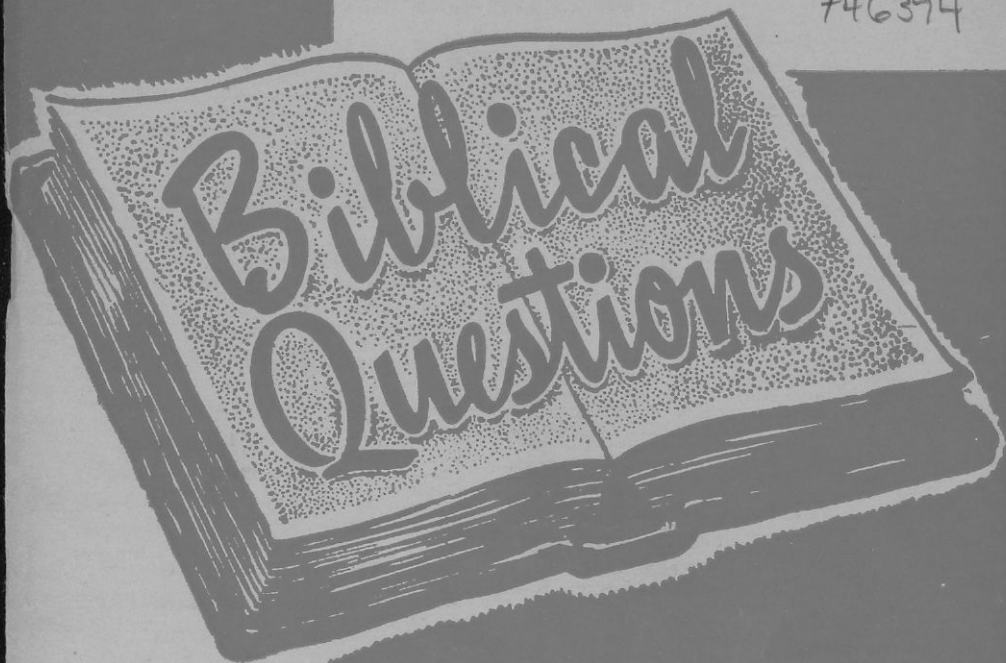


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A MANUAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL  
AND COLLEGE STUDENTS AND  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLES AND ~ ~  
ADULT DISCUSSION GROUPS ~

**By REV. RUDOLPH G. BANDAS**

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Young People's and Adult Groups

BY  
REV. RUDOLPH G. BANDAS

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## Chapter I

# The Primitive Pair and Its Descendants

### *The Unity of the Human Race*

It is the accepted teaching of the Catholic Church that Adam and Eve were the first progenitors of the human race. There have been writers, it is true, who maintained that men existed before Adam. Some who for one reason or another wish to remove all possible connection between the whites and the blacks, insist that several families lived contemporaneously with Adam so that he is not the father of all. Scripture, however, clearly asserts that no man existed when Adam was created: "There was not a man to till the earth" (Genesis 2:5); Eve, too, was the first woman created. "For Adam there was not found a helper like himself" (Genesis 2:20). St. Paul affirms that the whole human race is derived from one man; "God . . . hath made of one, all mankind to dwell upon the whole face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). The unity of the human race is necessarily implied in the Catholic doctrine concerning original sin; all men contract original sin because they all descend by physical generation from Adam: "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned." (Romans 5:12).

### *Unity of the Human Race and Experience*

Experience confirms the teaching of revelation. All things tend to prove that the human race

has not been composed of markedly different species but that there has been but one type of men from the beginning. A few examples will readily establish this fact. Men of all countries have rational souls, are capable of acquiring knowledge and of assimilating the sublime moral and religious truths of Christianity. Again, men of all colors and languages have the same kind of body. In America, Japan, or Australia, and at all intermediate points, all men have the same anatomical structure, physiological operations, and build; they all have the same warm blood, the same number of pulse beats, the same average length of life, and the same human sicknesses; they can intermarry and bring forth children who in turn are capable of parenthood. Finally, all peoples have, and have had a religion. More than two thousand years ago Plutarch said: "You may find a nation without a king, without cities, without laws, without coins, but you will find none without a temple, without prayers, without oaths, without a God."

