The assumption is probably justified that in this genealogical table is not given a list of the oldest sons, but that only those are mentioned who were distinguished by special piety and faithful obedience to the faith, and whose names were worthy to be entered in this book of life. In this we would have the key why the others are not also recorded.

Already here something shows up which we meet in the whole kind of God: the selection. If we were dealing with natural lists, ordinary family trees, natural lines, then the kind marked here would have no justification. But so the Scriptures move along the line of election-a line which God has taken up again and again, and which He will carry out in His procedure with mankind. We certainly do not err in supposing that in the personalities mentioned, who were so close not only in the flesh but also in the spirit, the thought of God moved from generation to generation in these elect of God. The elect are pinnacles on which God's spirit and pleasure can rest. But those begotten before Shem also perished in the flood.

6. Chapter **Six**

Our chapter tells us the cause of the general ruin and the threat and preparation of the shattering comprehensive judgment.

The wickedness and ungodliness of men grew into enormity when the children, the sons of God brought about a carnal intermingling with the daughters of men.

Many commentators assume that the sons of God are the sons of Seth. The application they make of this interpretation (2 Cor. 6:14 ff) is certainly worth heeding. However, we cannot agree with them, because in the whole OT the expression sons of God is not used by men. Otherwise, this would be the only exception and it would be far from the Old Testament use of this word, which constantly means angels, as Psalm 82:6 and Job 38:7 show us.

In my opinion, Satan and his angels are explicitly called sons of the Most High in Psalm 82. In our passage, too, the sons of God do not mean children of men, but fallen angels, Satan's angels,

apostate spirits, demons, who had an unlawful intercourse with the daughters of men, which was not permitted by God; and from this intercourse, gigantic families came forth, as the folk tales describe them.

These legendary figures are by no means to be considered as poems of human imagination. They are real beings who lived, and who, as is said of the Titans, waged a terrible war against God, but in which God was victorious.

These demigods have thus come forth from the carnal intermingling of divine beings with daughters of men.

There is one more thing. There are two lines running through the Scriptures side by side. One is the line after which an entrance of God, who is spirit, into human nature takes place. This is the mystery of godliness: God revealed in the flesh. Jehovah speaks of this mystery immediately after the Fall. For the seed of the woman, not of the man, is envisaged by God.

We, who are believers, know in what a wonderfully profound, mysterious way the Son of God entered into human manifestation, born of a woman, begotten, however, not by the man, but by the Spirit. It is in the nature of the Holy Spirit that the trait which confronts us in the union of the evil spirits with the daughters of men, namely the union of the Spirit with the nature of woman, should come into manifestation at the appointed time. The birth of our Savior is the proof of this.

It is a deep mystery to us how God and man, spirit and flesh can become one; how what for us are unconditional, irreconcilable opposites can be brought tounity; how the Holy Spirit is able to work His creative power in the womb of a Jewish girl. But that from the union of the Spirit in the highest potency, of the personal Holy Spirit with the corporeality of a human being, the highest revelation of God has come forth, that is clearly before our eyes.

Parallel to this line, on which God achieves the highest revelation of His being in the man Jesus, by finding the possibility to reveal His divine being to men, lies another line, that of the counter-Christ.

Throughout the history of revelation we perceive the endeavor of the prince of darkness to find his revelation and completion in his connection with a human corporeality. In our opinion, we find the first approach to this in this chapter. There the endeavor of Satan and his fellow fallen angels to incarnate in humanity has begun.

Even after the flood, this encroachment of demonic powers on the human family did not abate. In Canaan the demonism has broken in a terrible way. We find there the giant race of the Enakites, and giant figures with the Philistines, in whom we have similar spawns as here.

This same deep inclination to take possession of a corporeality is encountered in the many cases of possession in the NT, and since then up to us. According to our knowledge, this comes to a head, of which the book of Revelation speaks. It speaks of a man to whom Satan gives all his power and authority. We leave it undecided in which way this human being will be generated, but there is no doubt that in this satanic entity of a counter-Christ, in this sinister, horrible body, Satan will be incarnated.

In this man we are dealing with a satanic masterpiece, since Satan and man have become one in the highest way. For this man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3), the child of perdition, Judas is a prelude (Joh. 17:12; 13:27). Whether the goal of Satan's embodiment in human form will be achieved by taking possession of an already existing living human being in order to completely indwell him, or whether he will bring forth a very similar procreation as the Holy Spirit did in the womb of the virgin in order to thereby gain possession of a body, I do not dare to decide. An impossibility for the latter I do not see, because there must be such an ability inherent in this spirit being, otherwise I do not understand this chapter. Two possibilities are thus present for Satan to reach his goal. But with it he also attains the other possibility to be able to die like a human being. That is then not to be rejected from the hand.

Whoever has had an open eye during the last decade, concerning the sinister activity of Spiritism, will not have failed to notice how the endeavor of the evil spirits not only to take possession of a human body, but to achieve corporealization through forbidden sexual intercourse with women, similar to this, comes to light with a shattering clarity.

A man of God who has hadall kinds of experiences with the possessed, including those from the Pentecostal movement, knows about how female persons who have wanted to surrender to the Holy Spirit have been raped by evil spirits in a carnal way.

Such things have also occurred in America. An American report brought the following: A wedding is to take place between a medium and a spirit. A preacher is ready for the marriage ceremony. Many witnesses are present. At first, only the woman is there. The demon suddenly appears after the marriage act is performed, and then the married groom kisses his bride in front of the witnesses. - –

Because Satanism was at its peak before the flood and only a few people remained untouched by the disaster and destruction, Jehovah decided in His heart to destroy this humanity and to make a new start with Noah. But He still granted the unholy and wicked generation a period of reflection and repentance of one hundred and twenty years (verse 3).

"My spirit shall not rule in man forever," or judge, rule, keep in order. A time word is used that means: to condescend. The meaning is this: My spirit will no longer condescend to dwell with these people. So God has not left the pre-flood people. But now He pronounces His death sentence on them. But they did not use the time limit left to them; so the judgment must come.

Verse 6 speaks of God's repentance. In contrast, we read Deuteronomy 23:19: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither is He a child of man, that He should repent." Why do both words stand side by side? If there is repentance for God, it is not human repentance. He cannot repent in the sense that He did anything at all as if it were wrong. That would be against the testimony of ch. 1,31. Repentance is not the most skillful translation of the basic word. In it there is not the thought that God had cause to be ashamed of the creation or to complain as if it had not succeeded.

It is expressed in him that the holy will of love is forced to use the strongest means against the corrupt state into which His creation has fallen. His will cannot be achieved in any other way than by choosing death. In the word repentance lies the definite declaration that God cannot possibly tolerate the condition. He cannot continue to allow corruption to run free; He can never agree to let the devil have the last word in His creation.

God can never and will never allowevil to settle down at any point, in any corner of the universe, in such a way that it could never be eliminated until eternity. At the same time, however, this is the assurance that God will finally deal with corruption. Our verse is a guarantee for this.

We now understand why the judgment of God is described with such comprehensive thoroughness. But also how the Son of God makes use of the days of Noah (Matth. 24,37 ff). Is it not shocking to think that nothing can be deducted from this word?

It is not clear enough in Christianity that with the return of the Son of Man a judgment will fall upon mankind, against which the judgment in the days of Noah was only a small prelude.

That destruction, ruin, annihilation will come in the future days of judgment suffers no doubt. But both the water judgment in Noah's time and the fire judgment of Sodom give us, in view of the judgments in the day of the Lord, the clear lesson that as poignant as the judgment is, nevertheless a remnant will be preserved. Mankind never perishes. The continuance of the earth, of the animals, of mankind is divinely guaranteed.

To save mankind and the animal world over the flood, Noah receives the command from God to build an ark (verse 15). Better basic conditions for the building of the ship, than those indicated, were not set up yet. The construction itself on the part of the faith-obedient Noah

before the eyes of the godless people was a constant warning and reminder to repent, but without success. Only eight souls saved themselves from the collapse of the first mankind.

The indication of verse 19:20 shows us with how much care, accuracy and detail God provides for the preservation of the rest of the creature as well.

7. Seventh and

8. eighth chapter

From the detailed description of the course of the flood it is clear how long Noah and his sons were in the ark, namely one year and seventeen days. We have here at the same time a clear biblical proof that the years before the flood were not only a quarter or half of our years, but full calendar years. The scripture knows to report about months of at least thirty days, and therefore also about a year of at least three hundred and sixty days. This knocks out the ground of that assumption with which one wanted to help oneself to press down the "unbelievably" high age of the primeval fathers as far as possible on our age.

How there can be believing writers who in view of ch. 7,19 ff. (cf. ch. 6,17) want to claim that the flood was only a local and not a general one is incomprehensible. All flesh was supposed to perish, but this probably only extends to the land dwellers. Whether also the water animals perished, or whether in the depths of the sea still monsters from that time might hide, we do not know.

The words of ch. 8,17 tie in again with the original creation of ch. 1, 20-25 and point ahead to the time of restoration according to Acts 3,20 ff.

If this water judgment is a model, a shadow of the future judgment, then it is completely excluded that the fire judgment can be something else than restoration: through judgment restoration of everything that has been in the beginning. All the judgments of our God do not aim at destruction, but create space for real renewal. The real restoration cannot come the first time. Individual judgments since the Flood have already taken place. The judgment of God on His people is one of the most shattering. Judgments may well strike down, as with Israel, but not forever. Then the cross is a world judgment. Finally, however, there will be a great world judgment in the future day of the Lord. But the common view about the outcome of this judgment of God is wrong. Not annihilation, but restoration is the goal of God. This can only happen at the "other time". However, it is guaranteed in the word of our Savior Joh. 17,2, and the assurance of the transfigured Lord: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21,5). God has never given up His original thoughts with the creation of mankind. He comes to the goal.

The account of Noah's sacrificial act (verse 20) suggests to us the question: Where did he get the knowledge to be allowed to approachGod through sacrifice? Nowhere do we find a new command from God. But we do see that this activity was a clear, transparent remnant of the living true knowledge of God that had been preserved in the line of Seth.

According to verse 21, the Lord decides with Himself not to let such a judgment come upon people again, "since the human heart is evil" and nothing can be done about it until it becomes fundamentally new.

With this renewal Israel will make a beginning according to Ezk. 36, 26,27, according to which passage God will give His people a new spirit, a new heart and make new people out of them. We carry the new life within us; Israel will become a new humanity in the bodily life. We experience such a renewal through transformation and transfiguration.

Seed and harvest, frost and heat, summer and winter, day and night (verse 22) are henceforth fixed laws of our God. The covenant with Noah established that this order can no longer be shaken, despite astronomy and geology. Jer. 33:19 ff. makes another use of this covenant, which has a fundamental meaning for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

9. Chapter Nine

The blessing of God in His first part (verse 1) is on the same line as ch. 1,28. But verse 2 is a new line: "Let your fear and terror be upon all the beasts ...; into your hands be they given", - also the fish. This fear and terror are put in place as a new purpose.

So before the flood, man must have had a better relationship with the animal world. The reason for it is probably that he did not enjoy animal meat. How healthwise the human being must have lived, since he has experienced such an exceedingly long age. For this he has also not slaughtered and hunted, thus not murdered.

Nowhere in the scripture is there a trace that man took a position to the animal world before the flood like we do. Therefore, no miracle was necessary when the animals entered the ark. It is superfluous to attribute miracles to God. He does not want to create miracles, where the necessity for it is not set; and we do not want to find miracles, where nothing of it is said. But we want to hold on to the fact that God still has the power to do miracles today.

But now be "your terror over all animals". That is henceforth God's basic law. Enmity, unwillingness, rebellion of the animals against the people, and stalking, cunning, rape, murder lust on the part of the people towards the animals, is since then marking of the mutual relationship.

The first trace of a transformation in the animal world meets us at the appearance of our Savior, and Jesus' disciples could experience it: Fish went into the net; a young, unbroken donkey's fill carries Jesus on its back. This is a small sample of how it should become again.

In the beginning, tree fruits and herbs were given to man for food; now they are also instructed to eat meat (verse 3.4). Man becomes an "omnivore. Only blood shall he not enjoy.

In the consumption of meat we find a partition between the people and the spirit world - in the spiritualistic sense. Ch. 6 has drawn our attention to the illicit contact with the fallen spirit world. Against this, after the flood, after the judgment, God erects this barrier in the eating of flesh. In the divine ordinances, Israel is expressly instructed to eat meat; it is compelled to eat meat. In this way, God has armed and strengthened the people, whom He wanted to use for the execution of judgment on the people of Canaan, who had been horribly corrupted and given over to spiritualism and satanism, against this evil.

The meat diet is not quite what vegetarians would have us believe. With it we have a protective defense against the intrusion of spiritualism. From this point of view, vegetarianism takes on a very serious face. The fact is that it and most of the eating houses serving it are breeding grounds for spiritualism, occultism, theosophy. They are not all to be condemned wholesale, but a powerful promotional activity for these things emanates from there.

Similar to the consumption of meat, it is the same with conjugal intercourse. Let us remember that even in this piece Israel was obedient to God. Among no people does the desire to beget children emerge as strongly as among them. Let us not forget that Paul emphasizes these things in 1 Tim. 4:3, 4.

God did not avenge the blood of Abel; but here He allows to avenge man (verse 5-7), because man is made in His image. God does not think of giving up His original thoughts despite the deep fall of man.

The following verses report the closing of the covenant with Noah. The reading Flood (verse 11) is correct. The word means general flood. In Sintflut and sintemal not sint dem male i.e. since time, now substantiating sintemal and Sinngrün (evergreen) we have the only remnants of a word once more familiar. After all, the flood was not a flood of sins, but a flood of water. Verse 15 would have sin flood no sense.

We encounter an apparent difficulty in God's arrangement concerning the rainbow (verses 12-17). Science tells us that where there is rain, there must be a rainbow. Should there have been no rain before the flood? Our passage says that God set the bow **as a sign.**

In the second creation account, we read that fog rose to moisten the land without rain. That such moistening still takes place today in some areas is established. So rain is not absolutely necessary. It is quite possible that with the doom of the flood according to ch. 7, 11, 12 a new earth period occurred.

Weather changes may have occurred when waters erupted from within and above. Perhaps in these words we have the first manifestation of precipitation on earth. Then one would have perceived the rainbow for the first time after the rain stopped.

After the terrible experience of God's judgment of the flood, in this case people could have associated the arch only with the breaking of a new flood. They would have had to live in constant fear to see the disaster breaking in. In contrast, the Lord declares that the arch should guarantee them that a flood will not come again; another part of His blessings will enter their service from now on. But the scope of this covenant is not limited to man, as verse 16 shows. So we have to let Paul be right, who writes about a groaning of the creature for full redemption.

One of the most shocking stories on the ground of the post-flood mankind meets us in the passage verse 20 ff. Noah is not only the progenitor of the post-flood humanity, but also the last in the antediluvian line of God's elect, the bearer and representative of the divine truth of revelation, the appointed witness for God's thoughts of salvation and love also for the now new world time after the devastating judgment of the flood.

In this light, his deep fall makes a moving impression, like the earlier fall of Adam. What he encounters has become and remained characteristic and decisive for the whole distant development of mankind on the earth cleansed by the flood judgment.

The fall of Noah is proof that the witness for the new humanity did not know how to assert his dominion over nature, but sinks deep under nature and becomes nature's servant.

Wine is a new nutrient and tonic for mankind. This is an indication of the recognized need to counteract and help the declining natural strength in people by artificial means. The whole medical science is in line with this, which wants to support the declining body life by artificial means. It is the attempt to postpone the rapid decay as far as possible and to achieve a strengthening of life by artificial utilization of forces in creation.

Noah now shows how this bearer of the revelation of God became a prey of these new powers. But in his son Ham we see a quite terrible result. Ham was also a bearer of the revelation and of God's obedience and faith, next to Shem and Japheth a hero of faith who was saved over to the new earth. In Ham we have a man of faith who became secure in the faith and did not keep chastity, who spoke of what he saw to the brethren.

There are many things that we do not like; we see some nakedness and folly of men of God. This in itself is not a cause for concern, but it becomes a strong temptation to point out the nakedness we see and to tell others about it. This Hamitic spirit has far too much room among us, that one does not go into silence and keep what one has recognized of shame in brothers, but speaks of it to others and calls their attention to it. T h e spirit has had a shattering consequence for the whole human race.

Ham reveals an abhorrent crudeness. It is a fact that the Hamitic peoples are the most inclined to it, just as shamelessness is most prevalent among them. In this respect, this report has fundamental importance.

But now also the other side. God establishes a covenant for all the creatures He has saved (verse 16). In this act of God we encounter His will of restoration. God never departs from the original lines He has drawn, despite the deepest fall of the creatures. His obvious endeavor is to restore everything; He does not allow His goal to be lowered. This shines so brightly to us from the saved creation.

Now, however, the spirit of Revelation lets us know from the very beginning, right here in a shattering way, that the new humanity and the bearer of the new order of things, who has experienced the greatest that we can imagine, also fails completely.

The first thing he has to tell us about the activity of his life, about the mastery of nature, is his deep fall under nature. God has subordinated it to him as with Adam. He has taken care that Noah shall have and exercise dominion. Fear and terror shall be over all animals. Presupposed here is right behavior towards God, as also right behavior, right observance of the legal orders and laws on the new world are necessary, in which each authority, each state life announces itself. And now Noah with his sons fails so completely!

But God lets us have a glimpse into His thoughts. For Him there is no disappointment, even if in the reorganization of things man is no good. God does not count on human efficiency, on the ability to respond to His thoughts and to maintain His height. The implementation of the divine thoughts of salvation is independent of our miserable condition.

Now a new earth, a new mankind, a new householdbegins, which will last until the day of Christ, until a new creation brought about by fire occurs. But from the word it is clear as daylight that all these things are never bound to our condition.

This point of view is extremely delicious in view of the deep upheavals that are going through the Church of God. Through the movement in our days, the basic question is posed to us whether we human beings must enter into a completely new constitution, or whether God can create a new one in which He does not need us at all, but what Christ works in us.

By God's grace, we have been preserved from the terrible confusion that has swept over the land, which was only made possible by a thorough misunderstanding of this abc of Christianity. It does not require any special erudition to see this, but only a clear, open eye for the simple, sharply drawn lines that God has drawn for us. But He has given us the view for this and we must only let it be sharpened again and again. This can hardly be achieved in any other way than by a deeper study of the original revelations.

The fact that Canaan is cursed (verse 25) is much more shocking than if his father Ham had been struck by the curse. The whole further development is put into this word by God, but it is not supposed to be conclusive, final. It is, however, a profoundly black line of judgment, which God has given as an illustrative lesson for the whole new humanity.

The smell of the process reported here clings to the Hamites to this day. The impregnation with this spirit has survived all changes of the time, has defied all cultural undertakings, dominations, flourishing times. They have remained Hamites; the curse has not been wiped out. The Hamitic peoples are still the roughest and most difficult to deal with on the way of culture. These experiences are a seal on the truth of our God, which even the development of power and splendor cannot break off. He has drawn the lines and not we.

But this is also how the blessings have worked out over the millennia. Simple, plain people must confess that they see the confirmation of the truth of our God in the development of history and culture of the nations, which have worked out with faithfulness in the three lines that Noah drew. And this word is now proving itself for more than four thousand years.

10. Tenth chapter

In the table of nations we see one of the most powerful proofs of the divine stamp and of the reliability of the oldest document of the Scriptures. It is the hardest nut for the critics. People have wanted to relegate not only this table of nations, but the whole of Moses' tables of time to a later

period. But it remains that in this one chapter a point of view is taken for the **evaluation of the distribution of the earth** as it stands actually uniquely in the culture world.

We have to admit that the Jews had a view of the interrelations and the structure of the world of nations from the flood to the present day and of the unity of the human race which no other cultured people, no matter how grandly conceived, has ever had.

The whole heathen world does not know a uniform conception of mankind. With a transfer of this chapter into a later time, one only postpones their difficulties. The historians only grit their teeth at the blackboard. It becomes all the greater to us when we realize that it did not emerge from any philosophically inclined people. She offers the best that has ever been written by people about this point. Her information is confirmed by cultural research, linguistic research, excavation science.

The man who wrote this chapter has had an overview of humanity after the flood that cannot be compromised by any objections. As a purely literary testimony, this chapter is unique. For us, the question of its origin is easy. It is God who gave it. The genealogical table comes from no human, but from the original source.

Nimrod (verse 8-10) is a very unique phenomenon. He is the first Old Testament shadow image of the Antichrist. We see in him defiance, rebellion against God, Satanism. He appears as autocrat, despot, and above all he is the first founder of cities after the flood. What was started before it according to the direction, that was washed away by the flood.

Nimrod is the man who takes it up again. He sets about building giant cities that our builders still marvel at today. Nineveh and Babel go beyond anything we have of solid cities. They have proportions from which we can see that their builders were not small spirits. They had heaven-defying thoughts. Nimrod is the embodiment and rejuvenation of Cainism, only in much grander form.

In the case of Babel, we draw attention toa play on words in the Holy Scriptures. In Jer. 25,26; 51,41 the name Sesach (Sheshach) is found, which is to be read as Babel due to a reversal peculiar to the Hebrew language. (S is the penultimate, like B the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, etc.) This reversal is to be regarded as a delicious prophecy: God will reverse Babel.

Babel has a strange meaning in the Scriptures. It rises on the ground of the new earth and finds its end on this side of the new earth. Thus we read in Rev. 18:2; 17:5: "She is fallen, she is fallen, Babylon the great, who is the mother of fornication and of all abominations." By fornication we have to understand any deviation from God. The Babylonian evil is then completely over.

In this Babylon, which is the embodiment of the antichristianity, the symbol of the rebellion against God, God sends, when he could not watch it any longer, his so deeply sunk, so completely by idolatry infested people, in order to let them return home healed from it. Never again after that a tendency to idolatry is found among them.

But just as God used Babel (that power that createsdisaster and brings it to its highest flowering) to heal Israel; just as He used the mother of fornication to make it free from fornication, so He will know how to heal mankind from all satanic evil forever, and the angelic world as well. Babel is only a picture of the author of all sin and evil; and what God did to Israel is only a visual lesson, a rehearsal of His procedure in the future. Here we have a line that we may extend.

In Nimrod's enterprise (verse 8.9.) we meet the first traces of violent domination of mankind. Before the flood no traces of nations and state formations and dominations are provable. At that time the people were joined together on the ground of the family. The state was not known. There were no authorities, no legislation and laws in a pronounced form.

It is significant that a first approach to this is reported from the family of Ham, which was under the curse in a special way. The Cainites built cities in order to make their life pleasant and beautiful in view of the divine curse by means and gifts of this world. One wanted to draw the

view away from the goal which God had put. What started there, Nimrod continues, but in a much more grandiose and imperious way.

Abraham, on the other hand, learned to wait for the city whose foundations God had laid (Heb 11:10). That city-building was a defiant anticipation of God's purpose, comparable to when Israel desired a king. It was in God's plan to give them a king; now He gave them one in His wrath.

Similarly it went with the Cainites: the first city builder was - the first murderer. With them it is aimed at the glorification of man and highlighting his efficiency. But blood is always the sign of culture, which still clings to it today.

In contrast, there is the magnificent simplicity of the life of the patriarchs, who renounce the achievements of culture. - The trumpet of culture is blown loudly even today, and even the children of God become quite intoxicated by its sounds. The more willingly we surrender to this spirit, the more deeply we are caught up in it.

So now we observe a new phenomenon on the ground of the renewed humanity. One no longer limits oneself to the family frame; one advances to the formation of nations, empires. It seems to have progressed with Nimrod from the subjugation of the creation to the subjugation of the higher creatures, the human beings - an enormous contrast to the past.

Also in former times there was power position and subordination, as it is founded in the basic ideas of the family. With Nimrod however it concerns a rule of sinful humans over humans. The subordination given earlier in the family under the supreme power of the head of the family extended Nimrod to the subjection under the rule over the mankind equal to him.

But even the beginning of tyranny corresponded to a thought of God's reign on earth. As there are dominions, powers, thrones in the celestial spaces, so God will also carry out a monarchy, an accomplished kingship on earth. The procedure of Nimrod, however, amounts to a self-willed anticipating and running ahead, with which man reveals his not being able to wait.

We come here to speak about basic features in the sin being and its distinction from satanic being. Many things are attributed to Satan that do not belong to him. We must also be just to him and not burden him with what must be attributed to us. Some traits of the human being are due to Satan's inspiration; for example, the trait of rape, murder. Not for nothing Jesus calls Satan a murderer from the beginning (Joh. 8,44). It is something terrible that the sword, the murder, is given to the authority.

Then there is the other trait, which Jesus expresses in the words: "He is not passed in the truth." The tendency to lie, to untruth, is unmistakably Satan's product. How far it is connected with rape, we know.

But there is a third trait in man's sinfulness that is exclusively human, namely the tendency to corrupt everything we get our hands on. The unspeakable corruption, siltation, which can be perceived everywhere, seems to be a purely human ability.

Satan could not give an account of what he did with his seduction. He is not a competing counter-god. Certainly, he is superior to us, moreover, he has more than six thousand years of experience behind him, but he was not able to foresee what kind of harvest of ruin, of rottenness would grow in mankind by tearing them out of the fellowship with God. He undoubtedly had the delusion of leading people to the highest goal on the path of freedom. After all, he himself strove to achieve divine worship.

We see this most clearly in his procedure with the second Adam. This aspiration is not lost on him in his many thousands of years of experience: he wants to be worshipped as God.

Paul told us (1 Cor. 10:20) that behind the gods are demonic powers that procure divine worship for themselves. The superman of Nietzsche is known to us. Through the whole behavior of Satan goes the train of self-glorification. But he has not succeeded in warding off the ruin. He has not been able to prevent people from corrupting with such irresistible force everything that God has entrusted to them that is great, good, glorious.

In the whole procedure of the enemy during the Christian centuries a change of his procedure is not to be perceived. His aim was not so much to prevent the thoughts of God by lies, but rather to encourage in a clever and devious way all the self-improvement striving of men. Today the greatest danger for the knowledge of the truth in Christ is not to be seen in the violent way of war and subjugation, but in the way of imitation, to climb the highest levels of elevation and ennoblement on the basis of the most skilful and sublime systems and doctrinal views. Satan does not want to make people bad but better. After all, he promised Eve to lead her towards God-likeness. Satan would probably prevent many things that are happening today, abolish abuses and make a great reform.

The report about the establishment of the kingdom of Babel (verse 10) precedes ch. 11,4. The whole tenth chapter gives a short overview of the development and expansion of mankind.

The Babylonian culture is much older than the Assyrian and was authoritative for the latter. Proof of this is the fact that the enormous buildings in Assur resemble those in Babylon in a strange way. Thus e.g. completely in such a way, as it was usual in Babylonia, where stones were missing, also in Assur stone bricks are burned, although there natural rock for enormous temple buildings would have been plentifully present. So in Assur the old holy building method of Babylon was kept. Thus the foundation of Nineveh from Babel (verse 11) is not fable and poetry.

For us, Babel, as it is depicted in prophecy up to Revelation, has the meaning that it has become and will become the beginning and the completion of the summary of all God-opposing powers.

11. Chapter eleven

Only one family emerged from the flood, that of Noah. Did they speak Hebrew? In any case, the language is a strange link. If the presumption of man had not intervened, then it would have remained with one language.

In the confusion of languages we see a well-deserved, but also an exceedingly gracious judgment of God. Language is one of the strongest bonds. God's thoughts are to create such unity that all people and nations truly understand each other.

The ark landed on Mount Ararat, on a highland that had no room for larger crowds. So the natural urge arose to migrate, and that to the east (verse 2). On this migration they reached an extremely fertile region, Sinear.

The idea arises to builda tremendous tower to prevent dispersion (verse 4). The execution of such a work, as well as the precondition for it, like brick painting and burning (verse 3), however, necessarily presupposes a union and an overall direction. The simplest basic trait for what moved the people was the expressed will to act straightforwardly contrary to God.

They want to build a city and a tower so that they will not be scattered. So God was well understood when he said: "Fill the earth" (chap. 9:1). The course of human history has become quite different from the one God intended. The Babylonian disease has seized us and is shaking us violently. People do not want to scatter, but to gather together in tightly knit masses of people, to make a name for themselves, and thus to drive God's thoughts behind them.

We find this most pronounced among the civilized peoples. Shocking proofs of this are the large cities, which, despite all health measures and all improvements and reorganizations, are breeding grounds of the people's death. Not in the countryside, not in agricultural circles, but in the cities we find the source of contamination and rot.

In this we see the basic nature of Babylon, and one will not rest until the bankruptcy is there. We know all kinds of associations and unions, e.g. those of employees, employers, the military, governments of nations. On these lines lie the most dangerous impulses for decomposition of healthy national life; here lie the germs of ruin. One wants to storm heaven, figuratively speaking. We know the spirit. It manifests itself in the erection of church towers, skyscrapers, and so on. He gives man no rest, and man in turn does not desist from him. Hence Jehovah says (verse 6), "This is the beginning of their enterprise!"

"The Lord descended" (verse 5). These and similar humanizing phrases (anthropomorphisms) of Scripture are a delicious way of our God to respond to our way of thinking. We recall here the saying of our Lord (Matt. 11:25), "To babes the Father hath revealed it." We recognize in this the purpose of our God to become like man and to bring him near to His image.

Verse 6 is the first time we encounter the word "people." "And now should they not be forbidden to carry out all that they have undertaken?" God wants to resist, but His judgment is coupled with justice. He wants to keep them from falling so frantically into nameless ruin. His judgment thus controls the ruin to the best of His ability.

"Come now, let us ... confuse their language" (verse 7). The confusion of language has become the cause of immense work and trouble. It is also a serious hindrance to the mission. However, God knew what He was doing. He created an obstacle of which He was fully aware. "God is aware from eternity of all His works" (Acts 15:18). God measured and weighed that they would cause obstacles to the accomplishment of His salvation and purposely included them in His plan. So there can be no question of disappointment. The confusion of language is only one more proof that God is not in a hurry at all. He is sure of what He is doing. We electricity and steam people think we have to help our God with the whip as well. What is worse is that our ulterior and secondary thoughts are responsible for our complaining, questioning and trembling. According to this direction, we still have a lot to do.

He certainly estimated the costs at that time as well. Two thousand years ago, God gave proof of what He could do when He wanted to. At Pentecost, He gave a solution to the confusion of languages in principle when it says: "We all hear them speaking in our tongues the great deeds of God" (Acts 2:11).

A movement such as Pentecostalism can be understood in that it is aimed at helping God to accelerate His work. Without question, He could do this if it were in His thoughts. That removal of the confusion of language was an effect of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father, who is acquainted with the plans of the Father and of the Son, and who has been clear about His action.

It is understandable that we wish what happenedthen to continue. The efforts to form the human being into the image of God also continue. If necessary, then it would have been so simple to let the reproducing forces suffer no interruption also after the language gift. That it happened nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is responsible for it, not the congregation of God. For He has continued to build up the body of Christ, despite all the distortions and obscurations that have crept in.

He did not withdraw the other gifts, but the gift of languages. Therefore, it could not have been in God's plan to preserve and develop this gift in the present, otherwise it would have happened without fail. God is not in a hurry. But the time will come when He will make use of the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit in a very extraordinary way. We can vividly imagine the disappointment of those brothers and sisters who went to China with the certainty that they had received the gift of speaking Chinese and had to experience there that no one understood them.

The judgment had helped to preservemankind (verse 8). As with all judgments of God, one sees also with this only the difficult, annoying effects and has only a weak conception of what would have become, if God had not resisted. The destruction would then have penetrated out without barriers in a depth and unrestraint as we cannot imagine it. God has effectively prevented such an accumulation and expansion.

If one gains insight into the powers that conglomerate in a people, then one gets a small idea of what a conglomeration of all people would mean. The overthrow carries more and more a people-encompassing character. One wants to gather everything together. In the face of such danger, we may thank God from the depths of our souls that the confusion of languages has not been lifted. It is not foreseeable whether even one government could withstand a world-encompassing onslaught.

Even the most severe judicial visitations of God have a salutary meaning. None of them is exhausted in itself; they all aim beyond themselves for healing, recovery, restoration. This does not detract from their task; they are and remain punitive judgments. But they are not purposeless acts of revenge, but carry salutary effects.

With the section verse 27-32 the story of Abrahambegins. From Acts 7:4 and Hebr. 11:8 it is clear that Abraham must have had a revelation of God already in Chaldea. By his fatherland then Ur in Chaldea is to be understood. Ur was an ancient priesthood of the moon goddess, who was worshipped there.

We encounter a high degree of culture there at that time. In the scriptural passages mentioned, we encounter a very wonderful way of our God to reckon with human difficulties, ponderousness and stay. They give us an important key to understanding the ways of God with mankind in general. In them we meet the wonderful basic law in His procedure with His believers.

There was an interruption in the exodus. Abraham's family went out, but they did not reach the Promised Land. Tharan had to die first in Haran. Only then does a complete solution come for Abraham, so that he carried out the original thought of God the second time.

God reckons with obstacles in His plans and the inability on our part to fully absorb and carry out His thoughts the first time. The other time, however, He comes through with us. It is worthwhile to examine the whole of the Holy Scriptures on the basis of this key. We will be moved

to admiration and adoration when we perceive how God allows Himself to be delayed with unspeakable patience and how He is able to use this waiting time, which arises from the human lack of understanding and inability to respond to His thoughts, in His own way for educational purposes, but how, when He takes up His thoughts again for the second time, He comes to the goal. For God never draws a line that He does not finish. No matter how long a stay may last, He still reaches His goals. Happiness, joy, peace come over us when we gain this insight.

We all know the expression "the second Adam. God did not get through with the first Adam and his lineage. How long He allowed Himself to be delayed! At least four thousand years passed before He sent the second. He let the people manage according to their will and did not interfere. With the exception of the small nation of Israel, He let the rest live out their lives according to their hearts' desires.

But when the second Adam came, He was not understood at all the first time. Then God took Him back after His failed first mission. It was as if He said, "If you are not ready, we will wait.

But when He comes for the other time, He will penetrate, but in exactly the same line as the first time. Then He will succeed in carrying out the first thought of **forming human children created** from **dust into sons of God in His image. The** first sending of Jesus Christ into the world is the guarantee of the flawless execution of the original plan of creation.

When Cain is born, the greatest hope is awakened in the heart of Eve, but the one from whom she expects salvation and life becomes a fratricide. Another must be born, the prince of life becomes - not the first, but the other son of man.

What movement there was in Egypt when the brothers, the murderers, saw their brother Joseph before them. He knew them, but they did not know him. He made their consciences hot, so that they had to confess: "This we did toour brother, that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear him" (chap. 42:21). But the second time he made himself known to them, and now there was not only reconciliation, but complete restoration. He, whose murderers they had become, became their restorer.

The people of Israel are growing in Egypt. In their highest oppression, Moses is sent to their rescue at the age of forty. But they do not hear that God wanted to give salvation by his hand. The same man He sends forty years later, and now He enforces salvation.

The people who went out of Egypt must disintegratein the desert; only the second generation comes to the Promised Land. Moses is the first great commander of God, but he dies without entering Canaan. The second, Joshua, enters.

The first law tablet breaks, only the second reached to the custody. And so on down the line.

We understand why unrest, agitation, anger, gnashing of teeth were the result in the High Council when they understood that Stephen in his defense speech with his demonstration of this basic feature of the divine procedure was heading for Jesus and held before their eyes their inability and unwillingness to respond to it.

God allows Himself to be stopped by the inability of His elect to follow Him, and He bears it with unspeakable patience; but the other time He passes through without fail.

This is indescribably precious for us who stand at the crossroads between the first and second coming of the Lord. We have to bear with the burden and difficulty that the **thoughts of God in Christ will only be carried out with His second coming.** When one has recognized this basic trait, one no longer allows oneself to be buffeted and unwilling to wait. Then one can wait as Christ waits. And why can He wait? Because He is completely sure of His cause! The second time He leads everything out gloriously.

The fact that we are waiting, however, does not exclude but rather includes a God-ordained and God-governed activity and implementation of God's thoughts as they belong to the present age, just as Christ does not stand idly by. But let us not deceive ourselves about the importance of this age!

12. Chapter Twelve

In the election of Abraham, we are faced with a powerful truth that has given rise to much contention - the fact of divine election. It is a field in which the human mind has labored, as far as acumen and logic (correctness of thought) are concerned. It has forged human thinking in chains. We find here a striking proof that God has hidden His thoughts from the meek and prudent, but revealed them to the underage.

Election is a profound mystery, and yet God speaks openly and honestly to us about it. The key to understanding is not human acumen, human reasoning, but divine purity of heart, which is not inherent in us by nature, but which God gives.

We should take God at His word and not impute evil thoughts toHim; we should consider Him honest and trust Him to hold fast to His word in all circumstances, and that He will rule only love in all these things.

What has been accomplishedconcerning election! They dared to teach: God wants all people to be saved, but in reality it is not meant that way. The largest part of the people is condemned to damnation without salvation.

The most hideous ulterior motives were attributedto God, so that Calvin could write that babies of a span were to be found in hell! Today, one passes over such expressions, but one has not yet taken a stand **against** such a doctrine in Reformed circles.

On the other side, however, one has done awaywith all election. It is asserted that there is only one great thought of God of a single uniform blessedness, to which all people are called. With it everything is made equal and every difference is wiped out.

In the case of Abraham, the procedure of election is applied for the first time. God also waited approximately two thousand years for this. God now proceeds to choose a people as an instrument for the execution of His thoughts with mankind. Until then, God had done nothing with deeds, but only with words, if we think of the promise of the serpent treaders and Enoch's saying: "The Lord comes with His holy ten thousands to execute judgment" (Jude 15).

But now He begins to do something. As we have already pointed out, there is a great difference in the constitution of people before the flood and after it. Before there were only families, no formation of states; now, however, nations, kingdoms, dominions, authorities are formed. On this new ground God starts with the formation of a chosen people. He does not only allow the newly formed order to exist, but he goes straight to this idea.

After having anticipated Him, He approaches the execution of His thoughts, which He must have had with man from the beginning, which they understood and took up. God places Himself on the line already trodden by man, but in a peculiar way: not by a judgment that might be obvious, but by **separation, by** letting the world go its course for the rest. This is so extremely important.

From the flood, which in a sense created a new earth, God has not allowed Himself a fundamental overthrowing intervention. He has not seen fit to give a different direction to the course of things in Babylonism, organization, development, union, rebellion against His thoughts: Rather, He confines Himself to carrying out His own plan through **separation** and preparing for Himself a people who would be His people.

He started it with one man, the father of all believers, first of all of those from the circumcision. This Abraham has a threefold relationship. Those from the circumcision, as his natural descendants, stand easily understandable in special relationship to him. This lineage confronts us everywhere and is not obscured or eliminated by his relationship to the church, but on the contrary is deepened and confirmed by it.

The second spiritual relationship is the New Testament church of Jesus Christ, which should not be a fulfillment and thus an elimination of the original natural relationship to His descendants according to the flesh, but a confirmation of His own higher meaning.

But then he is also a father of many peoples, because from his second wife a whole series of peoples came forth. They do not belong to Israel, nor do they belong to the community, but they do belong to the descendants of Abraham, as an indication of the peoples to be won after the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We are standing here at the root of a great system, which initially has the formation of the people of Israel in mind, but then runs beyond Israel to the calling and selection of a people from the peoples of the congregation of Jesus Christ.

In Abraham we see the beginning of this still higher arrangement of our God in a similar line, but on higher ground, the beginning of a multitude which is not national (state-like) like Israel, which is international (supranational, encompassing peoples) and which in its composition is a double guarantee for the redemption of all peoples.

We are only firstfruits; but with that also the descendantsare required. If the beginning is holy, so is the dough; if the root is holy, so are the branches (Rom. 11,16). Here is the first approach to the wonderful double construction. The development of these great thoughts is still reserved for us. We still expect revelations about it in other ages.

When we speak of election, the question must come to us. Why might God have chosensuch a path? The Scriptures do not give us an answer to this question. Other ways would have been possible. Which ones? We must bow to the divine wisdom, which does not answer all questions.

How did God come to choose this one Chaldean? Why not several others? We do notget an answer about that either. - How did He come to choose me? In the face of this personal question, we can only bow down, be silent and give thanks. It is not even necessary for our knowledge of these deep mysteries of God's thoughts that we have to give ourselves completely satisfying answers about them. We may also trust God. He has probably chosen such a path because in this way He must presuppose a very high degree of unconditional faith in His elect.

It is in the nature of things that He does not even come to terms with His chosen ones if they are not people who, without looking at the reason, have this unconditional trust in Him that His choice is the best and that He has taken the best way to reach His goal. This trust makes His path immensely easier, since He has freely spoken about the goals He is pursuing. If one had simply observed this at all times, one would never have fallen into such deep abysses of human perversities, attributing to one's God all kinds of ulterior motives that must suspect and dishonor His nature and make it impossible for thousands of thinking people to believe God.

Before us is Jehovah's declaration to Abraham (verse 2), "I will make thee a great nation, and will bless thee, and make thee a great name, and thou shalt be a blessing." It doesn't look like anything big, although it is a lot for God to say all that to a single person. The promise, "I will bless thee, and make thee a great name," does not yet go beyond the scope of Abraham's personality. The words on the other hand: "and you shall be a blessing", cannot remain limited to this person, because he cannot be a blessing for himself alone. There God Himself bursts the bonds of personality, of personal enjoyment, profit, frame; He pulls open the floodgates. Yes, He goes even further (verse 3): "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you; and through you all generations on earth shall be blessed". God would rather bless than curse.

In John 17, Jesus clearly confrontsHis Father about what He has done and what lay before Him. And so He prays verse 9: "I pray for **those** whom You have given **Me,** and not for the world". This is the first group. He wants to specify that this is only about preparation, preservation and equipping of the chosen ones from His people Israel, His disciples.

But with these words He did not want to refuse to be the Savior of the world. For a moment He turns away from the world and thinks only of the preparation and equipping of these His chosen ones, when He speaks of carrying out the divine thoughts of salvation.

But in verse 20, another circle of elect comes: "I pray for those who will believe in Me through their word". This circle includes all who are reached by the apostolic proclamation in the present.

But this is not yet the largest circle, nor is it the whole world. The last comprehensive circle is mentioned in verse 23, when Jesus pleads that they, the elect of the present time, His own, mayattain to perfect unity, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and love them even as Thou lovest Me.

According to verse 3, this knowledge is eternal life. So when the world comes to **know** Jesus Christ, **it is** life for the whole world.

Perfect unity can only mean the bringing together of the members of the body of Christ with their head in the completion at the future of the Lord. Here we have quite clearly from the mouth of the Lord the same great program of divine election that was first struck at Abraham.

If only He had been trusted that what He says will come true, namely, that as the fruit of His redemption and the perfected unity of His own, the world will attaineternal life!

And in addition there are those passages where He says that He has the keys of death and the kingdom of the dead (Rev. 1:8) and where He is called Lord over the dead and the living (Rom. 14:9). Now, however, one has become accustomed to thinking: Jesus can no longer come to the aid of the dead; when death has occurred, He must turn back. If we had only trusted Him to reach His goal with infallible certainty, how much pressure, bondage and despair would have been spared!

The delightful thing for us is that God, in spite of all wrongdoings, does not get upset and sticks to His program, because He is completely safe with Him who rose from the dead.

One more. If only they had not made the mistake of limiting the election to salvation!

Today, being chosen is understood to be synonymous with being saved. There is hardly any other concept known than that of being saved. Whoever is not chosen is already lost. Only the elect go to heaven. That is the prevailing concept.

While it is clear right here at the first beginning of the election that God could not possibly have thought of wanting to save only the one Abraham among all the people. Or do we go further to the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ: should the son of the virgin, who does not need any salvation, be the only one saved, since He carries the title "the chosen one" (Is. 42,1)?

And when God calls a people the elect, we know for certain that God never dreamed of saving only the Jews; on the contrary, salvation came to us only through their fall.

How could it have come about that the concept of election could be used in the **sense of salvation**! From everywhere this conception receives a breach.

The predominant part of the concept of election is that of **usability for God**! That is where the emphasis is. True, election includes salvation; but an elect goes beyond himself and also allows God to go beyond him, that is, to be a blessing and to become a blessing. The elect never have the blessings for themselves, but for others; they are vessels and instruments of blessing for others. Those who receive blessings and keep them for themselves are not on the way to establish their election. Only those who have for others will be given that they may have the fullness. This is the basic question in this great chapter.

And now first a word about the difference between the **called** and the **chosen**. Here is no indissoluble contrast, so that called are also lost, if we think of a word like that: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matth. 22,14).

Also with this word we have to observe a similar misinterpretation as with the word election. Let us think of the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matth. 25, 1-12). They are all invited,

called, entitled to participate in the wonderful privilege of receiving the bridegroom and escorting him to the wedding.

It is therefore not a question of life, not of acceptance or rejection, but of the offer of a high privilege. Only half of them made their vocation firm by not lacking in accommodation on their part. They had the wisdom to find the entrance with the bridegroom.

The others, who were called in the same way but missed the entrance, have not lost their virginity, but they have lost the high privilege. Thus, they are not eternally lost. Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to putting everything in one category: blessed or lost. We judge everything in these terms.

But then, how is the saying, "I do not know you" to be understood? It is not difficult to explain it. A high official who goes in and out of the court commits a misstep and is "cut" from the court, that is, he is shunned and makes himself impossible at the court. He is dismissed there; he is no longer known. But this does not mean that he loses his life or his profession. We know this from our own circumstances, and it is no different in Scripture.

Ten are called, five are chosen. Is the election only in the divine predestination? In any case, we do not know this destiny, but we know that God presents us with the same possibility.

In 1 Thess. 1, 4-6, Paul lightly sets forth the two viewpoints of election. "The word comes in power and in the Holy Spirit and in great assurance." This is the divine viewpoint. The human one is this: "You have become our imitators and of the Lord". Chosen ones, then, know with unconditional certainty that they have accepted the Word commanded to them without abatement, no matter what it cost them. "With joys of the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit wants to guide us into all truth. He wants to reveal to us the whole unabridged counsel of God.