#### *The Wife of Cain*

But does not the Bible say that Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, went into a strange land and there wedded a wife? How was this possible, if Adam and Eve and their sons were the only human beings in existence? Let us see what exactly are the words of Genesis: "And Cain went out from the face of the Lord, and dwelt as a fugitive on the earth, at the east side of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived, and brought forth Henoah" (Genesis 4:16, 17). All that the Bible says is that Cain lived with his wife in a strange land and begot Henoah. The natural solution is that Cain brought

his wife with him. In Genesis 5:4, we read that Adam "begot sons and daughters." Now, as St. Augustine says, Cain's marriage to a sister, especially in the beginning when necessity demanded, was not opposed to the primary natural law. Almighty God, who created one man and one woman and decreed that from them the earth should be populated, approved of this measure of intermarriage between brothers and sisters. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that "there were giants in those days," that the men and women of that time possessed an unadulterated bodily vigor. Their intermarrying did not impair the strength of human nature. Today the Church forbids marriages up to the third degree inclusive. The two reasons for which such marriages were permitted in the first days are lacking; men are no longer giants, nor is it necessary for the propagation of the race that they should marry close relatives.

*Unity of the Human Race and Color*

Against the Biblical and Catholic doctrine that Adam and Eve were the first progenitors of the human race pseudo-science registers a vigorous protest. If men descend from a primitive pair, how explain the differences in color among the various peoples? Whence arose the white, yellow, and black races? This difficulty is not so serious as it seems at first sight. Color is merely a matter of sunlight playing upon the skin. The browns and the yellows and the blacks are men in whom the process of sun-burning has gone on for thousands of years. Men are black at the equator where the sun's rays are most direct; they shade off in the temperate and frigid zones where the sun's rays are oblique. The



basis of this difference of colors is a certain pigment under the skin which varies its shade with the climate and mode of living. When this process had continued for a long time, especially in the beginning when human nature was more flexible, color finally became stable. At any rate, we would hardly stare at our friends, who come home tanned from three weeks at a seashore, as beings of another race.

*Unity of the Human Race and Languages*

Nor does the great number of languages in the world point to different human families. This variety is due to the dispersion and migration of peoples. History shows that two peoples who originally had the same language and who later on separated, finally developed entirely different languages. Local conditions, provincial ways of viewing things, the naming of new objects found in the district, developed the original language along different lines. Consider, for example, the many dialects spoken in England alone; but who will say that the English are not all of one species? Or consider Chaucer's spelling for a moment, and you will be surprised when you are told that he wrote English. On the other hand, philological research has shown that languages which at first sight seemed diverse, have in reality one and the same origin. The Semitic and the Indo-Germanic languages have so many fundamental elements in common that linguists are of the opinion that these languages probably belong to the same family. Again, certain sounds, exclamations, metaphors, and constructions are found in all languages and point to a common parentage. Finally, the fact that all men possess the faculty of speech points to a common progenitor.



*Unity of the Human Race and Migration*

But if all men have sprung from Adam, how could they migrate from one center to most distant lands and islands, especially to America and to other far-away parts of the world? Today, the possibility of Asiatics passing to America is readily admitted by students of geography. As a matter of fact, Bering Strait is all that separates Asia from America. Only thirteen miles wide, and often frozen in winter, it formed a natural bridge from Kamtchatka to Alaska. During the warmer months ships and boats were driven by the winds and currents from Asia to American shores. As a matter of fact, many of the Asiatic customs and religious rites are found among the Mexicans and Indians. The same explanation holds for the South Islands and the islands of Oceania: even in our time the inhabitants of these islands cross great ocean distances in their little boats. Again, the coast line of France today is quite different from what it was in the past. In all probability the British Isles were once connected with the Continent, and the imaginary impossibility of crossing from one country to another was consequently nonexistent.