Then why is there so little realization? Because we have buried these sources. But all the elect have to let God tell them everything and not to be satisfied with being "only blessed". Today we know a "decided Christianity", but it is limited to the mere blessedness.

Let us remember the story of Martha and Mary (Luk 10:38-42). In consuming, consuming zeal for the Lord, one works oneself to death. In contrast, the Lord tells us: "But one thing is necessary". You have to let the Lord tell you everything He wants to say. This is how the Lord recognizes His chosen ones.

Let us study John 17:8. How did the Lord recognize those whom His Father gave Him? "They have acceptedYour word, which I have given them." This is the test He puts them to. When once many of His disciples went back, because of His words which He spoke to them, and there was a clean divorce, He also asked the Twelve deliberately, "Will you not also go away?" Not because He wanted to repel them or doubted their faithful devotion, but because He wanted to make them aware of what they had in Him. But Peter answered, "You alone have words of life" (John 6:67-68).

Our position in relation to the Word reveals whether we belong to His chosen ones. We have become accustomed to relating everything only to our personal blessedness, in the opinion that we are serving the community with it, and we do not even notice that in this way we have put up a bar against true knowledge. This is a shame without name. - By the reception of the word it becomes apparent whether we are chosen to be vessels of God's glory. "Whoever believes in Me, **as the Scripture says,** from his body will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

While in the Old Testament, on the ground of earlier households, the difference between calling and election is confronted with great definiteness and sharpness, as in the instructive example of Abraham and Lot, in the church, the body of Christ, both terms are used in such a way that factually they almost completely cover each other, even though they can be kept apart in form.

Paul wrote: "Those who He predestined (appointed, ordained, chose), He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified" (Rom. 8,

28.30). Compare 1 Thess. 1,4 with 2,12; 2 Thess. 2,13.14; 1 Cor. 1,2.26.27; Eph. 1,4 with 4,1; Col. 3,12.15 and others.

It is a precious truth that the body of Jesus Christ is composed only of those who are thus chosen and then also effectively called. The elect are not only saved and redeemed, but also bearers of blessings and givers of blessings to others.

In the letter to the Hebrews (chap. 11, 8.9) it is testified that Abraham went out in faith and came in in faith, but there is no word of Lot who went along after verse 4. This is poignant. There is no hint in all Scripture that he was a blessing, but there is the word of our Lord (Luk 17:32), "Remember Lot's wife!" And yet he went out on the same line and the same way as Abraham!

This is touching because we must see in the person of Lot a very clear example and model for countless people who have also entered the path of faith and are not lost, but who are saved only as if by fire. He was a saved man, but completely useless to God. We must not go away. There is a being saved in which nothing comes out for God but the salvation of a single soul. No man has ever been blessed in Lot, and no one has ever been blessed in him. Only the one warning is there, "Remember Lot's wife!" His wife is snatched from him by the judgment of fire. His daughters brought him nameless shame. According to the law, their descendants were never allowed to join the Jewish community. Yet Lot was a saved man, and Scripture calls him a righteous soul (2 Peter 2:8). And now there are people who are satisfied with the saying: "Only blessed!" Nothing comes of it for God.

Abraham comes to the school at such an old age, where he should attain to the promise of the seed through decades of testing - a proof of how God knows how to use the human delay to let His thoughts emerge all the more clearly and gloriously. Abraham must become so old so that God's way can be seen more clearly and no doubt remains, and we should not despair as if God were prevented by our delay from carrying out everything He has planned.

Abraham, however, came up short. He could have lived such a joyful life of faith much longer if he had not been stuck in Haran. Many come so late to the faith, although they would have had earlier or early opportunity. But God comes to the end with them. We do not understand how, but it is clear that He understands.

Verse 5 tells us who and what Abraham took with him from Haran. The chapter after next informs us that Abraham had a number of three hundred and eighteen servants. These were not yet manly enough at the first exodus for the great service which Abraham was to render to his brother Lot. Also in this direction the postponement became a gain. For the second time they reached Canaan.

"At that time the Canaanites were in the land". This remark in verse 6 is not incidental or superfluous. This fact was meant to remind Abraham that he did not yet possess the land promised to him, but that he had to reckon with the fact that God wanted to carry the Cananites or Amorites, the tribes ripe for judgment, with a very special purpose and that he had not been given the task of cleaning up with them. What he could have done in this respect, he got a sample of, when it was a question of him to free the brother. God gave him a brilliant victory, since he did **not** lose **even one man.** God would have been able to defeat the Canaanites even with the few servants of Abraham. Gideon also had only three hundred men and dealt with an enemy army.

The believing community has to move on Canaanite soil and must mature there before it can come to the outer historical representation and implementation of the kingdom thoughts on earth. For what Canaan meant for Abraham in the narrower circle, means for the church the whole earth circle, for which the kingdom of Jesus Christ is to be established.

The Canaanites are still in the land. God could well deal with them. When Jesus was to be captured, He said to Peter: "Do you think I could not askMy Father and He would provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels even now (Matth. 26,53)? With these legions Jesus would

have been able to deal with His enemies; with them He could have thoroughly cleaned up the ground of His country. No city, no country, no people could have resisted Him if it had been His Father's intention. But the Son, as Abraham's seed, understood His Father rightly in this. His word, therefore, is not boasting, but speaks a sober fact.

The church also stands on the same standpoint. They point to the power of God behind us, to the indomitable power of the Holy Spirit, to the power of the gospel. Certainly, this is undoubtedly true, but we must not draw the conclusion that we are conquering the world for Christ. That would be a fallacy and comparable to Jesus driving the Romans out of the country or Abraham driving the Canaanites out.

Just as little as that, it is in the sense of God to clean up with the world. He still needs it, at least for us. We should learn to live with God among the Canaanites. We are not to stand in the world without temptations, without liquor bars, without games of chance, without dance halls, and so on. One would like to make such a world, so that the people would pass smoothly. But the Kananites are still in the country. In the midst of the godless, evil world we should walk as lights in the world.

"Then the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land (verse 7)." Everything starts from God. God keeps on speaking. Abraham must let God speak and learn to do right by Him. God does not interfere with decrees, measures, etc. in the whole education of faith until Abraham receives the certificate of maturity.

God appears and God speaks: The creative, begetting, life-bringing word is everything. This indicates that our whole education is not about what we are able to do, but about the fact that God, who appeared in Christ, whose splendor has risen, comes to speak alone and that we take everything and every word from Him. That housekeeping is a vest pocket edition for our household.

"To your seed I will give this land." Strange that this promise is repeated so often. It makes one look a long way out in relation to this land. Why God of all people gave the land, in which the Canaanites had nested and in which a devil's service, a demon culture of the most horrible kind had spread, and which had thus been previously occupied by Satan, to Abraham and his seed, in order to create on this soil a center from which all the forces of renewal were to permeate His whole creation, is a mystery of divine administration.

God has chosen this spot as the scene of His most wonderful revelation. Abraham must have lived there when the Canaanites stayed there. Then, however, also the people who should thoroughly finish the Kananitern. They as the bearers, guardians and keepers of the revelations of God receive it as an eternal inheritance.

The Son could only appear on the soil of the beloved land. Everything that has happened to and for mankind has happened on the soil of this land, or has been linked to this land. Nowhere is there even the slightest hint that the future glory revelations will have their center anywhere else than in this land.

Even after that terrible judgment of nations spoken of by Zechariah (chap. 14:1-9), we are told that the remnant of all the nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship, for Jehovah dwells in the land. Their delegations go up; those who do not go up, it does not rain on them (Zech. 14:16,17).

There are more than enough traces in the Scriptures that this preference of God does not extend only temporarily to this little spot of earth. It has been thought to be childish that He, who owns heaven and earth, should have chosen a piece of earth as His dwelling place. In contrast to this, the word remains: the land is mine. That is why the Israelites were not allowed to sell their property definitively; they possessed it only in hereditary lease. It is as if He had said to His people: I let you dwell with Me. And Is. 8,8 it is called: "Your land, Immanuel".

There, where Satanism had taken root, and where it has done and will do its worst to God's people - on the ground God will celebrate His highest victories; and just this place He has

chosen to carry out the work of redemption on it. It is precisely on this ground that Jesus pleads, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luk 23:34). Whoever wants to limit this word in human opinion may do so. But as little as the rulers and scribes knew what they were doing, so little did Satan know; for if he had known, he would have prevented their doing.

Delightful it is to perceive that Abraham was in intimate communion with his God; for the erection of an altar indicates worship. This is a clear hint that even in the still so much corrupted mankind, from which Terach's family must not be excluded, because they were also idolaters, the primal thoughts, which still came from the time before the flood, had preserved themselves.

The fact that Abraham now builds an altar to Jehovah is the clearest proof that the situation was clarified for him from the beginning and that he had really been converted. Abrahamthus became a forerunner of all those who "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9,10). For the fact that Abraham waited for a city of God is testified by the Scriptures, and he also waited for the Promised One.

The basic lines have remained the same until today. Moving out means not only detachment from external circumstances, but also thorough renunciation of idolatry. His descendants have not kept themselves completely free of it. Already in Jacob's family we find a tendency to household idols. In Abraham we encounter from the very beginning a clear, decisive position against all previous relations to idolatry.

"He pitched his tent", we read verse 8; i.e. he considered himself a stranger and waited for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:9,10). Without question he trusted his God with the ability to build a respectable city with external means, but he left that to his God and the future and "pitched his tent". His whole walk was a nomadic life. Nowhere did he settle and become a citizen on the soil of the Promised Land.

Verse 10 tells us how God's chosen one lets himself be driven, pressed, prescribed by circumstances. Abraham, the father of the faithful, did the same. He did not ask the Lord, so he had no instruction. So he goes to Egypt and into the temptation, but also comes out again.

Can a believer who has just received such great promises and who has believed in such a way be in a position to think that it could cost his life? What would have happened to the promises of God then? How could these promises fade so completely from sight? These painful, humiliating experiences are part of the education of the elect.

From the passage verse 11-13, we can see that Abraham was a bright man who knew the state of affairs very well. He was a worldly wise man, but his cleverness did not help him. You are mistaken if you think you can get away with it.

According to verse 14-16, what he feared and wanted to avoid happened. But what might Abraham have thought when the prince sent him these rich gifts for the sake of his wife?

Verse 18 gives us a strange glimpse of God's dealings with the king of the Gentiles, but for the sake of His servant. This worldly prince shows an activity of God that clearly shows us that as soon as these powers entered into any kind of relationship with God's elect, God understood how to make His will known and comprehensible to the Gentiles as well.

What the chosen one was blind to, this pagan has a bright understanding of. That a sin had occurred here, that the chosen one had been guilty of a dangerous deviation from the right line, that was recognized by the pagan; and it was certainly a deep humiliation that he, the chosen one, had to get such a rebuke from a worldly man.

Some of God's children think that you can win the unconverted by listening to their thoughts. Make concessions, go along with the world's way of thinking. Observing worldly and carefully calculating procedures may bring great benefits, but you will also find the world saying, "What have you done? You have denied your holiest, abandoned your most precious, made yourself a whore to me". Unfortunately, this habit is prevalent everywhere. Church history bears

witness to how early believers became involved with the world. Earthly advantages were gained, but inwardly an infinite amount was lost.

How now, if Abraham should have preached a sermon of repentance? He was morally under the prince of this world. So the church is under the moral judgment of the world. If the church wants to know why it cannot make animpact, instill respect, and reach people, here is the key.

Finally, in verse 19. 20 we are told how God uses the judgment of Pharaoh and the judged Pharaoh to set His servant Abraham right, just as God has used and will use the judged nations to set His servant Israel right, and how He uses the judged nations to bring out the Christ of God. The lines are the same everywhere.

We see it here irrefutably that the judgments of God have educational, corrective purposes in all circumstances. God never punishes just to have punished; but He punishes terribly. "Terrible is it to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

13. Chapter 13

After his release, Abraham returns to where he was before (verse 4); he gets back on his feet after having beenhumiliated. He came to the place where the Lord had spoken to him. God gave him an opportunity to prove that he was a chosen one of God and how he had received His teachings in judgment and grace.

At the same time it turns out quite clearly how it was withLot (verse 5-9), the experiences were the same for both. Lot had painfully shared in Abraham's experience and could have learned the same lesson. Abraham had come to know and fear Egypt. He had burned his fingers and now did not want to play with fire anymore.

Lot had not learned. Although he had returned, his heart and his thoughts were taken by the Egyptian good life. This now came to expression. Because the livestock increased, trouble came. It became clear that the two had to separate.

Whether Abraham knew it, whether it had becomeclear to him inwardly that there could no longer be any question of an inner, close community with Lot? He leaves to him not only the choice, but also the precedence, where he could have commanded as the older. He gives the inwardly divorced Lot freedom to decide.

If a prosperous, distant cohabitation is no longer possible, so that a clean divorce becomes necessary, then the highest conceivable consideration should prevail. There is no question of violent rejection. In spite of all separation, Abraham never withdrew his heartfelt love and willingness to sacrifice from Lot. The same Abraham, from whom Lot had separated himself inwardly and outwardly, stands at the top, where it is necessary to help his brother. "If it is possible, as much as is in you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). However, it takes two to make peace.

The description in verse 10-13 is characteristic for the decision and choice of Lot. The determining factor was not the question: how can I stay in community with my brother, i.e. with my uncle under all circumstances? Apparently, the only decisive factor was their own advantage, their own greed, their own lust. The culture, the wealth, the prosperity of Sodom did it to him; he felt attracted and drawn.

After Abraham showed that he understoodthe Lord, that under no circumstances would he sacrifice fellowship with Him, and that he would take his own lot entirely out of the Lord's hand, then the Lord meets him (verse 14).

Now the land is promised to him (verse 15). It has been claimed that the word "to you and your seed" is always to be understood corporately. But according to Acts 7:5, God's promise only has value when the land has been promised to him personally. The contrast against Lot requires to find the meaning in it that He will give him the land in his time.

According to verse 16 his descendants shall be like the **dust of the earth,** and according to ch. 22,17 like the **sand of the sea** and the **stars in the sky.** These three designations cannot want to mean the same, as was already pointed out above, and only mean that his descendants should become so numerous that they would escape counting. We find rather in them a clear indication of the three kinds of his descendants.

S t a u b refers to the soil of the land from which it comes. Under this designation, the natural descendants are to be thought of, the future inhabitants of the land.

S a n d on the shore of the sea refers to the biblical concept according to which the sea means the world of nations scattered over the seas. Thus he is promised a posterity of peoples. In the six sons of his second wife we find a reference to peoples who are to descend from Abraham in the future ages.

S t e r n e directs our gaze to the great number of those who belong to the heavenly body, the congregation of Jesus Christ. In a very unmistakable way, a third kind of offspring is envisagedhere. As in the dust on earth and in the sand at the edge of the sea the earthly, so in the stars the heavenly descendants of the Father of the faithful are foretold. This is not to be regarded as a gimmick, but the great divine basic lines are clearly pronounced.

If there is to be a literal fulfillment of this promise, there must be such a great increase in the flesh that it leaves the present conditions far behind. Is. 60:22 promises that God will hasten it in His time. Israel was never a very numerous people. This promise compels the expectation that the future will bring a great increase of the people.

The six-thousand-year work of our God is only model work. Although magnificently laid out, it will be far, far eclipsed by its execution.

14. Chapter Fourteen

It is not by chance and well to be noted that in this chapter names of peoples, kings and localities arereported with such detail and accuracy that they virtually represent a challenge to scientific investigation as far as their historicity and reliability are concerned.

If these patriarchal life pictures were tribal legends, then such ingredients, as accuracy in the details of time, place and names would be very well dispensable; and not only that, but it would hardly be assumed that we would then find such exact details, by which it could be easily determined, if they are not correct, that we are not dealing with real history, but with legends.

Research in recent decades has now produced quite surprising evidence that the Mosaic accounts are indeed history, after so long we had been led to believe that Abraham and the prehistory of Israel were legend.

The historicity of these traits is becoming more and more evident. The German science, which gave itself the appearance to be compelled to its findings and assertions out of pure truth drive and unclouded research urge, has tried in a very unattractive and dishonest way to silence those researches. However, one cannot expect anything better from it. Who would like to inform himself thoroughly about the results of the excavations in Babylonia etc., finds in Urquhardt, "Die neueren Entdeckungen und die Bibel", an abundance of relevant proofs and evidences. With those data it becomes apparent according to which leading points of view the holy scripture was written.

Foolishly, it has oftenbeen accused of not being complete or detailed enough. This would be true if it had set itself the task of providing a history of all the empires of the East and their kings. However, it does not claim to give a complete, detailed list of the history of the world of nations.

What does it want? It wants to illustrate in broad outlines how God makes the history of the peoples serve His purposes; and everything that is contained in it in terms of historical information has been brought in because it relates directly or indirectly to the implementation of God's great thoughts for mankind.

The guiding point of view for the sacred writers has not been to hand down to us precise discussions of those events or those kings, but only to show us how the thoughts of God, moving along in a very definite line, in the line of a definite people, have inevitably touched in their execution a whole number of peoples, kings, authorities in the different courses of time.

And the Scripture, which does not originate from one author, but has a whole series of authors who wrote it in the course of many centuries, everywhere follows this procedure with great care and fidelity. It is excluded from the outset that an appointment to preserve uniformity could have been made. This should be enough to make a careful researcher think.

In our chapter there would have been a tantalizing opportunity for a man who had sufficient sources or could obtain further documentation, as Moses surely could have done, to report now in broader detail what he knew or had come to know, to show that he knew still more- opportunity not to confine himself to scanty facts, but to spread about the events, thus strengthening the whole factual position and increasing credibility.

For people who would have written only from a human point of view, there was enough material to say much more and to bring other facts. All these temptations were resisted by the holy scribes. They were all under the limiting discipline of the spirit. This unity of the Spirit, which pervades, pervades, pervades the whole book, is the strongest and most striking proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. It is as if of one cast. There is no scribe who was allowed to follow the inclinations of his own mind. They all had to limit themselves without common, mutual agreement, because one spirit drove them all, as 2 Peter 1:20,21 so aptly put it.

A little more. We see that the Scripture observes a very carefully planned, purposeful restriction on the whole line according to layout, preparation and execution, but that it by no means means an exclusion as far as God's salvation intention with the other peoples is concerned.

Even if God has chosen Abraham and through him Israel as His people, it can be seen from such historical reports as the present one that God does not forget the other nations either, although He lets them go their own ways; and in this we receive the precious guarantee that they will also have a share in His salvation. All these events are there for the salvation and the best of the nations punished by God's judicial visitations. They have all received rebukes with one purpose, that the nations should know that Jehovah is Lord. This has been the one great educational purpose that God has had in view, not only in friendly visitations, but also especially in His judicial visitations, which have been inseparable from the maturing of His chosen people.

All the judgments that struck Egypt, the Sodomites, and Nebuchadnezzar have the one background that "all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, Jehovah, alone are God" (2 Kings 19:19)!

If we keepthis great basic idea in mind and put it into the light of Jn 17, then the way in which God makes Himself known, namely that He is victor over all opposition, is again a delicious guarantee for us that it is God's intention in all His ways of judgment with the nations to lead them towards the one great goal of which Jesus speaks in His debate with the Father: "That they may know You, who alone are true God and whom You have sent, Jesus Christ. And to know God is, according to Jesus, "eternal life" (John 17:3). Everything that has gone before is only a preparation

and indication of this. God did not expect that the first mission of His Son would bring this about, but "the other time" (Acts 7:13,35) it will happen. There are delicious lines drawn here.

Lot's fate arouses our deepest sympathy (verse 12). The Scripture says not only that he lifted up his eyes and chose for himself the meadows and the tristes by the Jordan, because they appeared to him like a lovely garden, but also that he camped nearer and nearer to Sodom. At last he dwelt in Sodom itself; so he settled there permanently.

He gave up therestless wandering life that Abraham had. He was even comfortable to enjoy all the cultural benefits. That the inhabitants of Sodom were evil, he had to accept. They plagued his soul. This is described in detail in chapter 19.

Therefore, because he dwelt in Sodom, he was reached by the heavy misfortune and disaster that fell upon Sodom through that unfortunate battle. So just because he had not remained mobile and settled, he came into the same judgment that took place on his cities. But this judgment was also a gracious chastening of God that could have warned them and him of more severe visitations. Lot is hit with because he made his bed in Sodom. He now has to watch it being taken away from him and led away.

That was only one lesson. An even more important one was the way his uncle and brother Abraham took a stand on the whole matter. If ever a man had had the opportunity to say: it serves you right, so you should not have acted - Abraham could have gotten that opportunity now. That is usually the verse we sing, and then we leave such a man stuck. Abraham, however, is willing to make the greatest personal sacrifices with the goal of saving his brother and restoring what had been stolen from him, even if through his own fault.

We have here a precious example of how, with great sacrifice and personal devotion, one may place oneself under the suffering and misfortune of others through no fault of one's own. Abraham was innocent of the evil that struck Lot, and no one could have attributed to him any complicity. But at the first news he spends all that is in his power to save Lot. In doing so, he makes a permissible use not only of his skill but also of his means of power. He could have become an excellent commander; this is shown by the small sample of how he meets the Babylonians, outwits them and completely beats them.

This is to tell us that it is not at all necessary for a true life of faith, for a life of intimate communion of faith with God, that one refrains from all the natural endowments and gifts that God has given and lets them wither away, but that one makes the use of them that God intended. Abraham is not only allowed to make use of what is his, but is required to do so. If the good right is there, then it is our duty to use all that God has given us for the salvation of our brother. Abraham was allowed to make use of everything that God put within his reach.

If our human sciences had no other goal in mind than to serve the brother and not to glorify themselves, to increase their own name and reputation, then there would not be the least thing to say against their achievements. There will come a time when science, art and technology will be there for no other purpose than to glorify the thoughts of God and to carry out His purposes of salvation.

These things in themselves are not to be condemned. What is reprehensible is that they serve no higher purpose than to show the world what "we" can achieve. That is their curse. If they serve to save the brother - and some things do serve this purpose, such as medicine, which has often made redemption from bodily evils possible with heavy sacrifices - then it would be an injustice to look upon them with contempt.

Here lies a great danger for us. How can we be allowed to look down contemptuously on such selfless efforts to put our skills at the service of saving people. We do not want to throw everything on a heap to the self-aggrandizement, which is driven on these lines. There is, after all, a great deal of unselfish devotion in this field; and God, who does not leave the cup of cold water unrewarded, will not overlook these devoted services.

Abraham brings everything back. This is a hint for us regarding the purpose of God. What was lost through his own fault is **restored** through the ministry of Abraham. We have here a sample of the fulfillment of the promise that in his name all the families of the earth shall be blessed, and a small example of how those who have to bear sufferings of their own making can have their loss replaced. The future times will bring many more of these things.

When Abraham came back, he had two encounters. Before the king of Sodom meets him, God made sure that Abraham, who will have come out of the battle of the kings in an uplifted mood, hadanother encounter beforehand.

Here we are confronted with an apparition, a personality, which seems to us like a later Elijah, great, powerful, mysterious. We are not told who he was, what he did, where he came from, what he became (Hebr. 7,23) - all this is passed over with silence.

Here again we have an example of the chaste restraint observed by the sacred writers. We cannot but assume that it was God's intention to keep to a minimum all communications about events and personalities that are not in the line of the chosen people.

If a writer like Moses had written an encounter with such a man on his own initiative, then he would have had to spread much further about this Melchizedek out of mere historical sense, and if he had not had closer news at first, he would have had the ability to get further sources to be able to say more. No man of such mental gift would have won it already from purely scientific incentive over himself to draw only with two strokes something where more detailed communication would have been extremely grateful. It is not in the human spirit to impose such restrictions on himself, and they are to be explained only in such a way that a giant spirit like Moses knew himself dependent on and determined by a greater spirit. They are proof to us that these men were not allowed to write one syllable more than the spirit permitted them, and of course not one syllable less. In such traits we have one more proof of Peter's statement: the holy men of God did not speak out of human will, but were driven by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). They were under a spiritual discipline that was wonderful, supernatural, divine.

Melchizedek, king of righteousness and of Salem (Jerusalem): in this name lie precious hints for us. We are given no genealogical register and no historical context of this unique priest-king. Almost all the teachings about him flow from his name and from his title King of Salem.

Here we are confronted with thefact that even though the Canaanites were in the land, and ungodliness and the corruption of sins were rampant as in Sodom, and even though God's chosen one went up and down like a stranger, the Most High God also had a resident witness in those days.

We do here a deep insight into the friendly intention of God over the corrupt peoples. If he was the King of Righteousness, who is compared to the Son of God, that is, His model, His shadow image, this tells us a great deal.

Before God could lead His servant Abraham as far as He wanted to lead him, to the righteousness of faith and to being the father of the faithful, before the first beginnings of what was to come were actually present, God already has a wonderful witness on the soil of the nations - a witness who occupies such a high position in the divine orders that the office of the Son of God is compared to His own, yes, that this is even an example and pattern for the high priesthood, which is better than that of Aaron.

There are wonderful, firm fundamentals for God's behavior toward the nations that give us food for thought. Here we have approaches that very clearly coincide with Paul's statements in his Gospel that our election reaches back before the foundation of the world, i.e. that all of God's immediate institutions on the line of the promise are not the last measure by which God's thoughts of love with His community must be measured. They reach backwards beyond the measure He has set in His promises.

For this the father of the believers does not remain the last milestone. This Melchizedek reaches back behind Abraham and beyond him. He meets us as a finished, completed personality, before Abraham has made the first beginning in the school of God, before he has climbed the first steps of the ladder. This points us back behind this line of promises. As much as they have a fundamental meaning, they do not have an exhaustive meaning for His congregation from the nations.

This is very clear in the Epistle to the Galatians. One of the main distinctions between the gospel to Israel and the gospel to the church is that the twelve are concerned with showing Jesus Christ as the Son of Abraham, the bearer and fulfiller of all promises for all nations backward and forward, while Paul in his gospel goes so far as to push back the significance of Jesus' life in comparison to His death, so that his gospel begins with Golgotha and not with the life between Bethlehem and Golgotha, to which today's theology wants to limit itself.

Paul declares: my gospel begins with Him crucified; and though we have known Him according to the flesh, we know Him no more (1Co 2:2; 2Co 5:15,16). The gospel to the circumcision had to deal with His life. The apostles had to prove Him from the Scripture and from the promise; these traits could not be missing in their gospel.

We, on the other hand, have no promise and do not know Him as the Promised One. For us, there are no lines that would have to be fulfilled in Him. For us, it is the Son of God, for whom the Spirit prepares a wonderful community, which becomes partakers of the life of the Son of God.

For those, however, it was of great value that He came into the flesh and proved Himself to be the Messiah; but for us it cannot have this significance. We can calmly put it aside and leave it aside. For us, too, all those reports have a precious value, because they concern His person; but for the special relations to the church they do not come into question, but only that He died on the cross, removed the partition, and is now raised again and we are transferred with Him into heavenly places. This is the starting and core point.

As valuable as those stories in the gospels are for us as proofs for the reliability of God's predictions - the subject of prophecy has never been the community. But here is an approach for it in Melchizedek, who stands before Abraham and reaches back behind him.

The encounter with Abraham is a very touching one. Melchizedek, a priest of God, a model of the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ, brings forth bread and wine. In this fact one can find the biblical justification for the fact that the Son of God, after having kept with His disciples the Passover given to Israel, took bread and wine and used them to establish with these ingredients a memorial meal of His death, not only for the Jewish Christians, but also for us. That is why Paul says: "I received it from the Lord".

We have here again the same chaste conclusion of which we have already spoken: he lets himself be instructed concerning the memorial meal for us by the Lord and not by the twelve. This has a particularly delicious meaning for us. There is more in this meal than what concerns only the seed of Abraham. The Master connected it directly with the Passover meal, and derived it from the components that belonged to Him.

But the way Paul speaks of the banquet makes it clear that he has brought it into definite relation to the high priest Melchizedek. The service, dignity and office of Melchizedek go far beyond the shadowed priesthood in Israel, and is again only a shadow of the service that the high priesthood of Jesus Christ has to render to the world.

We are looking here into a delicious mystery, from which we may infer the wonderful thoughts of God, which reach beyond all that God thought and decided in Abraham and of which Paul spoke.

The comprehensiveness of Melchizedek's blessing is remarkable (verse 19.20). The word prophetically reaches far, far beyond the future thoughts of God with Abraham and his seed. It

reaches back to God the Most High who created the heavens and the earth. This is the widest, broadest and firmest foundation for all the distant revelations of our God.

We must by no means disregard this. The Scriptures referto it again and again on particularly important occasions, e.g. in the Epistle to the Colossians, where the apostle Paul draws the broad framework of what is included in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. He does not know how to do it more effectively than by telling us that through Him all things were created in heaven and on earth and that in Him all things have their foundation (Col. 1, 16.17). This is proof of how the Spirit of God uses the fundamental facts, and at the same time a guarantee that the great God will not leave the work of His hands.

Thus we find also here an unmistakable reference to the honor and attitude of God, who has created the earth and what is in it and pledges His name for it, that there will be with His great wide creation, which encloses the heavens and all heavens, a goal worthy of Him, a completion, of which God will not have to be ashamed in any way, when He will submit it to the examination eye of all His created thinking creatures: Have I succeeded? Or do I have a failure to record? Have I started something that I have not been able to carry out? Has anyone succeeded in really thwarting My plan?

We still know far too little of the outcomes of things other than what He has held out in prospect through the prophets, but we have seen, experienced, experienced far less of what God can do than we may limit God on His ground. The self-evidentness with which one believes to be able to measure God by what has happened so far, and with which one has drawn barriers for Him in His own creation, beyond which He cannot and must not go, can only end with shame that we were caught in such folly.

The statement in verse 20 refers to the promise in 1 Cor. 15:25-28 that God has put all His enemies under His feet and that everything is subject to Him, the only exception being the One who has subjected everything to Him. These are all echoes that go far beyond what we have come to know and experience as God's historical teachings. Our God is far from finished, but He has started well and will continue well.

Incidentally, we refer to the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 7, 4-10, for theproof that the Levitical priesthood was to be valued lower than that of Melchizedek.

Now Abraham is inwardly equipped and steeled for a victorious encounter with the king of Sodom (verse 21) -- an apparition that has something sinister about it. It is the head of a polity that has reached the highest level of corruption and that God must put away. It meant a great danger for the calmness, the composure and the clear view of the most high God to meet such a man.

In the divine way of education, the best means to arm a believer against such a dangerous encounter is the reference to the God who made heaven and earth. This is a tangible proof that there cannot be a more strengthening food than the word of prophecy, than occupation with the God Who has the great thoughts, not only with the God Who is "my Savior", circumscribed by my person and my personal salvation. It is certainly great to give evidence about our experiences, but they never give support against the temptations. Only the reference to the highest God, who encloses the universe with His thoughts and who copes with His enemies, is sufficient.

So Abraham can answer the king of Sodom victoriously (verse 22,23). What imposition had he made on Abraham that elicited a response? "Keep the goods for yourself!" The king wants to express that Abraham was a great man, who had sacrificed himself extraordinarily and rendered priceless services, to whom he paid the highest honor and met accordingly. "Keep all the spoils for yourself!" The king of Sodom does not show himself to be a "rascal." He has a good point; after all, he had no rightful claim to booty. Only Abraham had. He had used his best to save his brother, and as an accompanying event, it happened that Sodom also came back to its property.

Also in the salvation of our brethren the world comes to yours; it has great advantages from it. If it opposes Christianity, as the king of Sodom did to Abraham, as if it wanted to and could take over the patronage for the work of salvation, in order to express that it would shield and protect it, one must take caution against this. The world has basically no right to do so; for it does not suspect that its own is given back to it only through the kindness of God.

It is certainly a justified view if we believe that the whole stock of welfare and regulated conditions, which are so essential for the peoples, can be traced back to the saving preservation of God. Governments and authorities are not preserved by bayonets and cannons, but because there are so many prayers. The fact that society is not rotten and broken to the last bone does not come from the fact that it itself works so excellently and advantageously to heal its pestilence, but from the fact that there is still so much salt in the flesh, so that the final rotting is stopped and prevented. But one does not recognize this; one would make oneself ridiculous if one wanted to express such thoughts. But it has nevertheless its correctness.

There was a great danger of losing the clear view of the real context of things at the offer of the king of Sodom, as it has been a temptation also for Christianity, but in which it has not existed like Abraham here, to put up with the protective rule of the world. He has understood to lift up the hands to the highest God, and not to take a thread and shoestrings from the king of Sodom. If Christianity had taken this position all these centuries and had rejected with calm determination any support from the source, the situation of the Gospel and the world would be different today.

Abraham does not use the same standard for his allies as he does for himself (verse 24). There he acted more correctly than most dear children of God do. They think that after they have come to the knowledge of the truth of God, all people are to be beaten over the same bar. They do not even suspect that by doing so they are not promoting the glory of the Lord, but hindering it. We cannot and must not do that. Such souls, who lack the sight of this, we must command into the hands of the Lord. Abraham made no attempt to put those people on equal footing with himself.

15. Fifteenth chapter

The incident reported in this chapter has flowed out of the context of Abraham's conversation with the king of Sodom. This was an opportunity that God gladly seized to further reveal Himself to Abraham. His revelation was based on the right behavior Abraham took toward the king. Because he walked faithfully before God, the believing and proven Abraham had to experience an enrichment and distant affirmation of the promise given to him by God.

"Do not be afraid, Abraham," was Jehovah's call (v.1). What was there that he couldhave been afraid of? In the first place, we have to think of those mighty kings to whom he inflicted a great defeat. Even though Abraham had the Eshkols and Aners to himself, all of them together could not measure their multitudes with the multitudes of those kings, and they had to be wary that the latter would take vengeance on them. This is the first thought.

But we do not want to exclude the other one. Abraham had just decisively rejected the offer of an oriental king in a way that one was not allowed to accept there quietly. All negotiations there go through a great series of complications, formalities, flatteries; that is oriental.

We find this very well explained in ch. 23, where the negotiations are vividly described when Abraham wants to conclude the purchase of a burial place for Sarah. In the Orient it is expected that if one refuses something, one does not say it bluntly to the face. To refuse an

oriental ruler something bluntly, that could become very unpleasant for a neighbor. Abraham knew that well.

God meets such fears by saying: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield". The Lord thus holds out the prospect of cover against enemy attacks, against robbery and plunder. What is meant by "I am your shield" cannot be measured at all. God places Himself before His servant, who is prepared to suffer a loss, to give him a glorious promise.

Abraham's answer (verse 2) has a worrying aftertaste. It betrays the slight doubt whether Eliezer will succeed him. Eliezer of Damascus was an estate inspector, the chief administrator of the great estate of Abraham. The answer is, of course, also a reminder of the Lord of His promise. He takes the Lord at His word and allows himself to admonish Him.

Certainly, the Lord takes great pleasure when we remind Him of His promises; we can hardly give Him greater pleasure. We may, yes, we should hold His promises before Him in simple, childlike trust and ask Him to fulfill them soon. Is. 62, 6.7. He is different from us human debtors. We balk when we see our creditors. He wants to be reminded most strongly to fulfill His promises soon, even if they are not addressed to us. This pleases Him more than if we refer everything to ourselves.

God did not reply and thus gave Abraham the opportunity to express himself even further (verse 3). Thus, human impatience was also expressed. God did not say anything about g e b e n , only: I am your shield and reward; when you have Me, it is enough; I am sufficient for you. Abraham did not grasp this in its entirety, but he speaks quite similarly to Peter, who, when Jesus asked him to abandon everything that inhibits him for His sake, replied, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have in return?" (Matth. 19,27).

We know the melody and sing it in minor and major keys. Abraham was also a human being like us, so we do not want to judge him too harshly. Nevertheless, we have to admit that he did not reach the full measure of what God had said. This is also expressed in the way God meets him, who has bound Himself by His promises, and which He never wants to limit and shorten, because Abraham did not reach the measure. What Abraham continues to say sounds like a reproach and does not make the impression as if he could follow his God, who wants to place him on the highest height that is possible for Him.

Verse 4 is first a simple, plain, clear, but not lofty confirmation of His promise. It is a rejection of Abraham when God says: Eliezer shall not be your heir. But God is not satisfied with this. He cannot do otherwise, even if He should find in us small-mindedness, insufficient faith to understand Him and to take His word without deduction - He cannot speak small, He must speak big.

This became so delicious to me while studying the letter to the Corinthians. There is probably no church whose spiritual condition was more deplorable than the one in Corinth, and what precious things God has written to this church! In the face of the depravity and wretchedness on certain lines, God cannot do enough to open one jewel box after another, as if to say: I am the rich God and I will not let your flesh keep Me from saying the greatest thing that I can say.

So also here. There is a rebuke, but after that He fills His mouth as never before (verse 5). This is the way of God, who understands the education of His children better than we can, that He makes use of His richest goods, of His great promises, just there, where pusillanimity wants to prevent one from reaching what He has offered.

In His education He observes the principle, not that He uses the whip for our miserable behavior, but that He only speaks all the more magnificently, powerfully, comprehensively, gloriously, in order to meet this deep lack, the inability of our heart to fully comprehend Him, healing, lifting, strengthening, invigorating. He does that here, too, and He succeeds.

The Lord sees that Abraham believes Him without reservation (verse 6) when He makes the great promise concerning his seed.

Verse 7 reminds us that the first time there was only an exodus from Ur in Chaldea and then only the second time there was an entry into Canaan. This is here at the entrance of the following execution. Again, the land is promised to him (cf. ch. 13,15) for hereditary possession.

In response to Abraham's question (verse 8), God gives a deeply moving, frightening visual lesson. The sacrificial act to be performed is similar to what happened with contracts. God made to wait a long time (verse 12). In the evening sleep fell upon Abraham, but at the same time terror and horror, which must have made a depressing impression. And then God spoke the word of the alienage of his descendants in Egypt (verse 13.14).

One could get the impression from these words that God had not answered Abraham's question. For verse 8 he had asked, "Lord, Lord, whereby shall I know that I shall possess the land?" God's answer, on the other hand, describes the severe conditions of judgment under which He would give the land to His seed. Abraham receives only the promise that he would be gathered to his fathers in good old age and peace (verse 15), which can mean nothing other than that he will not experience the possession of the land in his present physicality. That he, too, would one day share in it remains unspoken, but it is open.

This shows us that our God expects the greatest from His servant and friend, namely the unconditional trust in the reliability of His promises, which is not substantiatedby any external evidence. For Abraham, most things remain unfulfilled throughout his life.

Abraham is for us the father of faith, of believers, from whom we are to learn that salvation in its highest sense remains unfulfillment in this age of unfulfilled expectations.

At the same time, however, we see clearly that Abraham receives strangely detailed instruction about God's procedure with his descendants. Through visual instruction and clear words, which complement each other, God gives him a clear view of the future leadership of Israel. He shows him how his descendants will have to go through a difficult school of suffering in a foreign land, after which he will judge the people they will have to serve, and they themselves will go out with great good.

The whole program for the emergence, oppression and victorious execution of the people of Israel as God's people is laid down there in very clear lines. For us it is delicious and precious to see how God does not give His servant any answer to his immediate question, but expects him to accept His promise as firm and definite.

The spirit proves that Abraham was waiting and that he was looking for the better, the heavenly fatherland, the land where heavenly conditions will be. But with that, at the same time, he got a clear teaching about God's whole procedure in judgment and grace with the chosen people. Abraham had to learn this, and we have to learn it too.

We have not learned clearly enough that God does not intend to achieve all His ways and thoughts, all the great goals He has set for Himself, in any other way than through judgment.

His own people are not excluded fromthis judgment: they are to serve in a foreign land for four hundred years. We are witnesses of the poignant way in which God has continued this trial of Israel, His chosen people, even to this day, so that they have to go through the most difficult trials before they are finally redeemed and presented as God's people.

Let us take it to heart that we spell out this fundamental truth quite carefully. Jesus Himself summarized it in a powerful word from His mouth (Mark 9:49): "Every man must be salted with fire". Whoever understands it correctly will no longer be bothered by or unnecessarily dwell on God's statements about the judgment by fire, on the severe, frightening manifestations of His unsparing holiness which, precisely because it is love, can never tolerate that even the slightest remnant of that which could work and carry on corruption should be allowed to remain in us. All of this must be salted relentlessly with fire. His elect make no exception to this.

This is what God here, since it is a delicious confirmation, wants to expose to His servant Abraham in such a deeply penetrating way - an initial lesson of the fact that God knows how to harness even fear and horror to His chariot, to subdue fire and smoke vapor, to achieve His great goals, to bring about the execution of His great redemptive thought.

This is what we are dealing with here in the first place. It is true that in God's answer it is also about the scene; but clearly we see that it is not only about the ground, the part of the earth that is to give the scene, but about the people of His choice. Then the most severe visitationsare not spared, so that God finally comes to His goal and achieves everything that He has planned.

Verse 18 shows that God not only makes a covenant with Abraham, in which the latter is the receiving part, and to which God binds Himself contractually by the sacrifice, but that He thereby also draws the boundaries of the future owner as clearly as nowhere else.

With the water, the river of Egypt, it is quite right to think of the Nile, which lies very close to the border of Africa. If the Nile is given as the western border and the Euphrates as the eastern border, then one does not have to think only of the small Palestine; this would be to be regarded rather only as a little garden to the country, which Israel will possess finally. Then also the whole eastern land up to the Persian Gulf and Arabia belong to it - lands on which remarkable fights between Turks and Arabs take place, which may also play over to Europe. Perhaps great decisions are in the offing. -- If these two streams to the east and west mean the actual border lines, then the descendants of Abraham have never possessed their country in this extension until today. Then the fulfillment of the promise is still pending until today; and everything that has happened in possession under David and Solomon has only been deposit and down payment for later. God will pay this check in cash in all its extent.

16. Chapter Sixteen

In the beginning of this chapter we are told the deed of the believing Abraham at the suggestion of his likewise believing wife. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the fact that in all machinations faith rests. It is about a machination in the behavior of man towards God, as we have often found it before - about a self-willed anticipation, about a not-wanting to wait, which justifies and excuses itself with the fact that it rests on the basis of divine promise, and which wants nothing else than what God wants.

It is not an act of pronounced disobedience, not a breaking of given promises, no - it is a holding on to the promise. From you shall come the seed (chap. 15, 4.5.18). But it is an anticipation on the part of the believing people that bears the bitterest fruits.

This, of course, does not mean loss of their bliss, their life, their position as beloved and chosen, but for both of them it means a lot of turmoil, pain, bitterness, disappointment and bitter experiences, and what is the most painful, it had a thirteen-year silence of God in its wake.

We see clearly again how precarious such an impatient anticipation on the line of the divine promise is. It is obvious that it is precisely in this area that the most alarming and sad experiences of God's church are to be recorded. Not open apostasy from the things and truths of God, not open unbelieving breaking and renouncing of God's promises, but a mighty, purposeful going forward on lines which one has recognized as divine, but kind and mind of the flesh which one wants to evaluate as divine.

This has been the error and seduction of the faithful Christ community until today. Not that it denies the promised kingdom and openly says: there is no such thing - that also happens - but that it undertakes to strive with great enthusiasm in the will of the flesh for goals that are

divine, for whose fulfillment by God one cannot wait. One wants to create, to establish kingdom states.

Only Israel comes out of this. In Galatians we come to the same truth from another point of view. There Paul uses the same procedure to show us that no Israel comes into the church of God.

And now still some individual trains in this picture. First of all, we encounter something very similar to what we found in the story of the beginning of mankind. It was Abraham's wife who persuaded him to do this (verse 2). But this does not mean a grandiose justification. He cannot be accused of forgiving his position with his lawful wife, for she induces him to do so in order to raise up seed for him from her.

But as soon as the union between Abraham and Hagar has brought forth the hoped-for and desired fruit, there is stirred up all the pride of the Egyptian woman toward the called free woman, the rightful wife of Abraham (verse 4), who had attained her position at the side of her chosen husband according to divine order and destiny, while Hagar owed the honor that had befallen her - for as such the deed was certainly regarded - her preferment merely to human machination. On the part of man everything had been avoided which could have been offensive, and yet all wise, careful, human events have as a whole result an intolerable, proud rebellion of the flesh against the children of the spirit, who, however, have forgotten themselves and lost sight of the height of their calling.

However, they became impatient and did not want towait, so that they said to themselves: we have already been waiting ten years for the fulfillment of the promise; now it will soon be time for it to come to pass. There rises all the unbroken pride of Hagar, which means the bondage of the law, as Paul depicts it in the Epistle to the Galatians, and they had to pay heavily for it.

Sarai had given rise to the quite sad event, and now she heaps her reproaches on her husband and lays the blame on him (verse 5). This is quite a natural phenomenon. As soon as a child of faith has lost its direction and has allowed itself to deviate from a certain course, such a derailment can be expected with great certainty. Abraham knew no other way of escape than to hand over the woman to her hands (verse 6). Sarai cooled her chin on her maid, who had become a mother through her own fault.

All these events are a profound, shattering warning for us. Oh that we would be warned against our own ways and never anticipate them! How much bitterness, mutual misunderstanding among the children of God, who got along with each other in the best way, we experience in the church of God! As soon as it comes to such arbitrary prejudice, the understanding ceases. There is trouble! Usually it is the guilty party who complains bitterly. Of course, the result was not foreseen and not desired, but it is there!

As touching as this is - above all hostilities, divisions, in which the church has become so rich in the saddest sense of the word, the kindness and condescension of our God prevails.

It is a delicious fact that these harsh, painful experiences for Abraham and Sarai did not mean a turning away from their relationship with God. That remained untouched. But their communion with God was interrupted until Ishmael had turned thirteen. God did not speak a word to Abraham all those years. This is more profound.

Now a few things about Hagar and Ishmael. Hagar was a personage who certainly did not come from the lineage of the original, proper, divine ordinance. She was an Egyptian maidservant who, according to her origin, had no right to be brought into such an intimate relationship with God's chosen one, a foreign body who was introduced into the household of faith. And through the introduction of this foreign body, a son was begotten who has become of fatal importance for the whole development of God's kingdom on earth to this day.

Above all, however, again the wonderful wisdom of God, who knows how to insert such a derailment, such a sad impatience and disregard of the clear divine promises into His great glorious plan.

There can be no question of making Ishmael a damned, cursed one. This is simply not possible. It is clear before our eyes that God Himself knows how to use the fruits of such wrongdoings of His own and that even from the side one can never cross or change His plan and His great intentions.

It is a fact, however, that the execution of the divine thoughts is delayed for an alarming period of time, a thirteen-year interruption of the communion between God and His servant. But also this long waiting time is used by God to lead out His thoughts with Abraham quite wonderfully, who had already had to wait ten years and now had to wait ten and three years more, when God takes it up for the second time on the old line with Isaac, and then it turns out all the greater, clearer, more glorious that God is the One who creates life from the dead. For the waiting time had to serve to make it clear that the natural prospect of begetting and bearing a son had vanished. And then came Isaac!

But God also has something very specific to say about Ishmael, the maidservant's son. The angel met the fleeing Hagar at a well and told her to turn back and humble herself for all she had done (verse 7-9); after all, she had entered unlawfully and had adapted a position that was not her due. There applies a complete submission to divine discipline. "Humble thyself under Sarai," which is a shadow image of the Free One who is the mother of us all, the heavenly city.

All these defiant manifestations, indignations, rebellions of the proud flesh come back under the hand of Sarai. At the same time, the angel of the Lord tells Hagar that she will have many descendants (verse 10). But a third announcement is made to Hagar, concerning Ishmael.

The name of this boy is determined by God Himself (verse 11). It can be seen that God retains the unconditional authority over it as well. Whoever can give a name to a thing or a person proves that he is in control of it. God remains the unconditional disposer of Ishmael. He has set the way and the goal for his being, his destiny. God calls his name: Ishmael "God hears". There we can hardly resist the impression that it is already too much of an honor for the son of the maidservant. God is right that His thoughts are higher than ours, and that even in the son of the maid, who owes his origin to the impatient not being able to wait for His chosen ones, God shows Himself as the One who wants to be recognized as the One who hears. That is great! Here again clear features emerge on the ground on which we have often moved. Just there, where human falseness, human lack of understanding towards God comes to light in its most unpleasant, most painful, most embarrassing way, God shows that these never mean a veiling, darkening of the divine glory thoughts, but that they and all their consequences must serve in His hand to make His name great. God can deal with them, He can attach a great name to Himself from them: "God hears".

Ishmael will become a man like a wild ass (verse 12). God can use him, too, in His menagerie. "He shall dwell in the sight of his brethren." Ishmael has remained a wild ass to this day and no one has tamed him. He cannot be schooled. He has remained an unbroken wild ass, but God has sometimes used him for very harsh chastisement.

One sees how the rod is already bound toa distant stroke. The root sounds of his name meet us again in Islam in another order. The descendants of Ishmael have been until this day the most dogged representatives of Islam, which is a religious phenomenon that we must regard as unique. It is a satanically skillful mixture of folly and falsehood ever devised by man, an entity that is among the most powerful that has ever existed; a mixture of religions that has progressed six to ten times faster than Christianity in the Near East, India, Africa.

In recent missionary history, we have six million conversions, where Mohammedans have increased by twenty million. It is well known that the missionary activity of Islam from Cairo is so

powerful. The most painful complaint of our missionaries is that because of political and economic conditions, colonial governments are encouraging Islam.

But God can also use wild asses. As often as He has usedhim for the sharp, terrible chastisement and judicial visitation of an ossified Christianity, so certainly he is at His disposal also now. The prophetic picture, which the German emperor has sketched, will one day be fulfilled in a completely different way: "Peoples of Europe, preserve your most sacred goods!"

Christianity has already experienced Islam standing at its gates. God has a rod of correction and we are helping Him bind it over a Christianity that is ripe for demolition, just as North Africa was a thousand years ago. This is a line that has serious, deep meaning.

17. Chapter Seventeen

For thirteen years God has been silent; but now He must break His silence (verse 1.2). God begins to speak and now it flows and flashes like a wide stream; but Abraham has nothing more to say. God can make an impatient man silent. Abraham can only fall on his face (verse 3) and he lets God speak over him.

Delicious when a person has come so far that he can be silent in the dust and let God speak alone. At the same time it is a clear proof that God does not bear grudges. He sees to it that Abraham gets his chastening - Hagar remains a thorn in the flesh - but He does not abrogate His relationship with him; and we see God's Word growing. With the believing, chastened, humbled Abraham, God deals exceedingly mildly and kindly.

The word is seen to grow (verse 4:5). This is one of the delicious observations we may make. We are, after all, highly favored, we to whom the yields of divine revelations, knowledge, manifestations are just poured into our laps, so that we have a wealth of God's knowledge and revelations to dispose of, as could not be the case with Abraham and all the saints of the Old Covenant. Let us never forget this!

But "to whom much is given, of him much will be required" (Luk 12:48). God will not forget this in His time, when we will be called to account for how we have kept house over the goods of His house, which have been made available to us in a formerly impossible way for right use. We, to whom such a wealth of God's revelations in His Word has been made available for examination, may observe it again and again, how the Word of God has grown and how in the revelation the new beginnings show themselves, just as in a tree we see the new rings and shoots forming upward and on the sides, and how new branches indicate growth in various directions. So also here in the repetition we see new shoots bursting forth, of which God had said nothing before.

Kings are said to be descended from Abraham (verse 6). This is the first time we encounter this idea. We know how this branch unfolds later in Matth. 1,1: "The book of the lineage of the son of Abraham, the son of David." There the bud, here the fully grown fruit. The tree had already become thirsty, but all of a sudden a fresh rice shoots up (Is. 11,1). This is connected with the bud that bursts forth before our eyes.

"I am the Almighty. Walk before Me and be devout" (verse 1), says the Lord. God does not say anything about protection and reward, like last time; He only says who He is. This looks like a restriction, as if He has less to say. And yet we understand that this is not so. When God leads us to the point that we no longer concern ourselves with the things, blessings, advantages He provides and gives us, but only with **Him,** that we no longer seek the blessing, but the Giver, that we no longer say: what do I get, but: only when I have **You,** I ask nothing of heaven and earth - this

is not a diminution and restriction, but an unmistakable strengthening, a clear progress in God's revelations to His chastened and humbled Abraham.

It is precious to see how God goes on with the education of His children, and that He knows how to use the harshest experiences they have brought upon themselves in a whimsical way, as Scripture also says (Romans 8:28): "We know that to those who love God all things work together for good." This is where the children of Ishmael belong, the bitter fruits that we have loaded ourselves with. After all, God could have let Ishmael die as a child; it would have been easy to eliminate him before he could develop as a wild ass. But he should remain a wild ass and as such fulfill his task, also in the life of Abraham. But God also remains, and He remains faithful.

"I will make My covenant between Me and you" verse 2). So there is nothing of Abraham's offense between him and God. God pays for it. "And I will make your offspring plentiful." God could go further, because Abraham had nothing to say. "I will make you a father of many nations" (verse 4).

And now we encounter again a naming. This is a strange action of God, as we already found it with Ishmael. But now it is not a new name, but a majestic intervention of God in an existing name, a transformation, enrichment and new filling that God makes with the name and the bearer of this name. A sharp Hebrew breath enters the name (verse 5): not Abram, but Abraham shall he henceforth be called. The vowels do not play any role in this language. As if a new breath should go out from Abraham, for which now Abraham, the father of a great multitude of nations, is set. Thus the promise of our God flows out beyond the frame of the chosen people.

God establishes an eternal covenant with Abraham. Not the Sinaitic one; Abraham has nothing to do with that. It has come in addition. The Sinaitic covenant must never get the meaning as if it was a substitute, a completion of this great covenant with Abraham. That has never been in the thoughts of God.

All these statements of God are tuned to the one tone: "I will". They are not based on any consideration of Abraham. God first expresses Himself completely what it should be about this covenant relationship. There, everything that refers to the greatness of Abraham rests exclusively on the statement: "I will". God uses His perfection, superiority, honor and being for the fulfillment of His promise. He does not make the slightest request of Abraham that he must perform for all these things. He only demands trust in God and that Abraham henceforth does not allow himself any anticipations. God cured him of this, but not his descendants. But God takes His time with it, and it will come there also with them.

God promises him and his seed the land "for eternal possession" (verse 8). There is no mention of consideration, because one part of the contracting parties was not yet there.

"I want to be their God." It has becomecommonplace among us to think: God cannot if man will not. And indeed, we also see how the Israelites did not make it easy for God to be their God.

But do we want to make this a reproach for them? Have we made it easy for Him? Is He our God? How long did God have to wait before He finished with us. But if He succeeded in being our God, shall it be too difficult for Him to be Israel's God one day? What do our boasts mean: we do not want to, therefore God cannot. God will deal with the people. And when the nations all at once cry out: "We do not want Him to rule over us" - He will also deal with them. O you will rejoice that you can bend your knees before Him!

After Abraham received the seal of righteousness by faith, God gives him the covenant of circumcision (verse 9-14). This covenant was the basis on which God wanted to meet Abraham and his natural descendants according to the flesh. It is quite clear that this covenant sign is only to be thought of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.

An extension of this covenant sign according to its spiritual meaning not to baptism but to the circumcision of the heart is not only permitted but commanded. The apostle Paul also does this in the clearest way with regard to the natural seed of Abraham. He himself draws this clear

line through the Spirit. He says of himself and the believers from the children of Abraham according to the flesh: We are the circumcision. These are permitted, extended lines. But the natural descendants receive the promise of Canaan, not of heaven.

Circumcision is a deep, clear, symbolic action, because it was not possible without bloodshed. There is an intervention in the flesh, a symbolic taking away of the flesh. We see from this that it is in the sense of God, how from the circumcision of the flesh the application to the circumcision of the heart should clearly emerge: the taking away of the natural sense, the impulses and inclinations of the natural heart, which are called flesh in the Scriptures. This is the meaning of this figurative action, which found its grandest, most precious, final execution in the action of God on the cross. There the judgment of the flesh is finally and completely pronounced.

It is unmistakable that in circumcision we are dealing with an identity card, a covenant sign of the natural descendants of Abraham. In the eyes of God it has such a high significance that He makes the affiliation to this people dependent on this sign. Whichever soul does not accept it loses its membership in this people (verse 14). Neither by Jesus nor by the apostles after Pentecost has circumcision been taken back, abolished. The scripture knows nothing about it.

To anyone who dares to take this mark from a natural descendant of Abraham for himself and his posterity, the sharp word of the Lord strikes him: "Whoever breaks one of these little commandments will be little in the kingdom of heaven (Matth. 5:19).

Of course, this does not mean: he will go to hell. We must become free from this unfortunate way, as if every such threat holds out the prospect of a punishment in hell. We don't know anything else than to go to heaven or to hell. And hell is an equal fire for all. It is nameless, how we have been gagged, constricted, crippled. The Chinese foot lacing is a trifle compared to that.

That word does not mean that such a person will lose his soul, but he will not be in the kingdom of heaven. God will know how to judge this correctly. We are faced here with the clear fact that we are once again dealing with the error of wanting to deprive the believers from Israel of their vested right to the sign of the covenant, which was not ordained for them by Moses, but by God through Abraham as the victory of the righteousness of faith.

Not only Abraham has received a new name, but also Sarai a change of her name, because from now onshe shall be called Sara. God wants to bless her so that she becomes the mother of nations. In this, Sarah is a very clear and delicious example of the barren people of Israel, for whom all the weary millennia of barrenness are intended, but who will nevertheless become a source of salvation and renewal for the whole world of nations.

It cannot be denied that Israel has beenbarren until now, but we have not to see in it an abandonment of the original thoughts of our God. As she bore the new name and still had to wait a long time before she, the barren one, became a joyful mother of children, so also Israel, the barren one, will experience such a joyful change that can be applied to this people according to Isa. 54, 1-10 and 66, 6-9. Already now Sarah is an example of Sarah who is above (Gal. 4, 26). The words of blessing for Sarah are parallel to what God said to Abraham.

Abraham falls on his face and laughs (verse 17). Not only does he laugh in his heart, but he gives further evidence of how deep-rooted unbelief can be in a human heart that allows itself to be told much by God. God does not have it easy with us, even if we have believed a lot. There is always the deep-rooted way of the heart to stick to what it wants.

Abraham says it freely and meets God with the request: "Oh that Ishmael should live before You!" (verse 18). The painful experiences with his mother and the unpleasantness that arose from the relationship of Hagar with Sarah had not yet thoroughly healed him and made him stop expecting and imploring the implementation of the divine thoughts in Ishmael.

It is wonderfully friendly how our God passes over it with silence. It is almost striking how God lets his small faith and doubts go without further ado (verse 19). True, He pushes Ishmael aside, so He is far from accommodating Abraham and making a change in His original plan. But in the

face of His servant's suggestion to make easier for our God the fulfillment of His promise, it is as if God wanted to say: it remains with My word, however difficult it may seem to you and however much I put you to the utmost in faith, that Sarah should bear you a son (verse 19). This was a sufficient rebuke.

Later, Sarah also laughedat the promise of a son. Finally, however, God also laughs; He even calls the son Laughter, i.e. Isaac. What a wonderful fine irony of God about the laughter of Abraham and Sara was that: You laugh, but I also; but I laugh away all your difficulties and then Isaac comes out.

Verse 20 is significant. God also has room and use for Ishmael in His great household. God promises Abraham that He will bless him and multiply him greatly, but not that He will make him a blessing. He has use for Ishmael, if not for blessing, then for judgment, for chastisement. Ishmael will probably have to continue to do so. However, Ishmael later became the object of further divine prophecy and he will still be offered on His altar as a pleasing sacrifice (Isa. 60:6,7).

Abraham performed circumcision (verse 23-27), in accordance with God's ordinance. Ishmael and the whole house of Abraham receives the covenant sign. This was a significant act, from which it seems to emerge that even though Ishmael is not set to be a blessing for the rest of mankind, he will not be excluded from the blessing of Abraham.

In Is. 60,7 we find the solution of the Mohammedan question, which has already caused and will cause much trouble to the nations. Nebajoth and Kedar are two sons of Ishmael who are named instead of all. This type, as some are named for all, is often found in Scripture. According to Rev. 1:7, all the tribes of Israel will mourn when they see their returning Lord and Savior; but in the basic passage Zech. 12:10-14, only two houses or families of Israel are mentioned that comprise the whole house.

Just as there two tribes are named as representatives of all Israel, so here from the twelve sons of Ishmael only the two are named as representatives of all, as a prime example that God will also draw Ishmael into the completed blessing of Israel. The Mohammedan question will thus find its full solution, even if not in this age, but only when Israel will have entered its rest and will carry out its great service to the world of nations.

Israel itself will then be a delicious sample of the fact that what has served for thousands of years in the divine administration of grace merely as an execution of judgment, God can transform into a blessing for mankind (Zech. 8:13). So also the tribes of Ishmael will come as a pleasing sacrifice on the altar of God.

It is a precious line, if we letit draw us, that we have often encountered, that every judgment of God is not exhausted in itself, but is only a preparation for glorious blessings to come.

18. Eighteenth chapter

In the section verse 1-8 we have a description which makes quite an original impression, so that one cannot understand how an unprejudiced spiritual man can read it differently, at that time a fact. Here is nothing dark, legendary. Bright, light, clear, transparent is for us this whole description of the event - a delicious proof, how in the school of obedience Abraham has got such a sure, fine memory for the divine way to appear and to appear.

It is not said how Abraham knew the Lord; he just knows Him. Through years of contact with Him, He had become known to him; he had acquired practiced senses through habit. And so, as if itwere a matter of course, he also refers to the circumstance, which is puzzling for many, that God

appears like a man, with human needs, Who needs rest after wandering, Whose feet need to be washed, Who needs refreshing food.

These are simple, delicious traits, from which it shinesbrightly how the whole mystery of God's incarnation, the whole wonderful counsel and plan of God to enter into human nature and to make Himself one with it, seemed so completely natural to this Abraham. He did not need to be lectured theologically on whether and how such a thing was possible and feasible, but since he was attentive to all of God's ways and guidance, everything became clear to him from the way God spoke to him and from his dealings with the living God.

It is very likely that in the fathers before Abraham, before the flood such knowledge of God, such insight into the glorious thoughts of God will have lived with mankind.

Thus again in distorted form in the legends of all heathen peoples the thought is reflected that the deity had intermarried with the human beings. This general and terrible distortion lets us conclude with great certainty that in the beginning of the human race certain realizations must have lived over the contact of God in human form with the human children; realizations, which could be reproduced in the tradition by virtue of the longevity of the primeval fathers through millennia. Admittedly, these traditions might have been distorted very soon by those who had left the line of the pious Sethites early, but by those who walked on this line and remained in connection and fellowship with God, they will have been able to propagate themselves unclouded.

So also through his ancestors a great measure of this original knowledge of God may have come to Abraham. For we must not imagine as if he would have come to such knowledge on his own, despite the fact that his ancestors had practiced idolatry. Even in idolatry, a memory of former realities has been preserved, even if it has fallen into complete dependence on Satan.

The prince of darkness, as devious as he is, is not a real creator even in this field. He does not seem to be able to accomplish anything else than to reverse truths, realities, insights that God has entrusted to mankind. To create something new is beyond him. Reversal of divine thoughts is the highest thing he accomplishes. In doing so, he goes as far as negating, denying and horribly distorting the truth, although he cannot prevent people from recognizing its basic features, just as the basic features of the face remain when the human face is distorted. In the human face we still find the image of our God, despite the deep aversion from Him. Satan does not manage a new creation, only a disfigurement with the use of the existing.

Thus, a treasure of knowledge was also present in the patriarchs, although it needed rectification, for which God used the separation from the customs and practices of the nations in Abraham.

In verse 9 and 10, God appears fully human, and yet Abraham realizes that there is more here than a man. Sarah, however, listens behind the door.

If you read verse 13-15 under the impression of the testimony of the spirit about Sarah in Hebr. 11,11, then you have to rejoice again. This testimony is wonderfully kind and delicious. This is again such clear evidence to us that the compilation of God's witnesses did not take place according to human standards. We would probably have written differently; we probably would not have put Sarah on this list. God has a different standard than we do, and that He can deal with His unbelieving laughing and denying children is something great.

The rebuke was sharp, though no improper word was spoken. The rebuke by the reproving word of the Lord must have worked. "For the word of the Lord is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). There again we have proof of the righting power of a simple word of God, where God has not rubbed in pepper and salt. We would have pulled off a piece of skin. God refrains from doing that. He knows what He can trust in His word.

If only we wanted to know it better, to trust the effect of the clear, sober word more. The effect is written in Hebr. 11,11. So the rebuke had the intended effect. Thus, in spite of the alarming error of which she was guilty, she found her place among the witnesses of faith. This is

immensely comforting in the face of so many aberrations and the spirit of lies that we encounter in our days. Let us trust God; He will deal with His erring children.

With the words: "How can I hide from Abraham what I want to do? (verse 17) begins a wonderful speech of our God, one of the greatest words from His mouth. God acts as if there is a bondage of God to His elect, as if He is under their compulsion. A great, mighty word! So delicious it is, so great our responsibility becomes at this word, so differently we stand in Abraham's succession, that we let it be said to us. It was not a matter of salvation, which concerned Abraham, and not about his own affairs. After all, what was Sodom to him! He walked high above Sodom on the heights of faith. Sodom was at his feet; he was not related to it. He could calmly leave it to itself and to God.

But God wants and has to talk toAbraham about Sodom. He is driven to talk about a terrible judgment by fire that He wants to execute. God wants to turn Abraham's attention to His ways of judgment, which He intends to go. As God cannot withdraw from Abraham, so Abraham must not withdraw from the Lord. That would have been a simple rejection of the divine trust, an unseemly rejection of a distinction that belongs to the highest that God has bestowed on a human being, when God takes him into His trust.

And the fact that it concerns just such an object as the one in front of us is certainly not without meaning, not coincidence, much less arbitrariness; it is divine wisdom and intention, plan and goal. God cares so much to set forth to His elect, Abraham's children (verse 18.19), His intentions with Sodom, His thoughts about the terrible judgment by fire He intends to execute, and to have them tell Him everything He thinks is good. This is what we are confronted with here with clarity and definiteness.

What would the words of the Lord in verse 18. 19 have to do in this context if they were not connected with the execution of the judgment? Is it still possible to speak of a blessing that is supposed to stand unattained when God sets forth His purpose of the judgment by fire? Surely it must be so, otherwise God could not use it as a justification for the fact that He wants to speak about this very point. After all, it is about Sodom, and according to the Scriptures Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of the eternal fire chastisement (Jude 7).

We are here, therefore, on a ground that has become exemplary in the Scriptures about the marking of the most terrible judgment that God knows in all His administration. Are we, as children and followers, as true seed of Abraham, ready to move along this line and respond to the revelation of God concerning Sodom and thus take our position with the believing Abraham?

This question is also an extremely significant one for our own lives, when it comes to establishing our calling and election.

It is not permissible to pass over such questions without offending the divine revelation and to say: these are things which do not concern us and with which it is idle or even dangerous to concern ourselves. What a judgment on the living God! Then He would have put His chosen servant on a very slippery slope. And yet God has the deepest need to speak to him about Sodom!

Why do we not believe it? Or has God changed His mind? He would no longer stand by His elect today? He would no longer have the deep need today for them to want to be told what He has to say about Sodom?

We believe in the infallible God of Abraham, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him also our Father, that we may walk in the footsteps of Abraham and be told with full right what He has to say about His judgments.

Verse 19 says that first in the whole house the word must come to its right, so that God can fulfill His promises. Only then can come to exhaustion what He spoke of blessing.

Verse 20 and 21 are quite humanly spoken, similar to chapter 11 in the Tower of Babel.

The passage from verse 23 onward reports Abraham's intercession for the doomed Sodom, which shows us his warm participation, his heartfelt compassion for the unfortunate and unhappy

inhabitants. Abraham, becoming bolder and bolder, finally dares to ask the Lord not to destroy the city, even if there were only ten righteous people in it. He does not dare to go down lower than ten.

But one thing Abraham brought out inhis persistent intercession, one thing confronts us with overwhelming power: the quite indescribable willingness of God, if only it were at all possible, not only to postpone His judgment, but to cancel it for the sake of some righteous people. That is quite wonderful!

From such an occurrence God gets a completely different appearance than the one given to Him. This "dark" Jehovah, the "terrible" God, who smites whole nations and instructs His chosen ones not to spare neither women nor children, even infants, from whom one indignantly turns away for the sake of such abominations and cruelties, is willing and ready to suspend His judgment, if only ten righteous people were to be found in all those places!

At every step we betray how little we know and understand Him, and how little we have allowed ourselves to be told about death and judgment and their significance in the administration of mankind. We suffer from exaggeration on one side and on the other.

Our conceptions of the powers of death and perdition have been overstretched, so that they have become for us insurmountable obstacles to the demonstration of the power and glory of our God. And yet, death, damnation, hell, fire, the judgments of the most dreadful kind, whose terrible significance and scope are nothing to be discounted, are nothing but means and instruments in the hand of God, with which He surely achieves His great purposes.

They have made insurmountable barriers for our God Himself, the Lord of Glory, so that when death reaches man, God cannot help him for all eternity. And this with a zeal worthy of a better cause. One could be angry about the stubbornness with which one claims that a dead person is unreachable for God; even Christ, the Lord over the living and the dead, can do nothing there; death is the inexorable ruler.

We have been able to do this in the face of an example like this, and of a God who allows His judgment to come and yet has shown His willingness not to execute His judgment even if there were only ten righteous people, so that one might think that we must be overcome. -- The story of Sodom is not over, although here too the story breaks off with the words: "The Lord went away when He had spoken to Abraham" (verse 33).

This incident, this glorious intercession of Abraham for Sodom, the priestly interceding love, the standing up for Sodom, which forced Abraham not to desist but to go as far as he was allowed, all this was the divine intention. God wanted, God had to bring His servant to realize himself about his behavior to these events.

Of course, the negotiations do not come to the desired result. The judgment comes; it is unstoppable. But it is not by chance that the account shows such an unsatisfactory conclusion, and that the intercession of Abraham for Sodom did not achieve what it wanted to achieve. For it prompts us to pursue the matter further. And precisely by breaking off here, God wants us to understand, as it were: I go on in judgment, but trace Me and let Me tell you that I have more to say about it. Up to now we have understood this with difficulty or not at all.

19. Chapter Nineteen

We now come to one of the most poignant chapters in the whole of ancient history, to a chapter which is also of quite unique significance and scope for us in our knowledge of the ways of God's judgment - for such we are dealing with here in the most thorough manner.

We were allowed to hear it from the mouth of Jehovah Himself when we looked at the previous chapter, how much He needed to talk to His trusted servant and friend Abraham about what He was going to do with Sodom. The so very delicious dialogue, however, ended in a way that is not quite satisfactory to us. Jehovah talked no further with Abraham, and Abraham had come to the end of his intercession. So then the divine judgment of wrath on the corruption of Sodom and its sister cities took its unhindered course.

In the present chapter, the accompanying circumstances of the judgment of God as well as the judgment itself are reported in detail. In particular, we are given an insight into the appalling depravity that was torn down there, and of which we have such shocking examples in our days in the "best" human society, of which we know more than we would like. We have before us a picture of human immersion, as it can hardly be painted blacker. In addition, we have delicious points of light concerning the demonstration of divine mercy, the saving and preserving grace of God to Lot and his family.

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, when Lot was sitting at the gate (verse 1). The gates of the city in the east are so spacious that public meetings can be held there, court hearings can be held, commercial transactions can be made. It can be concluded from this account that Lot, though a stranger, attained a certain importance, that he clothed a certain dignity. Whether he occupied a public position cannot be determined, but he was where the center of the life of his city was to be found. So he stood in the middle of this life, what resident and native in Sodom and has possessed a firm house as one who could not wait for the city, which has foundations.

When Lot saw the angels, he forced them to come in. So there we see that a rest of divine cognitive faculty remained to him. He recognizes supernatural beings in the two men who came as wanderers. This is very significant. It shows that even when a man has become deeply involved and badly entangled in worldly activities, as was the case with Lot, a measure of divine discernment can remain. And now he considers it a privilege to show hospitality to these messengers of God, as whom he recognized them, to shelter them as angels (verse 2).

But he did not find the reception he desired; he was sharply rebuffed. It is a harsh word that he has to take. Despite his deviation from the faith, he believes that he is entitled tosuch a community without further ado and that he can accept such deputies of Jehovah. They taught him otherwise. Only after he had greatly coerced them did they return to him (verse 3).

Before they lay down to sleep, people came to disgrace his guests (verse 4). There the angels had a tangible proof that the judgment on Sodom was not exaggerated. The behavior of the people testified sufficiently to how horribly fallen, how morally depraved they were. At the same time we get a glimpse of the deep sinking into which Lot, that righteous soul, had fallen. For that he was righteous, the spirit testifies, and he did not perish. But the way he offered to give up his daughters to the raging people of Sodom (verse 8) is deeply shocking.

There is no sign of trust in the divine help in this difficult situation, of calm trust in the God who had sent His messengers there and who had come to his house. We can imagine that his situation was not easy. Strangled by the lofty notion of Oriental hospitality, which compelled him to give up his daughters rather than let his guests be ravished, he came to a fearful distress.

There is no mention of trust in God, but Lot has great confidence in his ability to get along with the men. With this confidence he goes out, but is treated badly, so that he alone would not have succeeded in snatching himself from their hands, if the men had not grabbed him to pull him into the house, in order to then strike the people with blindness (verse 9-11).

After that they gave him the warning to lead his nearest relatives out of that place (verse 12,13), because the Lord would destroy the place. This message finds a measure of faith in him, for he goes on to tell his sons-in-law; but he was not taken seriously by them (verse 14).

It is shocking when a righteous person is no longer taken seriously by those he wants to save. There we see his complete spiritual inability, despite his own personal preservation, to serve those closest to him for salvation. That is terrible!

Lot is exhorted to haste (verse 15.16). There he will have stood by this and that of his possessions, and wife and daughters with him, and we can imagine how difficult it must have been for them to break away from him. All this must be left behind and goes into the fire.

Even in the last moment he has to listen to sharp threats from God's messengers (verse 17). This was certainly not a blind shot, but a great kindness of God that he still sends such a sharp warning and admonition to a believer who has gone very far astray and sunk very low, in order to save him.

The timidity, the faint-heartedness of this man (verse 18-20) has something deeply shameful about it. One can see how puny the life of faith in a person can become, how every ability to build oneself up can be completely lost; and yet God still respects even the saddest remnant so highly that He spares a person, despite this unspeakably sad atrophy, even if only weak sparks of a life of faith can be perceived. He also takes care of such a little plant. This is adorable from our God!

Even more: Lot negotiates with God. But how different it is from Abraham, who walked withJehovah on the high places and interceded tirelessly that no righteous person should perish in Sodom, and that He would even spare Sodom for the sake of the righteous, even if there were only ten of them.

Lot allows himself to negotiate with God, because he fears that an accident might happen to him on the arduous way. He asks Him to allow him to flee to a city destined for destruction, and God agrees. God is thus willing to suspend His judgment and to spare rather than to destroy. If we may call this intercession, we could say that at the intercession of a man saved under very miserable circumstances - and such a man was Lot - God suspends judgment where He has already decided it. This is wonderful from our God. He responds to Lot's request and Zoar is saved from destruction.

It is a powerful word that confrontsus in verse 21 and 22; a word that lets us see into the way God knows Himself bound to His promise and how He respects it. I cannot do anything, I cannot execute My judgment, until you are saved. That is great! This justifies the assumption that the judgment on a world ready for judgment cannot and will not be executed until the **divine selection of the members of the body of Christ is saved;** and for their sake many things will still be preserved and spared in the future judgments.

It was broad daylight when Lot arrived in Zoar (verse 23). The people of Sodom did not take it to heart that this stranger had gone out and will have discussed it with mockery and scorn.

In verses 24 and 25 we read one of the strangest statements in Scripture concerning the nature of the Godhead: "Then Jehovah rained fire and brimstone from Jehovah out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah."

It is thus stated that a Jehovah on earth is distinguished from Jehovah from heaven, the emissary, the angel, the angelic Jehovah, the **sent** Jehovah from Jehovah in heaven. We do not have to deal with two Jehovahs, but we see again and again a mystery of God's being and acting, which mocks all attempts to put Himself in fetters, and which we encounter again and again in the Scriptures.

We will not finda solution to this mystery. But the simple in faith let it be said that **the** Jehovah who is on earth can and is in equal power and authority as the Jehovah in heaven. This is very clearly indicated here.

Lot's wife becomes a pillar of salt (verse 26). This is the poignant judgment of which Jesus reminds His listeners: "Remember Lot's wife," who had to pay heavily for her disobedience.

Now the man clearly enters the scene (verse 27,28) who probably contributed most to Lot's salvation through his faithful intercession with the Lord, before whom the Lord could not

hide what He wanted to do to Sodom, and who is now placed before the place of judgment to be a witness there of the smoke of their torment that ascended to heaven, and who is also a witness for us of the unsparing execution of judgment in the eons.

What does this want to tell us? We are given the word of God that tells us what Abraham did. He must have understood his God correctly that he should not only be a witness for what God has spoken and planned to do, but that he may consider himself quite entitled, on the basis of the position that God takes toward him, to take a very personal look at what God has done and to let his faithful gaze rest on the places of divine judgment and inwardly resign himself to it.

The place where Abraham had stood before the Lord was probably one of the heights from which there is a wide view of the Jordan Valley and the site. He saw that a smoke was rising from the land.

If we are Abraham's seed by faith, then it is certain that we all have the right to calmly take up such a position as he did and to look at the mightiest place of divine judgment that this earth has ever seen until this day and which, according to all that Scripture has to say, is exemplary, exemplary, authoritative for all the severe terrible judgment that God has decreed upon an alienated humanity.

The Scriptures declare in concise language that Sodom is an **example of** the 'eternal' (aeonian) fire punishment, which is still future for the great day of judgment and visitation of the godless world. But God has taken care that we, in the tranquility of faith, unshaken in our hearts, without letting our view of the great God, who is a consuming fire and into whose hands to fall is dreadfulness, be veiled and clouded even in the slightest, follow the traces with eyes of faith, which God Himself has left in His revelation.

For it is a fact of great consequence that God repeatedly in later manifestations through the prophets, the Son and the apostles just keeps going back to Sodom and lets say things that we also want to be told.

So let us look at what Ezekiel 16 may write about Sodom. From verse 32 on, the shameful deeds of Judah and Jerusalem are enumerated, and from verse 38 on, God's judgment on them.

But from verse 44 to 52 we find a language of the Lord that would be quite impossible for us. There we are told, not that the abominations of Sodom were greater than those of Judah, but conversely, that the sinking of His people reached **deeper** than the ruin of Sodom. On this ground they can object to nothing that could be pleaded as a ground of mitigation. If God measures with the same measure, then the judgment on Jerusalem and Judah must be at least the same as on Sodom.

But now God says in verse 41: "I will put an end to your fornication". This, then, is to be the purpose of His judgment. Thus it is said that the purpose of the divine judgment is to satisfy His wrath at Judah's fornication, so that He need no longer be jealous. There we see the clear line that the most severe visitation on Judah has the purpose of remedy and correction.

It cannot be expressed more clearly that the purpose of the terrible judgment is to bring about the restoration to such a state that God can no longer be provoked.

But verse 53 speaks even more clearly: God will **turn the** captivity of Sodom. What that captivity was is not in doubt. It was not a political one. Sheol, the judgment of fire and brimstone from heaven, was it. Sodom did not suffer another. Relentless ruin to the bottom has befallen it. This is its captivity according to the Scriptures.

But the Scripture clearly says further: I will **turn** this captivity (verse 53), **like the captivity of Samaria and Jerusalem.** This "turning" will therefore be something that God intended as a corrective in the further education and leadership of His people: "that you may bear the shame and be ashamed of all that you have done" (verse 54).

In the following verse 55, it is explicitly promised to "your sister Sodom" that she should return **"to her former state"** with her two sisters.

The result of the miraculous restoration of Jerusalem would be that Samaria and Sodom would also share in it: your daughters shall become as they were **before.** God will do it, remembering the covenant of the youth of His people (verse 60), namely with Abraham. So these words point back to the time before Moses.

But included in this restoration is that God will forgive their sin (verse 63). If this is the goal of the divine ways of judgment, then we know what is meant in Jude 7 by the example of 'eternal' (aeonian) fire chastisement.

I repeatedly presented this scripture to brothers at a time when I was not yet aware of the final thoughts of God beyond the judgment by fire. At that time, I was like one whom the Lord heals from blindness. I realized that there was something wrong with the conventional idea of the hell of fire; that there were lines that could not be squeezed into this dogma. But I did not have clarity. However, all that highly esteemed, dear brothers, whom I had asked for advice in my innermost distress, could tell me was: we know nothing to do with this word; we let it stand. To my counter-question: Is this word a fully important word of God? They replied: Oh, yes, but we don't know how to put it. They refused to go into it and to deal with it openly and honestly.

I could not be satisfied with this and I could not now also stop pursuingthis line because these proven, faithful, glorious servants of God, to whom I looked up highly, did not want to go further. Certainly, it harmed me; for many of these dear brothers I became impossible; they could no longer work with me. But I did not rest until I had clarity. I have it now! I can no longer hide behind the mountain.

If I spoke to please men, I would no longer be a servant of God. But I am not built that way. There is still some darkness, but on these lines I see clearly and joyfully that God's **ways of judgment,** even the most terrible ones, are not exhausted in judgment, but are only **ways of passage** to **restoration;** and Sodom is such a great example of this that Scripture offers no other.

I remember another word, **Matth. 11, 23.24.** I am almost shocked by this word. The dogmatics went to pieces. It is regarded as unshakably fixed that God does everything in this life to all people that is necessary for conversion, and that a hope for deceased people beyond the grave is completely excluded. That went out the window with me in the face of this word. For here we have a declaration by the Son of God that God undoubtedly did **not** do to Sodom something that He did to Capernaum; but if it had been done, then the people of Sodom would have repented (cf. verse 21).

And now, in the conventional doctrine, I am asked to believe that God would cast a large number of people, who were capable of repentance according to the testimony of His Son, who would have turned back from their evil ways, if such deeds had happened to them as in Chorazin and Bethsaida, as a result of this omission on the part of God into eternal, i.e. endless hell. Furthermore, this was impossible for me.

What would then become of the word: "God wants **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1Ti 2:4)"? And the Son declares: Sodom did not have your knowledge, otherwise it would still be standing today.

These are biblical lines that I simply drew. One will understand what that had to mean for me. I could no longer go along the old way. It is true that there were struggles through a number of years until one bond after the other came loose. But like scales it finally fell from my eyes. Brightly and clearly I realized what had to shake me in the deepest soul, how successfully the enemy had succeeded in teaching believing Christianity the idea of God, that **He would condemn to endless torment, which has** no purpose and goal, because there would **never** be **deliverance from** it; and that one could pronounce this with a terrible indifference and harshness!

It is inconceivable how it could ever come to that point with man to gain such a dreadful idea from the creator of heaven and earth that he with premeditation lets loose the arch enemy on the just created men, - moreover a compelling necessity did not exist because God could have

eliminated him, - and by doing so, as it were, says to himself: it will have as a consequence that I can take only a comparatively very small part to Me into glory, and by far the main mass of all this creation will be damned into endless, hopeless, conscious torment; but it has now pleased Me so. - –

This is how our God was taught and this is how He is still taught today. Make it clear to yourself what consequences this has, if you only think of the essence and the nature of God. If one seriously considers what becomes of the creation and the creatures, this would already be deeply shocking.

But it becomes worse when we ask ourselves the question: what will become of God's truth, of His Son, of Christ's sacrifice on Golgotha, of the authority that the Father gave Him over all flesh and of the certainty flowing from this authority that He will give eternal life to all whom the Father gives Him?

What becomes of God's generous declaration of His glorious Son: "Therefore He has given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus **every** knee should bow, of those in **heaven** and on **earth and under the earth,** and **every** tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

But people say: no, only a few will be saved; the others grudgingly make this confession. God cannot force anyone to be saved, even the gnashing of teeth in endless agony is for the glory of God the Father.

And what will become of the word in 1 Cor. 15:24-26 that Christ, after He has abolished all authority and power, will also abolish the last enemy, death?

The people claim against it: then will remain rebellion, indignation through endless eternities, and the authority of darkness.

But this is not written in our Bible! There we read rather further: "Last of all the Son Himself also shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (verse 27.28).

Let us go back to the word of Jude verse 7. In an urgent way Jude verse 5. 6 warned his readers by pointing out the angels who had not kept their principality and now have to carry their punishment sentence **until the judgment.** So we see a judgment that will find its goal on the day of judgment; then another sentence will be passed. This example has made it clear to me that the judgment of Sodom by fire is **finite.**

This also clearly appears to us in thehistory of the people of Israel. This became the first impulse for me to think about the judgment of God in detail. I saw in Romans 11 how the same people of whom the Scriptures pass judgment in the most poignant way, "they are hardened," will again be accepted in grace by declaring in the most simple way that this judgment is also **finite**: "hardening happened to Israel only **until the** full number of the nations had come in (verse 25).

But further, it declares that God has included **them all,** Jews and nations, among the unbelievers, that He may have mercy on **them all** (verse 32).

So we have here two lines running exactly in the same direction. If these are valid, then it means the entirety of the people of Israel, which is closed under the judgment of hardening, so that He may have mercy on them. But in the same chapter it is said (verse 30.31): in the same way as you Gentiles (nations) did not obey before, so also those (Israelites) did not want to believe in God, so that they might have mercy. These words say so clearly, as it cannot be said more clearly, that the most terrible judgments, like hardening, have served as a background, as a dark underground of the great saving and loving thoughts of God.

An example of hardening is Pharaoh, whose heart God hardened so that He might reveal His power in him, whom God bore with great patience, as a vessel of wrath prepared for condemnation, in order to show in him all the riches of His glory in the vessels of His mercy (Rom. 9:22,23).

But that the judgments are not only to be such a dark background for the revelation of God's glory, but that in them Jehovah Himself reveals His glory, and will also restore those struck by His judgments, of this we have heard the clearest testimony.

If the objection is made that Ezk 16 only writes that Sodom, like Samaria and Jerusalem, will only be restored to its former state, that there is nothing to be read about a reacceptance, a restoration, a redemption and glorification, then not a few think that everything is already decided. But can anyone be of the opinion, quite apart from the promised forgiveness (verse 63), that if those sodomites, after the four thousand years of captivity into which God has placed them, are offered the salvation which appeared in Christ and which is also possible for them, they will once again have the inclination to return to the hell of fire from which they have been restored?

We may well assume that all those judged by God will have the opportunity to decide for and take hold of the One who entered into the breach for them and for the universe, and Whose blood is a propitiation for all that is in heaven and on earth (Col. 1:20). For if for the people of Israel, who according to the Scriptures have been worse than Sodom, the time will come when they will mourn for Him in Whom they have stabbed (Rev. 1:7) and will call out their hosannas to Him (Matt. 23:39) at His Second Coming, then nothing less is to be expected for Sodom when the gaze cleared by the judgment by fire, the heart enlightened by the Lord, is directed to Him in Whom all the salvation of the world is decided.

It may be permitted to touch upon the judgment by fire of 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13 in connection with what has been said. If we compare this word with Psalm 102, and its end on top of that with Hebr. 1, 10-12, we will find that it is indeed about a very great judgment by fire, encompassing earth and celestial bodies, but not for destruction, but for **transformation**; just as our scientific knowledge has shown that nothing can be destroyed by fire, but through fire, through the process of combustion, the substances that are burned are only **dissolved** and freed for a **new use** in the divine household.

Our chemists can illustrate and prove this by putting certain substances, e.g. metals such as silver, into a corrosive liquid and dissolving them in it, as we dissolve sugar in coffee, so that no trace of them can be seen; but then they are able to precipitate the metals again from this liquid, e.g. by means of an electric current. This process results in a small loss of metal.

God is an even greater chemist than we are and He understands it better. The earth is passing away in its present form. I rejoice over it. All the garbage that we have created, art, literature, etc., is going into the fire. However, what goes into the fire is only our work; but the original stock, as it came out of God's hand, -- no trace of it is lost! Everything becomes free for new use.

Did we once see a great fire? It rejoices, it exults! It sounds like a jubilant song that the materials are set free again and God can use them anew. Our poet says: The elements hate the structure from human hand.

What a great redemption it will be when creation will be freed from the corruption that man has brought upon it. "The earth and the works that are in it will burn up".

And our physicality and our whole being? In 2 Cor. 5:17 we read: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; "old things have passed away," they are in the death-death state; but the Spirit works life for righteousness' sake; "all things have become new. Believers have the pledge that this mortal will put on the immortal.

Chemically speaking, decomposition is the same as burning. The burning of corpses is therefore not something so horrible as it is often thought to be. Only the motive for it is reprehensible: the fear of the resurrection. Man, however, does not manage to destroy himself or others, for example, by burning. If one thinks that the burning of corpses is a loss, then think of the funeral pyres on which the martyrs were burned.

From the progress of the science we want to assume calmly also this that nothing can be destroyed byburning. Only the composition dissolves, and the components are available to new composition. The basic composition of the earth will therefore not cease by burning. Also the change of the body life does not cancel the human being; it is rather a guarantee for renewal of the failing body. We get a new life of body and spirit.

20. Twentieth chapter

Abraham, before receiving his Isaac from God, must still pass a test or go througha deep humiliation. Abimelech's encounter with Abraham (verse 9) has much to tell us. The law, as Heb. 10:1 says, has the shadow of future goods and bears an exemplary stamp. So also these Philistine princes and the whole family of the Philistines, who in nature and behavior confront us with certain directions and currents in natural humanity, as far as it comes into contact with the people and the nature of God.

The Philistines originate from Egypt, so they are a derivation from the same source that we know from the Scriptures, namely from the carnal humanity that wants to know everything through the senses, that accomplishes significant things in this way, that achieves great things, that makes a great impression on the people of God, and of whose achievements also the people of God may make chaste use, just as Moses was not instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians for nothing.

This people comes from Canaan, the son of Ham. Already the location is significant. It is the coastline that extendsnorthwest from Egypt on the side of the Promised Land, from where one can enter the Land of Promise by bypassing the Dead Sea and the Jordan River.

These features figuratively represent to us the attempt, made again and again up to the present day and temporarily successful through the fault of God's people, to take possession of the land of promise by bypassing the way of self-judgment, death and resurrection. But God did not let them succeed in permanently taking possession of the land.

Abimelech reaches out his hand for something that does not belong to a Philistine (verse 2), but to the man of God. He wants to put himself in possession of the woman who is destined in God's wonderful providence (see Gal. 4:21-31) to be a sublime example of a new covenant relationship, such as God establishes and maintains in His own way through death and resurrection with those whom He can lead this way. Indeed, Sarah shadows for us the heavenly Jerusalem, the free one, from which are born not slaves but sons. Sarah is the representative and representative of the New Testament, of the heavenly covenant that God is ready to enter into with a believing humanity, and the womb from which the sons of promise, the heirs of God, the children of hope are to be born.

This is probably the correct interpretation in the spiritual area and for the spiritual understanding. Abraham represents the spirit of faith, how it is called forth by God's begetting, how it is led from knowledge to knowledge, from strength to strength, how God nourishes and steels it and finally puts it to the utmost test, so that it is proven, more than the perishable gold that is purified by fire.

And now this encounter with Abimelech! Abimelech is most likely a title, not a name. Translatedinto German it means: My father the king. Similarly, Pharaoh is not a personal name; it means as much as prince, emperor or better still as the High Gate.