*Longevity Of Patriarchs*

Intimately connected with the question of the unity of the human race is that of the longevity of the first descendants of Adam and Eve (Genesis 5:3-31; 11:10-26). Some of these patriarchs are said to have lived as many as nine hundred years. Certain scholars have attempted to reduce the years of the patriarchs by supposing that the years were months; but this is out of the question because it would cut down the patriarchal period to one-

twelfth of the time assigned to it by Genesis; furthermore, it would make Enos, for example, a father at the age of seven and a half years.

The author of the article on "Patriarchs" in the Catholic Encyclopedia points out the discrepancies in the figures as reported by three Biblical versions of the same narratives—the Hebrew, Greek and Samaritan—and concludes that the figures indicating the ages of the Patriarchs are more or less artificial; however, these discrepancies are too small to justify the author's conclusion and too insignificant to throw any light on the problem.

With the older commentators and modern conservative scholars we prefer to accept the figures as historical because they are found in the Bible. We do not consider the question of the longevity of the Patriarchs as beyond solution. Besides, the passage in Genesis 4:4—"Now giants were upon the earth in those days"—seems to point to the existence of an ancient race of mighty men or to the fact that early man was of greater stature and of greater physical strength than men of later times.

From the teaching of faith we know that the human body was originally destined not to die. For this reason the body of Adam and his immediate descendants was undoubtedly more perfect than that of later men. Man, like the other works of God, came forth perfect from His hands. True, our first parents lost the gift of immortality and became subject to the law of death after the Fall—"Dust thou are and unto dust thou shalt return." But, in order to effect bodily immortality, God conferred upon our first parents an unusual bodily strength which they preserved even after the expulsion from

Paradise and which gradually diminished during the successive generations until it reached that measure which belongs to man naturally.

Again, if Adam tasted of the "tree of life" he probably derived from it a vigor which persevered in his descendants for several centuries. At the same time this longevity of the Patriarchs was not without a providential purpose: this strong line of men propagated the human race rapidly and handed down God's revelation and the history of the human race pure and incorrupt.

Eminent physiologists have considered the extreme longevity of the Patriarchs not impossible. Even Buffon, by no means inclined to credulity in regard to Scriptural facts, admits the truth of the Biblical record and sees physical causes for such long life in early times. The fruits of the soil had greater nourishing powers in the beginning and were in perfect harmony with the body which assimilated them. Men lived moderately, simply and naturally until they reached a good old age. They were not subject to all those diseases and ills which gradually come to men from the environment and by heredity.

Modern science—especially the science of paleontology, the development and progress of which has received a new impulse from the evolutionist theory—offers a helpful analogy. It shows, as the German Scripturist, Selbst, points out, that in the beginning nature built on stronger and broader foundations and conceived in mightier and more generous proportions. It indicates the gigantic fossils and flora and fauna of long ago. It reveals, for example, the immense distance between the tree-

like fern and its descendants which today as small plants grace our ferneries. It points to the dinosaur, the mere flip of whose tail would be sufficient to sweep away a house. Everywhere is found an exemplification of the same law: the continuation of the mighty in the small.

The ancient traditions of such nations as the Greeks, Babylonians, Egyptians, Hindoos, and others carry accounts of the longevity of the early inhabitants of the globe. If it be argued that this only places the Scriptural account on a level with pagan histories, we reply that if the Scripture account is true, the traditions of other nations would be almost certain to preserve some traces of the truth; reminiscences of the longevity of the forefathers would be preserved among all the nations of the earth which gradually and successively detached themselves from the original family and group. This is a far more probable explanation of the fact than the supposition that all these nations—however widely separated and unconnected with each other—stumbled upon the same account.