"My Father the King": a strange title! In this word a high knowledge is expressed, the knowledge about the affiliation of the father name with the kingship. That there was no lack of a certain knowledge of God among this Philistine family is clearly shown here.

It is very significant and shameful for the man of faith that he seems to have overlooked this fact so completely. He excuses himself by assuming that there was no fear of God in that place, in which he was therefore mistaken (verse 11).

Abraham had an encounter with a king of the world of nations earlier (chap. 14). The same kingship and priesthood encompasses a wider scope than anything that was and could be decided in Israel. Thus Abraham would have had sufficient reason for a different assumption than the one he expresses. Abraham could have thought that God had not left himself unwitnessed even among the Philistines, that there would be a remnant of divine knowledge, as he recognized it in the person of Melchizedek, by whom he had himself blessed on the soil of the nations.

It is very noteworthy that even in those early days, during the time when God had His chosen one in His special school, the workings of the Spirit of God were by no means limited to this chosen Abraham, but were also active outside the framework of this chosen family in preserving and producing all kinds of precious knowledge and insight.

It would be wrong to say that there was only one man who knew something of God at that time, but there was besides Abraham and Melchizedek also an Abimelech with whom God talked, who lets himself be blessed by God, with whom therefore a not small measure of God fear and knowledge is present. He is not an enlightened doubter or denier of a life of God, nevertheless he is a Philistine, but he bows and acknowledges and is obedient to the word of God, happened in a dream. That this revelation had to happen in a dream, Abraham was to blame because this man of faith failed. Where the household of faith fails and does not stand by the truth, God masterfully goes His own way over Abraham.

Being chosen does not mean having the absolute monopoly of all truth. That would be a very dangerous delusion. It is not the first time that he failed, and on the same line (chap. 12). He held back with the full truth. It is deeply shameful for us, but in a certain sense also comforting, to see that our father Abraham was also weak.

A light falls from here on the so painful phenomena in the framework of the history of the Church, on the ground of the children of this world who want to appropriate everything sensuously and epistemologically. If the man of faith holds back out of shyness to tell the whole truth, God proceeds majestically. If God had not intervened, it would have become questionable whether Isaac was the son of Abraham or Abimelech. The Chosen One would not have prevented this. He passed off his legitimate wife as his sister and did not even object when the Philistine had his wife taken from his side.

This reflects one of the saddest phenomena on the ground of the household of faith, that the seed of faith not only did not object to the fact that the Philistine wanted to enter the mystery of the new covenant in his own way, in an ungodly way, but that the household of faith still encouraged this Philistine procedure.

On the part of the believing community, that which rightfully belongs only to the household of faith is left to the children of this world to recognize naturally without contradiction; it even favors this procedure never intended by God.

Thus the whole area of the knowledge of God in Christ was handed over to the Philistine science and only said: she is my sister, but not: she is my wife. And then one had to be reproached bythe Philistine afterwards. There the household of faith has completely failed like Abraham.

Only faith has the right to recognize divine things divinely. Nevertheless, it was allowed that one could believe in wide circles that one could come into a completely new relationship with God through theological study, bypassing the Dead Sea and the Jordan. With good reason one now turns against the household of faith: You have brought this upon us. - We want to honestly confess

that we are partly to blame because we have not been honest with the world and have not persevered in taking the stand that there are things that the natural man cannot recognize.

The Philistine must never become the husband of Sarah and beget children. The whole way in which God's relations with humanity in the world have been dealt with bears witness to the fact that God alone is right and He alone prevents what the household of faith should have prevented but did not because it did not want to assert its exclusive right over these things.

Yet another truth, in which the high delicious privilege of believers shines so brightly to us, meets us here, namely, that all the things that are outside faith are ours. Paul says, "All things are yours" (1Co 5:22). Finally, Abimelech, rebuked by God, not only returns to Abraham his lawful wife, that is, not only does he fully submit to God's order, not only does he recognize the exclusive right of the father of the faithful to Sarah and what is decided therein, but he is even able to give Abraham and Sarah rich gifts (verses 14-16).

This wants to tell us that natural humanity, as it culminates in the human being who is brought to a high level of perfection in terms of knowledge, can enrich us through natural knowledge, even if it is never able to effectively grasp the mysteries of God, because that is only possible in the way of dying and resurrection. It can never open the entrance into the things of God for us; that is reserved for the spirit of God alone.

However, it would be foolish not to acknowledge that human culture and science can enrich us. From simple natural processes we can gain some illumination and illustration for divine things. The Lord Himself gives us an example in this, as in the lilies of the field, the birds under the sky, the grain of wheat in the earth. Such examples are not really keys that open up the mystery of God to us, but they are illustrations that are not hostile to revelation, but can be of great service to those who use them in a chaste way.

Many ask: To what extent may the believer make things such as science, art, technology serviceable, which lie outside the framework of the actual revelation, but nevertheless within the creation in the area of the omnipotence and rule of God.

As certain as it is that the whole world is in trouble, as certain it is that the whole creation and everything that appears on the ground of mankind, as long as it is not decidedly fundamentally against the recognized will of God, belongs to us, i.e. that we have a good right to let it serve us, such as the inventions of the piano, the art of printing, and even the press, which has devoted itself body and soul to the devil. We did not invent them; now that they are here, they may serve us. There is no field of human skill that may not serve the church of God. Of course, there is also the danger of misuse.

But Paul also writes: "Everything is permitted to me, but not everything promotes me! Everything is permitted to me, but I will not let anything put me under their authority" (1Co 6:12). So there may be circumstances in which it is a higher prerogative of faith to abstain from what I have an undisputed right to do out of consideration for a weak brother. But this is different from putting a yoke on myself that tells me: you must not do this.

So this is how the Philistine is allowed to give gifts tothe household of faith.

But Abimelech does not come to knowledge without judgment (verse 18). Yes, God cannot cope with a perverse world without judgment; but He knows how to bring it to the recognition of facts that go against the grain of the respective natural cognition and against which it rebels. The Philistine, i.e. the natural man, wants to grasp everything according to his cognition, and therefore he rebels against God's instruments. There is hardly a truth more repugnant to him than that of election. But he is forced by God to recognize the elect of God and that there is an exclusivity between Abraham and Sarah to which he has no right. He realizes that there is an election of a special household and that God has special plans with His elect.

However, the Philistine does not only come to knowledge, but also to recognition. We may extend this line. Our God also understands where the household of faith has failed to bring the Philistine to knowledge and recognition along this line.

The Philistine king offers his gifts and thus bows under the counsel of God. But the door is opened to Abraham for a series of blessings that begin withIsaac. After Isaac is born, the most intimate relations occur between Abraham and Abimelech.

21. Twenty-first chapter

Three times we hear in verse 1 and 2: "as He had spoken", i.e. promised, promised. From this we see that we are dealing here with events for which there can be no other reason than the almighty, creative word of our great God, which can cope with all obstacles. There is nothing so great, so infallible, so certain for the fulfillment of what God has spoken, as the fact: our God can do what He wants. Oh that we could get rid of our overestimation of the creaturely will and get an estimation for the all-ability of our great God!

Without suspecting it, we behave as children of our time, i.e. without admitting it to ourselves, we are overflowed, rushed with all possible activities of the human capacity. Unnoticed and unintentionally, the impression grows in us in a quite unseemly way: yes, we humans can do something after all! That is not sought by us, but we cannot escape the power of such currents.

The only antidote is to immerse our minds more often and deeply in these testimonies of the creative omnipotence and saving omnipotence of our God, who laughs at death, mocks all obstacles, for whom the word "impossible" simply does not exist when He has undertaken something.

For God, it is a matter of providing resounding proof on the ground of the life of faith that He is able to create life out of death, as emphasized in Romans 4:17-21 and Hebrews 11:11, 12. The numerous seed mentioned in the latter scriptural passage has by no means reached the end of its fullness. God has taken a few millennia to bring forth Abraham's seed, all produced in the same way by the creative power of the living God, by the Spirit of life, who has finished with death, and who cannot be hindered or stopped in any way by any death or corruption.

"The Lord did as He had spoken and promised. Let us be sound in our inward man by such a word, and let us not expect anything from any other side. "What He had spoken": This is the measure, the measuring rod; and the content of this word is so immeasurable that we cannot exhaustit at all.

The name Isaac (verse 3) is derived from the time word laugh. Here Sarah is no longer laughing in disbelief, but rejoicing, exulting that God has looked upon her lowliness and shame, that she has become the mother of such a son on whom God has set such wonderful things and with whom He had such mighty purposes.

Sara must have hadan idea of this plan of God. But most heartily, so to speak, God Himself laughed about the fact that He was so thoroughly finished with all human incapacity and death. There one can read so deeply in the heart of our God and become aware of what an indescribable joy it must be for Him when there are people who trust Him just because He said it, and who do not let any mountains of obstacles keep them from believing Him that He never gets embarrassed and that He is more powerful than all death beings.

The introduction of circumcision precedes the birth of Isaac by thirteen to fourteen years. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when Ishmael was circumcised (ch. 17:24, 25). Ishmael also comes from the household of faith, so he is not the product of pure unbelief, but the result of an

albeit very questionable mixture of faith and self-help, where one has not come to the end of his own self, but lives in faith and also allows the promises of God their space.

That whole action of Abraham and Sarah, which led to the creation of Ishmael, must not be branded as an apostasy from God, as sheer unbelief. That would be wrong in the highest degree. Both Abraham and Sarah were prompted to do so by their faith in God's promises (see the interpretation of Galatians: Free from Law). Only they could not wait until God's time had come. This is not naked unbelief, not denial of the divine word, but in a way a derailment, a manifestation of carnal impatience.

The highest probation of faith became them only by thirteen years of waiting after the birth of Ishmael. During the thirteen years of silence there was no revelation, certainly a time of severe trial. Abraham was left to himself to observe what had come to him from Hagar.

Ishmael, then, is the result of faith that has not yet experienced the highest purification, that has not yet been proven by patient endurance to the utmost, that has not yet reckoned with the last possibilities that are offered to human thought and reflection. - –

But God can wait; and He also lets His faithful servant Abraham wait, because God is quite sure of His cause. He never gets embarrassed. So John the Baptist could say: "God is able to raise children from these stones" (Matth. 3,9).

But now the son of promise is born, and through the circumcision (verse 4) it must be shown that the way of faith also of the promised son and inheritance is a way, which has the putting away of the filth of the flesh as its reason. Thus already the unconscious course of the child of the promise is marked as a sacrificial course, in which it went out on bloodshed.

The word in Romans 15:8 is a strange application of Scripture. The infant Jesus was also circumcised on the eighth day. Paul says very significantly that Jesus was subjected to circumcision for the sake of God's truth, not because He Himself needed to remove the filth of the flesh, but because it was the fulfillment of all the righteousness of God.

It was certainly not by chance that Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born (verse 5).

A great feast was not celebrated at Isaac's birth or circumcision, similar to our baptismal celebration, but at his weaning (verse 8), since he was no longer attached to his mother and had gained some independence.

This will have a spiritual meaning. The greatest day of joy is not when a man comes to filiation, but when a child of God comes to weaning; when he may be offered solid food instead of milk.

The joy over the birth of a child of God is well justified, but it looks quite sad in the household of faith, because so many children still run around with the milk bottle, milk diluted with water and sugar! How little joy there is in the house of God over the weaning! It is even considered questionable when children of God desire to be led further in the knowledge and love of God.

The correct interpretation of Sarah and Hagar is given by the Epistle to the Galatians (see Ströter: Free from the Law). For the natural sense the story of the expulsion of the maid with her son Ishmael reported in verse 9-13 is a great hardship, but the wisdom of the wise shall be put to shame at this word.

When a man of God who walks by faith has really been brought to the attainment of filiation and this filiation has come to a certain maturity and maturity, then it turns out that the earlier fruits of our life of faith mock us (verse 9) and do not correspond to what we think we are entitled to expect from them, indeed that they signify a deep-rooted opposition or even enmity to the filial relationship. This phenomenon is not at all strange to us.

On the ground of God's great kingdom leadership with Israel, we are clearly confronted with the fact that the natural seed of Abraham proves to be the most pronounced opponent since

the great Isaac appeared. They were children of Hagar, not children of the promise. They came from the household of faith like Ishmael, but they sought to establish their own righteousness. And Ishmael does mischief with Isaac and mocks his! But then Ishmael must be cast out! This is what God did in the great stalk. The whole nation of Israel, the children of the kingdom cast out into the utter darkness and f r e m d e come to childship (Gal. 4, 28-31).

Ishmael is not damned, not lost. There is no mention of it. He is not cursed, but has a great promise (verse 13). He has become a great people in the great household of God because he is Abraham's seed. After all, God could have had Ishmael torn apart by wild animals. But He did not do so, because He rather wanted to use him.

It is well known that Islam has among its main bearers the sons of Ishmael, and also what great importance it has for the chastening of a corrupt Christendom. The advance of Islam is uncanny, and an enervated Christianity, which preaches apostasy at home, may be sure that God will not yet take back this chastening rod, but will make further use of it.

But the future of this people is described in connection with one of the greatest promises for the people of Israel in the prophet Isaiah, where the descendants of Ishmael are clearly mentioned by name (ch. 60,7), as it has already been touched upon above. When God will establish His people, Ishmael will also turn to the Lord. Let us beware of using an inverted standard and reading out of the Scriptures what is not written there.

There are not only saved and damned; there are also administrations, institutions, orders, extending through millennia, for which we cannot yet find a satisfactory solution for the sake of the infidelity of the household of faith, but which are used by God for severe chastisements, -- a serious downside for the individual believer.

So there is a life of faith, which includes thechildship, but does not lead to the inheritance. The Ishmael does not become an Isaac! So every possibility to reckon with ourselves we have to give into death; and as long as a man even in faith still deals with the works of the flesh and wants to promote his salvation by it, he closes the freedom and the right of inheritance of a child to himself. He is not lost, but he does not inherit with the believing Isaac, with the sons of the free.

It is more difficult to separate from these products, which are mixed with faith, than to give up one's own will. Terrible, deep bondages are expressed there. But God says: "Do not let it displease you for the sake of the boy and the maid" (verse 12).

There is an infinite amount of Ishmael Christianity today, which deals with works, but stands on the ground of the believing confession. An aversion of Ishmael against Isaac is also there. After all, both are children of Abraham. But the Scripture is adamant; it says, "Drive out the maid with her son" (verse 10); he shall not inherit with the son of the free. These are things that move us in the deepest soul, that have something unspeakably painful for us, and with which we must deal by the hand of Scripture, so that we do not lose the privilege and become Ishmael.

"In Isaac the seed shall be called unto thee" (verse 12), namely Christ and those who belong to the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12), who are called to real freedom through the gospel, who of course then must also come to weaning, who mature and then reach up to the measure of the full growth of the Christ (Eph. 4:13). All this cannot exist on the ground of a merely Ishmaelite Christianity. This is the key to the painful but also liberating solution of the embarrassing situation in which the children of faith find themselves in relation to Ishmael, who today holds the "reins" in the household of faith.

The handmaid's son wields the scourge in the house of God over the sons of Isaac. This is deeply upsetting. But the handmaid son will not inherit with the son of the free. That is why no letter has higher significance for believers today than Galatians, which is about the freedom to which Christ has set us free. And this is so difficult to realize because we are surrounded by an immensely active evangelizing Ishmaelism, since they mock us.

However, we do not want to get upset about this and beware of fighting against it with carnal weapons, so that we do not give up our freedom. We want to stick to it: "If we are children, we are also heirs, namely heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ" (Rom. 8,17).

The following passage begins with the words: "At that time Abimelech spoke ... with Abraham" (verse 22). So this was not by chance and was probably connected with the fact that the birth of the son of promise, unexpected for the Philistine, but long expected by the believing Abraham, made a deep impression on the prince of the Philistines, whom we recognize as God-fearing. Thus, this demonstration of the power of God brings him to Abraham.

In this there are very similar features to what we find at the birth of the great Isaac. There the wise men from the east came to worshipHim and opened their treasures. In the prophecy of Isaiah the same trait is found (ch. 60,6; cf. Psalm 72, 10.11). As soon as the seed of promise, the Son of God, appears, a mighty movement goes through the world of nations outside the household of faith. This is of high importance and delicious for us to realize. Through the birth of Isaac, the Philistine prince is brought to the recognition that God is with this strange stranger Abraham.

The same trait is found in John 17:23: I pray "that they may attain to perfect unity, that the world may know that You sent Me," only here it is carried out more deeply and magnificently. - From the future communion of the sons of God with the Son of God will come forces that will bring the world, the Philistine, to the feet of the Son of God, from which will come a recovery of the world.

Abraham now enters into a covenant, but not without judgment. First, it must be made clear that Abimelech sinned against Abraham and his whole household, that he took from him a well of water that the Philistine did not dig (verse 25).

The recovery of the world cannot take place until it recognizes that only the men of faith dig wells of water. "He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his body shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). The most distinguished thing that is reported to us about Isaac is that he dug one water well after another.

Abraham bears precious witness to the high significance of the truth of the sacrifice through the slaughter of the seven lambs (verse 29.30) to set something right between God and man. The number signifies a divine perfection. Because of this simple symbolic act, the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech is accomplished. Hence the naming (verse 31) Beersheba. In Sheba we find the same root as in Sabbath, seven.

In verse 33 we meet the name "eternal God", the God of the ages (olam) for the most serious time in the scripture. Before the birth of Isaac this name never occurs (see Ströter: What does the scripture understand by eternity?). From the context it becomes clear to us why he can appear only now. It has as its prerequisite the appearance of the promised seed, the heir of the promise, who is an image of the executor of all the great thoughts and intentions, ways and goals of God with His whole creation, which are decided in Him and for whom He has made this wonderful arrangement of the ages.

They have no other purpose than to be the framework and ground on which the various manifold treasures of the glory, power and wisdom of the Son of God are to unfold in orderly succession according to His divine plan. For this purpose God uses the ages. This can be understood by every simple child of God.

God does not at all intervene in the revelation of the Son with instantaneous appearances, but He takes His time. First of all, a lot of time to prepare only a chosen line in mankind, a thin line in the chosen people, which becomes thinner and thinner, to prepare only the chosen few for the appearance of the Lord.

It was a small circle that really waited for the consolation of Israel. And when the Son of God was there, at first bright crowds flocked to Him to be fed, comforted, blessed. But how many

stayed with Him? A very small selection! The others did not think about the thoughts of God; it was hidden from their eyes. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matth. 22,14).

And in our age we see the same thing. Great things are spoken of before the ears of many peoples, and yet how few there are to whom God can really make known the mystery of His will in Christ Jesus. The great mass of believers are stuck with themselves and see the whole salvation of God only in the narrow frame of their own blessedness. Christianity knows Him - of course. He healed us, made us healthy! We have experience Christianity in masses. Just like in those days! Masses had made experiences, could talk for hours about it: o, who does not know Jesus! But when they had to go the way the Son told them to go, they fled! We need not be frightened by such incidents. The fact that such lines are repeated is a striking proof that we are on the right track.

It is very shameful how many faithful servants of God are carried away by another gospel, which is no gospel at all, e.g. the gospel of the people's soul. We must preserve the people's religion, renewthe people's soul: that is how it is buzzing around us. Of course they can do that, but they should not let themselves be persuaded that they have recognized the thoughts of God.

Christianity, which needs so and so many supports to be able to sustain itself, is a failure. It is not at all surprising that serious, thinking people have no respect for a Christianity that needs to be supported and nurtured. This is not a victorious Christianity that overcomes the world.

The "eternal God". John says: "I have written to you fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning" (1 John 2:14), who has set the beginnings and of course also the goals, in an orderly sequence of time periods, each of which serves a special purpose, but all together serve the one great final goal, to bring the glory of the Son to unfoldment.

There is no calendar set for the number of the ages (eons) yet, but we get a glimpse of it from Eph. 2,7. Everything that happens today is only a foreshadowing for the greater (Joh. 14,12), and only from this breaking forth from the heavenly spaces a new flow will come into the ages and they will receive a new filling.

Abraham did not let his position in the world take him out of his alien position (verse 34). Even though the world serves us, it should never be allowed to pull us out of our alien position. Nothing should cause and move us to abandon it.

22. Twenty-second chapter

The beginning of verse 1: "According to these stories God tempted Abraham", is a clear hint that in these representations everything stands in a certain, God-willed context, that also in the arrangement of the material not the arbitrariness of the writer has been the determining factor, but the will of God.

Isaac is now an adolescent youth and probably already knows something of the things involved. This is clear from his question in verse 7.

"God tempted Abraham": an apparent contradiction to Jam. 1,13, where it says: "God tempts no one". But "God is not a tempter to evil": therein lies the difference. To tempt in this sense means only: to put to the test. God tempts people, not to tempt them to unfaithfulness, but to see if they would be truly faithful under tempting circumstances. This is justified and understandable.

"Here I am!" Here and later on Moriah, this is the only word from Abraham's mouth to God. Abraham is willing to receive further communications from God. God, in His love and wisdom, has kept the eventual outcome of the matter hidden from Abraham. Thus, this act of Abraham gains immediacy and freshness, and real significance as an act of unconditional obedience of faith, even where its depths cannot be measured.

That this willingness was not just a superficial one is clear from the whole context. It is not a: "Yes, Lord, but ...". God has come a long way with His friend Abraham. God could not have done that twenty years ago. God knew that; that is why this sharp test does not happen earlier. First the son of the promise had to be born, whom Abraham was supposed to give up, as there is a certain self-evidence in everything that God does.

God knows well how to get us to give up even the dearest Isaac without resistance; one should only have patience and wait. Only no unhealthy drivings, because one thinks to have become fixed and ready at a faith conference, and afterwards everything comes to shake, because one has worked oneself into a spiritual fever heat, which hardly lasts longer than one needed time to buy it. O what a sin is committed against the church of God!

This is due to the fact that God is not followed in His footsteps and that the Abc books are carelessly passed by. But "all these Scriptures are useful for teaching, for punishment, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work" (2Ti 3:16). Our God knows excellently how to reach the goal with His children, as we read in Phil. 1:6: "He who began the good work in you will also carry it out until the day of Jesus Christ. Becoming quiet before God and trusting Him is the greatest thing in this, greater than all the pious overzealousness with which one toils oneself and others.

"Here I am!" Abraham is ready to be absolutely obedient to his God. God knew this; and not an hour earlier does He come to His servant with His such fearful demand. God was now quite sure of His cause.

Four times God underlines His requirement (verse 2): "your son", "your only one", "whom you love", the "Isaac" in whom He had prepared a laugh for Himself. He relentlessly reveals to him the whole situation; and Abraham will have noticed that in these designations there was a clear allusion, there was here a complete break with the holding on to Ishmael, so tenacious for Abraham, not easily forgotten for him.

Such a tenacious attachment to the results of our life of faith is deep-seated and so human. So quickly one does not get rid of it inwardly. The other son is out in the desert: Abraham will never have forgotten that. But God says here: he does not count; Isaac here is your only one. The son of the maid shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

There is no doubt among researchers that under Mount Moriah, to which Abraham was pointed, is the same on which later stood the temple of Jehovah, where the altar of burnt offering was erected. This is not a meaningless fact for us. We are still able today to establish with great certainty this hill as the first sacrificial site where we know that Jehovah gave the command that burnt offerings should be offered to Him.

There is no mention that Abraham spoke to his wife. This silence is to be explained quite naturally from the restraint opposite the mother, which practices a father, who moves such things much rather in its heart, than to say them to its wife. Sara is not questioned, consulted, nor "tried" in the same sense, put to the test. She is unmistakably relegated to the background.

Nor does Abraham allow his servants to continue to be witnesses to what was about to take place (verse 5). The process took place between Abraham, Isaac and God alone. Quite calmly, he orders his servants to stay behind. What Abraham pronounces to them must not be interpreted as a pious deception. For the Spirit of God testifies (Hebr. 11,12): "Abraham thought, **God is also able to raise from the dead".** With this he counted; he was convicted of this belief, imbued with it. So he stood clearly on the ground of the resurrection truth. This is a sufficient key for the instruction to the servants to stay behind with the given reason.

That Isaac carries the wood to the altar of burnt offering (verse 6) is a delicious shadow of what we see later in the great Isaac, Who carried His cross! But the fire and the knife are carried by the Father.

In this journey of Abraham to Moriah, the reflection of God's deep counsel of love before the eternities, to give His only begotten Son, the goal of the divine thoughts, is reflected without dimness. In it this whole action culminates, much less in the greatness of the sacrifice that Abraham made.

This is the most glorious thing about this whole process, that God had succeeded through years and decades, step by step, teaching by teaching, instruction by instruction, guidance by guidance, unnoticed, without Him being able to see clearly, to bring Abraham to the point that this main thought in the heart of God from eternity was clearly reflected in Abraham, so that God could have His bright joy in it, as this is expressed in verse 16. -- This was the restoration of the divine image in fallen man. The masterpiece of God in Abraham had thus succeeded. Therefore, God could also grant an affirmation of His great promises.

If this is possible for our God with a selfish race, then all things are possible for Him. One may dig and trace the roots that have penetrated so deeply into our being and have so terribly corrupted and poisoned the human species, so that it hands itself over to satanic powers of seduction for some devilry, as was most frighteningly revealed to the Son of God: But if it was possible for God, in the school of faith, to bring in Abraham a man of such dispositions and abilities as we have, in whom lay the same possibilities as in every son of Adam, to act so completely as pleases the heart of God, then we need not despair.

Abraham is a prime example of what God can accomplish in the school of faith with a race such as we are, so that even the most lost person can take firm courage, if otherwise he is willing to let God lead him along the same path.

The culmination of God's education of Abraham is the giving of the only beloved Isaac.

It would also have been an enormous sacrifice with him if God had demanded the sacrifice of Ishmael. But it was a matter of giving up what had been given to him by God, the bearer of all promises made to him. Abraham had to learn to no longer look to anything that had gone out from God, in the last analysis to no gift of God, but only to the living God Himself. He was now confronted exclusively with the God who had "promised" and who now made the demands on him to give the fulfillment of the promise to death before Him and still to hold on to Him.

And this is what God accomplished with Abraham when Isaac asked him the heartbreaking question: Where is the little lamb for the burnt offering? Certainly, we are not prevented from believing that there was still a glimmer of hope in Abraham's heart, that God still wanted to know a way out, that he wanted to be spared the most terrible thing; but this is not evident in his actions.

How much God cares to bring us people of faith to the point that we are led back to naked faith, to the unconditional, absolutely only confidence: God can make His word true under all circumstances, even if everything is taken away from us. Therein lies the abysmal depth of our ruin, our incompetence, that we have allowed this trust in God to waver; and God cannot bring His creation to restoration until this has been completely healed on the ground of mankind. Only then can God go further.

The fact that God uses the revelation ages in the broadest sense to let His word be questioned from all sides is not hidden from us. The real children of God must not be made wavering by anything, but must let themselves be put on the naked faith alone. Our experiences are left to us, but as soon as it comes to the unbroken word of God, the hell army fires up.

The battle will become even hotter, and the children of God will stand there stripped and have only the naked Word of God. If they do not have it, they will become a prey of the enemy. Therein lies the triumph of our God and the guarantee of His complete victory over all the machinations of darkness, if we stand by the naked faith.

Until the promise of verse 17 is carried out, it still needs some eons of time. "The gates of His enemies" is not to be limited to the gates of the Canaanites. Our struggle is not against flesh nor blood; heavenly enemies of the seed of Abraham are also included.

God has passed byentire nations in thousands of years and only continued His way along a narrow line. And now God should abandon uncounted human generations? Not only those who are to come will have their turn at the blessing promised in verse 18, but also those who have long since died.

In verse 19, where did Isaac go? He was without question with the one returning home. The fact that he is not named is certainly not a scribal error on Moses' part. As a shadow picture it could not be represented more skillfully that one does not paint again the native, who is returned from the death. One lets him remain in the spirit on the height, alone with the God of Abraham. This found its real fulfillment when the Son of God, after the sacrifice, withdrew and no longer appeared among His people "so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled".

In the short words of verses 20-22 one may see the beginning of the fulfillment of the great promises of verse 17 to Abraham. The whole kinship of Abraham already participates in the promised increase. So we have here a deposit on it. At the same time, a new personality is introduced at the end (verse 23). Sarah must die, because she is only a shadow image of the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of all of us, who does not die.

The richness of divine thoughts is so great that **one** appearance is not enough to emphasize **all** sides of this truth. It makes room first for Rebekah, then for Keturah, who brings many children after Abraham - a trait that has something great and delicious for our consideration and contemplation.

23. Twenty-third chapter

A peculiar story is told to us in this chapter, which gives us a glimpse into the morgenland conditions as they are still found there today. One can buy a whole olive orchard without owning the land, and vice versa. One buys buildings without caring in the least about the land. One is also intimidated by the awkward and polite way in which the deals are made, even today. One can see that the writings have grown on the soil of the country and bear the imprint of the peoples in that country. But this only affects us externally.

This is the burial of Sarah. The Hittites were an outstanding people of antiquity. Researchers excavate strange monuments from the Hittite period and have all kinds of interesting facts to report to us from it. Here, however, we see how Abraham conducts himself in this business deal. We found a related trait in Abraham's negotiation with the king of Sodom (chap. 14, 22.23).

The Hittites show immense reverence to Abraham (verse 6): "You are a prince of God among us". These are prophetic features of what will happen in the world of nations when God will have brought out all His thoughts through the seed of Abraham, when all nations will bow down to Israel.

Abraham does not let himself be tricked by the nice words (verse 11). He acknowledges the friendly concession of the neighboring Hittites, but he keeps his back free; it does not occur to him to be bound by a gift.

If the church of God had understood this and had never allowed itself to be given anything by the world, then things would be different for it. From that Pipin's gift to the church of Rome the unfortunate church state has become! What curse has this brought?

How seriously Abraham took the word to be a stranger in the promised land. The Holy Spirit confirms it in Acts 7:5. Not a foot wide shall he possess in the land. That is yet to come! Here he does not acquire more than is absolutely necessary to bury his dead; for the needs of his living household, however, in order to settle down permanently, for instance, he does not buy anything. Out of inner urge he felt compelled to acquire that piece of land. He understood his vocation too well to let anything be given to him - a striking proof that Abraham never considered himself the rightful owner of the land during his lifetime.

At that time he was one hundred and thirty-seven years old. Baron Rothschild once said, when it was suggested to him that he should buy Palestine for his people: It is ours! With greater justification than he, Abraham could have said so; but he considered himself a stranger on the soil of the Promised Land and does not want to settle there, in great chastity of faith.

The believing community has not understood how to continue to regard itself as a stranger. Soon enough, people started to establish Christianity as a permanent institution. We build churches, cathedrals, monasteries, -- and with what splendor! - as if they were destined to be there forever. All these institutions will undoubtedly come to an end one day. But we cannot yet tell what loss we have suffered by this settling. No one would take the church seriously if it wanted to say today: we are strangers. The world would laugh! Strangers? And you buy one house after another?

Not so Abraham! He attached great importance to being and remaining a stranger, but always bearing witness to the faith that the land would one day be his (verse 19). When, for example, Joseph takes an oath from his brothers and their children to carry his body with him after the hour of deliverance from Egypt has struck, so that he can be buried in the promised land, we see from this how deep in the hearts of these fathers of faith lay the confidence of their own bodily resurrection, and how for them this resurrection of their bodies was intimately connected with the destiny of the land. They must have clearly recognized that the actual fulfillment of God's intentions and promises with the promised land would happen in no other way than through resurrection of the dead. Thus, in the obedience of faith, carried by this prophetic realization, they gave orders that their bones should rest in the promised land, in order to leave a testimony also in it that they reckoned that God had fulfilled His promises in their first life on earth as pilgrims and strangers. They clearly saw the fulfillment of God's promises only on the ground of the resurrection. However, this is not a purely spiritual resurrection, but a very real, bodily resurrection from the dead.

Thus, through this patriarchal conception passes the real strict-realistic trait, which reckons that God will visit their corporeality and the soil, the land, to which they entrusted their corpses, on that day in a very definite way; and the circumstance that they would die without having become partakers of the land does not mean an obstacle for them to recognize that all promises will reach their fulfillment only through death and by virtue of the resurrection.

24. Twenty-fourth chapter

We have here the beautiful bride chapter of the first book of Moses.

First of all, it is noticeable that the name of the servant who received the great commission to recruit a bride for the son of Abraham does not appear at all in this chapter. We know from other scriptures that it was Eliezer, whose name means: "my God is help". He experienced this name here. His God gave success to the great enterprise for which he had gone out.

One must not see in the omission of the name an arbitrariness or forgetfulness of the writer, but it is to be recognized in it like in all individual features of this God revelation a meaning.

If for us Isaac is an image of the great Son of God, and if Abraham stands before us as a father in the household of faith, then it is very obvious to think in all reverence of this servant Eliezer of the faithful Spirit, who goes out without mentioning His name to woo the bride for the Son of the Father. This is completely in line with the Lord's statement concerning the Holy Spirit: "He will not speak of Himself; He will take it from Mine; He will glorify Me" (John 16:13,14).

These are words that are too little considered by the congregation. Besides, it goes without saying that this servant of Abraham may be thought of all servants and prophets of God, who have gone out in the spirit of prophecy, of truth, and will still go out for the courtship and gathering of the bride, who also take it only from his own and have only one goal, to bring the will and wonderful counsel of the Father with His Isaac to fruition.

But it is clearly underlined that this woman shall under no circumstances be taken from the daughters of the Canaanites (verse 3). The servant is sent out to the house of Abraham, to his relatives.

It is a recognized principle for all scriptural interpretation that where a biblical concept is encountered for the first time, we are given a clear key to the meaning of that concept. Here we encounter the bridal concept for the first time. It is therefore justified to hold on to the train that in the thoughts of God the bride is to be taken from the house of Abraham. From the own family or descendants it was now not possible to take her. Only Dina is the first female offspring we find. But if the thought is to be expressed at all in the picture, the bride must come from the house of Abraham, then it could be expressed only in the form, as it happened verse 4. Against all objections we hold to the fact that a more exact version of this thought was not possible at all.

The servant receives a rebuke when he is concerned about the success of his move (verse 5-8), as was obviously not the case with Abraham. The servant has to betold that he only has to take care of the execution of his order; the success is not his business; that is in God's hand.

If all God's servants wouldheed this teaching, there would be fewer nervous breakdowns, less hustling and bustling due to the very human desire to see success. God has managed to have the Bible written without using the word success, while with us it is the third word. But God's word is the word "faithful.

Very few of God's servants have hadgreat success. If we think of the servant of God, Jesus, what was His success at the end of His life? So puny and small that only the eye of faith could see anything. And if we think of Noah, Jeremiah and other servants of God, where was the success? Doesn't Paul also have to complain about loneliness in his old age?

After all, not every servant of God can tolerate success. For some, it has become his downfall that he has been so successful. It is one of the most dangerous things he can encounter; he may receive it with trembling and fear. But he must be faithful in the execution of the commission he has received. He is then released if his mission is unsuccessful. He has only to carry out his mission.

Under no circumstances should Eliezer take his son Isaac with him to that land. This would have been so obvious if those relatives had said: we will not give away our daughter; Isaac may come here. One could understand that. Perhaps Abraham considered something like this in his mind (verse 6).

It is delightful to observe and instructive how the servant positions himself with regard to his prayer and its answer (verse 12-14). He knows how to combine in holy chastity what naturally opposes him, what circumstances and conditions would like to meet him, with the very specific request for an answer. He knew the custom of the country as it still exists today. He did not ask for a special miracle, did not expect that God would miraculously lead his daughter to a place where no other daughters would go. That would be considered particularly pious in our country.

The servant takes the circumstances as they weregiven. And the Lord made it happen that Rebekah in particular behaved according to his prayer. Thus, it was clear that she was the chosen one, because she fully responded to the thoughts that moved the servant's heart (verse 21).

Probably not only the beautiful figure (verse 16), but the wonderful way in which she, driven by God, responded to what he had presented to the Lord,aroused his amazement. But he did not yet tell her the whole counsel and plan of Abraham concerning his son Isaac. But he does something that all of God's elect also experience, even before they gain insight into the whole counsel and plan of God. He gives her out of the treasures of his master's house and only then he asks her about her origin (verse 23).

It is not reported how Rebekah thought about the strange, rich gifts of this caravan leader who so rewarded her for this simple service of watering the camels. A princely reward it was. She probably could not have guessed what lay behind it, any more than we can guess what is to follow when we receive the first precious treasures from the house of the Lord. It is so natural that we are full of what comes to us for the first time so golden and our thoughts are not yet directed to what is hidden behind it.

With great caution, the servant now asks further, in order to find out whether not only in her personally, but also in her father's whole house there would be willingness to meet him kindly and willingly to serve.

Laban's haste to meet the stranger (verse 29.30) and eagerness to serve him we understand well from the later description of his nature. He was well versed in precious things. Laban made the servant eat, but he did not rest until he had done his master's bidding (verse 33).

The Holy Spirit, where He really finds God's elect, has no more urgent business than to make known to them the whole counsel and will of God, Who has chosenthem. This is a great, important, delicious trait, which is also passed by. First of all, of course, it must be ascertained whether they are in accord with the thoughts of God all along the line.

Paul says: "We know about your election; you became our followers and the Lord's followers by receiving the word under much tribulation for the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1, 4.6). Then it is the most urgent task of God's servant not to rest until He has accomplished His whole mission. Paul was such a servant, and we may and must be such servants if we want to correspond to the thoughts of God.

Rebekah, and with her her relatives, is told the whole thing from the beginning through the faithful servant (verse 34-49), as our God still does today with His elect, to whom He shows all the precious, inner connections in which everything individual stands, and how their lives have only one purpose, to lead them towards the election.

Rebekah had already received a deposit at her first meeting with the servant. Now she has established her profession and election (verse 51; 2 Petr. 1,10), she will be given infinitely richer gifts (verse 53), but still only as an example of what was waiting for her -- she was supposed to become the wife of Isaac, to whom Abraham gave everything that was his.

But just as Rebekah's relatives weregiven gifts, so also those nearer and farther away, the circles and peoples from which the elect are brought to the Lord, are to derive great advantage from the fact that elect people are gathered from among them - a similar trait as we encountered in Abraham's encounter with Sodom. The whole kinship is blessed along with it.

Rebekah is confronted (verse 58) with the question whether she wanted to go with the servant immediately. Because that she would go at all was not subject to any doubt (verse 55-57). She expresses her heartfelt agreement with the whole action. The lesser is included in the greater. She shows that she is really the chosen one of God. Just as God only demands of us that we do what He has set out to do (Phil. 2:13).

From the well of contemplation of life (verse 62) Isaac comes when he meets his bride. This was that well which the Lord had shown to the despairing Hagar when the water carried in the hose was exhausted and she could not look at the boy's dying. The Lord heard the voice of the boy (chap. 21,17) after her eyes were held, as the handmaid, the law, (Gal. 4,24.25) cannot find the well of life alone. Only the Lord, who does not want to destroy, can show it.

At this well Isaac dwells with fondness. From the contemplation of the living seeing to the prayer community with the living and seeing one, he sees the fulfillment of his desires approaching; and Rebekah, the new form in which the life of faith has to bear further fruit in the thoughts of God in the household of faith, sees the Isaac whom she never saw, and yet to whom she knows herself to be led bride-like (1 Petr. 1:8).

Only He who leads us to the Son as the Spirit of truth can also give us the final information about the Son (verse 65). "This is my Lord," says the servant of whom I have told you all things, from whose riches I have brought the deposit, the jewels with which I have adorned you, who will usher you into the tabernacle of his mother.

The covering with the cloak is the believing acknowledgement of her spousal relationship with the man she met.

The servant reports (verse 66) not to Abraham, who sent him, but to Isaac, for whom he was sent. As the Father gave everything to the Son, so the Spirit leads everything to the Son.

In verse 67 we encounter the same essential truth in Rebekah, but with different tasks as in Sarah.

25. Twenty-fifth chapter

A quite marvelous trait meets us in the passage verse 1-6. To the man to whom the promised seed was given at the age of a hundred, to him thirty-seven years later a number of sons are born from another wife. In this there are very deep, delicious thoughts, truths, which we do not need to go into in all details, perhaps also not can.

It is clear to us, however, that after the seed of the promise has been begotten, i.e. after the great thoughts of God, which all have their center, their point of origin and goal in the native, have come to a completed expression in Isaac, the fruitfulness of the father of the faithful by no means ceases; on the contrary, it experiences a completely unexpected, surprising increase. The native, who remains the sole heir (verse 5), is followed by a series of descendants.

We may take fromour history the clear hint that in the fulfillment of the thoughts of God with the seed of the promise the great salvation and love intentions of God are by no means exhausted. Certainly, everything revolves around Him, the Heir over all, and everything comes down to Him. However, after the completion of the Christ of God, the sons of God, after the completion of the actual family of God, there will still be a great expansion of the seed of Abraham.

Ketura means incense, a sweet smell. From this meaning of the word one wanted to draw a conclusion, and probably not completely wrongly, about his inner spiritual life. The conclusion that a man of faith like Abraham, after he had obtained the promise, after he had come into the possession of filiation, because Isaac is here equal to sonship, entered into a relationship of very special intimacy and consecration towards God, from which unimagined rich procreations and fruits could come forth.

If our whole life is a life of constant incense, constant devotion of faith, the life of a sweet smell, then an immensely rich abundance of fruits will appear. This is probably a justified application of this story.

However, another trait appears to us. Among the descendants of Abraham of the Keturah there is at least one, Midian, who later is an enemy and oppressor of the promised seed, the chosen people of God. This is something we encounter again and again in these shadowy images. As rich and high as the life of faith is led, the fruits that are begotten from it always bear something of our wicked nature.

With clear consciousness Abraham demarcates the life of his son and heir quite definitely from the life and property status of his other sons and descendants. Again one sees clearly that just as little as Ishmael also these sons of the Keturah are not cursed or rejected by Abraham in the sense that they would have had now no more claims at all to child relations to Abraham, however they are treated differently from the son of Sarah, the promise.

There can be no question of seeing in the remaining sons of Abraham, who are not heirs, only rejected, cursed ones. No matter how much God-hostile nature may have come out of the descendants of Abraham, they are and remain Abraham's seed, a seed to which the corrupt nature of the flesh constantly adheres, which therefore is and must be put into relentless fire, but not for nothing do we read in Hebr. 11,20: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob **and Esau**".

Since Abraham was ten years older than Sarah (ch. 17:17), but Sarah died one hundred and twenty-seven years old (ch. 23:1, 2), Abraham lived another thirty-eight years after Sarah's death, having reached one hundred and seventy-five years (verse 7).

But he too must die (verse 8), and with it the form of the life of faith that is foreshadowed in Abraham. For it Isaac appears, the heir over all, whom we find almost exclusively not only at the well of the living and seeing, which has gained a particularly delicious meaning for him (verse 11; chap. 24,62), but busy with well digging, with the enrichment of the land, with opening up of sources of life for all inhabitants of the land, people and cattle.

"He was gathered to his people" (verse 8). In this expression it seems to lie not only that the death of the saints is esteemed by the Lord, but also that we must not think of the existence of the Old Testament believers, who have not yet had the light of God's revelation in Christ, as it has dawned on us, as an unconscious sleeping even after death.

By this people we have to understand not only its natural origin, but in a quite certain sense the people of God, the people of faith. For there was such a people, even if only in small beginnings, already before the believing Abraham. Abraham, Noah, Enoch and many of their family were undoubtedly people of faith in many gradations, manifestations.

God hadHis believers even before the flood. The family of the Sethites seems to have walked more or less on the lines of the recognized truth of God. The word means with it: gathered to his kind not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Through the death of Abraham, the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, come together again (verse 9). Death has a wonderful unifying power. We often find this fact in natural life. Deaths in families not so seldom lead to the reunion of often long hostilely separated family members.

God knows what He uses death for; and the apostle Paul strikes at the very heart of this profound mystery when he writes (Eph. 2:14-16) that through the death of Christ **the** enmity was put to death between Jew and Gentile, which had been set up in statutes by the law of commandments. Divorced by divine ordinance, the two were united by death into one new man. This is also a fruit of death, shadowed in this meeting of the two sons, as which they are recognized according to this scripture.

We find in this an indication that all these differences and distances, which God allowed to occur in the wisdom of His ways, will somehow find their abolition through death; i.e., that

these are orders of God which are not of permanent existence, but that through death, namely through the death of His Son with His miraculous scope, a final elimination of all that has come as a divorce into the world, into creation, will occur.

In the verses 12-18 twelve generations of Ishmael are mentioned, which appear significantly earlier than the generations of Isaac, from whom the Lord is then born according to the flesh.

In the presence of all his brothers (verse 18) he settled down, thus in the most unfavorable situation imaginable for the people of promise.

Why is the lineage of Ishmael mentioned to us rather than the history of Isaac? Therein lies again a peculiar, very remarkable feature of the whole biblical account, from which for the one who has eyes to see and possesses spiritual understanding, however, it emerges very clearly in a completely unbiased way that these writings cannot possibly have originated from human spirit.

We often come across such trifles in them, which the ordinary reader just passes by, because he cannot find anything in them. For thinking readers, however, this is an irrefutable proof of the divine material order of these Holy Scriptures.

A natural friend, heir, son of God's people, who was not under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, who knew only national enthusiasm, would never have thought of putting the story of Ishmael before the story of Isaac. This can only be traced back to the impulses and guidance of a completely different spirit, because divine thoughts are clearly expressed in it (1 Cor. 15:44).

The spiritual is not the first,but the natural. The second Adam follows the first, which must precede before the second can arise. Everything first must precede the second, but the first does not reach the height and depth of divine thoughts as the second does. In the first, certain basic features of divine thoughts are reflected, but in fleshly expression, not in divine perfection. The divine always comes to the corresponding expression only in the second formation.