Josephus Flavius, who wrote a history of the Jews about A.D. 70, refers to these ancient traditions concerning the early men in the following terms: "But let no one, upon comparing the lives of the ancients with our lives, and with the few years which we now live, think that what we have said of them is false; or make the shortness of our own lives at present an argument, that neither did they attain to so long a duration of life. . . . Now I have for witnesses to what I have said, all those that have written Antiquities, both among the

Greeks and barbarians; for even Manetho, who wrote the Egyptian history, and Berosus, who collected the Chaldean monuments, and Mochus, and Hesitiaeus, and besides these, Hieronymus, the Egyptian, and those who composed the Phoenician History, agree to what I say" (Antiquities I, 3, 9).

### Discussion Aids

#### *Set I*

1. Prove from Scripture that Adam was the first man—and Eve the first woman.
2. Does science support the doctrine of the unity of the human race?
3. Where did Cain get his wife? Explain fully.
4. Is the unity of the human race disproved by the variety of color among men?

By the great number of languages in the world?

By the difficulty of migrating from one land to another?

#### *Set II*

1. Are the "years" of the patriarchs "months"?
2. Do the slight discrepancies in the Hebrew, Greek and Samaritan versions throw any light on the problem?
3. Give six reasons explaining the longevity of the patriarchs.

#### *Religious Practices*

1. Since we are all equally created by God, I will not look down upon members of another race or nationality as inferior to me.



2. I will avoid all discrimination against the Jews and Negroes.
3. I will try to understand that God gives me length of days for a providential purpose: That I may serve Him and my neighbor longer and better.



## Chapter II

# The Flood and the Ark

### *The Fact of the Flood*

The account of the deluge is found in the Book of Genesis, chapters six to nine. In these chapters the sacred author describes the cause of the deluge, namely, human wickedness (6:5-7), the divine command to Noe to build the ark (6:6-22), the entrance into the ark (7:1-16), the deluge itself (7:17-24) and the events occurring immediately after the flood (8 to 9:17). The cause of the deluge is stated in the following words:

“And God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times,

It repented him that he had made man on the earth.

And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart,

He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

As the following quotations will show, the sacred writers of both the Old and the New Testament considered the flood and the circumstances mentioned in the Book of Genesis as historical facts:

"When water destroyed the earth, wisdom healed it again, directing the course of the just by contemptible wood"

Wisdom 10:4

"And from the beginning also when the proud giants perished, the hope of the world fleeing to a vessel which was governed by thy hand, left to the world seed of generation"

Wisdom 14:6

"The ancient giants did not obtain pardon for their sins, who were destroyed trusting to their own strength"

Ecclesiasticus 16:8

"Noe was found perfect, just, and in the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation.

Therefore, was there a remnant left to the earth, when the flood came"

Ecclesiasticus 44:17-18

"This thing is to me as in the days of Noe, to whom I swore, that I would no more bring in the waters of Noe upon the earth; so have I sworn not to be angry with thee, and not to rebuke thee"

Isaias 54:9

"And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark, and they

knew not till the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be'

Matthew 24:37-39

"By faith Noe, having received an answer concerning those things which as yet were not seen, moved with fear, framed the ark for the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world; and was instituted heir of the justice which is by faith"

Hebrews 11:7

"Which (those spirits that were in prison) had been some time incredulous when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was a building; wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water"

I Peter 3:20

"God spared not the original world, but preserved Noe, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly"

II Peter 2:5

"The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"

II Peter 3:6

In Christian tradition the Bible story concerning the flood has never been explained in any but a truly historical sense by the Fathers of the Church, theologians, and Catholic writers.

The Biblical narrative concerning the flood is confirmed by the numerous forms under which the

story of the flood lives in the literature and folklore of most distant nations of the earth. Some scholars pronounce the flood story the most universal tradition in the history of primitive man. Others maintain that it would be a greater miracle than the deluge itself, if the various and different nations had produced among them a tradition substantially identical. Ethnologists divide the races of mankind into the Semitic, Aryan, and Turanian. Now, in all these races there are stories of a flood which destroyed all mankind except a few chosen souls. Among the more civilized countries of Europe, and in well-nigh every portion of Asia and America, we find accounts of this great catastrophe and of the miraculous deliverance of a single family. That the nations of the earth should have a natural science, more or less alike, is easily intelligible. But that in all parts of the world among races the most remote and dissimilar, there should prevail a belief, that, after man was created on the earth, all men but one family were destroyed by a flood, is intelligible only on the supposition that such an event did actually occur. A universal belief, which does not spring directly from something in our nature, can reasonably be ascribed only to a historical fact. This event is narrated simply, graphically, and accurately in the Book of Genesis; it may be variously distorted and disguised in the tradition of the heathen world.