The writing moves uniformly on the same lines throughout in such a silent, soundless manner that only a careful observer who has acquired trained senses through habit even notices it. Another simply reads over it. But when one sees it, one rejoices and it lifts the heart wonderfully that one is dealing here with a work that is of one cast, from which the perfect unity and uniformity of all great thoughts and ways of God overwhelmingly confronts us.

There our God becomes too big for us, who wants to bring such a plan with such entanglements and reversals - because we could get offended at Ishmael, and believe that he interrupts the will of God - to the execution. God also reckons with Ishmael and inserts him into His great household somehow and for a great purpose. Ishmael is not a mere waste, but an opportunity for the presentation and demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God.

Ishmael is the one begotten by the maidservant, who was malicious toward the son of promise and laughed at him (chap. 21:9), and so today also the Christianity of Ishmael leads the great word and mocks the son of the free (Gal. 4:29,30). But Ishmael has his place by God and by law. This saves us from every carnal attempt to help ourselves to deal with Ishmael, and we wait it out until God also gets the rams of Nebajoth and the goats of Kedar on His altar (Is. 60,7). His word vouches for us. As long as He can bear it, we will also be able to bear it.

In verse 19 it is underlined once again that Isaac isthe son of Abraham. But what a pain it is for him that the chosen bride remains barren for so long (verse 21). Abraham reaches out to Hagar, Isaac does not. For the son of promise, this is an overcome point of view. The son of the free no longer thinks of begetting sons with a maid.

To enter into connections with the law, to want to help God out of one's own ability, one's own strength, so that His promises are also fulfilled. Isaac does not talk about this anymore, although the twenty years of waiting (cf. v. 20+26) might have been a temptation for him. Isaac asks the Lord: he expects everything only from the Lord; he renounces any help of his own and is not deceived.

A new pain is reported in verse 22 ff. Rebekah brings forth a twofold seed, something we have not encountered at all in Scripture up to this point. But she also "went to inquire of the Lord." This is delicious for this new shape and form of woman, of femininity, which is so essential to complete the household of faith.

In place of Sarah, who representsthe covenant of promise, comes Rebekah, the bride of the heir over all, who thus represents an even higher level of spiritual truth than Sarah, at least in the development of things under the silhouettes.

With Hagar and the wives of Ishmael there is no mention of a long waiting period anywhere. The fertility of the Ishmael family goes on quickly, while Isaac has to wait a long, long time; and when it appears, what a character it has (verse 24-26)! The first is Esau, full of bursting natural vitality. This is manifested in the reddish appearance and the hair.

Therefore we find also in the law the very significant regulation that with the priest ordination the whole hair growth, the symbol of the brimming life, the driving nature life, had to be shaved off. The same had to be done in the purification of the leper. Every trace of hair growth had to be removed in these cases.

Esau was a beautiful child, in appearance, but he turned out to be an outright antagonist and enemy not only of Jacob, but of the whole household of his father and mother. He was a cross in the house of Isaac, and yet how Isaac clung to Esau! This is such a poignant, true-to-life account.

Esau is later called Edom, a word that has the same root as Adam. Adam and Edom coincide; that is, in Esau, the whole Adamic primordial being reappears. Isn't it shocking that this is the first fruit to come out of the union of Isaac and Rebecca?

Here we make a valuable discovery that relentlessly confronts our conception of a purely spiritual formation of our sonship, of our life of faith. We must realize that also in us, also in Rebecca, the two natures, flesh and spirit, remain and manifest themselves and become painfully clear. However, the promise is: the older will serve the younger.

There can be no question in the household of Isaac that the spiritual, which inherits the promise, is oppressed, permanently held down by the carnal, but the thought of God is that Jacob, the serving Jacob, consumed in zealous service, serving fourteen years for his two wives alone, the emblem of the immensely richly blessed service, which has recognition from God, only because he is the son of Isaac, cannot be permanently subjugated by Esau.

The two brothers (verse 27.28) are described by the apostle Paul as carriers, starting points for the two great lines: "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Rom. 9,13; Mal. 1, 2.3). Not true, we no longer stumble over this word; for we have come to realize that it never means Esau is cursed, lost, damned. Rather, we hold that God also uses and blesses Esau in His own way, even if inferior. But he is not the chosen one of God, because in him the irrepressible freshness and energy of the natural life, of our own kind or naughtiness, is shown, which God lets grow up beside us to our humiliation and bending.

Isaac has an inclination towards Esau that seems almost incomprehensible to us. If he could have, how gladly would he have placed the blessing of the firstborn on Esau's head. Esau had something engaging for the son of promise, the heir over all - a deeply shameful trait for us. There the mind of Rebekah coincides more with the divine one than that of Isaac.

This does not mean that in the nature of Rebekka there was not also very much carnal and own, which comes afterwards to a moving expression. For it is exactly this Rebekka who seduces her darling Jacob to the painful deception of the blinded father. Esau, however, must reveal the whole blind evil of our natural kind of flesh.

Verses 29-34 tell the story of the lentils. The lentils were only used in case of need, otherwise the cattle got them. Jacob, however, knows how to take advantage of his brother's hunger. But for all the carnality that also appears in Jacob, for all the cunning and craftiness with which he knows how to take advantage of the opportunity, and with which he acquires the firstborn, Jacob betrays

a higher appreciation of things than Esau, the deeper disposition for the value and importance of the divine. Although the means he uses can be described as reprehensible, the attitude is undoubtedly on divine lines.

That is the strange mixture which confrontsus here: neither in the one nor in the other one one can have unclouded joy. Indeed, we have arrived at the Isaac stage - Isaac means filiation - but in neither of the two sons is a great divine trait to be discovered. In the first, the Adam predominates, the impetuous, rough, natural characteristic that is rejected by God. T h e being cannot need God, for blessing to others.

But also Jacob, who has an appreciation for the importance of the firstborn, is a strange, painful mixture of the spiritual and the carnal. The basic trait, however, remains as it is expressed in the divine word: "Jacob I have loved", but not from the merit of works, not because Jacob's ways and events, Jacob's way of putting himself in possession of the high good, were pleasing to the Lord. All this is condemned in the most definite way.

In Jacob something appears of which he waspersonally guilty, but for which he cannot be held completely responsible, because he brought it with him out of motherly love. But the deep trait, the understanding for the higher divine, spiritual things, which distinguished him before Esau, that is begotten by God, although it is clouded and held down by his own power for decades. The blessing of God rests unmistakably on Jacob.

Despite his open nature, Esau stands before us as a despicable despiser of the firstborn, which he also irrevocably forfeited (Heb 12:17). So there are irretrievable losses for us, which can never be recovered, which can never be made good; but they do not mean the loss neither of life nor of the filial position in the house of God.

26. Twenty-sixth chapter

The picture sketched in this chapter shows a whole wealth of similarities with what we encountered at an earlier stage of faith with Abraham. The same inducement, a dearth tempts Isaac to go to Egypt; but the Lord kindly intervenes (verse 2) and says: No, you do not leave the soil of the promised land. The same weakness is also shown in the relationship with his wife as with Abraham: the denial in the face of the Philistines of the very simple fact that Rebekah signifies divine truth, which no one else may touch. The son denies this as well as his father, even if he has arrived at the higher level of faith. But there is a difference: he does not leave the ground of the promise, as Abraham did.

Then come a number of traits for which we find beginnings also already in the life of Abraham: the relationship to the wells of water. In the life of Isaac, however, they are much more numerous and significant, and in fact they fill the whole framework of what we are told about the life of this man of God on the soil of the Promised Land.

After the same procession of recognition on the part of the Philistines is reported to us at the end of the chapter, another single very painful procession appears (chapter 27), and then we are finished with the life of Isaac.

It is very remarkable for us that in these people of God, who represent to us different forms of the same spirit, of the same life of faith, there are also common traits concerning dangers and temptations.

In the life of faith, times of drought occur, and the temptation comes very close to Abraham and Isaac to descend from the heights of the promise into the lowlands, into their own worldly hustle and bustle, which is shaded in Egypt, in order to find the satisfaction of their needs. This is, of course, a foreign soil for the seed of faith.

The higher level, however, on which we find Isaac, whose whole inner direction was nevertheless also that which was promised, is now drawn for us very deliciously by the fact that for him the life of fellowship with God wasa much richer and more self-evident one. The Lord meets him and refuses him to go to Egypt, and on this occasion confirms to him the great promise and the mighty, comprehensive oath which He swore to Abraham (verse 3.4).

It is very significant that on the ground of God's intercourse with Isaac we find only this one designation of his seed: "Like the stars of heaven". It has already been pointed out that in Scripture we have a threefold designation for the seed of promise: it shall be like the **dust of the earth**, like the **sand at the edge of the sea,** and like the **stars in the sky**.

If the dust on earth signifies the selection of Israel from the world of nations, the sand at the edge of the sea the masses of nations, we will probably be justified in referring the **stars to** the **heavenly seed,** which is promised therein to Abraham.

Now this third is the only promise given to Isaac from the mouth of Jehovah. This does not mean, however, that the promises given to him did not concern the fulfillment of earthly goods, because just in this connection it is said in the clearest way: "To you and your seed I will give all this land. So here too we have the same lines that are drawn in the other frames.

Verse 5 reads as if God had given Abraham a whole tablet of law regulations, and yet there is no mention of this in the household of faith.

The basic law, according to which Abraham is brought up, are not regulations and statutes, but promises. In addition, however, God gives him the covenant of circumcision as a seal of his righteousness in faith and requires him to faithfully perform and maintain this custom on all his descendants.

It was very important to God, because He wanted to educate in Abraham a certain people also for the earth, that the seed of Abraham would be accustomed to the obedience against divine orders right from the beginning and would be educated in it. Thus the Lord refers to it.

Circumcision is not from Moses, but Moses took it from the fathers; these are the statutes and rights that Jehovah gave believing Abraham to observe. But it does not mean at all that Abraham was now under the law. After all, the ordinance of circumcision was given to him only after he became a believer in God and His promise. Only the believing Abraham receives the covenant of circumcision to seal the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4, 9-14) that he had attained with God.

Under no circumstances, then, is it said that these commandments, which God gave him afterwards, were to be thought of as **contributing to** his life of faith and spirit, but they signify a demonstration of obedience born of faith.

This is the order of things as God recognizesit here; and here already lies the key for the solution of the apparent contradiction, at which many take offense, between the teaching of Paul and James, over which even our great Dr. Martin Luther could not get over, so that he called the epistle of James a "stroherne".

The solution to the difficulty lies in the simple word of recognition of the obedience of faith that Abraham manifested in carrying out on himself and all his household the commandment that God had given and ordained for him.

Surely the Abimelech of the passage in verse 6-11 and of this whole chapter is different from the one in the days of Abraham. If that is the case, then it would be a confirmation of the view that the word was an office title.

The deep meaning of this passage lies in the fact that in the life of believers there are times of drought, of temptation, which can lead him to let the high good, which God has given them in the form of the promises, and in the form of the gifts and goods, which alone may be recognized and made fruitful in the spirit of faith and which elude the touch of the world, because they want to be recognized spiritually, slide down into the low and abandon it to the world, even

allowing it to take it into its hand. However, God does not allow it to take hold of Him, as is made clear here.

Abimelech recognizes Rebekah as Isaac's wife, but then may also punish theheir of the promise and reproach him harshly (verse 10). But the blessing remains on Isaac and this earns him envy and hostility on Philistine soil (verse 44).

Now this expresses itself in a very peculiar way (verse 15), which is repeatedin the history of the Christian church. When one moves on the ground of the Philistines, i. e. has descended to the ground of the natural wanting to know divine things; when, therefore, one tends to want to grasp divine things in a natural way and, as it were, abandons them to the children of the world, who think so highly of natural knowledge and insight, and favors, and even encourages, divine truths to be treated philosophically alone; when one even comes to consider it the only justified way of interpretation, since all pseudo-Christianity does not ask about spiritual understanding and a philosophical examination and a philosophical treatment of Scripture is quite enough for it; and when one then perceives that a spiritual man begins to **dig wells of living water**: then one will have to make the painful experience how hasty the Philistines are to simply **fill up the wells**.

As it happened to Isaac, yet that was folly. For the Philistines could have said to themselves: we are fools in our undertaking, for we too can drink from the well! No, the living wells are filled up: someone might fall in and drown! If they are filled up with earth, then nobody falls in any more, gets also no more wet feet. This Philistine way has remained the same until today!

Just as the Philistines said (verse 16), the Gerasenes also said (Luk 8:37): Go out from us. Later it came differently. Here also. This may happen for a while, for a whole eon, for a whole extended household, but in the end the realization breaks through: "You are now the blessed of the Lord" (verse 29). And Isaac knows himself purified by all the painful experiences he had to make in the land of the Philistines.

That Isaac calls the wells that were dug up again by the names his father had given them (verse 18) is key to an apparent difficulty in verses 32.33. This very well had already been named in chapter 21:31, and from Abraham it had received its name. If we read verse 33 in the light of verse 18, the difficulty is solved.

So far could it come with the quarrels that Isaac himself had to occupy a well of living water with the unattractive name "quarrel" (verse 20). This reflects something that is well known to us. There are deep, precious truths of Scripture which the shepherds of the Philistines claim for their own and make the subject of fierce quarrels, so that one could attach such an unattractive name to Isaac right away.

But this does not prevent that such a water well, if one has dug it from the depth of the word, gives just as precious water as if there had not been a dispute about it. But this is a painful addition that we cannot always be spared.

So Isaac left them that well and dug another (verse 21). But from verse 22 we learn the delicious application to us, that we should by no means get tired in the well trench through all hostilities. We remain at the well ditch, and in the end the Lord does make a wide space for us. Beer-sheba (verse 23) is the place of the well that Abraham had dug.

From the great promises of God that now follow (verse 24) it becomes clear to us that it is not a question of the attitude, behavior and appearance of the respective bearer of this promise, whether his name is Isaac or Jacob, but God calmly and clearly falls back on what God promised to Abraham.

God unfolded His whole plan right at the beginning, at the election of Abraham (chap. 12), where there could be no question of proving oneself in faith yet. The "I will" stands at the beginning. And all the other bearers and mediators of God's promise must be told that it is the God of Abraham who wants to carry out His will, and that for Abraham's sake the blessing comes over them.

In the NT we are called Abraham's children (Gal. 3:7), not Jacob's children, because it is the same basic design, not a service that we are allowed to do, but the promise of God, which is unconditional, arising solely from the wonderful driving force and fullness of His power of love, His almighty, all-conquering love.

Isaac builds an altar and digs a well (verse 25). Thus he is happily back on the ground where he belongs; and only afterwards, after he has come into the right relationship with his God, Abimelech, his friend and his field captain, also comes to the realization (verse 26).

It is quite delicious that finally also the wicked Philistines come to the understanding (verse 27-30). They come to the recognition: "You are now the blessed one of the Lord!" What joy, when this will also happen outwardly on the territory of the world of nations, and their eyes will open about who actually has been the blessed one.

That the recognition will come once, suffers no doubt at all. The law has the shadow of the future goodnesses. As certainly as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are typical shadows of certain truths of salvation, so certainly everything that lies in them is at the same time also a shadow of the formation of human natural life, as it will become after the revelation of God.

All these are shadows of the finite outcome of things, and by the seed of promise the Philistine will yet again recover and come to the knowledge of the truth, wisdom and justice of God's ways; and what one now takes offense at, namely that God only goes to a small group of chosen ones who are such strange, whimsical oddballs in the world, that will one day be recognized as the only, perfectly right way.

Many want to put it philistine and do not take it in the knowledge of faith that God wants to bring His thoughts to execution only through chosen ones. But just they also prepare a meal for the naturally thinking people, to which they may sit down happily one day (verse 30).

The short remark in verse 34.35 betrays once again another than merely human author. He would much rather have suppressed this painful remark. But the writer here must not; it must be said. This is the transition of the story of Jacob and so very characteristic of the firstborn according to the flesh, who was not the chosen one of God, who also receives a blessing and seed, a lesser one, for whom God also has use in His household, but in whom the whole nature of the natural man comes to an ugly, repulsive expression.

27. Chapter Twenty-Seventh

At the beginning of this chapter (verse 1-4) we are toldsomething about Isaac which must bend us deeply. Also Abraham could not get rid of the deep-rooted affection for Ishmael for a long time, the mixed fruit of faith and own ability.

Here we have, if we want to take it that way, the matter even more painful! Abraham would have liked God to recognize Ishmael as the bearer of the promise, but he did not get as far as Isaac. One sees in a certain sense that the higher one rises in the spiritual life, the deeper one falls as soon as one leaves the level.

Isaac not only has the wish and desire to bestow the blessing on Esau, but he independently intervenes to bring it about. Isaac takes all the steps he can in his old age, after a richly blessed life. This is staggering.

But we must not throw stones; let us only set a memorial stone and let it become a serious reminder to us that no position in the spiritual life, however blessed, however fruitful, which is most highly recognized by the Lord, affords us infallible protection against deep

misconduct, against serious, alarming backsliding, against a very dangerous giving of room to one's own thoughts of the flesh.

Isaac stands before us in a quite delicious form, and now at the end of his life we see this deeply sad manifestation. He ate the venison so gladly. At this weakness the temptation began, and for the sake of this weakness, which was so pernicious to this Esau, he comes to fall. He expresses his definite intention to give him the firstborn blessing (verse 4).

In contrast, Rebekah now meets her event with the secondborn, who is to inherit the promise (verse 5-13). She had clearly heard: the older will serve the younger (chap. 25,23). She becomes afraid when she hears about Isaac's plan, and now she seeks to counteract Isaac's intention in order to use her means to secure for her favorite son the firstborn blessing intended by God in a surreptitious way.

There are traits that reveal to us with clarity our entangled nature, so that we have to bow down in the deepest dust; also traits as they have been repeated in the outward appearance of the churches and in the historical course of the history of the seed of Jacob after the flesh.

Jacob is a chosen one at the stage of service, which can only be in the wake of Isaac and Abraham. Also the life of struggle must precede, the life of Isaac at the well of water, before it can come to a blessed life of service. This is clearly stated in the appearance of Jacob after Isaac and Abraham.

But now we see this chosen one doing something strange. The plot of his mother was ingenious, but surprising truths are expressed in it. He takes the rough form of his brother in order to obtain the blessing of his father under this form. He denies thereby his peculiarity given to him by God and takes what Esau has registered his name.

This is the household of faith, which takes the nature and appearance of the spirit of the world in order to meet it effectively, in order to force it under itself; for this was the unmistakable impulse in the conduct of Jacob. There is a great deal of Christianity of this kind, which is ready and willing to serve, and which can by no means be denied its quality as originating in the household of faith, but which makes use of very precarious, carnal ways to force the elder brother outside under itself. The church has tried this over and over again and has taken the rough figure of an ass for this purpose.

In order to Christianize the world, it has usedworldly measures - with apparent success. The marvelous thing is that the household of Jacob has remained the blessed one, just as it remains that all these machinations cannot change the real inner essence of the household of faith. Among them there is Jacob. The voice is Jacob's, and Jacob is and remains the blessed one of the Lord, because he has a higher understanding for the value of the firstborn than Esau, who is its despiser.

Jacob is not quite comfortable with this whole deal. He tells his mother straight to her face that he would appear as an impostor in the eyes of his father and that this would earn him a curse instead of a blessing. The mother, however, wants to take the curse upon herself and only demands that Jacob follow her instructions. So they both carried out the plan and really deceived Isaac, although he had misgivings and was not quite clear about the personality.

How wonderfully God has balanced again! Isaac needed a sharp rebuke because he wilfully wanted to give the blessing to the one for whom it was not intended. The real heir of the promise must play this shameful trick on him, to deceive him before his eyes. Yes, these are God's ways of judgment! And his own wife is the instigator of all this dirty business! What shameful things Isaac experienced in his own house against those who were closest to him!

How many such painful things will have to be balanced on the day of the revelation of the believers before the judgment seat of Christ precisely within the household of faith.

But let us learn again not to be frightened under any circumstances. Nowhere is it said here that God approved of the lie and that He covered both eyes over the deception of Rebekah.

No, God relentlessly visited sin on all three. Isaac got his chastisement; Rebekah has to experience the banishment of her favorite son, and what Jacob had to put up with in Mesopotamia is almost indescribable. God knows how to cut the rods sharply. With all our lies and wrongdoings, we simply do not manage to dissuade God from His great goal. Even the most shameful manifestations of our kind do not upset Him; and the lying Jacob inherits the promise, not by merit of works, but by grace of the caller.

That God remains just, punishes sin, sharply, relentlessly, but makes everything right, how great is that! We would certainly not have found a way out of this. When such deep sins come to a decision in our brethren circle, we can only say: Get out! But God does not throw anyone out, and yet God carries out His ways, of course not without judgment. It cannot be said that God approves of sin in His children, but He comes to terms with them through the deepest paths of judicial visitation.

How Isaac gets behind the deception played on him is told in the passage verse 30-40. But with all the horror of this discovery, Isaac calmly declares: "I have blessed him, and he will remain blessed". We would probably have decided differently from a purely human point of view: Jacob has made himself unworthy of the blessing and I withdraw it. Not so Isaac. He bows under the divine counsel. He acknowledges the justice of God's ways, which kindly and graciously prevented him from acting straight contrary to his God, and managed to lead even him, the unwilling one, who did not intend it, to the point that he must nevertheless bring the divine will to fruition.

O, this is to adore! Where is our school wisdom of the human will! Isaac certainly did not want Jacob to receive the blessing; he thinks he has done the best to bless the firstborn and also thinks he has blessed him. And then he discovers that he has blessed Jacob and, without wanting to, has carried out the will of God!

Truly, it is a short-sighted way to speak of the will of a creature as if it can effectively undermine God's will of love. This simply does not exist. We think so highly of all of our abilities and all of our capabilities that we lose our unshakable faith in the almighty God. We are contaminated and poisoned down to the deepest soul by the magnificence of our will, which we trust to be able to effectively resist God, which He cannot get around.

There sits the deep, deep damage! No creature is able to prevent the execution of what God has planned. Nobody can reproach the holy, glorious God even the slightest, that He did not find the right, even an admirable solution in all these tricky, mendacious dealings. He has no need to make the slightest deviation from His plans.

In Esau the thought of revenge rises to killhis brother after his father's death (verse 41). Such a deadly enmity can come to the son of Isaac! And Esau makes no secret of his intention.

Also the section verse 42-46 is of importance for us. What Jacob, in whom we may see another stage of the life of faith, the stage of blessed service, has done to enter into this service, does not look divine at first sight, but very human.

The main reason for Jacob to serve in Mesopotamia is the hatred of his brother Esau and the maternal concern of Rebekah that she might lose her two sons in one day, the one because murdered, the other because fleeing from the revenge of the avenger of blood. This does not look at all like the spirit; and Rebekka shows also again very little, one may even say: no understanding at all for the hand of God, which leads everything. She does not show any trust in God. There is no talk of resting in the thoughts of God and His ways. Although the desire of her heart has been fulfilled, she is not at all satisfied and quiet inside.

It was, after all, a God-ordained purpose that Rebekah was pursuing, and she was moving along God-ordained lines, albeit in a thoroughly carnal manner, as she sought to turn the Father's blessing to her younger son; and yet, when the purpose was now accomplished, she could not rejoice in it.

The fact that Rebekah is in such great anxiety and worry after God has so miraculously directed everything for the best, reflects many a painful experience for us as well. If one recognizes divine goals and tasks, but has pursued them self-willedly and carnally, then one does not come to the right joyful pleasure and true joy.

And now she expresses (verse 45) a desire that was not to be satisfied. She has not experienced the joy of seeingher son Jacob return home from a foreign land. She is here most definitely sending her youngest son, the heir of the promise, back from the promised land to the land from which Abraham had gone out and left his friendship. And yet, even in this, how probably misunderstood, she has fulfilled the thought of God.

At first sight it might look like a leaving of God's intended lines, but it should not come to a real move to Mesopotamia. It was far from Rebekka's mind, even if she did not know the actual thought of God, that Jacob should settle there permanently, but she saw in Mesopotamia only a temporary place of refuge.

But the Lord had other thoughts. For Him, it was a matter of the heir of the promise having to leave the Promised Land in order to descend back to the areas of natural life from which his father Abraham had gone out in faith to the Promised Land. His ministry was to be to those who remained behind there. At first, Jacob was not to learn to serve in the promised land, but he had to learn on what had now become alien land for him, i.e. on the soil of natural life, which Abraham had had to turn his back on.

If we want, also a delicious trait for the fact that the son and heir above all had to leave heaven and descend to the soil of the corrupt, God-estranged natural life, in order to serve there and to become fruitful and rich there.

Rebekka will not have recognized everything. That is why it is so delicious for us to see how God used these blind impulses in Rebekah to realize His thoughts. There is no explicit command from Jehovah to Jacob to go to that land, but he is blessed by Isaac (chap. 28:1) and on the way has a meeting with the God of his fathers Isaac and Abraham (chap. 28:13); and He confirms his exodus to Mesopotamia.

To her husband Isaac, Rebekah says that she would not be able to bear it if Jacob also took a wife from the Hittites, like Esau, whose wives had caused Isaac and Rebekah much heartache (chap. 26:35). This was reflected in Isaac.

28. Twenty-eighth chapter

On the same line as Abraham, Isaac's thoughts move (verse 1-5) when he expresses his desire that Jacob seek a wife from the friendship of his house. He sees the divine lines as his father saw them, who had a bride advertised for him, Isaac, by Eliezer not from the daughters of the land. But Isaac himself sends his son to his father's house in Mesopotamia.

The strange step of Esau to take a daughter of Ishmael as wife (verse 6-9) could be interpreted as if he wanted to add a triumph to his behavior, and to add another daughter to the daughters of the land who made life sour for his parents, in order to hurt his parents even more, who had deprivedhim of the way of the firstborn.

On the other hand, it may be said that Esau's whole procedure gives the impression that he wanted to please his father. The behavior of Jacob, as well as the whole course of the affair, which had been so deeply painful for Esau, may have had a beneficial influence on Esau's heart and conscience. The natural man is always inclined to learn something from the spiritual man in order to improve himself. This observation can be made wherever real spiritual life is manifested

in the obedience of faith. The rough Esau then gladly accepts something of the good manners of the believing Jacob.

In this, of course, he fails. It does not occur to him to go on the same line as Jacob or even to make common cause with him, to go out with him, completely reconciled, agreeing with the turn that the matter has taken under God's guidance. No; but he accepts something of the good traits he perceives in Jacob. He wants to please his father in particular. Perhaps, too, his conduct was intended to be a small counterbalance to his former wickedness. Moreover, he knew how much his father Isaac was still attached to Ishmael out of reverence for Abraham. The finer differences between a daughter of Ishmael and a daughter from the house of Abraham were not understandable to him. Thus he reaches in his natural blindness with all good intention to make his father a joy - perhaps his own wives made it difficult for him - to a wife from the daughters of Ishmael.

This process is characteristic of the appearance of Esau, who is also a descendant of the house of Abraham, who is a fruit of the believing Isaac, and representsthe natural life as it is born in the house of faith: it is such a faithful image of what paths the natural man takes from such surroundings when he really wants to do something for the satisfaction of his own conscience and for the establishment of better external conditions.

Now we are told of a marvelous event that the fugitive Jacob encounters, a display of majestic grace from God, such as we cannot imagine more delicious (verse 10-15). These are adorable traits, which we can hardly understand with our spirit. There again our God goes completely different ways than we would have gone.

The circumstances are very clear. The sun has set, night has fallen. Jacob goes to sleep. While his mind may have been preoccupied with restlessness, fear, anguish of conscience, remorse, and a certain satisfaction that he had escaped the impending mishap of being slain by his brother's hand, heaven opened up to him.

This is something completely new. Neither Isaac nor Abraham have ever experienced such a manifestation. None of them has been shown what is shown to Jacob. Certainly, if you watch closely, Jehovah is here standing high above Jacob, while the same God of Abraham and Isaac has stood in much closer, personal relationship and contact with these his fathers. With his grandfather Abraham he had repeatedly been a guest, but at least once, and had consorted with him as a friend with a friend, i.e. in human form and appearance. But here Jehovah stands high above Jacob. This reveals a difference, and we can see that there was a certain gap between Jacob and his God.

The closeness of God, as he experiences it later, was not yet there. Later, when God appears tohim at the Jabbok in human form, He challenges him to a duel and allows Himself to be overcome by Jacob. This is wonderful beyond all measure. But on the other hand, Jacob now experiences a revelation that was not given to his fathers. The language used here about the angels ascending and descending reminds us very vividly of Jesus' word to Nathanael (Joh. 1,52). This language never occurs again elsewhere. The Lord evidently refers to this vision that was granted to the father of Jacob (verse 12).

The Fathers of the Church already saw in it a clear image of the mystery of the Incarnation, that the great God has descended, which is only indicated here in a shadow image by the descent of the angels. But in the whole picture the thought is pronounced that through the incarnation of the Son of God a new way is opened between heavenly and earthly. The way up to God is opened for the one who is called in faith to serve and to be fruitful in service.

For the personal life of faith there is nothing more precious than the mystery of the cross, but for the blessed ministry the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is indispensable, because it is also a matter for us that we have to learn again and again to leave our position in Christ, to descend from the heavenly rooms into the misery and hardness of heart of the earthly,

so that we do not become unworldly and are not satisfied with enjoying the heavenly privileges and blessings that we have, but also do not consider it a robbery to be partakers of the divine nature, but learn to take on the form of servants and to be servants, each with the gift that God has given him. The secret of blessed service is expressed primarily in this.

What touches us mostin God's manifestation in verse 13 is not what He says here, but what He conceals. We would expect that Jehovah would first and foremost have spoken sharply into the conscience of this carnal, deceitful Jacob, who is walking on such a precarious path, and would have clearly and forcefully reproached him with all his grave guilt and shamefulness. Nothing of it! Did God not know about it? Has God already forgotten? Oh no! The reckoning came; Jacob was not spared judgment; but God does not show it to him now. This is wonderful.

This does not mean that when you go into the service of God, you can make it as crooked as you want; God is silent about it because you are His called servant. No, it does not mean that! But it means that God cares very little about our dogmatic ideas, but can wait until He can give it home to His believers at the appropriate time for their salvation. For He does not give them anything of what they have missed.

Jacob was not yet mature enough for that, not yet able to take it in, to let himself be told that. That came later. Probably every child of God will have to confirm that there are insights into his own foolish, perverse nature, with which God holds back in great, exceedingly kind, incomprehensible patience and long-suffering, which He does not hold before us at the beginning, but only later, but which will certainly come out and which must then serve us for our complete breakage.

God already made sure that his brother Esau met him at the right time, like an armed man with four hundred armed men. Then the full horror of his sin against the Lord confronted him; and only then did he realize that all his self-willed efforts to subdue his brother were misguided and sinful. He must then bow low and say, "My Lord Esau! The Lord did not subdue him in all those years in Mesopotamia, - at his homecoming He brings it about. These are tasks that God also gives us to learn; He knows the time and the hour for it.

Here with Jacob the seed is marked in its extension "like the dust of the earth" (verse 14), with Isaac however "like the stars in the sky". It is to be emphasized that with none other of the archfathers so emphatically is stressed how far the seed should dwell. So also to him it is promised that his seed will spread and through him all generations on earth shall be blessed. And then the personal promise: "I am with you and will keep you" (verse 15). In this again we find the wonderful promises and great graces of God in his education. God serves Jacob so that he may learn to serve. He gives him the promise unabridged and on no other basis than: "I will".

Verse 16 clearly brings to mind what God has wrought in this son of faith. From the mouth of Esau these words would be simply unthinkable. T h e words can only be spoken by Jacob, with all the carnal bondage that is found in him; only the Jacob to whom God has given a sense - however much it may be subdued and clouded by natural impulses and aspirations of many kinds - to grasp the meaning of the birthright, even if he should hunt it by his own means and have to go crooked ways to put himself in possession of the promised blessing. In any case, a different attitude than that of Esau, who despised his firstborn, clearly shines through everything.

Here we perceive the fundamentally different nature between the one who is of the spirit and the one who is of the flesh. So Jacob is simply overwhelmed in his mind; and the first thing that awakens is the terrible awareness that the Lord has come so close to him. His evil conscience does not allow him to enjoy with childlike joy what God has revealed.

The place where he had lain was an ordinary fallow field, nothing strange to the natural eye. But now it becomes clear to him that it was a holy place (verse 17); for God showed him a way to visit this earth with a revelation of which even his fathers had not seen.

We see how God Himself progresses in His ways of revelation in a Jacob. God reveals Himself royally, one beauty after another. Where there is only a little understanding, however small it may be, God meets him, be it only in the dark night on the fallow field. But God reveals Himself and continues in the revelation of Himself.

Now, compared to the magnificent revelation of God, what we read in verse 18 to 22 is a rather poor self-revelation of Jacob who went out to serve and bear fruit.

"If God will be with me": This is the whole bankruptcy in one single word, and that outof the house of Isaac, against a fourfold confirmation out of the mouth of God: "I will"! This "I will", Jacob meets with a: "Yes, if". This is staggering! However, we probably have no reason to scold Jacob. In the face of the most precious, clearest promises of our God, to say: "Yes, if", that is something we can also manage. As if God's promises could somehow and sometime be doubtful! This is deeply shameful.

The words Jacob uttered in his vow (verse 20.21) were all good, praiseworthy thoughts, but only a Jacob can bring himself to simply turn the word of his God upside down and commit God to the ground of His promises: "If God keeps His covenant, then He shall be my God"!

It is shocking to see such revelations of a believing man in front of you, who has arisen under the most favorable circumstances imaginable out of an abundance of divine grace and is now called to blessed service, and who even at such a stage of spiritual life, where he is worthy to be fruitful for the Lord, can still understand his God so little. This is not complete dullness, not idleness, Ishmaelism, no, this is Jacob, the heir of the great promises of God!

How can we see our own image in such a mirror and bow down, and how will this protectus from all foolish certainty, as if, when we go out to blessed service, we would then already be completely at peace with our God and would have recognized all His thoughts and ways.

The house of God wasnever built in Bethel (verse 22). These were our own thoughts and pious ideas, of which we are always capable, especially when we are driven by great zeal to stand up for the cause of God. Certainly, Jacob built an altar in Bethel, but he did not know what one of his descendants would do later, namely to build an altar for the Egyptian calf service, namely Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-32).

Jacob's word about tithing (verse 22) is still interpreted in very different ways today. For many, even children of the New Covenant, the tithing is not only binding, which it is not and does not want to be, but a very high standard of giving. The whole way the word appears here from the mouth of Jacob does not strike me as very recommendable for this view. It tastes very much like a business agreement.

Afterwards, we do not find any trace in Jacob's life of how he kept to tithing at all, how he fulfilled his promise at that time. Thus, we do not get the impression that God would have responded and given him the opportunity to deliver the tithe before Jehovah. The aforementioned view seems to me to hang precariously in the air.

That later under the law of Moses in an explicit way the tithe was introduced as an order, had its quite certain and delicious meaning, which we understand at all only if the meaning of the whole legal housekeeping has dawned on us. For it is not to be regarded as a form of our spiritual life, in which it is to be bound, but as a shadow of divine order, which as vessels and formulas have had only a temporary meaning, but have been a reflection of great thoughts of God.

Thus it was ordained that the children of Levi, to whom God gave no possession in the land, who had no fields of their own, and who dwelt scattered among their brethren, should receive tithes from them out of their income, to provide for their maintenance. This was a delicious institution that commanded the tribe of Levi in a special way to the heart of the rest of the brothers.

The whole house of Israel was thereby kept not to live to themselves, but to serve the brethren, and to operate this fellowship in a very expedient, demonstrative manner. Those stood for them in the sanctuary of Jehovah in spiritual things, and those in turn had the privilege of serving their brethren in bodily things with what God provided for them.

The fact that the tithe wasset as a certain measure is more a coincidence. It recommended itself for reasons of usefulness almost by itself. So there are other connections. The whole institution was supported by another higher purpose, which is emphasized in the NT and of which Paul makes clear use in Rom. 15,27.

The whole manifestation of Jacob seems to carry a rather precarious character, and in his later leadership no testimonies are given for the fulfillment of the promise. In the historical account, therefore, this word has not been resorted to.

29. Twenty-ninth chapter

We have seen what a new important form of the life of faith is presented to us in Jacob, namely that of faithful, devoted service, which is easily mixed with carnal zeal and lack of understanding. In this we are all faithfully reproduced, as we must confess before our God. How much carnal lack of understanding in faithful devotion is to be found among us!

Now in this chapter it is presented tous in a lovely way how Jacob came to his two wives.

Under the principle of woman, very special divine truths are presented to us. Throughout the Holy Scriptures we find the woman in the most diverse forms. It does not always mean only good; it is even often used to embody evil. Thus the prophet Zechariah (chap. 5,18) sees the woman in an ephah and is told: "This is lawlessness".

Now this does not mean that the women are outlawsfrom the beginning. "The lawless one" is a man (2. Thess. 2, 3.7)! But from the woman the fruit is born; she is the receiving one in the mutual connection and the bringing forth, giving birth.

Examples from the NT are known to us: The woman with the leaven (Matth. 13,33); the woman who gives birth to the male son (Rev. 12); the woman in the most hideous form as the mother of fornication (Rev. 17,18). There we see that the feminine principle is used in the Scriptures in the most diverse ways to present and suggest serious and delicious, but also fruitful truths.

Now two wives are brought to Jacob here in this chapter. Many have already been offended by this. How could God allow polygamy among His elect and saints! Such an example would be much abused. Islam and Mormonism invoked it. Thus the patriarchs must hold out for the abominable sensuality.

When our understanding of the exemplary significance of this appearance has dawned on us, we no longer take offense at it. God has not anxiously prevented certain things from being simply put before us bluntly, although He knows very well that everything He expresses and presents in terms of truths is abused by the children of men. The abuse of men does not stop Him from expressing certain truths. We may learn a little from Him. The truth of God does not perish, no matter what men do with it. He speaks what He has to say and is responsible for the consequences. He leaves it up to man to decide how to deal with it.

One can even go so far as to say that the Bible is intentionally designed in such a way that people areoffended by it. Compare the word Luke 2:34: "This man is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel. This word is spoken by the Savior. There is a deep truth in it to which we have to bow.

God has not arranged anything as we would arrange it with our excessive caution. Not infrequently, one hears regarding this and that point: just don't say yes! One must not say that aloud! God says it quite loudly; and if He says it, then we may say it too. If people then take offense at it, God will still be able to cope with it.

Let us beware of a super-spirituality that is not divine, just as there is a super-spiritual humility that is very carnal, which holds back from speaking of the highest things of God under the pretext that they are too high. Behind it there is a very vulgar unbelief and a morbid mood. Let us beware of it!

The whole shyness about such a chapter is dueto the fact that Scripture declares: "To the pure all things are pure; but to the impure and unbelieving nothing is pure, but their minds and consciences are defiled (Titus 1:15). Of course, this is not to be misunderstood as giving the word to polygamy. But it is a fact that God also knows how to use unnatural, irregular relationships, as they are given in mankind, and knows how to make useful, important, delicious, meaningful applications out of them. This does not mean to stamp polygamy as a divine institution. Otherwise, one would also be justified in saying that because God once opened the mouth of an ass, all asses must now speak. Let us beware of such conclusions.

God is a master at making use of perverse currents and institutions to serve His purpose of salvation. We have made our own ideas about what is morally permissible or not. But we would do well and gain richly from it, if we wanted to watch our God, how He understands to make the wrong and ungodly, which got into the creation, serviceable for Himself.

This does not mean a vindication of the perverse, but for anyone who has come to know his God from His Word, it means that God can handle anything; and this is proof to him that there is no cross-dressing of men and the devil that God could not or does not make use of.

These two wives are to serve so that from them the seed of Abraham is built. In the years of Jacob's ministry, the fulfillment of God's promise begins on a wider scale from the numerous, or, as one might say, countless seeds.

It is of utmost importance that there is only one wife, one Rebekah, on the Isaac level. Abraham had two. On the level of the actual - one would be inclined to say: ideal - sonship there is only one wife, nevertheless, with the twenty years of infertility the temptation to take a second wife would have been obvious.

Here it concerns another side of the faith life and the guidance of the faith household. It is the **serving** Jacob, to whom not only two wives, the daughters of Laban, are brought, but also still their maids, and from these four women the twelve-tribed Israel is built. For it is important in this sense to note that the sons of the maidens are thoroughly respected and treated on a par with the sons of Rachel and Leah. The difference compared to the former traits, which clearly falls into the eyes, is well to be noted.

We will now just take a look at the differences between Leah and Rachel, and what they have to say in this context.

We understand it that a man of God, who has an idea of this his profession, is captivated to the utmost by an appearance like Rachel. The affection for Rachel is quite God-willed, in order, and natural; it is just as obvious that an appearance like Leah could not take a liking to Jacob. God, however, makes her more fruitful than Rachel. What does this mean?

Already theancient church fathers Origen and Irenaeus believed to recognize in these two wives of the serving man of faith the two different forms of church life: the outwardly beautiful Rachel and the inner beauty of Leah; Rachel the deep spiritual in the divine life and what else is beautiful, the edifying and contemplative; but Leah is more fruitful than Rachel. I gladly accepted this thought because I find it confirmed in the whole experience of the servant household of faith.

The unattractive appearance of historical Christianity cannot be attractive to a spiritual person. It is unattractive no matter how one looks at it; we cannot avoid it. Why? Yes, perhaps the Lord opens our eyes to see it.

The other form, the beautiful Rachel, is much more profitable forus; and what would we like better than to give the whole household of faith the most beautiful manifestation of which it is capable. Certainly we would like that! Why has God not allowed us to do this?

For decades, I have had to deal withthis question a lot - please forgive me for getting personal. My whole inner career and my outer way of life have actually brought this about. When I was allowed to go out into the big, wide, free America so freshly after my conversion, I was a raving fan of this Raelian side of Christianity, of the most beautiful, perfect, rounded, outer, harmonious representation possible.

I have spent the best years of my life with it to tie this being to me and to help him also as possible to the expression. I have had to recognize again and again that sooner or later the Leah will be foisted upon us again. We want only the Rahel and get again and again the Lea. I have not yet seen any attempt succeed that would have ended differently than what stands here so clearly and movingly before us.

Jacob serves with the most complete devotion seven years, and they were as seven days to him, so dear was he to Rachel; and when he opens his eyes in the morning, he has Leah, that is, when we come to ourselves, we see that we - I should have said I - are condemned in the educational wisdom of God, in some form and manner, to deal first with Leah.

Rachel also comes into her own, but only later, and after very difficult inner struggles. But she does not bring many sons, only two, and dies in the birth of the second.

On the one hand, this is a deeply saddening fact. But if you grasp it correctly, on the other hand, there is a very delicious truth in it for us. It was the same with our great serving Lord. He first got Leah and then Rachel, i.e. first the stupid people with dripping eyes, about whom there was really nothing beautiful, and then from them His chosen ones.

And in the Christianity from the world of the peoples it is also not different for Him. Only the unattractive formation of the historical Christianity, and only slowly, steadily something of the beauty of Rachel develops here and there; but it is not so fruitful as it would be desirable.

Another precious truth we find here. It is shown to us that God is quite independent of the law of the beautiful, regular, normal, of how it should be, and yet He can give a glorious, immensely great fruitfulness apart from the beautiful even and alone justified design of things.

For that the divine life has a good right to the most beautiful arrangement also outwardly, suffers no doubt at all, but - as it is said on another ground: "The natural man is first, then the spiritual (1. Cor. 15.46)", so also here: Lea the first, then Rachel.

What a precious thought this is again, that our God in His service - and He is the greatest servant - does not let the figure of the body prevent Him from begetting abundant fruit. She gives birth to one son after another, as unattractive as she is.

I cannot tell you what a painful experience it was for me when I came from America 21 years ago. I had heard a lot about the delicious community movement in Germany, and with the matter-of-factness of American judgment I had imagined that all the broad streams emanated from the free churches. That was my Rahel, the ideal arrangement of the church system, and it is much more beautiful than this dreary bleary-eyed amalgamation of state and church.

And now think of my astonishment when I found it so very different. What was given of divine life flowed in quite different channels than in the free churches. They were not completely untouched, but it was painful tome that my Methodist brothers were sitting completely on dry land and streams of living water were flowing around them.

And it was no different with other communities. They all had something to boast about; they were all pretty like Rachel, at least according to their own judgment. The national churches had had nothing to boast about, only to sigh, only to complain: there were many children born.

This is a phenomenon that gives a lot to think about; and if we consider it correctly, then our God has something delicious to say to us again, which I would like us to take to heart. Let us be careful not to despise, as little as we would like to call it beautiful, what our God knows how to use to bring forth fruit for His household of faith. We want to leave that until God is finished with it. At the same time, we do not want to let ourselves be robbed of our love for Rachel; she may remain, just as certainly as Jacob was allowed to keep his two wives.

No, I may keep my Rachel; and as certainly as God heard Rachel's prayer and made her fruitful - she even gave birth to Joseph - so certainly we may cultivate what God leads us to. For this was not Leah, but Rachel, that is, the ideal most beautiful form of that which belongs to the household of faith. This is what we want to keep.

But we want to get to know our God once again from the side that He does not let anything stop Him in His unrestricted way to lead His thoughts out under all circumstances.

And the children of Leah are just as true sons of Jacob and heirs of the promise as Rachel's, even though Joseph and Benjamin enjoywonderful privileges in the later leadership. That remains after all.

To our God, Who in this way provesonce again that He is above all and that nothing is so unattractive, despicable, repulsive that He cannot bring it to honor as He did to Leah - what do we offer Him? Is it purely Rachel that we offer Him for impregnation? Is it not mostly Leah? And yet God does not allow Himself to be hindered by anything unpleasant: He fertilizes it and makes His name great in the process. That is indescribably precious.

30. Chapter Thirtieth

It is shocking that Dan, the son so hotly desired by the favorite wife and the son so humanly forced (verse 1-6), became the very progenitor whose house and lineage introduced idolatry. That is why Revelation does not mention this name among the twelve tribes (Rev. 7).