We are now in a position to evaluate the claim of certain authors that the Biblical report of the deluge is borrowed from a similar Babylonian account. The Babylonian story of the flood is found on a tablet written in Ninive in the seventh century before Christ. That there are resemblances between

the Babylonian and Biblical narratives of the flood, we readily grant; but this does not prove that the second is borrowed from the first; rather, it indicates that both stories have one common source—a tradition handed down by Noe. It is reproduced in its purity by Moses, whereas the Babylonians adulterated it with gross polytheistic and mythological errors.

*Geographical Universality of the Flood*

Did the flood cover the whole earth or globe? Such seems at first sight to be the teaching of the Biblical narrative and such was the belief down to the seventeenth century. But two hundred years of geological and scientific study have led practically to the abandonment of the geographical universality of the flood. Neither Sacred Scripture nor tradition oblige us to adhere to the opinion that the flood covered the whole surface of the earth. The primary and correct interpretation of the Biblical narrative demands a universality of the flood covering the whole land or region in which the human race lived—probably the lower valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates—but not the whole earth. The Hebrew word for “earth” may also mean “land.” If the Bible says that “the whole land” was deluged, the statement contains a truth quite different from that implied in the phrase “the whole earth.” The use of universal for particular terms is of frequent occurrence in the Bible (Cf. e.g., Deuteronomy 2:25; Acts 2:5). The Orientals are fond of hyperboles and extravagant utterances. To explain their assertions accurately, we interpret their speech according to the mind of the speaker and of the hearer.

Certain scientific considerations also oppose the



view that the deluge was geographically universal. In the first place, no such geological traces can be found as ought to have been left by a universal flood. Secondly, the amount of water required to cover the highest mountains surpasses all imagination. The Biblical account implies that water was not specially created for the deluge, and that it was not annihilated subsequently. Whence, then, did all the water come, and where is it now? Thirdly, if the Biblical deluge were geographically universal, the sea water and fresh water would mix to such an extent that neither the marine animals nor the fresh-water animals could have lived in the mixture without a miracle. Finally, if the deluge covered only a limited portion of the earth's surface, namely, the portion inhabited by the human race, then only the animals of that section were taken into the ark, and the ingenious calculations how all the different animals—from remote regions and different zones—and how all the necessary provisions could have been housed in the ark, become unnecessary.

The claim that, if the flood were not universal, Noe could have saved himself—in some other way than building the ark, is beside the point. Noe, who is held up by St. Paul as a great hero of faith, obeyed the command of God implicitly, not knowing what proportions the deluge would assume. Nor is it true that Noe could have saved himself by fleeing to distant mountains; even in our day a minor transitory flood reduces men to utter helplessness in a few hours.

*Anthropological Universality of the Flood*

Did the deluge destroy the whole human race, that is, was it anthropologically universal? Science



does not necessarily demand the limitation of the flood to certain parts of the human race, and hence the question must be decided solely by the teaching of the Bible and of Tradition. In this regard, St. Peter makes it clear that all men not contained in the ark perished: "The ark was a building wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved" (I Peter 3: 20); "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (II Peter 3:6). "God . . . spared not the original world, but preserved Noe, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (II Peter 2:5).

*Relative Anthropological Universality*

The doctrine of the relative anthropological universality of the flood, propounded recently by William M. Agar<sup>(1)</sup>, which implies that the flood swept away only a portion of mankind, though taught by several scholars is not acceptable. The Fathers of the Church regarded the flood as a symbol of original sin, the ark as a type of baptism and of the Church. Just as baptism is the sole means of salvation from original sin, so the ark was the only means of escape from the flood in the days of Noe. In other words, the fathers taught implicitly that the flood was anthropologically universal—that all men outside of the ark perished. In propounding this interpretation the Fathers spoke as witnesses of Tradition and not as private teachers, and hence their teaching belongs to the traditional doctrine of the Church.

How could Noe pack the animals—together with the provisions necessary to feed them—into the ark? On the basis of the data furnished by the Book

(1) "Catholicism and the Progress of Science" (New York 1940) pp. 50-51.

of Genesis, architects and engineers calculate that, even if four fifths of the entire space of the ark were used for storage purposes there would still be room for approximately seven thousand distinct species of animals. Due to its shape and the absence of steering gear, it could carry one third of a load more than another ship of its size.

Whence did Noe derive his power over the animals so as to be able to gather them into the ark? It is said that the wildest of animals become tame and tractable when face to face with a terrible impending catastrophe. Then, too, Noe could have chosen young pairs of animals which were not only tractable but required less room. Eggs or larvae would have been sufficient in case of insects and reptiles.

The stability of the ark was in no way impaired because nails and iron tools were not used in the process of construction. Men fastened together boards and pieces of wood by coating the joints with pitch. The pitch or bitumen was especially suited for closing up the interstices of the timbers and making a vessel watertight. Long before the introduction of nails and iron tools, pitch was commonly used, especially in the construction of the very first Egyptian ships.

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis, Noe is said to have been ordered to take two of a sort—a male and a female—"of every living creature of all flesh" into the ark (Genesis 6:19); in the seventh, Noe received the following command: "Of all *clean* beasts take seven and seven, the male and the female. But of the beasts that are unclean two and two, the male and the female. Of the fowls also of

the air seven and seven, the male and female" (Genesis 7:2, 3). Are we, then, in the presence of two contradictory prescriptions? One of these affirms in general terms that all animals clean and unclean were to go into the ark by pairs "that seed may be saved upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 7, 3); the other, supplementary to the first, states in particular how many *clean* and *unclean* animals were to go in by pairs. Noe needed more *clean* than *unclean* animals because of the sacrifice to be offered; moreover, *clean* animals undoubtedly furnished the meat during the voyage.

### Discussion Aids

1. Does the New Testament accept the deluge as a historical fact?
2. Have all nations preserved the story of the flood? Explain. How are we ultimately to account for this fact?
3. Was the Biblical account of the deluge taken from the Babylonian narrative?
4. Did the flood cover the whole earth? Give several reasons for your answer.
5. Could Noe save himself in some other way than by building the ark?
6. Did the flood extinguish all men?
7. What is meant by the relative anthropological universality of the flood? May we accept this theory?
8. What was the size of the ark?
9. Could it be built without nails?
10. Why did Noe take into the ark more clean than unclean animals?

*Religious Practices*

1. I will receive the word of God with the same deep religious faith as Noe did.
2. I will see in the deluge God's unalterable opposition to sin.
3. I will always regard the Catholic Church, prefigured by the ark, as the divinely instituted means of salvation.

## Chapter III

# Ill-Fated Cities

### *The Tower of Babel*

The account of the building of the Tower of Babel and of the confusion of tongues is found in Genesis 11:1-9:

“And the earth was of one tongue, and of the same speech.

And when they removed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Sennaar, and dwelt in it.

And each one said to his neighbor: Come, let us make brick, and bake them with fire. And they had brick instead of stones, and slime instead of mortar.

And they said: Come, let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven: and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands. And the Lord came down to see the city and tower, which the children of Adam were building.

And he said: Behold, it is one people, and all have one tongue: and they have begun to do this, neither will they leave off from their designs, till they accomplish them in deed.

Come ye, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another's speech.



And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city.

And therefore the name thereof was called Babel, because there the language of the whole earth was confounded: and from thence the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of all countries."