The first half of this strange chapter (verses 1-24) records the peculiar contest between the wives of Jacob the Servant. Jukes aptly states: In Abraham we have the spirit of faith, in Isaac the spirit of filiation, in Jacob the model, the embodiment of the servant.

Jacob serves fourteen years for both wives and another six years for his flock before he becomes the God-fighter. From this we may take theright, delicious lesson - which could only be shown in a succession of different pictures - that it is not enough to have faith and filiality, but that the real fruitfulness only begins with the service.

The spiritual life, blessed and delicious as it is in its inner depths, must not be exhausted in quiet contemplation, but is set and called to bear abundant fruit through blessed service.

Only in Jacob the servant this fruitfulness, the increase of the promised seed becomes so great and significant. The fact that this, as in all service, is not entirely spiritual, is here very clearly before our soul. How much vanity, selfishness, self-will flows into it. How the natural life is expressed there in a sometimes frightening form. But everything belongs to it and is sanctified for service. There are secrets of the divine thoughts, which sometimes have something alienating for us.

Many pass by chapters like this with a certain amount of shyness. This is easy to understand. There is a feeling of almost being stained when you put these things in front of your mind.

But we must not forget that holy men also spoke and wrote them, driven by the Holy Spirit, and it does not behoove us to want to be more chaste than the Spirit of God. It does not behoove us to try to tell Him what He should have included in the Bible and what He should not have included.

Bible excerpts for children are organized in which these chapters are omitted, as if one could calmly cut out pieces from the organism of the Scriptures with regard to the views of the time. There a deep lack of real spiritual understanding is revealed in a very clear way. We may only be told again and again what the Scripture says: "To the pure all things are pure" (Tit. 1,15).

It is true that these events, which are described with such clarity, deviate from and contradict the ideas and conceptions in which we have grown up, and that they may offend our natural sensibilities. But basically we find in them only another wonderful proof of the richness of divine thoughts and of His incomparable way with which He knows how to subdue all things, with which He can take even the deepest weaknesses, bad habits, aberrations, even corruptions, in short the human nature and way, as it can only reveal itself, absolutely as it is, into the execution of His intentions, without Him having to apologize to us.

We are here faced with the simple fact, which we cannot get past, that these two legitimate, equal, co-equal wives of the progenitor of Israel, which they indisputably were according to the customs of marriage at that time, in carnal zeal, in irresistible desire for progeny, now gave their own handmaidens to their lawful husband as wives.

This was not the first case in the family; he had already had a predecessor with Hagar and Abraham. This procedure with Jacob therefore happened according to the grandfatherly model, and Abraham, if God had not prevented it, would quite undoubtedly have given the whole inheritance to the son of the maid, which, however, was not in the divine plan.

But in the whole Bible no trace is to be found that for instance the descendants of these two maidens would not have been regarded as equal in the family of Jacob. They are given names which have a rich meaning in their composition and express the divine thoughts of grace and salvation not only with Israel but also with the world of nations.

This is written in the names of the twelve sons of Jacob, and they are trying to tell us something. God could not give us this lesson if these things were not so rendered here. There is no trace of an attempt of the holy writer to excuse them, but they are reproduced with a matter of course, as if it should not and could not have been otherwise according to the strange, mysterious will of God.

This is not to say that everything comes from the spirit, that everything is done on the impulse of the spirit. But all these natural impulses, as they have confirmed themselves on the ground of service, of the sanctification of all natural gifts and powers, may they have in themselves as much of the unspiritual as they like, all phenomena of human life and activity, as they are under the administration and order of the divine thoughts, are drawn in and have a place in the divine program.

If these things were not here, as repulsive as they are to our chaste sensibilities, as much as they strike against our feelings, then I simply ask: shouldn't one be sorely tempted all one's life in view of the fact that most people owe their existence to sensuality, to fornication? Millions would never have been conceived, never born, if fornication and lust had not been there.

This is not an excuse for fornication and lust, but I cannot believe that God will destroy all these creatures that have come into existence only through lust, and only those begotten through chastity will be valid in the divine judgment.

There is no question of God taking care only of the lawfully begotten and throwing away all the rest, because they come from a horrible carnal source. Certainly, one meant well, in the effort not to shake the minds unnecessarily, when one said: it would be better if such things were

not in the Bible. But here it is clearly stated before us that God can also build up His own people from the drives. But if God can use them for the realization of His plans, yes, what can't God!

It is a precious truth that Laban, who represents the natural man, speaks when he admits: God has blessed me for your sake. We may extend this line. It runs through the world of the nations, which is blessed for the elect's sake, and which will be blessed much more. It, too, comes into the household of God; it is the soil on which His people are built up. Laban is not called to be one of God's elect, but he is not apostasy; he is not outside the divine household. He is drawn into it, and blessed for the sake of His elect. Thus, in days to come, mankind will also be blessed to an extent and in a way that we can only guess at.

It was a perfectly sound proposal that Jacob made toLaban when he was asked for his wages (vv. 28-34), and Laban was quite agreeable to it. But what is further said of Jacob's means to increase his possessions excessively (verses 37-43) looks quite sly and grated. No wonder, if one hears say in view of such a process: there we have the mischievous Jew!

This remark is certainly not entirely unjustified, but it is not the last thing about this grated Jacob, nor is it the whole of this very clever and carefully considered procedure, which is certainly not to be judged according to the principles of New Testament ethics.

Jacob was simply on natural ground with Laban, and his father-in-law is as grated a rogue as he is. The two had nothing to reproach each other. From the ground of the natural life however no reproach is to be made to the Jacob. There everything went habitually.

He knew how to make use of the events he had observed during his fourteen years of service in a very wise way. He did not overreach, so that he acted against the agreement with his father-in-law; he did not cheat. He acted wisely, cunningly, cunningly, cunningly, that is a fact, but these are not immoral traits, considered in themselves. He acted on the ground of the carnal life, but there was no other ground.

We must be careful not to apply a false standard. This is still true today, when we hear these accusations. If we look into our business world, we make the observation that there, too, people have exactly the same desire to be just as wise and rubbed as Israel; they just don't succeed. We cannot believe that people only take so much profit out of Christian charity that they no longer go hungry. In any case, they take as much as they can get and are thus not a hair's breadth different from Israel, only the latter succeeds better. They are the blessed of the Lord. We will find the key to this in the next chapter.

31. Thirty-first chapter

In the sons of Laban we have the real anti-Semites (verse 1).

But the other verses of the passage (verses 1-14) bring us the key to Jacob's growing wealth. We have no reason at all to think that what Jacob tells his wives is all fiction and lies. It is the wonderful God of Bethel who blesses this carnal Jacob, who is no better than his grated father-in-law. So he is no better than Esau either. But Jacob succeeds, so that the blessing is not done out of piety, efficiency and worthiness, but out of the grace of the one who is called.

God now once turns the promised blessing to the chosen seed and takes it away from the one who is not chosen, even if it does not make him a cursed one. The thoughts of God move on the line: "I will bless you".

There lies the key for the solution of the question, why Israel is blessed in spite of wrath and curse before all nations; and all attempts to make them morally responsible for it, betray only that

one does not understand the thoughts of God from a distance, Who does not care whether humans are good or bad. Not as if God did not chastise evil.

Certainly, the same Jacob will have toexperience this in the most painful way. Jacob, who can act so selfishly, will not come out of school until he has learned to bend. All his aberrations, however, do not thwart our God's intentions of grace, and do not prevent him from being heir to the promise.

It is of such great importance forus to understand that all the gifts of grace that are guaranteed to us in Christ and that flow to us from there are not dependent on our way of life or our position. Everything that we are and mean is only the grace of God.

Of course, this is not to say that we may sin. For every sin we receive sharp blows. But this does not mean rejection, not nullification of our calling in Christ. We must keep both in mind: that our calling does not depend on what we are by nature, and that this calling does not mean impunity because of God's counsel of love. God lets us slip through His fingers even less than He does the children of the world. God chastises His children sharply.

Election, therefore, does not mean security, calmly letting oneself go, but responsibility for our position as saints, beloved and chosen. The judgment hits all the harder because we have such a high position. That is why everything that is written in the Scriptures is so extremely important for our conduct of life.

Jacob thus tells his wives how God's invitation to return home to his fatherland came to him; and they agree, emphasizing that the father had acted unjustly; he had sold them, consumed their money, considered them strangers. Therefore, the wealth given to Jacob belongs to them and their children (verse 14-16). There, unconsciously, these two women have spoken a great truth.

We were allowed to see in Laban the spirit, the essence of this world, the natural man in his cleverness and shrewdness, as he took on the called and chosen Jacob and yet drew the short straw, not as a result of Jacob's superiority over him, but because the hand of the Lord was over him. It is not the will of God that His chosen one should finally succumb in the struggle with the natural forces of life.

The most distinguished gain that Jacob has made in his twenty years of ministry is that he wins Laban's two daughters, Leah and Rachel, in Mesopotamia and is allowed to bring them to the land of promise.

They are willing to leavetheir father's house on their part, as Abraham did in his time, and to follow their husband into the land of promise. This was an act of faith, even if it is inferior in its accompanying generosity to Abraham's departure.

It is easy to see that it was the same central idea that was involved. So they follow the call of the chosen one, in whom we see the service, leave father, father's house, friendship and go to the land of promise. They move with husband and children on the lines of the divine promises.

But because they do this, after it has become clear to them what is for them the directed way, they may also prophesy, i.e. do clear glimpses into the thoughts of God, which He has with those who follow the traits of the spirit, recognize the time of promise and are not afraid of the pressure to break with the past and move on the new stage of life. They realize that the riches of their Father belong to them and their children.

This will be fulfilledone day in a completely different way than it is indicated here. In the prophecies of the prophets about Israel, it is shown with full clarity and in strong features that the treasures of the nations with their silver and gold, the wealth of the nations in mammon, which will be consecrated to the Lord their God, will flow to His chosen ones, while the present congregation of Jesus Christ does not have the vocation to move on this path, because it takes a different position. But it must be noted that it is God's counsel to turn to His elect, Israel, the position of power in the world.

Now Jacob sets out to come to his father with all his possessions (verse 17.18). Before that, however, we are told about Rachel, which is peculiarly touching (verse 19). Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife, the more beautiful of the two sisters, who so captured his heart that seven years were like seven days in his service for her - she of all people steals her father's household idols and takes them to the promised land.

It is strange what idols human children who walk on the lines of God still drag around. It is unquestionably not about pagan idols in the case of Rachel. It was images of ancestors, highly respected ancestors, who in the course of the centuries experienced a divine veneration, as Chinese still know it today.

So they were not superhuman gods, but household gods. We still have many such household gods: family pride, pride of birth, pride of nobility, prejudices of class, and whatever else such lovable household gods may be called; and one thinks that as well as Rachel could hide her idols from Laban, so well one can hide his own from God. But she and we do not succeed. With feminine cunning she is able to deceive her father, but she as well as her husband and her children cannot enter the promised land until they have done away with these idols (chap. 35:1-7).

After all, we were natural people and have enough of the natural being in our memory that we can imagine how upset Laban must have been when he learned that Jacob had left by night and fog (verse 22-24). This was not nice; ruthlessness on a par with anything else is shown in it. Nevertheless, something else can be said about this, although neither Laban nor Jacob will have thought of it.

There lay, consciously or unconsciously, in this conduct a proper inner sense on the part of the spiritual man that there is a holy ruthlessness, an inner opinion which impels one to break away from natural consideration.

This does not want to be misunderstood. There is a fine noble consideration that the child of God must not refrain from towards the children of this world. The spiritual life does not culminate in the fact that we should, without any inner reason, without any inner justification and reasoning, go out to strike with our fist, to provoke unbelievers. That is wrong, completely wrong.

However, in the life of every person called byGod, especially on the path of God's service, there are days of decision, when we have to clearly discuss with our God the consequences of a step for our future and that of our family. Before something like this has happened to us, we are not in a position to break the baton over Jacob or to justify him.

We repeat: there is and always will be a time in the life of a worker called and sent by God when the question must be decided: Is this the path shown to you by the Lord? We emphasize this strongly because so many children of God who are willing to serve do not come to clarity on this point. There are hundreds, thousands of them running around, not lacking in willingness and eagerness to serve, but they do not have a clear instruction.

We know those who lack consideration for their own who need it. There is a sick mother who needs to be cared for, but the daughter goes into the deaconess service and thinks that is her business. Their profession is at home with the dying mother. There are countless such cases in Christianity.

So we are not talking about such cases here. Here it was clear what had to be done: there was only one way for the two women Leah and Rachel - to follow the man into the land of promise. What came out of it in terms of ruthlessness against father, house, family, could be safely disregarded, in accordance with the words of the Lord: "Whoever does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, even his own life, cannot be My disciple" (Luk 14:26).

This gives a clear position against these family considerations (cf. Deut. 33:9). This gives a legal ground, a directive beyond all doubt, against which all other considerations must take a back seat.

Now Laban catches up with Jacob and harshly reproacheshim for his conduct (verses 25-30). Jacob may justifiably justify himself (verses 31-42). This is not always our privilege. But opportunities come also for the elect of our days, as they came even for our glorious Lord, and for His apostle Paul, when they have to face the unjustified reproaches.

Thus our Lord said to the servant who struck Him on the cheek, "If I have spoken evil, prove it to be evil; but if I have spoken right, why do you strike Me (John 18:23)?" And Paul said to the high priest, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. Sitest thou to judge me according to the law, and dost thou smitest me against the law (Acts 23.3)?" In response to the reproach that he had thus scolded the high priest of God, he excuses himself by saying that he had not been able to distinguish the high priest from the other councilors because of his shortsightedness.

So there are occasions when a child of God, not in order to seek himself, but in order to serve the persecuting Laban and to make his position clear to him in a clear way, must make such a soul aware of the whole distance, the whole gulf, which exists between a man who is there for God and a man who is there only for himself. In such a case, a chosen one of God may reject unjustified accusations and make everything clear.

This is what Jacob did in the face of the accusations of his father-in-law Laban. For Laban had not been able toget over the fact that Jacob had given him to understand so clearly by this silent exodus: I do not need you anymore. To this day it is terribly annoying and incomprehensible to the world that children of God do not need them. We do not have the job of mending her witness, but we do have the job of proving to her by our separate walk that we can do without her. This is something that she forgives us least of all.

Laban says to Jacob: Why did you steal away so secretly and I would so gladly have givenyou the escort with music (verse 27). We can still have that today. The world will gladly supply a band of music if we tell it: we cannot spare you.

It was such a clear step, a clean divorce, as Jacob took when he gave his Laban to understandclearly: from now on, all connection between us ceases (verse 36-42). Jacob had gone through his school in Mesopotamia well. What God wanted, He had accomplished. Now He is directing him again to the Promised Land.

After their argument, Jacob and Laban came to a clear understanding (verses 43-54). It is something desirable when we make an effort with dear people to make our point clear to them and they finally see it.

But there was also an alliance. The mark was established at the crossroads between Mesopotamia and the western land. It was agreed not to cross this border. That meant nothing less than: we are inwardly divorced people and remain so. The task in Mesopotamia was accomplished: Jacob had won Laban's two daughters and Laban's herd wealth as well. This was in the service of the Lord God, and at the same time it meant the foundation of the family and wealth of the chosen one in the promised land, which he now went to meet.

32. Thirty-second chapter

While Jacob goes on after the clean separation between what now lay behind him and what he went to meet at the command of his God - for we see clearly that in the way of God, in all the various stages of divine life, it is always according to the law of separation - there occur for Jacob three strange incidents.

He encounters first the armies of God, then his brother Esau, and finally the living God in human form. These are three encounters of the deepest significance.

The meeting with the armies of God (verse 2,3) is touched upon only very fleetingly, but nevertheless not concealed. It must have a justification, a reason in the divine counsel and plan, that the relations of the angelic world to the ways and guides of God's elect on earth are really included in the revelations of God.

But if they are, they have something to tell us. For in the biblical story there is no mere finery, no mere embellishment of the historical account. The Bible is not a textbook of aesthetics and good taste that needed such adornment, though it is never tasteless. That is not its task.

Jacob encounters the armies of God; he recognizes them and calls them Mahanaim, double camps of God, with a prophetically sure look. There we see the veil, the curtain lifted and something of the otherwise invisible world of our God becomes visible.

It is not the first time that Jacob sees angels of God. It is very significant that he had a similar encounter when he fled from his brother Esau and dreamed that the heavens had opened above him and the angels were ascending and descending a ladder.

What a great part do these hosts of the living God take in the destiny, the way, the changes of God's elect on this earth! Here they appear again, certainly not without being sent, but without testifying to their participation in his fate! They do not have the mission to exchange words with him like in Joshua (Jos. 5, 14.17). Just like at Bethel, they have nothing to say to him. We do not have to listen for a message from the angelic world. It happens later that angels come to Daniel, Mary, Peter with a certain mission. But not here.

In the appearance of the angels there are many differences, which we cannot go into now. But all appearances of the angels of God in the life of His human elect speak a very audible language, even if no words fall from both sides. We interpret them in such a way that all ways of God with His chosen ones on earth must be of highest importance and consequence for the heavenly hosts.

That it is not mere curiosity that drives them to earth goes without saying. We cannot let such a reason of their appearance arise. There they are; again and again they appear. What drives them to the earth? Without a doubt, they are driven, as Peter says (1 Peter 1:12), by the desire to see into the mysterious ways of their and our God with His own.

What do they have in this? If everything in the entire angelic world were as it should be, if disturbance, indignation, disorder, rebellion against God's majesty, omnipotence, and love had not penetrated into it, then it could hardly be explained.

Careful reflection leads to no other explanation than that one thing stands before their minds, namely that the outcome of God's ways with His human elect here on this earth is of quite incalculable value and incalculable importance for the outcome of things also of the upper world. We cannot dwell on this here. This hint may suffice.

For Jacob, however, this encounter with the armies of God also had a meaning. It had to remind him unfailingly of the encounter twenty years ago when he fled from his brother Esau and lay as an impostor under heaven at Bethel, and the marvelous grace of God had for him not thunder words of reproof, reproach, cursing, but Jehovah, Who was at the head of the ladder, spoke His great royal promises: I will be with you, bless you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

The angels brought all this back to his memory. They were the messengers of the Most High, who confirmed to him that he was really on the way shown to him by God, who also called to his conscience what had driven him from the land of promise to Mesopotamia at that time, namely the terrible sin which he had committed against his brother Esau and against his blind father Isaac. Strange, this drastic encounter with the armies of God!

And then comes the encounter with his brother Esau (verse 4-9). Twenty years had passed since he had transgressed against Esau in such a vile, disgraceful, genuinely carnal way. Sin and shame were born out of unbelief in that process, and now this experience!

Rebekah had indeed received God's promise that the older brother should serve the younger (chap. 26:33), that God would turn the natural order upside down for Jacob's benefit. She clearly recognized, understood and did not withhold from her husband that it was in the counsel and will of God that Esau should not be the bearer of the promise but his younger brother, not by merit of works but by grace of the caller. But this knowledge had not been enough to silence Rebekah's carnal inclination.

There we have a very important and serious lesson, which we want to let serve as a warning. One can have a clear knowledge of divine things and have no strength to cope inwardly with the carnal impulses, to really rest on the tangible divine promises which one has recognized as such. There are probably such shameful experiences in the life of every child of God that bring us to the realization that our knowledge is far ahead of our overcoming. This should not be.

How long-suffering God has borne and still comes to terms even with the heel holder and deceiver, this pious flesh. Jacob was not rough, unpleasant, ugly, but kindly flesh, the favorite son of his mother, not like Esau.

Now he remembers what he did twenty yearsago and sends messengers to Esau. Yes, a lot of grass grows in twenty years, but not enough to cover the brother Esau.

We may come to forget brother Esau and our shamefulness outside through the guides of our lives, but after twenty years, brother Esau stands up again.

There is no entrance for Jacob into the land of promise until he has come to terms with it, has come to terms with it and has done away with evil. What inner distress this must have caused him, he betrays in his whole procedure. But he also betrays that he is still an unbroken man inwardly. A blessed one of the Lord, who takes a clear position towards Laban, undoubtedly!

But one can be a blessed man of God, have a blessed ministry behind him, have a clear position toward the world, and yet not be finished with the brother Esau. Let us learn from this. Esau is Jacob's own flesh, born of the same mother by the same process; they are twins. The scripture cannot bring us more in the figurative representation than that we see in the twin brother, the Esau, with the blood that is still in us, the own unbroken being.

With Laban one is done, but with the brother Esau not - there it hangs! How much unbroken character is found in very determined children of God, and yet, what is not the determination in the Christian camp! This is the whole ABC of Christianity. Jacob is a proof that it is not enough. It will not go to the land of promise until Esau is overcome; and this cannot be done by one's own machinations. This is precious doctrine, which so vividly brings before our eyes Jacob's procedure toward Esau, so quite clever, so admirable, so unsurpassable. How he understands so excellently that with one gift the fiercest anger can be softened or eliminated. Not only does he divide his flock in two, but to appease his brother he sends choice pieces from his flock as a gift to his brother, who comes to meet Jacob with four hundred horsemen. This was insightful wisdom in the highest degree!

Certainly, Jacob also prays in the process (verse 10-13). He does not lack deep insight and recognition of all the great, good things God has done for him. Gratitude is there; let us not ignore that. He refers with great certainty to the instruction that God has given him. With his knowledge there is also bowing. After all, God had blessed him abundantly. He had only one staff when he crossed the Jordan and now he has become two armies. From the bottom of his heart he has to thank God and he also asks for salvation from his brother.

But this Jacob, who can pray so movingly, acknowledgeGod and give thanks, is the same one who can make his own plans and plots (verse 14-21)! He knows how to meet his brother with his own knowledge, will and ability. And then the wonderful kindness of our God! Jacob says, "Perhaps he will look upon me graciously (verse 21)." Is there still a maybe after earnest prayer, trusting in God's promise: I will keep you and bring you to the land of your fathers? (ch. 28:15; cf. ch. 31:3).

Yes, there is such a maybe while we are still unbroken people! Not a few believers have deep insights into God's will and ways, but when it comes to clinging to the Lord with unshakable firmness and not getting restless at approaching dangers, they fail. Then they say: I must help myself; perhaps I will succeed. Where it is like that, there is no clear certainty, there is inner wavering and wavering.

Jacob lets the gift pass over the Jabbok (verse 22-24). He may quietly carry out all his plans. God knows how He will deal with him and how He will finish.

Jacob himself, however, remains back in the camp (verse 22). He could not sleep, but he prays and spreads his cause before God, surely having recourse to God's promises. But why does he not come to rest?

He lets pass over still in the night everything what he has (verse 23.24). Did it have to come so far that everything God had blessed him, given him, was separated from him only by the Jabbok? Yes, God wanted to force him to an inner divorce. At first, Jacob is confronted with an external separation; but the external is only a reflection of the internal.

Before it came to the decisive battle, of which he has no idea yet, the spirit drove him to make a complete divorce from all blessings, from everything acquired, become. It is not only a clear divorce between us and the world, under all circumstances the Jabbok must flow also between us and everything that has become to us from God. Everything given by God must also pass over. He stayed behind alone. Doesn't God do it differently? No, otherwise He leaves Jacob alone.

And now, last of all, the encounter with Jehovah. "Then a man wrestled with him (verse 25)." Jacob did not call him; he certainly did not think of him. There now stands before us so great, mighty, overwhelming: By grace, by grace! What drove Jacob was restlessness. But what produces the restlessness? It is the unceasing struggle between spirit and flesh, the old and the new man.

When a man of God gets into such inner struggles and turmoil, it is something painful and encouraging at the same time, because it is the proof that the spirit is effective. People who let themselves go, who are content with what they have become also through the Lord, who have resigned themselves to unfinished business between themselves and their brother Esau, do not have such struggles. But when we get into such turmoil, it is not a dangerous sign, but on the contrary, a joyful one.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: these are contrary to one another, lest ye do what ye would (Gal. 5:17)." But now the great glorious God brings about the decision, the victory. This reflects a great glorious truth; one glory after another is revealed.

For twenty years God can carry and bless a Jacob without everything being put in order. God can; but He will not let him enter the land of promise than until everything is put in order. The man who wrestled with Jacob strikes him on the hip joint (verse 26).

It is something incomprehensible to the natural sense that there could be a divine appearance, that God could come to earth in human form - for we are dealing with nothing else here; it was the Lord Himself who appeared there - and that He should not succeed in subduing Jacob.

There is such a precious shadow of the annoyance of the cross that God, the Lord of heaven and earth, appears in the form of a servant and allows Himself to be defeated by His sinful, perverse people. The human mind will never grasp this. That is why the Gospel is never calculated for the masses. The natural man does not understand this mystery.

"And when Jehovah saw that He overcame him not," not because He was not innately stronger and could not have confronted him differently and not have knocked him to the ground. But this is not the way of God, but God wants to be victorious in overcoming; and by going this way Himself, He opens it for us. For no one would think of becoming an overcomer by being overcome himself. This is not human, but divine.

The heart of God must have rejoiced when He heard from the mouth of Jacob the confession and the plea: "I will not leave You, You bless me!" (verse 27).

To awaken this desire in him was what God had in mind all along; this was what He had been working toward; this was the ripe fruit of all the knowledge He had given His servant, all the blessings and benefits He had showered upon him, all the struggles and triumphs during the twenty years.

But this was not yet the last and highest stage, but Jehovah asks Jacob, "What is thy name (verse 28)?" Here we come again to the so serious and important chapter of the names, and of the deep meaning, which have the names in the work and in the revelation of God. The understanding of this has completely dwindled among us natural people. We have hardly any idea of what it means to call a person by name as he is. Our names prove that we have degenerated terribly and that we have lost the ancestral ability to designate the essence of a human being with a name.

"What is your name?" Now one's very being must come into the judgment of God's presence. That which man is inwardly must be unsparingly spoken out. God cannot be satisfied with anything less than that we execute judgment on ourselves by unsparingly drawing out our hidden nature and placing it in the light of God.

Jacob, the heel-holder, the man full of intrigues and craftiness, inexhaustible in his machinations, who was so clever and knew so many ways out, until he had become a master in it, he must realize: all this is only Jacob's being, only flesh, not spirit.

After this confession he receives a new name (verse 29). If God's gifts and calling do not repent Him, we have already here in this simple naming, name change, the undoubted guarantee that God will not only deal with the one Jacob, but with the whole house and family of Jacob and will not rest until He has made the Jewish people a nation of God's victors. This is the goal, as it has been proclaimed in the mouths of all the holy prophets.

Jacob, in turn, asks for the name of his fellow fighter. God rejects this (verse 30). For this time, it is only a matter of Jacob becoming what he was to become; not that he should be enriched in knowledge, but that he should come into the right position with the living God.

Jacob calls the place Pniel because he had seenGod's face (verse 31). The sun rose for him when he crossed the river, just as it had risen for him within (verse 32). But he retained one souvenir of his struggle - the limp. The memory of this encounter with God thus did not leave him throughout his life.

And so that the children of Israel should not forget the memory of the bent, broken Jacob, Moses gave them the commandment not to eat the span or from the joint of the hip (verse 33). That which constitutes the suppleness of man, the seat of his own strength, God has struck, and thus God's victory over Israel is complete.

33. Thirty-third chapter

Now Jacob has become Israel and the Lord has finished with him. It has taken a long time. For twenty years the Lord bore His chosen one in His own fleshly doings with wonderful patience. These are paths of grace from our God that shine with such marvelous light that one is overwhelmed when one looks into them. So now before us lies the delicious result that the Lord, after all the turmoil, after all the difficulties and troubles He had with His chosen one, could nevertheless triumph.

This is not only in a small way a delicious pledge for the whole life of the believer, but it is also in a broader way - we never want to lose sight of this - a pledge that the great God of Israel will also deal with the whole house of Jacob, and that He will certainly carry out His heart's thoughts

with this people and make of them a real people of Israel. But the ways with His chosen one are not finished yet. It is still about the meeting with his brother Esau.

It is wonderful how God knows how to lead things and how He knows how to smooth out in His own inimitable way everything that seems like mountainous difficulties to us. What troubles Jacobhad in his relationship with his brother Esau! His evil conscience constantly accuses him. Whoever is not at peace with God, the thought of his brother must bring him into the greatest embarrassment. Now that God has finished with Jacob, what about Esau?

It calls for worship how God also copes with it. God knows how to turnwhat is feared so kindly that all the worries and fears that made Jacob's heart so heavy before he had dealt with God and before he had come to terms with Him are completely put to shame.

He also gives him a complete victory over Esau, so that neither he with the wives and children, nor the flocks have to suffer even the slightest loss (verse 1-11). Jacob would certainly have recognized it as a righteous atonement and visitation if God had severely chastised him on this occasion, if it had cost him a large portion of his earthly possessions. He could have overcome it with great ease after seeing God face to face and recovering.

But no, he now experienced that in Esau, which from a later revelation has been clothed in the words: "If a man's ways please the Lord, He also makes his enemies pleased with him (Prov. 16:7)". God, in such situations, can and will also overcome adversaries and enemies and make them our friends, so that the brother Esau, who was so bitter against Jacob from the ground of human knowledge, even offers to grant his brother Jacob and his great troop a safe escort through the desert.

This is quite wonderful! I will never forget what an indescribable joy in more than one case I got from the fact that dear brothers of Esau, who had been very repugnant to me, were completely overcome by the Lord and are still standing by my side today with the greatest willingness and devotion. Yes, God can do that!

Now comes something very remarkable, which forms the reason and cause for the painful events of the following chapter. Jacob came safely to Shechem (verse 18.19). Opposite the Canaanite city he bought a plot of land. What right had Jacob to buy and settle here? None at all! There, on the soil of the promised land, he unexpectedly becomes the prey of an insidious temptation, as it is constantly repeated in the spiritual life of the children of God.

These are the most perilous times, when God has blessed us abundantly and met us wonderfully, when God has achieved great victories in us and with us, and then we want to rest in what we have achieved. This is so obvious. For one gets tired from the struggle, and even the victory won does not take away the feeling of weariness; and the inclination is there to settle down permanently. This does not exist and must not exist!

Jacob himself lays the foundation for the so sad seduction of his only daughter by the prince of the Hewites, from whom he bought land to settle down domestically. He was not called to do so. Abraham had also bought land, but the case was quite different. Abraham had to buy a field in order to acquire a burial place for the corpse of his wife. He did not want to and was not allowed to let this be given to him as a gift, just as he did not let himself be given a thread nor a shoe strap to the king of Sodom. This basic law was still valid. His purchase was quite justified, because he had to bury his wife. It was not in order to settle down, to make a home, to build a house, that he acquired the piece of land. He did not deny in the least his foreigner position in the promised land.

But Jacob does it. He does it on a high level of his inner life. We fail to recognize here that no level of spiritual experience, no matter how high, offers any security against temptation. But the temptation does not come from external enemies, not from the rebellious world like Laban at that time, not even from the evil brother Esau. The enemies are not named, to be sure. Spiritual

powers were the ones who invaded him, who had already occupied the area of the promised land before.

Darkness powers, which had nested in those tribes of peoples on that ground; just as the course of this world, in which we must be strangers and in which we may never be at home, is subordinated by God according to His wise counsel and will to the darkness powers under heaven, the prince of this world. This is divine order. There is no talk of an intervention in God's right, but Satan only exercises with his rule the right left to him. Just as the word in Hebr. 2,5: "God has not subjected the world to **come to the** angels", suggests the conclusion, but the present one.

On the soil of the Promised Land, satanic evil had taken root in a way that has never been worse on any part of the earth until today. This is the reason for the internal struggles and dangers that threaten God's people on this soil.

But there lies the key to the solution of the difficult question: How could God give such a cruel order to the Israelites to exterminatethe Canaites with stump and stick? Truly, it would have been merciful for the rest of mankind if they had done it! The whole world has been poisoned by this satanic evil. Their development would have been different if Israel had cut out this poisonous boil. They did not do it; they themselves perished from it. They themselves have been drawn into the Cananite devil's services and have poisoned the rest of mankind with it. This suffers no doubt.

There run clear lines for us and they alonehelp us to evaluate and judge such a position as Jacob took. Other than in the demonic machinations, we cannot find a key to the shameful circumstances of the fall of Dinah. What was the fault of this innocent girl? The reasons for Dina's seduction lie in the fact that her father Jacob did not preserve his due position.

There we see the danger of resting after times of victory and blessing. Just then it is necessary to be vigilant against the attacks of the enemy. Here it is not external enemies who attack; the Canaites do not storm against Jacob, but the powers that have settled in them and are at home on the ground that God swore to Abraham, and who also have the right to attack God's chosen one and to show their power on him.

So Jacob buys himself, settles down, builds an altar and calls upon the Lord, whom he calls "the strong God of Israel" in good, pious opinion (verse 20). This may have been an unconscious prophecy, because afterwards the Lord meets him and reveals himself as the almighty God, as he had not done before (chap. 35,11).

34. Thirty-fourth chapter

So Leah's daughter - the Leah who boreJacob six sons and only one daughter - went to look after the daughters of the land (verse 1). Now this was not her task at all; her father should not have given her the opportunity. He himself made the track slippery on which she fell.

Shechem did violence to her, but very much wanted to right the wrong he had done to her (verses 2-4). He wanted to marry her after he had violated her. This is the highest thing a natural man can do in such a situation.

The sons of Jacob, with deceit, however, went along with this proposal and agreed to make a treaty with the Hewites, the inhabitants of Shechem, which amounted to spoiling the whole plan of God right here, immediately after God had succeeded in bringing the father Jacob out of Mesopotamia and placing him on the ground of promise.

Although the proposal came from the son of Hamor and from his father, it is shocking to see how the own sons of a father so wonderfully blessed and so highly pardoned by God can think

of entering into such a contract, even if only with deceit, in order to be able to take revenge (verse 5-17).

On the condition that the Hewites underwent circumcision, they agreed to be mixed with this tribe. This is the key point at issue.

This shows us once again that there can be no experience in divine things, however high, which means complete preservation and security against the most terrible fall, the most disdainful denial of the simplest, clearest baselines on which we stand.

The children of Hamor are very happy about this mixing of the tribes (verse 18-24). This can be understood only too well. The children of this world welcome every opportunity not only to weaken the only daughter, but also to make great sacrifices in order to draw all the descendants of the elect into their domain and make complete fellowship with them.

This has been the procedure of the enemy and has remained until today. After Jacob's daughter had been defiled and God's church had been desecrated, this daughter of Jacob, God's church on earth, was made the greatest offer and the greatest concession before the world, and she fell for it.

The marriage union of the church with the world has been accomplished. It was very gladly given the leading position in the life of the people according to the law. How little the church has learned! We see how cunningly the enemy has pursued these lines until today, and with what success? It is shocking that in spite of all the warnings given by God's Word -- and the Christian fathers saw these things, recognized the danger and raised their voices in warning -- nevertheless the church of Jesus Christ could intermarry with the sons of the Canaanites and make a covenant with them. One has approved and praised this never godly relationship. And the consequence of this?

The sons of Jacob have become angry. It is easy then. After the disgrace was accomplished, they wanted bloody vengeance and took it (verse 25-29). Wasn't this a holy zeal for the truth? I suppose they looked at it that way. But their father did not say in vain, "Cursed be their wrath!" (ch. 49:7).

The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' time, like Saul later, were zealots for the paternal law. There is still today such blind zealotry on the ground of the purity of the Christian community. Hardly anywhere have greater hardships and cruelties occurred than on this line.

How often have zealous men risen up in the church to act in the same way. Figuratively speaking still today wounds are struck, blood is shed, cruelties are committed, hardships which are not to be said, and this then dresses itself as here in the garb of the fiery zeal for the innocence!

No, she was gone! The sister was no more a pure virgin and if also the whole people would have been massacred. Instead of giving up the self-willed way, to see the injustice where it is and to put an end to the damage, one strikes with the sword against those who could not have any understanding for it.

This zeal is much easier and simpler than the harm of fighting the apostasy and putting oneself under the guilt and carrying it along; but the church does not become a pure virgin by fiery zeal.

So the sons of Jacob attack the defenseless inhabitants of their confederates, strike down all males, plunder, rob the property. But Jacob has to lament before his sons: "You have made me hateful" (verse 30). Even their father, the warrior of God, has a despondent heart. How could it become different for him with the abominations of his sons, to which they had no order!

35. Thirty-fifth chapter

Now God Himself strikes the note that Jacob had struck earlier (ch. 28, 20-22) when He asks him to go to Bethel and build an altar there (verse 1). But when the time of the Lord has come for Jacob, it is something different than when he chooses his own way.

Not furious zeal against the enemies who attacked the sister, but purification of one's own being, cleaning up everything that was still present in hidden impurity and idolatry (verse 2.3), that was the right path to take.

So Jacob moves on at God's command, for there was still much land to be discovered, not to be captured, to be taken possession of. He was only allowed to remain a stranger, but God still had much to show him as the heir of the land of the length and breadth of the promised land.

Therefore, he should not settle down at the entrance to the land. But every progress on the way of the extended knowledge is conditioned by inner purification, detachment from everything what cannot please God. Also the beloved Rachel had to get out of there with her household gods, and even the rings and clasps (verse 4).

After such self-judgment was accomplished, the terror of God fell upon the surrounding cities (verse 5). Now they were immune and covered against the enemies because they walked in the way of obedience. The self-judgment had taken place. They had not looked to others for blame, but to themselves. Then the strong God is their protection and shield, so that the enemies could not harm them.

In Bethel died Deborah, a maid of the house of Bethuel, the nurse of Rebekah, who had been given by her mother (verse 6-8), and who accompanied her when she went to meet Isaac as a bride. She had lived through the whole period of filiation represented in Isaac.

But also Jacob's favorite wife Rachel died, after she had given him a son again, - the last one that was born to him at all. She had once again become fruitful through a gracious visitation after the self-judgment (verse 16-20).

And yet a third wife, Bilhah, who bore him two sons, is taken from him, overcome by his own firstborn son (verse 21.22).

These are three profound, painful experiences in Jacob's life, but also three distinctive solutions that had a necessary place in his leadership. He needed them. As much as these three might have been dear to his heart - he had to be detached from them.

We do not want to go deeper into these processes, but we want to touch on them. A wet nurse is the one who has to take care of the first nourishment of a child. We understand that on the ground of spiritual life, there must come a time when the wet nurse must give way, when strong food must replace the child's food with the food of the adults, the perfected ones.

Rachel, the beloved, beautiful one, to whom Jacob's whole heart was attached, symbolizes the beautiful, deep impressions that the outward appearance of truth had made on him. He also had to be detached from it, just as we have to be detached from all the mental impressions of the beautiful truth, which have had their right and their meaning.

And fruit has also come forth from Rachel for Jacob. The blessed Joseph and the little Benjamin; but Rachel must depart. And the maid Bilhah, who contributed greatly to increase his house and who bore him two sons, who was thus fruitful, is taken from him in a poignant way. Reuben, his firstborn son, mounts his father's camp.

What is Reuben? The name is perhaps a key to the meaning of this act: the son of seeing, cognition, knowledge. This perhaps shades for us the very poignant fact that the firstborn son of Jacob, his first power, the son of knowledge of his first wife, wrests from him this fertile wife, this one source of his fertility, of fertility in his blessed service. By Reuben's touching Bilhah, of course, she ceased ever again to be fruitful for Jacob.

Human science has robbed the house of Jacob of a source of fertility, has come upon revealed truth, has done violence to it, and in this way has prevented it from bearing sons to the house of God.

This is a fact that no insightful Christian will deny. Jukes in his "Models of Genesis" has shown excellently what precious things are reported for us in the historical events of the first book of Moses. Of course, one has to be very careful and chaste about the symbolic meaning of the events of the Scriptures, but they are not without such meaning.

Even if it were not permissible to give such an interpretation, it would not change the fact that violent intervention of human science in the matters of divine revelation has made this very revelation quite unfruitful for the community of God. The only possibility of fruitfulness is the return to the divine revelation, under complete rejection and negation of science. The fact that one could read 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 and remain throughout the long weary centuries that, as ministers of the Word of God, no one should be allowed in the pulpit who was not scientifically trained, is one of the most shocking facts that has been experienced. The apostle firmly rejects any connection with human science and denies it any right to have a say in these matters.

The Christian church, however, exactly reverses the matter and denies the right of every layman to speak about the things of God. It admits of necessity that also laymen may serve at the word; but nevertheless only as an act of most condescending acquiescence on their part. Only those are ordained servants of the church who have sucked the breasts of science.

This is what has happened in the church of God, which has had the testimonies of 1 Cor. 1 and 2 before its eyes for centuries, but has thrown them to the wind.

When God does something for the second time, somethingcomes out of it. That is the delicious key that we can use again and again. Now God comes the second time, blesses the blessed Jacob and at the same time confirms the naming of the Jabbok. Now Jacob calls himself Israel (verse 9.10).

At that time when God gave him the new name, Jacob had asked God for his name. God had refused to name him. Now, appearing for the second time to confirm the name of Israel, He says: "I am the Almighty God" (verse 11.12). After Jacob has judged his house, God makes him do deep looks into His precious name.

"Be fruitful and multiply," God continues. This seems pleasantly an idle promise, for Jacob already has eleven sons and the one disgraced daughter; and yet his favorite wife gives him another son. But now God gives an extension of His promise: "a nation and a congregation of nations shall come from thee, and kings shall come forth from thy loins." Moreover, He also gives him the confirmation of the promise of the land.

As for God naming Himself, the Epistle to the Colossians (chap. 1) has great things to say along the same lines. God can give this revelation of Himself as the Almighty God to His chosen servant Jacob only in this so late hour, after the long and many experiences and the great demonstrations of His power and love.

Then the birth of Benjamin is told (verse 16-19), which cost his mother her life. For her he was a "child of pain" (Ben Oni). But the father saw more correctly and called him prophetically "son of the right". He is the father of that tribe of Benjamin, the small one that has become, which was once close to being wiped out. No tribe has been led the way of death like the "small" one.

Something of this flashes out when in the NT the little Paul is chosen as God's chosen armor, who comes from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3,5). This little Saul comes from the small tribe that was almost completely wiped out. How God has made him fruitful!

"A nation and a congregation of nations shall comefrom you": this applies in a special sense to Paul's spiritual children. The prophet's word: "From the small shall come thousands (Jos. 60,22)", has literally come true in this tribe. So when God says, "Be fruitful and multiply," it applies

in a special sense to this Son of Sorrows, who had to walk the path of death like no other, but who also became so fruitful.

Finally Jacob comes to his father Isaac (verse 27). Rebekah is not mentioned, she must have died. To her great sorrow, she has never seen her favorite son since the time she seduced him into shameful deceit. Isaac still experienced the joy that his son Jacob came to him; the mother did not. So completely Jacob had to be detached from the female influences of his life. This is the fourth woman from whom he was detached. But then Isaac also died old and full of life.

36. Chapter Thirty-Six

This chapter offers us a great comprehensiveness and a wealth of names from the descendants of Esau, with which we are served. It would be a worthwhile study, if one wanted to pursue the meaning also of these names. But we must refrain from it, as it would take up too much space and is not necessary for our purposes. But still we want to stop a little with this chapter and, without going into details, only consider some of the great features.

First, we pay attention to the fact that the Spirit of God presents to us in the revelation of this very outworking of the Edomite life, the life of the firstborn son, the elder brother of Jacob here.

These remarks come before the most precious, most pure, most glorious picture of life is unfolded before us, which is known to the whole of the old Scriptures, the picture of Joseph's life, into which the story of Jacob's life flows, as ch. 37:2 shows us: "This is the family history of Jacob: Joseph was seventeen years old." This is the significant transition after the Scriptures are finished with the teachings about Jacob, who represented the ministry in this world. But it cannot lack completeness, cannot suppress the fact that between Jacob and Joseph there must be a careful consideration of the lineage of Esau.

In the double name Esau-Edom, we are struck by the similarity of the name Adam to Edom. Edom and Adam, written without vowels, as is the case in Hebrew, are indistinguishable. This is of deep significance. With Esau we have a similar appearance as with Ishmael in the house of Abraham. The only difference is that his lineage is different. Ishmael is born of the Egyptian maid, while Esau is the son of Rebekah, as certainly as Jacob. Esau is not son of the maid, but of the appointed wife. Rebekah is mother of both sons, as certainly as there the same father. This imprints a different scope on the character. With Ishmael the slavish is given from the beginning with the maid. Here with Esau not.

We are dealing with a lineage that, according to tradition, completely coincides with that of Jacob. After the direction no deviation is to be determined, but we see that the exit is so completely different. The contrasts between Esau and Jacob appear to us in the Scriptures with a clarity, abruptness and weight of meaning as hardly anywhere else.

The words of Scripture immediately come to mind: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Mal. 1:2). The deep difference cannot be expressed in a sharper, more definite, more incisive way than it is expressed here.

Now it is told about Esau and his descendants - we do not want to talk about the different wives of Esau, -- that they lived on the mountain Seir (verse 8). But Seir was the property, the territory of the Horites (verse 20-30), and there it is not by chance that the princely families of the Horites are incorporated without further ado into the genealogical tables of the princes from the house of Esau.

These Horites were one of the giant tribes among the Canaanite tribes. The children of Esau have cast down these Horites and taken their dwellings. The families that cleared up with

outspoken enemies of God, more than the Israelites did with the Cananites (Genesis 14:6; Deut. 2:12, 22). In this we have a certain distinction before the sons of Jacob.

This brings us to a line that reaches up to the presence of Jesus. We find repeatedly in the writings of the prophets from Moses on that the children of Israel are prevented under all circumstances from wielding the sword against Esau. Esau must never be attacked by Jacob. Of course, Esau compares this gentle treatment, which God inculcates into the house of Israel, with scorn, disgrace, contempt, disparagement.

Esau represents the malicious gloating in the face of the defeats, the losses that Jacob suffers. Yes, it comes so far in the development of the things that Esau leads the regiment over Israel. For **Herod** was an Edomite. If God had not resisted the child murderer, he would have become the murderer of Jesus, the Messiah.