According to Josephus, the motive for building the tower was the fear of another deluge and the hope that the high tower would protect them from the waters.

The expression, "a tower the top whereof may reach to heaven," is here used in much the same way as the modern term, "skyscraper"—namely, as a hyperbole. Just as the word "skyscraper" does not mean that the building literally scrapes the sky, so also the Biblical description does not imply that the tower of Babel would be lost up in the skies. This manner of speech was common in ancient times. The cities of the Canaanites were said to be "great and walled up to the sky" (Deuteronomy 1:28; 9:1). Homer in his *Odyssey* (5:239) speaks of a pine tree "high as heaven." Secondly, the passage is not to be understood to mean—and the narrative makes no such statement—that all the languages and dialects of ancient and modern times were miraculously formed at Babel; for the separation of nations and tribes and the evolution of languages and dialects have been going on ever since.

Modern scholars identify the Biblical Tower of Babel with the ruins of Babil within the old city of Babylon or with Birs Nimroud some miles away. The constructions, which today exist only in a ruined



condition in Babylonia, resemble in form the more ancient pyramids of Egypt. Excavations show that these Babylonian temples and sanctuaries rose in several pyramidal steplike sections. The storied Tower of Birs Nimroud counts seven of these quadrangular platforms painted in seven colors. These separate stories were formed by cubic blocks of masonry, decreasing in size, and piled one on top of the other. The interior of these towers consisted of sun-dried clay; the outer walls were coated with fire-baked brick; the asphalt from the neighborhood served as mortar. All these details acquire a new value when viewed in the light of the Biblical narrative. Herodotus (1:179) gives us a description of the construction of the Babylonian walls which greatly resembles the Biblical narrative of the Tower.

We must be careful not to consider the building of the Tower of Babel in terms of modern machinery and of modern methods of engineering and construction. The immense amount of material, time and labor necessary to build the Tower becomes apparent when we recall a few facts about the kindred structures; namely, the Egyptian pyramids. The Great Pyramid of Egypt covers thirteen acres. It is a solid mass of masonry containing 2,300,000 blocks of limestone, each weighing on an average two and a half tons. History tells that a hundred thousand men worked on this royal tomb for twenty years.

These facts shed new light on another phenomenon connected with the Tower of Babel; namely, the "confusion of tongues." Catholic scholars explain the "confusion of tongues" as an imme-

ciate and direct miracle. Up to that time all mankind spoke one and the same language. At the Tower of Babel God confused the builders so that they could no longer understand one another, and they had to devise new languages.

Some Catholic exegetes maintain, though perhaps less conformably to the Scriptural text, that God brought about the "confusion of tongues" through created agencies. The simple and limited vocabulary of the men of Sennaar did not cover this new project and enterprise—the building of a tower. New names had to be found for many of the objects and operations connected with it. If the vast army of laborers was divided into twenty or thirty companies, and if each lived apart from one another, each group would not only invent and give currency to new terms but would eventually develop its own provincialism and dialect. When the different groups convened to work on the tower, there ensued a great confusion of words and expressions—as well as an irreconcilable contradiction of counsels and opinions about the operation and various circumstances of the building. As a result, the work was abandoned, the company disrupted, and the builders dispersed to various parts of the earth where they developed their own language.

#### *Sodom and Gomorrha*

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha is narrated in the following passage of the Book of Genesis: "And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrha brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And He destroyed those cities and all the country about, all the inhabitants of the cities, and

all things that spring from the earth. And his wife (the wife of Lot) looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt" (Genesis 19:24-26). Catholic scholars teach that the cities were destroyed by a rain of ignited sulphur which fell miraculously from heaven. Some Scripturists point out that God in His punishments and interventions often uses created agencies. Thus, He brought locusts upon Egypt with an east wind and drove them back with a west wind. Is it possible, then, that God also made use of some natural agency in destroying the two wicked cities?