These are strange things, from which it is to be seen that significant connections lie here. However, we are also led to the differences that have to be considered.

What should they tell us for the present task in this world? Because all these things are models, shadow imagesof then distant future, a clear mirror, from which we recognize the task, which he has set us or not.

We look again at this warlike bravery, this sacrificial spirit of the sons of Esau as they deal with the giants, the Horites, and whose territory they take.

What does this tell us? Unlike Jacob, the servant, and his sons, who were not allowed to possess the land at that time, as long as they had to be pilgrims and strangers in the land of promise according to the counsel and will of God, the sons of Esau are indeed inhabitants of the land.

But they, with all the service they have torender, are not called to put this service into warlike undertakings against the inhabitants of the land, but into the life of serving, fruitful love. Jacob is allowed to bring in wives, children, flocks, peacefully, kindly, without the stroke of the sword, to the soil of the Promised Land. This is the God-ordained service of His elect even today. Such a service in highest increase in the area of the OT is demanded and carried out by Joseph.

In him, in the purest, most promising way, comes the service of suffering, of suffering without resistance under unjust accusations, hostilities even from his own brothers in the house of Jacob - a suffering that is crowned on the same ground on which Abraham, the mere believer, stumbled and fell; for on this ground Joseph becomes the victorious, ruling one. This is precious. We see there the service prescribed for us in this hostile world.

The Edomites believed, as is still often believed today, that they were real sons and heirs of the promise in the house of Isaac, real sons of Esau, not in a servant position. It is not said of them, as it is of Ishmael, Cast out the son of the maidservant. Esau is a legitimate son of the free, not of the maidservant, and his inheritance must not be diminished, not shortened.

But what does Esau represent on the ground of service? He points to the efforts, which know of no other service than that one must beat the giant evils in the world to the ground, clean up with the giant tasks with fire and sword in a violent way. We know only too well that this service is considered to be the only right thing to do, and that in wide Christian circles a silent walk is considered to be something despised, weak and unbearable.

How often do we have to hear the reproach from brothers who walk on those lines: You have no heart for the damage of the people! Every believer should throw himself into the harness to put an end to the existing grievances. To strike down the Horites and take their territory, to conquer the ground on which those Horites sat, to carry out social upheavals, reforms: this is considered in many circles as the only justified way of Christianity, for the only right service.

Jacob is not allowed to take the sword, to participate inthe battle. Let us understand that Jacob-Joseph received another task according to the counsel and will of God than that of Esau. But we are not allowed to judge our brother Esau either, let him do what is his job!

Our task in the line of promise, when we have understoodGod and recognized our place as those who are strangers here, is to tolerate the Canaanites in the land, to bear them, to proclaim the name of God without exterminating them.

In this world-storming edomite activity lies an anticipation of God, a carnal, self-willed action. The time had not yet come for the whole house of Jacob to draw the sword against the Canaanites. It came only later, only after Jacob had become a great people, to whom God put the sword in the hand.

And one day Psalm 149:5-9 will be executed. Then His saints will have the honor to judge the world. This cannot be done without the stroke of the sword. The bloody judgments on the satanic powers cannot be executed in any other way than by death. Everything has its time.

For Joseph, who is called to be led through suffering to glory, to attainthe form God intended, the lines run differently. The church is not to conquer the ruling positions in the world. Let the Edomites do this work! We want to learn this from what is switched on here from the princes of the family of Esau, the Edomite.

37. Chapter Thirty-Seven

After verse 2 the family history of Jacob begins now. Instead of reporting about Jacob's doings and activities, a single son comes to the fore: The firstborn of Rachel appears on the scene. The six sons of the older, unattractive but fertile Leah also appear on the scene later, and the other five in addition. Benjamin plays a less painful role than the others.

Joseph is the son of Jacob, born to him after a long, not always patient, bearing wait, in whom his deepest longing, which God had placed in him, found its satisfaction and fulfillment.

Seen in the light, it is Joseph's story that is toldhere, into which the story of Jacob flows out. Joseph is from now on the all dominating figure. Around him everything turns and moves, as it is represented so vividly in the dream face. Before him bend father, mother, brothers, the whole house of Jacob.

Joseph was seventeen years old (verses 2-4), that is, still a boy, when he tended cattle with his brothers, and he brought complaints about them before their father. There we are again given the sons of the maidservant, Bilhah and Zilpah, in whom the servant element is expressed.

Of course, in the house of the pre-married sons of maidens there are all kinds of things that cannot please the father of the house, and Rachel's son had the painful task, fraught with bitter consequences, of not only keeping an eye on these things, but even bringing them up. And Joseph brought them before the father. They were not unwarranted accusations, but ones that called for redress. They were reported according to truth, and this earned him hatred and bitterness from his brothers.

"But Israel" (verse 3)! It is no coincidence that here the name Israel is mentioned, the God-given name, Jacob according to his nature not, but Israel according to the new creation that had taken place in him after victory and defeat at the Jabbok. -

"But Israel loved Joseph more than all his brothers". The very special preference shown for Joseph may have been a piece of the old Jacob nature, yet the new name is attached to him, because much has already been clarified with him, since he has been carried over many storms by the patience and long-suffering of his great almighty God.

"But Israel ... made him a long skirt". This is how the miniature Bible translates. We prefer Luther's translation: "...a coat of many colors", a coat of beautiful, different colors, as in the different colors the refraction of the pure sunlight is expressed, of which the rainbow is an example for us.

The colors of the rainbow are nothing more than the refraction of the one unified, pure sunlight; all rays taken together form the clear, unclouded, bright light of the sky. But in this light there is such a fullness of beauty, a richness of variety, as is symbolically expressed in the bright colors in which God has clothed His creation. Our God is an artist, like whom no one is.

It is a great misunderstanding of dear, serious people, who did not understand God, if they think that the darker, gray, black colors, in which everything colorful, bright is missing, dress them more pious, more holy! Our preachers are forced to dress in the costume of darkness; the sisters, the poor - everything must wear dark or gray ass color. It is a pity! I am glad to approach the bed, because there one may dress in white.

It would be more correct to always dress in white. The lighter, the friendlier, the better. God has no pleasure in dark shades. He is lavish with colors and shapes that one can exult.

According to this, that is, for an inner reason, it is more obvious tous that this garment of the son of Jacob was not a monochrome, uniform one, but a colorful, multicolored one, as an expression of the manifold, rich gifts of light, which should be reflected in his person, in his walk, in his task. Out of correct feeling Luther made the best translation, which is also the prevailing one among the Hebrews. Hebrews love the colorful.

When his brothers saw this, they hated him (verse 4). They do not want to greet him, nor to address a friendly word to him, but they let him tell themhis dreams (verse 5). Dreams are very difficult to define, to determine their origin.

Here we are undoubtedly dealingwith God-given dreams. That God in earlier days often used the dream, when there were no written revelations, is not only fact, but also very understandable. Even when there were already written divine revelations, He still used this means, but mainly with the peoples without revelation, as for example in the case of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.

The prophets clearly distinguish between dreams and the word of God. "He who has dreams, let him speak dreams; but he who has a word from God, let him speak the word" (Jer. 23:28). In the word we have a higher form of divine revelation, a safeguard against error and deception. But God can also speak surely and confidently in dreams, and of many dreams we know that they have come to real, historical, literal execution.

The dreams are two, as God makes all very important things appear in double form, so that our certainty is all the greater. The first has to do with the brothers with whom he stayed, with whom he saw himself in the field. Father and mother do not come into the circle of vision (verse 6.7). The second one moves on a higher level, on heavenly ground; he has to do with heavenly bodies. Sun, moon and stars appear here (verse 9.10).

In this, too, there are significant differences between earthly and heavenly bodies. Dreams move in both areas. Of course, such a young person goes after these things; they trouble him. He would not have been a human being otherwise. That is why he has to speak out in front of his brothers. So he tells them without bad thoughts, reports without ingredients in sincerity and truth, what God showed him in the dream. But he arrived beautifully!

There we have one of the clearest, one of the most exemplary features of the one whom the Father sent from heaven to His brothers. Joseph comes to his brothers with still unclear revelations, with still dreamlike slumbering ideas of coming rulership and glory.

But the Son of God speaks to His brothers about the things of the Father, which He Himself knows and possesses (John 17:5), and is not only not understood according to the deep meaning, but is also bitterly hated by them because of the given revelation, the communication of the received truth of God made by Him, as Joseph also had to experience.

Even his own father rebels against these thoughts. He asks, "What is this dream?" To you shall we bow, bow down (verse 10)? His father kept these words in his mind; "but his brethren

envied him" (verse 11). This expression reminds us of Matth. 27,18: Pilate knew well that Jesus had been handed over out of envy.

There we see how completely the lines coincide. The rulers of the people would have lifted Jesus on the shield in triumph, if He had made Himself availableto them as an instrument, if He had chased the enemies out of the country with miraculous power. But when He spoke to them of the things which His Father had revealed to Him, there was an end of friendship. "They envied Him".

Then comes another delicious trait, casual, unforced. His brothers are far from his father's house; they feed the flocks; and then he sends the son to look after the far flocks and the brothers. Who does not remember the word of our Lord: "I am not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matth. 15,24)?

When a man saw Joseph going astray in search of his brothers, he asked him what he was looking for. He answered, "I am looking for my brothers" (verse 16).

This word from Joseph's mouth we may confidently regard as a harmony with the basic tone that runs through the whole life of the Great Joseph, and which is still valid today: I am looking for my brothers, even though He has not yet found them. He will not tire until he findsthem, as he so sweetly and clearly said in the parable of the lost sheep.

He searches for the lost **until He finds it!** Let us believe that He is a shepherd who does not stop searching until He has found! Otherwise, He would have disgracefully exposed Himself. For of a human shepherd He says that he does not cease until he has found what is lost, and He Himself should give away what the Father has given Him and cease to seek until He has found everything? Verily, through all the ages (eons) He searches **until** He will have found!

When his brothers see the "dreamer" coming, the thoughtmatures in them to kill him (verse 18). Reuben, however, prevents this attempt (verse 21.22), and through this service he has again found his way, established, employed; Joseph, however, has never forgotten this service to him. Reuben fell into the arms of his murderer brothers not to kill him.

In the silhouette, however, something had to happen that symbolized and very vividly represented what happened to the Great Joseph. He was not allowed to be killed, like his great archetype, but in the silhouette it could come to the vivid representation: they take him, bury him alive, so to speak, and then he is pulled out again. He went through the burial and resurrection figuratively. After his resurrection he comes to Egypt and becomes a great man and is allowed to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

All this is realized in such a precious way. There we see how clearly God knows how toform His model form down to the last detail. There is not a single trait missing, which would be important and essential to recognize His great and rich love thoughts towards Him, Whom He loved above all His brothers. That He loves Him more than all His brothers, we can see from the fact that He is and remains the only begotten, beloved Son of the Father.

Now his brothers, according to Reuben's suggestion, threw Joseph into a cistern, and they sit down to eat bread (verse 25). Joseph's brothers still manage to do this to this day. It is reminiscent of the image of the venerable lords under the gallows. Even today, the brothers can sit down in front of the house and be merry after they have laid their brother in the pit in cold blood.

Then they see a caravan approaching and the thoughtarises in Judah to sell the brother (verse 25-27). When the brothers agree to this, he must now fall into the hands of the Ishmaelite merchants. This, too, is necessary; for they, too, are to come into contact with the Great Joseph, into the realm of His love, though they have no knowledge. Also an Ishmael shall know his salvation, for the sheep of Kedar and rams of Nebajoth shall come upon His altar (Isa. 61:7), as a pleasing sacrifice unto the Lord. So Joseph will be sold to this Ishmaelite by his own brothers for twenty pieces of silver (verse 28).

Only ten silver pieces more were paid for the Great Joseph. A young slave was no longer valid; an adult slave was worth thirty pieces of silver. Also this train may not be missing in the picture.

So Joseph is sold by the brothers. When Reuben came back, Joseph has disappeared from the pit. There he gets into great excitement (verse 30); because he had to be responsible for the life of Joseph as the firstborn. The firstborn has a high task in the family. This resonates throughout the OT. Despite all the shameful things we know about Reuben, these traits make us think more kindly of him.

But now the sons of Jacob commit a wicked trick. Not content with selling their brother for twenty pieces of silver, they deceive their father in the most cruel way. Although they know that Joseph is alive, they deliberately set out to lie to their father. They slaughter a goat, dip Joseph's skirt in the blood, and send the blood-soaked skirt to their father (verse 31.32) to make him understand that the brother is torn, dead.

It is shocking how clearly the behavior of the house of Jacob is reflected until today against their brother Joseph, of whom they could know that He is alive, because a dead son of Jacob would never have gained such importance. Nevertheless, they do not want to believe that He is alive. Thank God that saying dead does not mean making dead. He lives! - in spite of the brothers who acted so shamefully against him by killing the one who is alive and who was about to ascend the throne in the land of Egypt.

38. Thirty-eighth chapter

But now comes a painful interruption. Pleasant things were told of Reuben in the previous chapter. But now this chapter tells us painful, offensive things about Judah.

Judah means the rulership in the house of Jacob; in the blessing of Jacob it is granted to him, which should actually be part of the firstborn, Reuben would have been the appointed leader and ruler of the whole house of Jacob, but he has forfeited that. Simeon and Levi likewise (ch. 49, 5-7); they also cannot be leaders; they are condemned to live scattered among the brothers.

The children of Levi were not given an inheritance in the land. They were entrusted with the service of the sanctuary, which should have been done by all the firstborn of the house of Jacob. It was, in a sense, a recognition of the next claim to priestly service.

Here, too, we see judgment and blessing paired. Being allowed to serve is a blessing, but dominion is lost to them. And so it passes to the fourth son, Judah. He is promised that it will not be stolen from him until the prince comes to whom it is due (chap. 49:10).

Now of this Judah we are told in our chapter how he acted with great unrighteousness by sinning against his daughter-in-law.

It is well known that according to the custom of that time, the later so-called levirate marriage, a lawful wife, whose husband had died without an heir, had the right to raise up seed for her first husband through a younger brother. The Pharisees referred to this lawful custom in their school example of the seven men who had a wife by asking our Lord, "Whose wife then will she be after the resurrection?" (Matth. 22,28). By this they thought they had caught him. But the Lord tells them that the sons of the resurrection no longer know sexual intercourse.

Thamar was a legitimate wife, although she was not from the kinship of Abraham. This also answers the question: Where did the sons of Jacob get their wives? Here we see (verse 2) that Judah had Shuah's daughter, the daughter of a Canaite as his wife. And also Thamar, the wife of his firstborn, Er, is recognized as a real daughter of Israel and a daughter-in-law (verse 6). But this

Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and so He caused him to die. Onan refuses to raise up seed to his brother and he too must die (verses 8-10).

When Judah, as the lawful wife of his third son Selah, denies her this third son (verse 14), Thamar wants to help herself to her rights by exposing herself to her father-in-law by the way (verse 12-18). But when she later brings forth fruit from Judah the ruler, he is so blinded against his own daughter-in-law that he wants to burn her (verse 24). But when she sends him the ring, cord and staff, the pledge demanded of him, his own sin and guilt are revealed (verse 25,26).

What is now of special importance: is there not a delicious instruction in the fact that just the name of such a woman, who is described to us here under such unattractive concomitants, is found in the genealogical register of our Lord (Matth. 1,3)?

She who is urged by Judah to come as a harlot to the marriage of obligation, from which the two sons Perez and Serech were born tohim, -- appears in the ancestral line of our Lord! And then still further Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah (Matth. 1, 3,6)!

Rahab was a real harlot, and also because she belonged to the exiles of Jericho, she should never have been accepted into the church of God - how does she get into this genealogy?

Moab was a son, begotten from the incest of Lot with his daughters. Nevertheless, from Moab came David's ancestress and thus also that of our Lord. And Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, with whom David committed adultery!

We are faced with things that preach the wonderful mysteries of God. I have already said in a previous chapter that I have learned to give thanks also for the unpleasantness of such chapters, which many in misunderstood shamefulness wish to erase from the Scriptures, and which they would prefer to eradicate, to eliminate, because they are ashamed of them.

The depths of God's wisdom and mercy open up to us when we see that personalities who come from the deepest human immorality, from incest, from public prostitution, are drawn into the realm of divine grace, and that God has made even these, in our judgment, ugliest phenomena in humanity - for to our thinking there is nothing more abominable than a fallen woman - serviceable for the revelation of our glorious God.

With this, sin is not permitted, approved, not made unsinful; it is not excused, justified, not given a pretty face. Rather, we sense a holy chastity even in these chapters. We see that even the deepest depths of lostness and depravity are not too deep for the hand of God not to reach in there to produce glory.

Let us think of names like Thamar and Rahab, which also belong to the genealogical table of our Savior, who came to seek the lost **until He finds it.**

39. Chapter Thirty-Nine

In the beginning of the chapter we find Joseph in Potiphar's house. Sold rudely by his brothers, delivered into the hands of the Ishmaelites, he is acquired by Potiphar, the chief of Pharaoh's bodyguard (verse 1). Then it is further told how the Lord was with Joseph, who, unlike his ancestors, did not come down to Egypt voluntarily, but had been sold there by his brothers.

It is a well-known and weighty saying that when two do the same thing, it is not the same. As Abraham and Isaac went, it meant to them a dangerous deviation from the path shown to them, and a great danger, from which only the faithfulness and kindness of the Lord could save them.

Joseph's way to that same perilous Egypt was marked out for him in the wisdom of God, not left to his choice; he had to go it as a bound, a captive, a sold one under the power of the strangers.

When God leads His elect to Egypt, it is something completely different than when they take the path therethemselves. If God places us in an extremely disgraceful way in the middle of the most attractive environment of the dangerous Egyptian world, then we can count with the greatest certainty on the fact that He confesses Himself to us, that He stands by us.

Very serious questions arise: How far may an elect of God get involved with the things of this world? Is he under all circumstances required, bound, to avoid from the outset all relationships - business, social, official, influential - in the world and with the world? Can the life of a servant, a child of God, be formed only in complete seclusion from the environment and from worldly influence? Is this possible and justified? Is it necessary to be completely and thoroughly secluded? --

To these questions, which have deeply moved the faithful for centuries, such a picture of life as the Scriptures present to us here in Joseph gives such a clear, unambiguous answer that no one can go astray.

It immediately strikes us that Egypt meant something completely different to Abraham and Isaac than it did to Joseph. Not because Egypt changed its nature in the course of time, because it "Christianized" itself and weakened or even completely gave up its ancestral, inveterate enmity against God. No! Egypt has never ceased its lust for domination. It has remained the same. But God leads His chosen one to Egypt; God puts him under severe pressure; but God also ultimately ordained His chosen one to be the ruler and savior of Egypt.

Joseph is such an unmistakable copy of the Great Joseph, the heavenly archetype, that no proof is necessary. And if we follow in the spirit the course of Joseph as he is led in Egypt, then he shows us with great definiteness and clarity that Egypt, too, will definitely come under the blessing rule of the chosen Son, as Isa. 19:25 says: "Blessed are you, Egypt, My people, and you Asshur, the work of My hands, and you, Israel, My inheritance!"

A wonderful triple league of future days, the like of which the world will never have seen until then! For these were the two millstones, Egypt in the south, Assyria in the north, between which God's people, the people of His choice, have been crushed in the centuries. Tribulation, anguish, heavy affliction has hit it soon from one side, soon from the other. Not only is it written: "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Matth. 2,15), but the purpose of God's ways just with His chosen people is that they stand in the midst of the two instruments of judgment, which God had used again and again to chastise and purify His people, in the midst of these terrible enemies, and they will be a blessing in the midst of the earth. This is what the image here suggests.

Joseph is lucky. He became what one would call a steward, a chamberlain. Servant does not come close to the meaning of the word. Joseph found favor in the sight of his master (verses 2-4).

Yes, if God Himself places His children in such tasks in the middle of the world, in the household of a completely worldly person, then He can also preserve, bless and use them there. This is a completely different chapter than when we let ourselves lust after such positions and stretch out our hands for influence, and want to bring the world around us under our influence according to our own thoughts and plans, which is quite a popular method.

With this bait hundreds of dear children of Godare caught today. One must get involved in efforts that have a deliberate world goal, that want to influence the world in a Christian way. God understands that, yes. But it is not without significance that His chosen child, His servant Joseph, did not even remotely entertain this thought of voluntarily taking the road to Egypt, but that he only got there under urge and compulsion.

We do not want to let this rebuke pass byunused. Because it means a great clarification of a very difficult matter, factual situation.

Many of God's children get into unexpected difficulties and darkness because they do not see and have not learned to distinguish between voluntarily getting involved in certain circumstances in the world and being forced by God to solve a very specific task.

It is precisely from this non-discernment that quite alarming dullings of happiness arise, and in most cases the result is quite different from what it is here. In the course of time, one discovers with deep sorrow that all the well-intentioned efforts are vain and nothing comes out of them but bitterness, disappointment, and that God's visible blessing is not felt.

God blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, so that he left everything to him (verse 5.6). But it is precisely in this so blessed position that the chosen one encounters a very fierce temptation. He had to learn and become aware that Egyptian soil is not Canaan, that Egypt is always a foreign soil, but that it means rights, powers, effectiveness, currents, movements that find a very loud echo in his own being; that Egypt is a tempting, dangerous soil, because we still live in the flesh and are surrounded by great weakness. I.e., even the blessed position, a really wide, great position assigned and secured to us by God, does not at all mean security against the charms and temptations of the surrounding and subjugated powers that rule and determine there.

Jukes interprets Egypt in the spiritual realm to the emotional life. This is very true. On the ground it is correct that in Joseph's life, at a very high level for Joseph, the most severe danger arose from the emotional life, from the spiritual being.

The emotional life of the renewed man, the man in Christ, is not stifled to us, nor should it be stifled. That is not the intention of God. He did not intend it to be destroyed, to be raped. God's intention is only that the natural disposition, which is connected with our spiritual being, should under no circumstances gain dominion, that we should never give ourselves into its arms - a danger such as Joseph is confronted with here (verse 7).

These are the most dangerous temptations, which find their strongest appeal in our own nature, especially when we know that we are visibly blessed by God, when He has led us to a certain height in life, when He has created a wide space for us beyond the difficulties. This is the given moment when we feel so easily inclined to throw ourselves into the arms of elevated moods, blissful feelings and sensations, to indulge a little spiritually. Who hasn't enjoyed indulging in feelings? This is the danger that threatens us.

But Joseph says, "How should I do such a great evil and sin against God (verse 8.9)". God can give and does give in such very tempting situations a clear view of what it means to surrender to such temptations. Therein lies the only secret of overcoming.

The overcoming of really hot, violent temptations never happens other than on the ground of a clarified, purified knowledge. No one should make an attempt to cope with temptations, irritations, lures other than on this ground, especially when it is a matter of the stirrings of our spiritual being.

These are quite different in strength and movement with the different people. With some, they can hardly be set in motion. With others they sound at the slightest impulse; and they have a hard stand, a hard fight.

But the living, effective word of God also penetrates through the spiritual man to the purified separation of soul and spirit (Hebr. 4,12). It is a precarious state if one cannot distinguish between blissful moods, feelings, sensations and the purified, clarified effects of the spirit. As a result, one is inclined to regard these moods as the only correct measure of the spiritual life. If the feelings are high, then one sees this as very pleasing; with love and peace, however, the opposite may be the case at the same time.

Feelings are not reliable, especially in people who are very soulful, in the literary and artistically inclined, who can easily be set in vibration, for example, by music, a colored glass in the window, by which consecrated moods and devotion can be produced; that is, not in people whose bliss depends on the colored glass.

The only effective, thorough remedy against this is the living word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword and which teaches us to distinguish between soul and spirit, so that we are on

our guard against the soul's own vibrations and say with Joseph, "How then should I do such a great evil and sin against God?" -- He who puts himself in danger perishes in it. Joseph does not.

Courage arises from clear recognition of one's own irritability. If we recognize that we are irritable and can easily be set into vibration, then we will not easily expose ourselves to danger. Then we have to strictly avoid the danger. This is then easily interpreted as hostility to culture. Christians have no sense for the beauty, highness, depth of culture, it is then said. Certainly one has a sense for it; but the question is whether it becomes a snare or not, whether one can overcome it inwardly or whether it grips one again and again. Whoever knows that it harms him to expose himself to such irritations, that it seizes him, grasps him, holds him, it will seem advisable to him to flee. Because on the ground only Egyptians are born.

Now Joseph, the innocent man, who has resisted to the utmost in clear knowledge of his God and Lord, is accused by this same woman in a vile, shameful way (verse 10-18). This is how it still goes today. The people who tempt us and lure us to surrender to the more or less attractive pleasures that set our inner man vibrating are the ones who accuse us in a shameful way.

Innocently, Joseph is accused by a lecherous woman to his master, who was very favorable to him. He becomes angry and has him put in prison. Now one of the sweetest features in the life of this chosen one comes out. Not a sound, not a syllable is uttered that he even made an attempt to justify himself, to set the record straight and to clear up the matter. Joseph would have had so much influence with his master that he could have presented him the true facts in a quiet hour. But then he would have had to accuse his master's wife terribly!

Therefore, one can get into a situation where one would only be able to justify oneself at the expense of such horrible possibilities. Because such circumstances existed, Joseph is completely silent and bears the injustice without contradiction, without any attempt of clarification.

Here is a delicious example of one of the most glorious effects of grace of the Spirit of God in a man who was really under the discipline and power of the Spirit, so that in the deepest innocence, in complete blamelessness, he can give up any attempt to justify himself when circumstances suggested to him silence.

There can also be other circumstances, as it was the case with our Great Joseph, our Lord, who knew how to suffer, who did not scold when He was scolded, and who knew how to be silent like a sheep before its shearer; circumstances where He was allowed to say: "If I have done evil, prove it" (John 18:23). Here again another ability is needed than the one just mentioned, a very deep, clear, purified knowledge.

There we see, this meets us at every turn: knowledge of His will, His intentions, thoughts, guidance, ways with us. We understand that such knowledge can never be gained in a purely doctrinal way, but that it will always be only a mature fruit of deep visitations and difficult guidance from God. For it does not lie in the area of our natural spiritual life, our thinking, but exclusively in the area of the inner life, the new, divine spiritual life. Thus Joseph is again in this trait a shadow image of the greater Joseph, who could silently endure.

But God was also with Joseph in the dungeon and procured him favor in the eyes of the jailer, who made him overseer and put him in charge of everything in the prison (verse 21-23), so that he himself cared for nothing. This was the clear divine vindication and confirmation for Joseph, the God-ordained path to his restoration. For those who have become quiet in their hearts before their God, this helps them to overcome the bitterness that comes with being unjustly condemned, condemned, bound and thrown into prison.

40. Fortieth chapter

The two chapters 40 and 41 have to do with dreams, with divine revelations. On Egyptian soil, this is the most natural thing. But we do not have to regard such revelations as inferior; on the ground this is rather the given. We must consider this, and then we can make an application of these things to the ways of God with Egypt, in which the ways of God with the world are reflected with the arrival of His chosen one. There we encounter clear, delicious things.

Two of the king's chief officials, his court baker and his cupbearer, are thrown into the dungeon with Joseph. Both are guilty, undoubtedly; both have sinned against the king, perhaps instigated a court revolution. They are guiltily imprisoned in the same dungeon in which Joseph innocently languishes, and the chief of the bodyguard unexpectedly placed Joseph in charge of the king's unfaithful servants (ch. 40:1-4).

There is clearly reflected for us the double meaning that the touch of a guilty and deeply bound world receives from the presence of the innocent condemned. Here, too, we clearly see the same features that we find again on the hill of Golgotha.

Here are two criminals in the company of Joseph, in the midst of which is the innocent man. The one goes in to life, the other is condemned. We find the same thing on Golgotha: the avenger repents and enters into life; the other goes away into night and darkness. We see with what precision and subtlety all these models of the OT are executed.

The effect here is also the same as we encounter later in the book of Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar: one knows nothing to do with God's revelations; the inability to understand them becomes apparent (verse 5-8). Even the learned king fails here (chap. 41,8). Only the beloved of God can give information, here Joseph, there Daniel. If we ask for the reason, the answer suggests itself: because they let their eye be opened by the spirit of God.

When the cupbearer speaks of a vine (verse 9.10), we see how the whole dream is quite adapted to his life situation, his circumstances. What is told here, we still find today on murals and sculptures, which are uncovered by excavations. There it is illustrated how the cupbearer holds a goblet in one hand, while he crushes a bunch of grapes with the other and lets the juice flow into the goblet.

The ancients also drank like us, but yet they enjoyed more unfermented wine. It is not necessary to produce alcohol.

The cupbearer sees a vine on which three branches are green, blossoming and bearing fruit. He has Pharaoh's cup in his hand and is exercising his office. The beloved of God gives a simple interpretation. The shoots mean days.

As often as we encounter three days in the Scriptures, we may certainly expect that there is talk of a resurrection in the shadow image and in the great reality. Thus we read e.g. with Hosea: He has visited us after two days, that we should live on the third (chap. 6,2). So Abraham lifts up his eyes on the third day and sees the mountain, because he has to sacrifice his son, who then rises as if from the dead. And on the third day, Jonah is spit out by the fish again, pointed by Jesus Himself to His own resurrection from the dead.

With great certainty, therefore, here in the dream face this condemned man is shown a gospel in silhouette. He has not planted his vine himself, it was not his own work. The baker, on the other hand, is struggling with his own works and is hanged. Here is a vine of divine planting, in which one not only perceives a wonderful mystery, similar to that of Moses' almond stick, which also greened, blossomed and bore fruit, but which also, according to the context, points to the life process for the whole world, which will one day quickly be brought to fruition.

Three shoots mean three days: after three days the cupbeareris restored to his office. Joseph promises him resurrection from darkness and complete restoration in office, dignity and honor (verse 11-13). Then he adds the words: Remember me then in mercy and commend me to

Pharaoh (verse 14.15). We know the result of this intercession: the cupbearer forgot him two years (verse 23; ch. 41, 1.9-13).

We do not blame dear Joseph that when the Lord gave him the interpretation of this dream with great clarity, Joseph could not turn any other page in his heart and mind than the longing to get out of the dungeon and darkness in which he was kept innocent as soon as possible. It is not sinful, if in distressed situations such thoughts are suggested to us by the guidance of God, to which we then attach our desires.

This does not happen with Joseph in a violent way; he does not make it a means of pressure, although he could have used it to offer everything that could help to carry it out. No, Joseph only says it in all simplicity, in the hope that it would not remain without effect. The effect did not fail to materialize, only it did not occur quickly as he had wished. God also acknowledged Joseph's indirect prayer and later, after his time of tribulation was over, brought him out of prison and to even greater glory than this pardoned cupbearer.

When the court baker heard the good interpretation, he also told his dream (verse 16.17): Three baskets he carried on his head, in the uppermost baking for Pharaoh, but from which the birds ate. In this there is a fine trait. The children of this world, the religious, who carry on their heads baked goods, not for God but for Pharaoh, are deeply influenced by the delicious visions that the pardoned, redeemed may behold, and are then encouraged to turn also to the elect of God, to ask for light and enlightenment from them about riddles, mysteries, darknesses in their lives that they cannot understand. But then one sees again how sadly they are struck down because they lack the inner readiness to receive; and they can then hear words of death to death from the same mouth that spoke words of life before (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

It is quite unmistakable how the principle is expressed here that God intended a twofold effect of His gospel in this world. We are dealing here only with a reflection of the present course of this world. We are under the sign of the suffering Joseph, not under the sign of the ruling Joseph. Let us not forget this!

If we want to make a transfer and application of this principle to the guides and ways of God also with His message of grace and salvation, then we must consider the time well. The principle applies only to the present, to the time when Joseph is in prison, misunderstood, sold in the same world in which he is to be Savior and Redeemer, which will happen later in glory.

Do we not see an extended application of this principle in the fact that the blessed gospel always has this effect, that it is an odor of life to life or of death to death? But if one wanted to conclude from this: these effects are final, then this would be a miss. Certainly, they are God-ordained, unavoidable, naturally given effects of the gospel, connected with love for the world, but they are not the final, ultimate measure of what God has given in powers into the world through the same Joseph through whom He will perform His saving deeds in the world, later - not now. Later, but not now, all the land of Egypt has been blessed and saved. These are such simple traits, -- if we keep them, we will not go wrong.

Joseph could only tell the court baker that in three days his execution would be carried out. And as he said, so it happened: the court baker was hanged (verse 18-22).

41. Forty-first chapter

After two years, Pharaoh had a dream (verse 1). The Pharaohs were similar to the great kings of the Babylonians of excellent endowment of the mind, as we know from the excavations. Those ancient cultured peoples had a high-level insight into the interrelationships of nature; and it is on

this ground that God talks to Pharaoh. Their worship was worship of the forces of nature. Bull, crocodile, snake were worshipped, deified by them. That had driven to the polytheism.

Our modern paganism is exactly the same, although it does not take the crude forms and does not worship oxen. But if the world still believes, it believes in the forces of nature, which it calls natural laws. God has long since been deposed. So we have exactly the same chapter here as in Egypt.

On this course God meets Pharaoh and shows him almost frighteningly a double face.

First, He takes seven fat cows, which are eaten by seven lean cows (verses 2-4). This must have made a shattering impression on the king. He had to ask himself: What does this mean when these forces of nature, these lean, diminished forces eat up the well-fed ones in such a way that it is not even apparent to them?

The second vision of the fat and lean ears of corn (verses 5-7) moves along the same lines, except that it is a phenomenon from the plant world.

What Paul summarizes in this word: "To them - the Jews - is entrusted what God has spoken (Rom. 3,2)", that is already foreshadowed here, before it was spoken, before Moses made the first stroke of his pen for his records. Already the chosen one of this generation is entrusted with the revelation of His counsels, and it will be no different in the future. What future revelation is to be expected will be offered from no other source. Israel, like the cupbearer, will be reinstated to present the will of God to mankind.

The repetition twice says that God will certainly do it and send it in haste. Joseph gives this explanation when interpreting the dreams (verse 32) for which he had been summoned. But he also gave advice to prevent the coming distress and to save the people in the land from misery and ruin (verse 33-36).

And now comes a pleasing progress. The shaken king lets himself be told that! Unlike Nebuchadnezzar later, he bows under the revealed truth of God. It has become delicious to me that here in the Scriptures the first example is given of the fact that the glorious Joseph, destined for future glory, is taken from bondage forever, never goes back, but finds recognition, honor, distinction from the Father, who does to Him on the new soil what Pharaoh holds out to Joseph on his soil.

Everything will be accepted by Pharaoh without any compromise and will be carried outpunctually (verse 37-49) - a delicious reference to that time when The Great Joseph, rejected into the night, will see that the great world power will bow down before Him and say similarly to Pharaoh's servants: Where is such a man of such wisdom of God (verse 37)? The world can do nothing better than to follow this advice and example.

We have here right at the front of the Scripture the first announcement of the world power despairing of itself in complete helplessness and bowing to The Nazarene cast out in darkness, despised.

The whole world comes to its senses once again, but only through severe trials. This is a clear path; there cannot be any other way, not even for the church of God, just as Joseph went through suffering, endurance, being mocked and subjugated through no fault of his own.

For any saint of God who is called to glory, does the way go anywhere else but through Calvary? There is no other way for those born of dust than through deep judgments. Of course, this is different from the judgment of damnation, but the effect is the same in both cases. There is no other way for the elect or for the damned and cursed world than through judgments.

"When Your judgments pass over the circle of the earth, the peoples of the circle of the earth will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). Only when they have becomecompletely bankrupt of their world problems will this occur.

There lie goals for thinking men who must shake body and soul at the deepest level when they ask themselves the serious question: What will happen one day when the plebs, the poor

people, eat up the stratum of the rich and yet do not grow fat? When the lower classes awake, devour the wealth and then no improvement is to be seen? Then Pharaoh, the high policy, stands helplessly there: What will become then once? Only Joseph knows a way out. That is then the given moment, when God's Joseph finds and offers a solution against these terrible burning questions. It may come late, but it will come.

Most noteworthy is the fact that Pharaoh not only called Joseph savior of the world, but also gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, the priest of On, in marriage (verse 45). Following this, we are told that Joseph passed through the land of Egypt. His remarkable age is also mentioned. He was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, that is, in ripe young manhood (verse 46).

It goes on to tell how Joseph carries out the wise counsel he has given, which has earned him his high position, and makes provision for the coming time of need (verses 47-49). But before this time of trouble came, two sons were born to him (verses 50-52), whose names are significant, as Scripture itself tells us.

The name of the firstborn Manasseh: God has mademe "forget" my misfortune and that of my father's house, and of the second son Ephraim: God has made me "fruitful" in the land of my misery, tell a piece of his life story.

Here we have very clearly before us two clear biblical examples that illuminate the important fact that the biblical names have wide significance for history itself.

By the way, the series of articles about the biblical names in the "Prophetisches Wort", year 1911, and in the "Zionsfreund" from the Hamburg Judenmission (1903) are highly recommended for writing. In these names vast treasures open up to us, apart from the fact that we also get a better understanding for one of the greatest promises of Jesus for the new time: "I will give him ... a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives it" (Rev 2:17).

It should be emphasized, however, that these two sons, born of Joseph'smarriage to the Egyptian priest's daughter, appear without propriety among the sons of Jacob, not only recognized as great sons, grandsons, but virtually incorporated into the twelve tribes. This is very significant. In this it is clearly expressed that Joseph received one of the privileges of the firstborn, namely a double inheritance, as he really was the firstborn of Rachel.

We have seen how the firstborn of Leah forfeited his birthright, as did Simon and Levi who followed him. That is why only the fourth, Judah, enjoyed the firstborn: The leadership passed to Judah, as it appears quite clearly in Jacob's blessing (chap. 49, 3-12). But Joseph as the firstborn of Rachel receives a twofold inheritance through his two sons.

So Ephraim and Manasseh both inherit on equal footing with the Ten -- Levi gets no inheritance; to Him God says, "I am your inheritance." -- They inherit on an equal footing with the real sons; they are not considered grandchildren who must first take their inheritance from their father, but they are considered two independent, equal tribes in Israel.

The fact that the descent of the two sons of Joseph from the Egyptian priest's daughter was no obstacle for their equal rights as sons in the house of Jacob, as it happened in other cases, is, with all determination, according to which any mixing of the holy seed with the nations was forbidden before it came to the formation of the people, a clear indication of a later time in which the relations of Israel to the world of nations will be completely different, as we are told e.g. in Zech. 8, 20-23.

These are preliminary, foreshadowing features of the new relationships that will be commonplace in future times between the sons of Jacob and the nations, but the fact remains, the sons of Joseph have no part in Egypt. They do not inherit from the mother, with the mother; they do not become priests in Egypt. They are full, full sons of Jacob.

42. Forty-second chapter

Now we return to the fate of the sons of Jacob and come to their course to Egypt.

The famine is pressing. The cattle had no more fodder. Jacob's wealth consisted mainly of cattle. That had suffered in the drought, and that meant a considerable loss of wealth. They lacked grain, but not the means to buy anything.

There we encounter the precious trait of how God has ways and means to slowly but clearly set His mill in motion. In the plan of God it was determined that this Joseph should be deliveredby his brothers into the hands of the heathen and dragged away to the worldly Egypt. This was part of the education of Joseph, the education of the future chancellor of the land, which is a wonderful image of the leadership of the only begotten son of the Father.

Furthermore, we also see in a luminous way the special relations between the destiny of Joseph and the destiny of the whole house of Jacob. In the previous chapter we have already encountered features that will find their great historical fulfillment only in future ages, when the nations will receive their calling to enter the kingdom of God as peoples, after God has resumed the history of His people Israel and His anointed one will face the peoples, as Joseph faced Pharaoh, to show the way to salvation for people and land.

But we must not forget that between the formal breaking off of God's relations with the house of Israel and the resumption of the people's history of the administration of salvation there is a gap, an intervening space, about which the apostle Paul instructs us in more detail in his mystery of the body of Christ. This whole period is filled with the work of the Spirit to gather and complete the members of this body to full maturity and growth.

Therefore it is not strange that in our chapter and in the following chapters we have to do with an exalted Joseph, who is not known as such to his own brothers and is not recognized by them. And even if in this so graphic Joseph story the thought of God about the body of Christ, taken from the nations, is nowhere pronounced, we may still say that although the mystery of the body of Christ has not been proclaimed by the mouth of the prophets, nevertheless in a hidden, concealed way events are presented to us here which actually belong into the framework of the age of the church.

The Joseph of God is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty, and while He has already taken heaven, He is nevertheless for the whole world and in a very special way for the people of choice a stranger, unknown, unknowable. But in a very definite characteristic way the relation between the exalted Christ and the whole world of nations has here been prefigured.

It is shown how the Son has come to be regarded at least by the one Gentile people as the representative of all peoples (nations) from which the congregation is gathered, while His own people do not recognize Him. God has foreseen and decreed this long before, and now it is coming true.

The principle that prevails throughout Scripture, which cannot be inculcated often enough because we are not properly educated in this line, is that God's way of carrying out His thoughts of love with Joseph and the house of God is clearly none other than the way through severe judgment. There is no other way.

We are taught, admittedly, in the conventional way that while the judgment of God plays a major role, the preponderant, almost the entire judgment is interpreted to be of the final, conclusive character of the judgment.

Very few of God's children have an understanding that in their own life and walk, the judgments of God are only transit points to life. Their life is therefore predominantly surrounded by black, heavy shadows. The whole life then becomes a judgment.

It is only too well known that over the heads of many undoubtedly believing children of God the thought of a future judgment stands as a threatening one. They have not understood that for them the judgment can no longer have terror.

Undoubtedly, we will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ. And let no one believe that we will be rewarded if we have been disobedient. There is no reward for naughty children, for unfaithful stewards, for brothers who have set others back. There will not be a reward for every child of God. Dear children of God will get their punishment, but it does not mean that they will be lost (1Co 3:12-15).

It can come to such a point that a worker of God, who has built on the only foundation laid in his service, loses all his work, but he himself is saved, should it be even as through fire. This is a serious truth, but not a threatening one, since the loss of life is never in question.

The questions of life are decided at Calvary. We live by grace. Our life is never the result of faithful service. We are not made alive or more alive because we faithfully serve and faithfully administer. This has nothing to do with life, but it has to do with reward and punishment.

It may be that at His appearance the children of God will have to stand back inshame like disobedient children when daddy returns home and will not dare to look Him in the face (1 John 2:28). But they will not be chased out of the house, even though they may not be spared shame. They have not forfeited the right of filiation.

These are simple lines that many of God's children do not understand and therefore confuse everything and let the enemy make them afraid of the future judgment. It should first and foremost drive them to faithfulness, that as a child of God one does not seek one's own, does not live for oneself, but for Him who gave Himself for us because of our sin, and rose from the dead because of our righteousness. It should warn us not to risk our reward, even if we do not lose our life.

We have found a deficiency in this very point in many of God's children, which is to be seen as a consequence of insufficient education and training on the biblical lines, as an inevitable result of limiting the gospel to the simple line of saving one's own soul, all else being of no concern to them.

This means crippling our life that God has givenus. Many of God's children are not responsible for this because others have passed it on to them. Stunted, crippled children of God abound, who do not have the growth God intended. This is deeply, deeply painful and breaks your heart when you see it.

So it happens that not only many children of God do not have the view for their own life, but that they also lack the ability to understand the judgment, the blessing of the judgment, the blessing that we may let ourselves be instructed by the word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword and penetrates soul and spirit, also marrow and leg (Hebr. 4, 12.13), so that one is finished with self-will, but gives Him the opportunity to submit everything to Him. If one avoids this, one suffers damage.

But even less do many of God's children understand the greatest implications of God's judgments of love. That is why we want to put our finger on it, so that it will be possible for us to confront certain circles.

The ways of God's judgment never mean His final goals; they rather lead to another goal, namely through judgment to glory. And this basic law always applies without exception. There is no judgment of God, which would be for His own sake, which God imposes in order to conclude; under all circumstances, they are means for the purpose of life, for the purpose of attrition. There are probably unsparing but not endless discharges of God's wrath. They are only means to an end beyond them. Everything must serve Him to carry out His will of life and love.

This appears to us here in the story in a very clear and lovely way. While the famine had nothing pleasing about it, in the hand of God it was a very effective means of bringing these sons

of Jacob, who had grievously sinned, now face to face with their brother Joseph, even though they simply do not recognize the brother now literally exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on whom their eyes can rest (verse 8).

One has asked whether such a thing is conceivable. But do not forget that when Joseph stood before Pharaoh, he was already thirty years old and that between seventeen and thirty years the facial features of the people, as for example by the growth of the beard, undergo a quite significant change. If we add the strange environment and the strange costume in which their brother met them, then this non-recognition is quite explainable.

Here is a vivid picture of what Paul (Rom. 11,8), the Lord Himself (Matth. 13,15) and Isaiah (chap. 6,10) said: "With their eyes they will not see, nor with their ears hear, so that they will not understand with their heart". This is spoken out of the glory of God (Isa. 6:1-4). Let us not forget this word in the future. As certainly as this word is born out of the glory, as certainly the glory of the God, who for centuries, millennia put His people in hardening, darkening, will appear again to lead them into the full splendor of His glory.

If one drives through the St. Gotthard, one hears only the rolling and thundering, but nobody is worried, because everybody knows it that, as soon as one will have reached the end of the tunnel, the sun of Italy laughs. Along the millennia of Israel's sidelining, it moves in extreme darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, but at the end of the track, the splendor of grace shines on it.

So the brothers are driven to Egypt by necessity, but Jacob does not let Benjamin go with him (verse 4), which is easy to understand. This was a circumstance that is significant for the story, because that is where the Great Joseph hooks in.

He recognizes his older brothers at first sight (verse 7), just as older men in thirteen years do not change like younger men between seventeen and thirty years. But he immediately saw that one was missing, his own brother, the son of Rachel, who cost his mother her life.

It was foreseeable and quite natural that the brothers had to come to Egypt for the second time, and that circumstance must serve Him to pierce their conscience in the deepest way (verse 21.22). God knows how to arrange His guides and providences in such a way that He can deal with the people He wants in the most effective way. We should learn this better, because there is no question that we also have to deal with children of men who are heavy on our souls, of whom we wish that something would happen to them. Now we are so easily tempted to do this ourselves or to write to others to get them around. Or one has a heavy pressure in relation to someone whom one does not communicate and so one lets one's mind be depressed for weeks, months, years. This is also a type of unbelief that is very much at home among God's children.

And then we easily form the opinion as if God does not know how to help man or as if He has lost sight of the matter. Certainly, we want to present our affairs to God. We should not be misunderstood as if we do not value intercession. We are only firmly convinced that our heartfelt intercession should be permeated by the clear, confident certainty that God likes this soul much better than we do and that He will take much better advantage of His time and opportunity than we do.

Our prayer is never lost. We do not pray to a bottomless pit, nor out into the air. We have double representatives before the Father at all times. We haveone with the Father, the eternal High Priest, who is constantly at work, which does not make our intercession superfluous, but also does not allow the thought to arise that He could forget our request and we would have to tell it to Him again and again; and then we have the Spirit, who is in us, who represents us with sighs that are inexpressible, as it pleases God.

Our intercessory service should be done with great chastity, not with pushing and shoving against the living God. However, this does not mean that we want to put our hands in our laps. Let us always bring our intercession before His face because it has promise, but let us never let the

ugly taint of unbelief or impatience enter into it. We have prayed much in unbelief that lacked the profound confidence that God will work His ways in all circumstances and that He knows the best means and the best time to do it. Earnest prayer in faithful belief will experience miraculous things. To this God gives very clear samples of His ability to help.

But we could have savedourselves a lot of sighing, plagues and pressure. Under no circumstances do we have the job of carrying the burden in such a way that it presses us, makes us sore, but in such a way that the awareness remains that He carries the heavy end, He carries the main burden and we help a little. This is how the Lord carries, and He knows exactly when and how to intervene to deal with the difficulties.

We will not go into the details of our chapter. The story is familiar to us. It is sufficient to summarize it briefly. We hear Joseph talking to his brothers, but they do not recognize their own brother when he confronts them like an enemy, as it were, in his manner, which can be called harsh, cunning, so that he makes their hearts heavy and their consciences hot, and they break out into lamentation: "We have brought this on our brother Joseph, because we saw the anguish of his soul and would not hear him" (verse 21). But a clear breakthrough does not yet come to them.

Then it is further told how Simeon is kept as a hostage for the return of the other sons, including Benjamin (verse 19); how the others get back not only their sacks, but also their money in them by secret order (verse 27.28); how they tell their father about the events after the return home (verse 29-33) and how he is full of despair when he hears that he should also let his Benjamin go with him the next time, because he would be brought into the realm of the dead - this is how the word Sheol is to be rendered everywhere in the OT - by a possible accident of this son of Rachel (verse 34-38).

43. Forty-third chapter

Jacob refuses to lethis youngest son go with him, but he must allow it; for hunger hurts. God knows how to arrange His judgments so that His purpose is achieved. So Jacob also lets Benjamin go with him (verse 11-15).

But before it happens, a side circumstance is reported in passing, and this is a delicious trait. It is Judah who stands up for his brother Benjamin and who makes himself liable for him, who wants to be a guarantor for him (verse 1-9). For from Judah should come the guarantor who would stand up for His brothers and for all mankind before His Father.

How true Judah wanted to make his words, how bitterly serious he was about it, he shows when they came to Egypt for the second time and he comes before Joseph to carry out what he promised his father (chap. 44, 14-36) and how he stands up for Simeon.

And now they come the second time into Egypt (verse 16). This second time we want to keep in mind. It has been pointed out on various occasions how Egypt makes the greatest use of this very important fundamental law of divine action, that all God's thoughts, in His wondrous wisdom, when first thrown into humanity, meet with a complete lack of understanding and do not come to pass; but the second time God goes through, and that with unfailing certainty, in spite of our inability, though through judgment.

God never changes His plan; the basic idea remains; at most He extends it. But He always continues along the same line. This is a key to understanding the work of God that is highly recommended, but we must be careful with it.

The clearest example of this occurs tous at the beginning of mankind in the first Adam, who is contrasted with the second in the NT. The first one failed. In the case of the first, the divine plan was not carried out, because his son was in his own image, not in the image of God. "But as

we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:49), the second Adam.

That is why we can never expect a third, because God reaches the goal with the second directly, infallibly. One soon feels it out alone; if He does not succeed the first time, it is not God's fault, but it is an inability, insufficiency of man, whereby the power of darkness is given further leeway.

However, the other will also becometruth with infallible certainty: "As **in Adam** they **all die**, so in **Christ** they will **all come to life**" (1 Cor. 15:22), become partakers of His own fullness of life. The opposition is flawless.

Another clear example of this kind is this. The first time Jacob's sons come to Egypt to make purchases from Joseph, they do not recognize him, but the second time he makes himself known to them.

Further back, however, lie similar things. In the life of Abraham, the call to Abraham (Genesis 12:1) to leave father and friendship is undoubtedly the second one, because according to Acts 7:3,4, the family had already set out at God's call from Ur in Chaldea, but they were delayed and it took the death of the father before the exodus was carried out. Then Abraham came to the land of promise.

It is similar in the whole holy history. The first time Moses failed, the second time he becomes the savior of his people and leads them out of Egypt, guided by a high hand. But Moses, the first great leader of the people, does not bring them to Canaan, only to the desert, and there the people, who had gone out of Egypt, perish: only the second, Joshua, brings the newly resurrected people to the Promised Land.

The first king of Israel, Saul, is a disappointment, he was a man after the people's heart; the second, David, was a man after God's heart and is confirmed.

David was first to undertake to build a house for God; but God says, no, not you, but your heirs.

Not the first David, but The Second, is the King Who will finally give rest, not at the first, but at the second time of His appearing.

The great thoughts and ways of God once take a clear certain beginning, but then they encounter the human inability to understand and respond tothem. Then God says, as it were: If you are not ready, then we will wait. I can wait - you must wait. But then He intervenes a second time in His time, and then it must go, no matter what the cost.

This is a precious master key for the whole prophetic exposition. Another example of this is the promise of the restoration of the people of Israel as a nation.

The first restoration was given by God to the Persian kings. They gave the order to build temples and cities. The first time, however, the restoration did not succeed; it was not a full creation and subsequently went completely bankrupt. Israel had proved itself to be a people of faith and had never again practiced idolatry. God had completely healed it from that.

That return to Palestine was temporary, but not **the** restoration. But when God sends out another time to gather His people, not one claw (Ex. 10:26) will remain behind and all the people will be saved (Ezek. 39:28). Everything His mouth has said will be fulfilled. Then one will no longer read of only provisional fulfillments, which have been real ones, though not exhaustive ones, but one will rest in the great Second and Final Fulfillment.

The second time Joseph met his brothers was so different from the first time. The change in his behavior was quite tremendous. They might have been afraid (verse 16-24). Can we blame them for suspecting that behind the friendship they witnessed, they sensed a trick to make them slaves? This suspicion is also prophecy, since their descendants really had to become slaves. The friendliness shown to them by their brother, which they could not make up, lets them draw conclusions on the fate threatening their descendants.

Now the table is served. The table companions are seated according to age. The firstborn always go first, the younger behind (verse 16-33). For us, who know the context, the explanation is easy. But not for the brothers.

Joseph gives them silent, mysterious hints, in which he wants to give them something to think about. Did they not have to say to themselves: What does this mean? He is so familiar with our circumstances! Could he be the one we sold? Who knows if these thoughts really went through their minds? And then they had to be overcome by an even greater horror. However, this impression may soon have given way to a more cheerful mood.

So much is certain that today, when the emblematic features are executed, the thought passes through the minds of thousands from Israel: Is not He who is so highly regarded by the Gentiles our Messiah in the end? They see themselves surrounded by so many features for which they cannot find any other explanation than that they must be related to their Messiah.

Of course, we have presented Him to them so Egyptian that the brothers are not able to recognize Him! We "Christians" have presented their own brother to the children of Israel so genuinely pagan that it is understandable if they have a deep aversion to accept our Christ of the nations.

Our "Christianity" is decomposed by pagan essence! We have infused it with an infinite amount of pagan philosophy. To the Great Joseph we have put on an Egyptian skirt and combed the beard. The Gospel of Christ has been made into a mixture of pagan philosophy and divine truth.

If the Jews have a deep abhorrence of this, I do not blame them. It will not be any different until they are shown their own Messiah in Jewish garb and no longer as He comes out of the pagan lathe. - –

Individual Jews we gain well, however, in contrastto all blessings accruing to them from it, they mean a real loss for their own people and a quite questionable gain for the Christian church. The way to the recognition of their Messiah has only been made more difficult by the way in which their own King has been presented to them.

44. Forty-fourth chapter

In this chapter, we still encounter some quite wonderful traits in the story of Joseph and his brothers that need to be mentioned. We cannot go into everything.

A very strange change took place in Joseph's behavior toward his brothers when he metthem the other time. They have not yet recognized their brother, but they are at his table, eating, drinking and being merry. And everything is going well. Simeon was with them, Benjamin was honored, and they were graciously dismissed. The sacks are filled. And now they go out to the city and breathe a sigh of relief. There they see horsemen behind them. They are overtaken by them, stopped and accused of theft. They say that a silver cup from which the great Lord prophesies has been stolen (verse 1-6). With indignation they reject this. They are innocent; they are incapable of such a shameful act. Proof of their honesty is the returned money from their first purchase, which they found in their sacks (verses 7-9).

None of this helped. The court master insisted on examining their sacks. With a good conscience they open the sacks. He chose the oldest one, which seemed to be all right, but here it had a strange purpose. For the courtier had received the order from the master to put the cup into the youngest's sack. He had all their sacks examined in turn, and sure enough, the cup was found

in Benjamin's sack (verses 11-12). The courtier declares: The guilty one goes with me; the rest of you are free (verse 10).

This excuse was fair and just. The facts of the case left no room for objection. Benjamin was the guilty party. It can be seen that no evidence, no matter how clear it may be, can in itself provide a secure legal basis on which to pass judgment.

The result of the investigation makes them dismayed, although they are convinced of the innocence of the brother. The calculated procedure of Joseph reveals a feature of the state of mind of the sons of Jacob which is capable of filling us with joy and satisfaction, but also with a certain embarrassment. There is a standing together and a holding together, which unfortunately is not always found among brothers, and which is also rare among believing brothers. They are determined to go and fall with the One (verse 13).

And so they go to Joseph's house. The waited for the development of the things he foresaw.

This unanimous standing together is a trait that is still pronounced in the character of Israel today, in the same depth and strength as here. If there is an attack from any side on the fate, the lot, the reputation, the peculiarity of Israel, then the attacker has all of Israel against him.

This is something overwhelming in contrast to the cool attitude in Christian circles when any part of the community of Jesus Christ is attacked. Only rarely do the other brothers and sisters in Christ come to the aid of the attacked. If a Methodist is attacked, then perhaps the Methodists go along, but a Baptist does not. So they say: What business is it of ours?

So it is with the different members and groups in the family of God: doctrinally they believe yes and every year they like to emphasize it before the whole world that they are one in the Lord - by heredity. But if someone gets involved and brings something unpleasant to light, then everyone else is happy to wash his hands of it: "Look, this is your private affair; you are not one of us. This is how theory and practice, doctrine and deed are juxtaposed.

The togetherness of the Jews, which appears in every attack, is one of the most delicious gifts of the Holy Spirit, the after-effects of which we find so excellently preserved in this people, despite all its depravity and other deplorable and pitiable characteristics. There we can still learn a lot.

In the accusation on the part of Joseph, Judah appears as the spokesman (verse 14:18). He did not know how to explain the facts of the case, nor could he guess. But he asserted their innocence. They had not committed any crime. They were innocent of the theft of the cup. Judah did not believe for a moment that Benjamin was guilty. So there was no question of that.

But something else came out of the whimsical procedure almost unexpectedly, reflecting what we sometimes encounter in spiritual life. If we have been guilty on certain lines, it is not always these very things where God touches us. Often He enters the conscience in a roundabout way and illuminates deep damage where we would have least expected it. He brings us into inner distress on a side that at first has no connection with what we are actually guilty of.

Judah must confess: "God has found iniquity in your servants" (verse 16). God's art of education is so very different from the one we are so fond of. Our process is fit for form and straightforward. Our God understands better. He comes around our backs in ways we don't even suspect. We should remember that. Sometimes we want to help certain souls, and we think that if we don't help them at the sore point, then we can't help them at all. God thinks and acts differently, but they end up where He wants them to be.

He does not touch them in their wicked sin against their brother, but in an event for which they are not to blame. There they are given into Joseph's hands, who had to call back to their conscience their other grave guilt in a shattering way. "God hath found the iniquity of thy servants". Already once this trait came out when they were in distress (ch. 42,21).

Yes, our God knows how to talk to people; and we too will be able to do so, the more thoroughly we want to learn it also in our proceedings with others whom we are to serve in a

pastoral way. God gives with certainty that in all such cases, when we have calmly placed the matter in God's hands, we will find opportunity to talk to people about such incidents of indebtedness, provided we are willing to take advantage of the opportunity presented to us. However, in our experience, there are also not infrequent cases where it is difficult, delicate, or even impossible to approach people straightforwardly. Let us confidently leave such difficult matters to God and trust Him to unfailingly achieve the desired goal.

Joseph insisted that the man should be his servant with whom the cup had been found (verse 17). Just there, however, a delicious trait is revealed in a prophetic-pictorial way: the spirit of substitutionary intercession, of standing up for the (apparently) guilty. The facts were not subject to doubt. Benjamin was the guilty one.

Judah, however, becomes an intercessor for his brother in the face of the great judge before whom he stands. He draws a vivid picture of the events leading up to the second coming of the brothers: how his brother Benjamin had been bound on his soul, how he had vouched for him, how his father would sink into the realm of the dead if Benjamin did not return home after his other brother had already perished, and how he now wanted to take his place (verses 18-34).

These are wonderful words. There, the innocent has stepped into the crack for the guilty, the accused. From the spiritual point of view, it may seem a certain presumption to stand up for a brother. One can justifiably refer to that scriptural word Psalm 49:8,9: "No brother can redeem another, nor reconcile him to God; it costs too much to redeem their soul; he must let it stand forever".

There is no possibility for the sinful man to get another one free even by giving up his own life. That is completely impossible. But we are dealing here with prophetic images, which always have something of natural imperfection and inaccessibility. Even though it is impossible that a brother could give himself as a real substitute for the other, the prophetic image clearly shows the great fact that one of the tribe of Judah, a real innocent and sinless man, had to and did step into the breach for the guilty.

As He testifies with the prophet (Is. 63,5): "I looked around and there was no helper and no one to help Me, but My arm had to help Me". And: "Nobody takes My life from Me. I take it from Myself. I have power to let it go, and have power to take it again" (John 10:18). This could only be done by the One in Whom the Scriptures have been fulfilled, which testify of Him and point to Him.

45. Forty-fifth chapter

Joseph could not abstain any longer. After he had let all the others go out, he burst into tears before his brothers (verse 1.2). This was such a holy, delicious hour for Joseph; it was such a pure, glorious triumph of his brotherly love against guilty, shameful brethren, such as has never again been seen in history, but such as shall appear in the highest perfection when the Great Joseph shall make himself known to the whole house of Jacob.

That is certain, that God never designsprophetic images, which He does not intend to execute. "All things must be fulfilled that are written of Me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms" (Luk 24:44).

And while Jesus in a way certifies the usual threefold division of the Bible in this word, we see at the same time how He stamps the whole OT as full revelation on Him. The books of Moses make no exception to this. As justified and necessary it is to take them historically, it would be wrong if we wanted to limit them to their historical meaning. Because then we would deprive

them of their highest most delicious meaning. They are an inexhaustible treasure trove of prophetic truths which have only been fulfilled in the smallest part and which, as far as the glory of the Son of God is concerned, will still be fulfilled.

Therefore also the pleasure of the spirit in the detailed description of the glory of the future Christ. It is impossible that any of His sketches would lack execution.

We all experience very similar manifestations on the part of the Lord in our lives. But when we come to Him as guilty people, how does He meet us? He does not overwhelm us with reproaches, but embraces us in His arms, draws us to His bosom, gives us the kiss of peace, and forgives us all shame and disgrace (verses 3-15). - This is how Joseph's brothers are treated. This is the experience of every child of God.

But here it is about the very special relationship, which is not present in our life, about the whole house of Jacob, which was guilty of the shameful sin of selling, of betrayal and is still deeply guilty. This is what gives this depiction its unique charm and significance, which even in fulfillment will not be felt by anyone as it is by the house of Israel.

When all the kindness and gentleness of their Great Joseph will one day come before their souls, it must cause a pain in the whole house of Israel such as cannot be felt by anyone else. That is why Joseph wants to be all alone with his brothers (verse 1). The Lord will probably somehow know how to arrange that at the final revelation of His love against His brothers from the house of Jacob, the nations will not be witnesses.

But this will not apply to the church, for it is His body, and it will have come to a completed consummation and be with the Lord before this prophetic trait in Joseph's history will find its realization, of the process of which the great world of nations will see nothing.

The meeting of the Lord with the physical brothers of the house of Jacob, which will be one of the most touching that ever happened in the history of this or any other people, will probably take place in the innermost sanctuary.

In the words of Joseph (verses 4-13) a gleam of light of divine thought shines upon the ghastly depth of the sin of which his brethren were guilty, that one can but worship. Joseph certainly did not speakthem from his spirit; one cannot but suppose that the spirit of Christ was in him when he spoke to his brothers, and that in them is faithfully reflected the mind of the Great Joseph, and so also in the manner with which He judges the deep guidance which His brothers have experienced when He presents Himself to them.

By telling them, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt" (verse 4), he by no means spared them the humiliation, the self-judgment before him; he told them their shameful sin on their heads. What a wonderful thought it is that Joseph utters, notwithstanding that sin is judged in the first place. Let us hold on to this!

Our consideration of God's thought of the restoration of the lost, sunken world can only be that it never happens at the expense of the sinfulness of sin. Those who think and speak in this way fundamentally misunderstand it.

This is not a shallow universalism, which makes of the great, holy God a pajama daddy, but sin is judged ruthlessly, unsparingly. But this is not the end of God's ways, but a passage and beginning to a true life out of and in God.

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold" (verse 4). How they will be crushed in heart and conscience under these words! Then they saw their shamefulness: they were murderers who wanted his death. But Joseph says, "Do not be ashamed; God has sent me before you" (verse 5). Isn't that wonderful?

This cannot mean that they should not be mindful in their deepest soul of the terrible sin and disgrace they had committed, but it does mean that he pulls the last sting out of the wound he has struck. The deep beating was not for destruction, but for salvation. Everything happened so that would be revealed in the clearest way how he can heal, restore.

We would not have a crucified Savior if His brothers had not delivered Him into the hands of sin. There we stand before mysteries that we will never fathom. But the fact is undeniable.

How could this have happened if such a horrendous sin hadnot been committed in humankind, such as the rejection of the Son of God? Salvation would have been impossible without the cross.

But this never means the justification of such a horrible act. This has infinitely much to mean, but not that by this bottomless deep corruption the grace and love of God could be prevented, thwarted, shortened. Rather, it only forms the ground on which it can unfold.

Therefore, according to the Scriptures, God has decreed **all things** under sin, that He might have mercy on **all** (Romans 11:32), and where sin has become powerful, **grace** has become **almighty** (Romans 5:20). Where God has given the widest scope to sin, His **grace** is **overflowing!**

Their sin, committed against their brother, had to be the means in the hand of God, for their own future salvation, as Joseph says: "Do not grieve or be angry, for **G o t t** has sent me before you to save your lives" (verse 5, 7.8).

Can a human being express it more clearly than is done here? Our God is once again a master of the art of form. Why do we humans not see that these deepest ways of sin are only means in His hand to give Him the opportunity to reveal His exuberant fullness of life in these brothers. Because this is shown to us so vividly and clearly.

"It is not you who have sent me here, but God" (verse 8). One would almost like to tremble back before such a clear, definite statement. But there it is; and that it was spoken in the spirit and sense of Jesus Christ, the New Testament revelation offers the most palpable evidence.

According to Acts 2:22,23, Peter spoke the same powerful truth in the same rough, granite way in his sermon to the crowd. The apostle does not take the slightest hesitation to simply declare through the Spirit in the face of this guilty crowd that the Messiah was given up to sinners according to God's premeditated counsel and plan, that therefore in this rejection there was by no means a thwarting, a prevention of the divine intentions with Jesus Christ, but that in it a straightforward fulfillment had taken place. Does this make the murderers innocent? As he says on their heads: "You have taken him and killed him".

And the same prophetic image of the profound, delicious mystery of divine action meets us in the formation of the people of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 12), in the institution of the Jewish Passover. On the tenth day of the first month, every householder had to take an innocent, unblemished lamb, keep it until the fourteenth, and then lay hands on it, strangle it, and paint the blood on the jamb and lintel of the house door.

From the blood and life of the lamb slain with its own hand, salvation, cover and preservation blossomed for the whole firstborn in Israel. In the same night, in which the Egyptians had to break out in dirge and lay down, the whole people of Israel was allowed and had to eat the flesh of the lamb slaughtered with their own hand. Whoever did not eat this meat was cut off from the people; he had no part in salvation and preservation.

Thus the whole people went out as a redeemed one from the bondage of the service house of Egypt. We see here, then, the mystery so deeply hidden that Israel must slay with its own hand, head by head, hand by hand, the Lamb of God, from whose blood and life not only the firstborn church has salvation, but from whom comes the complete deliverance of the whole house of Israel.

This Passover has found only a partial fulfillment until today. Because we still stand in the sign of the first birth. It has not yet come about that the whole people of Israel would have appropriated the flesh of the Son of God.

Therefore, Christianity has no right to prevent the believing Jews from celebrating the Passover. There still lie unfulfilled precious truths, which no one is able to guard except the Israelite who has become a believer. To take away the precious Passover from him and to give him

the Easter eggs as a substitute for it is unspeakably abominable. No Jew can understand this and he must turn away in disgust and disgust that we wanted to give him such a poor substitute of our Easter eggs for his so beautiful Passover.

"Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers spoke to him" (verse 15). With this, the Godly relationship was then completely restored. This is also one of the things Peter speaks of in Acts 3:19,20: Israel should repent so that the time of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord who is to come, which will infallibly happen when the Lord appears again.

At His first coming, these times did not occur. They have suffered a postponement to us too well, for the purpose of the representation of the church. But with God, postponement is not annulled. This refreshment will certainly happen when there will be a living contact of the house of Israel with its brother Joseph.

The news of Joseph's miraculous meeting with his brothers comes to Pharaoh's house. Pharaoh sends the brothers home loaded with grain and instructs them to come to Egypt with their father. They are to leave their household goods behind. The best in Egypt shall be theirs (verse 16-20).

These are traits that we see depicted and unfolded in the history of Israel, but especially in the prophetic writings. The goods and treasures of the nations are to be supplied to Israel, it is to be given abundantly. With the exodus from Egypt this came to the execution. The Israelites had been forced to work as drudges; no wages were paid to them; Egypt had to make up for this. Richly loaded with treasures they leave the land of slavery.

The prophets see the days coming when the children of Israel will be brought back to their land from the lands where God has scattered them, along with the silver and gold that will be given to them in the name of the Lord. Then it is foreseen that the pardoned children of Israel will make a worthier use of their goods and treasures than the nations have understood.

It is a terrible thing to see how the enlightened peoples of Christendom, whom God blesses with goods and millions upon millions of which are poured into their laps, know nothing better than to use these riches in murder weapons, to shoot each other into the ground, and on top of that they imagine that all this is done for the sake of peace. That is shocking!

There must first be a general League of Nations before there can be real peace, just as peace could not come to us until we became bankrupt.

It neatly lifts the heart to see how the prophetic account gives this people as an example and model for a distinctly blessed use of silver and gold. They acquire more precious metal than their numbers would indicate. This small group of Jews exercises a paternalism and domination over the stock market that is quite out of proportion to their numbers and their political importance. This is not by chance. But Israel will one day know how to repay its wealth in the service of the kingdom of God, so that one will only be amazed.

When Jacob hears that Joseph is still alive, he can no longer stay in Canaan. He must see his son.

"And **I s r a e l** said: I have had enough that my son Joseph is still alive! I will go and see him before I die" (verses 25-28). How a little word says so much! Here it is not the name of Jacob, but Israel, as a testimony to the fact that Jacob undoubtedly stands and speaks in the spirit of God, and that he moves in a godly line.

46. Forty-sixth chapter

As resolutely as God refused Israel to go into Egypt, so resolutely does He speak to Jacob to do so (verse 1-4). It was a great kindness on God's part that He does indeed hold out the prospect of returning His seed to the land of promise, but does not say how severe would be the birth pangs under which His people were to be born. But He gives him the definite promise: "I will make you a great nation there" (verse 3).

The strange word in Matth. 2:15 (Hosea 11:1) refers to this promise: "Out of Egypt I have called My Son." The word is double-meaning. We are entitled to understand by Son the people (Israel) as a nation. This is not subject to any doubt. Thus Scripture speaks (Exodus 4:22), "Israel is My firstborn son."

This does not apply to an individual Israelite, but to the whole people as it stands in the great family of nations, since the Most High set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel (Deut. 32:8), i.e. His leadership, geographically and historically, with Israel happened unmistakably according to the destinies of the nations and His behavior towards them was determined by His rule with His people Israel, as it is obvious to an insightful view, if one considers the geographical position of the promised land, which lies in the center for army and trade purposes of the previous cultural world (Ezk 38,12; Is 19,24), and if one considers the ease of traffic in all directions.

The peoples have quite a correct understanding of this. They are building Israel, they have Jerusalem in mind, without writing it into their program. The Suez Canal, the Cape Town-Cairo Railway, the Baghdad Railway all aim atthis one center. The Oriental policy will not find its solution in Constantinople nor in Rome, but in Jerusalem, which lies in a corner of the earth from which all great, world-moving spiritual currents have started. God knew why He chose such a location for His people.

Therefore we can draw the conclusion with full justification that with the restoration of the people of Israel in the land of their fathers the great world and nation history cannot possibly come to an end, but that with it only a new beginning and upswing will take place. For in all the 3,500 years of its existence up to the present day, God has not come to an end with this people and its mission, but so far there have only been judicial paths, terrible, sharp chastisements and visitations that God has taken to wear it down for the restoration as a people in the land of the fathers.

God needs more than 3500 years to prepare the people for the land and the land for the people in order to carry out His intentions. Then a new gate will open for the development of the whole human race on earth, and from this new geographical and cultural center a revival of the nation system will take place, of which we have no idea yet. For wherever a nation has blossomed briefly today, we see that it has just as quickly perished again.

In future times, however, ruin is impossible. When the peoples of the earth are no longer blinded by the prince of darkness, they will have room to live freely. Before it comes to that, there will of course be a mighty strife in heaven and on earth. But everything in Scripture indicates that the judgment will not be a conclusion, but only a terrible reckoning for the past history of nations, which is to be followed by a beginning of a new history of nations, which lies beyond the execution of the judgment.

"There I will make you a great nation" (verse 3), the strong God had said to Jacob. God, in His wisdom of education, arranged that Israel should be born into a nation in the land of Egypt.

A strange extension of this line, however, is when Jesus' flight into Egypt is referred tothe prophet's word: "Out of Egypt I have called My Son" (Hosea 11:1). It is only surprising and strange that we are not told anything about Jesus' stay in Egypt. We are simply told about such a stay. After that Joseph is commanded in a dream to return to the land of Israel, because there was

nobody left who wanted the life of the child. What Jesus' stay means for Egypt, the story is silent about.

In view of this prophetic word, however, one may well conclude that, as once Israel itself, so also the appointed king of Israel must have a temporary sojourn in Egypt.

This should be a clear hint that God has not given up His thoughts with Egypt in relation to the future history of the people of Israel. Somehow Egypt will have a strange meaning for the history of Israel. This is actually expressed in that passage Isaiah 19, 19-25. The pillar or the painting stone mentioned there is probably an allusion to the great pyramid of Giza, which stands exactly in the center of a geographical circle section, which is limited by the coast, but whose center lies at the same time also at the border.

Thus the double determination, which seems to be a self-contradiction, wins its completely satisfying solution. Now this pyramid shall be a sign and testimony to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.

If Jesus had to come to Egypt as a boy, He could no more be its Savior than He became one for His people. But at His second coming the Egyptians will recognize the Lord. So (verse 22) Jehovah will again turn judgment to salvation.

So we encounter here the same central idea that we have found many times before. The Egyptians will turn to the Lord and implore Him, and with the Assyrians, thus both original enemies of Israel, serve the purposes of Jehovah. Third, not first, Israel will also join them, and they third shall be a blessing in the midst of the earth.

The Lord will then say, "Blessed are you Egypt, My people, and you Assyria, the work of My hands, and you Israel, My inheritance." A wonderful word.

From all this we can see what a strange significance Egypt will have in the course of the future history of the world. But today it is already evident that a feeling of it goes involuntarily instinctively through the world of nations.

47. Forty-seventh chapter

The experience reported here, namely that Jacob came to Egypt with seventy souls, that he had a meeting with Pharaoh and was told by him the land of Goshen (verses 1-6), has become one of the most important turning points in the history of the house of Jacob.

None of them had any idea of the consequences of this move from the land of promise to the land of Egypt. That this move was in the counsel and plan of God is beyond doubt.

The Lord Himself had only recently assured His servant Israel: "Do not be afraid, go to Egypt. I am with you, the strong God (chap. 46,3).

Now Jacob meets the prince over Egypt land. After Joseph had brought his father in to Pharaoh, we are told the simple word, but repeatedly: Jacob blessed Pharaoh (verse 7-10). It might have been strange for the great proud king over a mighty world empire that this prince of the herd, this foreigner, this stranger who came from the north, met him as a blessing.

We know from Scripture what this means. Without a doubt, it is that the higher blesses the lower. Pharaoh probably had enough understanding for this. On the part of the father Jacob it was for Pharao a prophetically-symbolic action, which, as we recognize from the past history already sufficiently, points with its finger far out into the future. In the foreground there is already a great fulfillment. We still meet it later in the following chapters.

Pharaoh was blessed in an overwhelming way by the wise and skilful administration of the son of Jacob, who made it so that the whole land of Egypt, fields, cattle, children of men, came

completely into the possession of the king (verse 13-26). This was, of course, a procedure that is very sharply condemned by unbelieving people and to which naturally thinking people take great offense, as to so many other things in the word of God.

But we must not forget that here againwe have to do with great, clear models, pattern forms of our great God. And if already here in the foreground there is such a comprehensive, tremendous fulfillment of these prophetic blessings, which God let pronounce over the head of Pharaoh, with how much greater justification we may expect distant, future, more magnificent fulfillments of the blessings of Jacob over Egypt and its king, in whom we are confronted with the world powers.

That Israel enters the deep shadow of heavy judgments means an indescribable blessing for Pharaoh and Egypt. For it is undeniable that terrible visitations came upon Israel in the wake of the move of the house of Jacob to Egypt.

There we have again in a veiled distinctness -- they are recognizable and yet not written onthe outside of the curtain; but he who has eyes to see sees them, -- features that come out so clearly in the NT, of the hidden counsel of God, that Israel's going into judgment means a fullness of blessings for the world.

But the acceptance of Israel means infinitely more blessings than the judgments on Israel. For if, according to Romans 11:12,14, Israel's fall has become riches for the world, then undreamed-of blessings must flow to the world through the entrance of the full number from the nations to the God-ordained position with the Lord and the subsequent salvation of Israel, and if their rejection means reconciliation for the world, then their re-acceptance will mean nothing else for the world than a resurrection!

So in the present passage (verses 13-26) comes the first historical fulfillment of this blessing of Jacob upon the head of the great world empire.

By immensely wise administration Joseph brings the entire property of the Egyptian people - fields, fields, cattle, personalities - in a quite natural way into the most complete dependence on the monarch. This means, after all, the preservation of their lives, the rescue and preservation in the quite horrible famine.

But this trait need not disturb us. On the contrary: it only illustrates again quite clearly that also the last, great, all-embracing saving thoughts of God can never be separated from the heaviest, sharpest judgment visitations of God. This is the hue that all these pictures show. Only through judgment does one go to life, salvation, preservation, grace.

Above it, with unmistakable clarity, it is this Great Joseph who, by miraculous use of the given difficult circumstances, of the terrible emergency, brings it about that everything comes into the hands of Him to Whose right hand He is exalted.

We can easily draw the conclusions ourselves, without coercion and effort. God's Great Joseph, Whom He has exalted to His right hand, will be able to bring the whole people, the whole population of the earth, to complete bankruptcy and to convince them that it is He alone Who means salvation for their lives and for everything they have: and that this lies solely in their becoming the undivided property of God with body and life and everything of their own. This is shown here as simply as many words could not make it clearer to us.

Before his end, Jacob instructedhis son not to bury him in the land of Egypt and swore an oath to him about this (verse 29-31). In Hebr. 11,22 we are not told about Jacob but about Joseph, that he did command by faith from his bones.

From our history we see that Joseph took these thoughts, this deep inner opinion on the question from his father Israel; but it is only with him that it is emphasized as a proof and example of the importance and power of faith.

Here, however, it is the archfather himself who makes Joseph swear that he will not be buried in Egypt, that his bones will be buried only in Canaan. This was probably one of the most powerful

testimonies that Jacob could give, also as a warning to his Joseph, who stands here as the son of his father, not as a lord but as a subordinate who receives a commission; and it was probably the most effective way of making it clear to Joseph, in whose hands the fate of the house of Jacob was placed, that under no circumstances should it come about in the lineage of Jacob to make Egypt his homeland. It must never settle there. More expressively than by the oath on it this could not be represented at all. This behavior is a proof of how faithfully and conscientiously he faced the danger, which was so close, to send himself into the new situation; to think that it was God's unmistakable guidance not to take Canaan, but Egypt land permanently as his residence.

Joseph would have had what it took to founda dynasty. The temptation to push through, to take a higher position, was so close to him. Another of them had later again the most extensive opportunity to let dynastic desires arise: Moses, who is brought to court and raised as heir to the throne. But also for him, as for Joseph, the obedience of faith is decisive, which must reject in faith all temptations to choose Egypt as the dwelling place of the people, in the face of all desires to settle permanently in the rich land.

So Joseph swore; and he not only kept this oath, but passed it on for himself to his children and brothers.

48. Forty-eighth chapter

When Joseph is told his father is sick, he brings his two sons to him. In verse 1 they are named in the order in which they were born: Manasseh and Ephraim.

But right after that (verse 5) we see a new proof for the thought we have already spoken of several times, of the first and the second. Again, the first is not the one who was actually the firstborn by nature, to whom the blessing of the firstborn passes from Jacob, even though Joseph definitely wanted and sought this, but only the second. In the natural order of verse 1 a change occurs; the order of grace demands the reverse. Thus Jacob puts Ephraim before Joseph already at the beginning of his farewell speech (verse 5).

After verse 6, Jacob speaks of sons born after Joseph, although we findno trace of them in the story. There must have been such, but they do not appear anywhere, not even in chapter 50:23.

Joseph led his two sons on Jacob's right and left. He intended that the firstborn Manasseh, led in his left hand, would be blessed by the right hand, and Ephraim, led in his right hand, would be blessed by Jacob's left hand (verse 13), just as Isaac intended that Esau should inherit the blessing of the firstborn.

But Jacob stretched out his left hand on the head of Manasseh standing on the right, and his right hand on the head of Ephraim standing on the left, thus crossing his arms (verse 14). Then thinking Jews discovered early on that this miraculous blessing occurred under the sign of the cross, because Jacob crossed his arms. The cross means the reversal of the natural order, the crossing of all one's own thoughts, however justified.

Joseph had the best natural right for himself to expect his firstborn to inherit the promise of the firstborn (verse 17.18). But with God, all natural aspirations are simply crossed (verse 19.20); a whole new order of things occurs through the cross.

49. Forty-ninth chapter

In this chapter, the outgoing patriarch speaks of days to come. The prophetic stamp is clearly impressed on his words. Not only are strange things said, but a significant distinction is made between the ten brothers and the two firstborn, Judah and Joseph.

It is also worth noting that only the entire house of Joseph is mentioned in this blessing. Ephraim and Manasseh have already experienced their incorporation into the twelve tribes in a special way and received the blessing proper tothem, the tribal blessing (chap. 48, 14-21). Therefore it is quite appropriate that in our chapter only Joseph appears as the father of these two sons.

In the case of Reuben (verse 3.4) we have a poignant example of how cursing can mean passing over. One can forfeit his birthright, but still remain a son. The privilege passes to another. This has not been properly understood.

How little it is the case is shown compared to the word of Jehovah, He lovedJacob and hated Esau (Mal. 1, 3.4); Rom. 9,13). Never was Esau condemned and cursed, nor was he lost in our sense. But he lost the blessing of the firstborn and could not get it back, though he sought it with tears (ch 27:38; Heb 12:17). This is a simple but very important truth, which again confronts us so clearly here.

In the words about Simon and Levi (verses 5-7), the word is noteworthy: "Cursed be their wrath," -- not **them**. We have here an example of how a mere judgment on an act of wrath may include a blessing. For Jacob speaks in deep indignation, with displeasure. This does not look like blessing, but it does look like severe, sharp condemnation. But what is now pronounced in the form of judgment, punishment, visitation, has been transformed into wonderful blessing, especially in the house of Levi.

Five verses each deal with Judah (verses 8-12) and Joseph (verses 22-26). Both are given a significantly larger space in the context of the Father's blessings than all the other brothers.

Verse 8 says Judah's leadership will berecognized.

Verse 9-11 is one of the most delicious Messianic prophecies of the Lion of Judah's tribe.

Regarding verse 14, it should be noted that the donkey was held in higher esteem then than nowadays. We have a contemptuous opinion of him, since he is distinguished neither by his figure nor by his sonorous voice; but he is an exceedingly useful animal in the Orient.

The words about Dan (verse 16.17) betray a certain amount of deceitfulness.

In verse 18 there is a strange, delicious interruption in the midst of the blessings: "Lord, I wait for Thy salvation." It is as if the heaviness that came to the house of Israel through Dan -- Dan was the tribe through which idolatry was first introduced into Israel -- had in a special way weighed deeply down the prophet's mind and wrung from him this hopeful sigh, "Lord, I wait for Your salvation," in the face of the calamity that one of my children will bring to my people.

A very peculiar promise is madeconcerning Benjamin (verse 27).

Finally, Jacob gives specific instructions as to where he wants to be buried (verses 29-32). It is striking with what jealousy and sharpness even today the grave of Abraham is guarded by Ishmael. One can enter all the holy places of the Mohammedans in Canaan and Arabia, but Abraham's grave is guarded so jealously that it would be downright life-threatening to go in there.

50. Fiftieth chapter

After the customary embalming and public obsequies of the Egyptians over the passing of Joseph'sfather (verse 2.3), there was the transfer of the body to Canaan and the solemn dirge (verse 4-13).

This seven-day celebration and lamentation (verse 10) is probably the historical reason for the custom, which still exists today in Israel, that after the death of a relative,one does not sit on the

chair for seven days, but rather sits on the ground, laments the dead and says the prayers for the dead (Kaddish).

We know what it means for pious Israelites and how terribly whole families are affected, even deeply damaged and shaken, when any member of a familyfrom Israel abandons Judaism by converting. Then the relatives of this family must not only sit on the ground in sackcloth and ashes and say kaddish for seven days as usual when a death occurs, but for fourteen days. It counts as heavy as a double death. All members of the family are then considered cursed. This is the meaning of causing a Jew to break the connection with the whole of the people.

That the place was called "the Egyptians' lamentation" (verse 11) is evidence of how little insight these Canaanites had to rightly understandthe events that were taking place before their eyes. If the children of Israel are rightly accused that their eyes are kept from rightly understanding Jesus, then this is certainly not less true of the peoples who are most clearly touched by the things of God without gaining a right understanding of them.

These Canaanites could have easily obtainedinformation and learned that it was about the possession of the land. It did not step here on Egyptians, but the sons, the direct descendants of the fathers, who had emigrated recently from exactly this country to Egypt and who gave with their action a clear testimony in view of the Kananiter that these "Egyptians" made claim to the country, in whose death lap they wanted to bury this man.

The land for it belonged to the Hittites, but Abraham had used and acquired it for an inheritance burial. Like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob is also buried there.

With all the knowledge that the Canaanites had of such events, it is revealed to us here that they did not grasp the allegorical meaning of the action. Otherwise, they would not have protested against the Egyptians, but would have rejected the testimony of the sons of Jacob, which was taking place before their eyes.

And then comes a repetition of that significant event when Joseph made himself known to his brothers (verses 17-21). It is especially beautiful in Scripture that it repeats such meaningful teaching, words and examples with great fondness. Of course, it is not an exact repetition; the external circumstances had become quite different since then.

But it was only due to Joseph's brothers that they were driven into great distress after their father's death. In the long meantime, they had seen him, gotten to know him, experienced only good and love from him, and yet their conscience woke up.

One must suspect the brothers of having made up the story for themselves. Of a message of Jacob to Joseph in favor of the brothers the Scripture says nothing at all. This is a very explainable but human machination, to use a mild expression, which these dear sons of Jacob allow themselves in order to appease their brother Joseph, who, according to their conception, now no longer needs to show consideration for his father, but can take the opportunity to cool his chin in order to pay them back for the terrible disgrace they caused him.

The friendly answer of Joseph, however, is used by our great God as an occasion to let the whole depth of mercy, which He has put into His servant Joseph through the Spirit of grace, spring forth as a prophecy for the second time (verse 18-21). This is one of the most delicious confirmations of God's deep, unshakable counsel of love, as it is so poignantly expressed in the scriptures of the OT (Isa. 49:15; Jer. 31:20).

Admittedly, we encounter accusations in the psalms and prophets that do not seem tocorrespond to these promises. In the Psalms, the Lord is sometimes reminded of His promises and the deeds He has done, and then it goes on to say, "But You are hard on us," and they complain that they cannot understand how God is handing Israel over to the enemies. But then again the prayers are so joyful and full of gratitude over the great, rich, deep thoughts of God's mercy and love.

The miniature Bible translates verse 19: "Am I then in God's stead?" and Luther: "I am under God". Certainly the words can be put in the form of a question, but the Lutheran version probably corresponds better to the context. The miniature Bible probably presupposes the sense: Not to me, but to God you are to confess. He then refuses that they seek forgiveness from him; they should seek it where it is to be found, with God.

In itself, there would be nothing wrong with this translation. In fact, however, we take from the story only the idea that Joseph is a model for us of the Great Joseph, in Whom the power of forgiveness, love, grace comes to the breakthrough over all natural revenge and retribution. And this coincides better with the other translation: "I am under God", also agrees with the content of the other words: Fear not; for it is God who has brought me and you here. He certainly points out to them that His guidance is an order, determination of God Himself. But with this, their sin is neither excused nor denied.

In verse 20 is the same delicious thought that he expressed in a different form in ch. 45, 5.7.8. But when he says: "You intended to do evil to me", he touches them in their evil spirit, and this will happen one day when "they will mourn as one mourns over an only child, and as one mourns over a firstborn son" (Zech. 12,10), when it comes to an encounter of Israel with their Jesus.

In the words: "But God intended it to be good", we are confronted with that simple, yet powerful principle, which the Lord puts into the form of a command, an order, an admonition to His own: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12,21). This is what Joseph does here; and in it is clearly reflected this deepest attitude of his and our God, and from this point of view it is a completely impossible thought to assume that our great God cannot expect us, His sinful children, to overcome evil with good.

But if God expects this from His spirit-born children, then should He not be able to accomplish the same? That would mean turning everything upside down that God has spoken in His Word!

Joseph lived in Egypt with children and children's children (verse 22.23), in the clear understanding that it was not his business to conquer Canaan by the sword and exterminate its inhabitants by taking advantage of his position of power for his brothers and their children. The possibility of doing so was there for him, as with the Lord who said to His disciples, "Could I not ask My Father, and He would give Me more than twelve legions of angels" (Matth. 26:53)?

He could have, but he did not. It would certainly not have been difficult for Joseph to persuade Pharaoh to undertakethis conquest, which would have been based on the specific promises of God. But in doing so, Joseph would only have anticipated God and made a mistake. So he remains in Egypt and bows to the certain promise of judgment: "Your people shall be servants in the land of Egypt four hundred years" (Genesis 15:13), in obedience to God.

The significance of Joseph's decree to bury his bones in the land of promise has been discussed above.

And now comes the very peculiar conclusion of this significant first book of Scripture. It closes with Egyptland (verse 26). This is a strange ending of this Abc-book of our God.

The very figure that stands before us in such rich saturation of glory colors, the very most beautiful, noble appearance on the ground of the whole first book of books, the figure of Joseph, is placed in a coffin in Egypt at the end of this book. Why does the book end like this? What does it want to tell us?

We cannot but find in it again a confirmation of the whole conception which we have gained of these processes, namely that they never exhaust themselves but reach far beyond themselves into the distant, distant future. This is what these words underline for us here, as if with a broad stroke.

We know it must come to the transfer to the land of promise. The lines that seem to have been broken off are not over. They will find their continuation in a completely different land, on a different soil.

The testimony of this servant does not end with his being laid in the tomb in the land of Egypt, but a glorious, magnificent resurrection awaits him. It is only a scattered seed of glory for the resurrection and elaboration in future times.

This is the brief outline of the content of this short word, in which the finger of God points beyond the historical significance of these events into wide, wide ages that have not yet dawned today, but which are in the offing.

The most glorious thoughts of our God may lie dormant for a long time, as in a coffin in the land of Egypt, but the day of resurrection and implementation is coming, and everything else is for this one purpose, that the seed may bear much fruit.