The spot where probably the two cities once stood now forms a part of the Dead Sea. At present the northern part of the Dead Sea is about thirteen hundred feet deep, the southern only about sixteen feet deep. Originally, the Sea comprised only the northern part; the two cities stood where the southern part of the Sea is now. The foundation on which the two cities stood abounded in salt and was permeated with bitumen. This bitumen was probably set on fire by lightning which God sent down from above, and burned itself out while devouring at the same time the two cities. This catastrophe, as the scientists tell us, was probably accompanied by a volcanic eruption which overwhelmed also the cities of the plain. The bed of the Dead Sea rose and poured itself into the blackened pit.

The ancients speak a good deal of the bitumen which surrounded the lake. Diodorus affirms that the masses of bitumens were like islands. Even today travelers testify to the existence of bitumen on the shores and waters of the Dead Sea. Especially after the earthquakes of 1834 and 1837 large

quantities of bitumen were cast upon the southern shore, probably detached by shocks from the bottom of the southern bay.

It is well to keep in mind, however, that the whole event was the result of God's intervention. The revelation to Abraham, the visit of the angels, the deliverance of Lot stamp the whole incident as miraculous, whatever method God may have used in punishing the inhabitants of the two cities.

The death of Lot's wife has been rendered more intelligible by such recent excavations as those of Pompei. The writer has seen at Pompei human bodies which, during the eruptions of Vesuvius in 90 B.C., were petrified in all the various actions of life. Thus, at the gate of the city is to be seen the figure of a Roman soldier who stood erect at his post until the lava transformed him into a statue of stone. Despite the warning of the angel, Lot's wife, in her unbelief and disobedience, halted. A fiery dust suddenly overtook her, her body was incrustated by the rocksalt that blew about, and she was literally changed into a pillar of salt. In the time of St. Irenaeus and Tertullian men still pointed to a pillar of salt near the Dead Sea which they identified with Lot's wife.

The Dead or Salt Sea stands as a mute and changeless witness to the terrible events which once happened on its shores. Its extreme saltiness was known to all the ancients. Its taste is intensely and intolerably salty. Its specific gravity and its buoyancy are so great that people can swim or float in it, who can not swim in any other water. This excessive saltiness is probably caused by the immense masses of fossil salts which lie in a mountain at its

southwest border, and by the rapid evaporation of the fresh water which flows into it. Both ancient and modern writers assert that nothing animal or vegetable lives in the Sea. The few living things which the River Jordan washes down into it, are quickly destroyed. Even its shores, incrustated with salt, present the appearance of utter desolation.

In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah countless generations have seen and will see the evidence of God's unalterable opposition to sin and especially to all unnatural vices. Lust had crept under the roof of every home in these two cities. Sodomy had transformed the cities into a den of vice. Citizens, guests, strangers—and even angels—were looked upon with unnatural sinful desires. God warned and pleaded—but in vain. In His unchanging holiness He flashed forth fire and kindled the saline, bituminous, and oily foundations of the cities, and burned all sinful flesh to a brittle mass.

### Discussion Aids

#### *Set I*

1. What passage in Genesis tells of the Tower of Babel?
2. What is the meaning of the phrase, "the tower the top whereof may reach to heaven"?
3. Did all languages miraculously originate at the Tower?
4. Are there any ruins today which throw light on the Tower of Babel?
5. What other constructions do these ruins resemble?



6. How were these towers built?
7. Describe the Great Pyramid.
8. Explain the "confusion of tongues."

*Set II*

1. What scriptural passage tells us of the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha?
2. How did God destroy these two cities?
3. Explain how Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt.
4. What today stands as a silent witness to the destruction of these two cities?
5. What attribute of God does the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha emphasize?

*Religious Practices*

1. I will never permit pride or any other human or sinful motive to actuate me in my religious undertakings.
2. I will see in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha God's judgment upon sin.
3. I will restrain my eyes from all unnecessary curiosity.

## Chapter IV

# Esau and Jacob

Jacob's craftiness in depriving Esau of his birthright and his cunning in stealing Esau's blessing are represented by the infidel as indicative of the low standards of morality in the Old Testament. This conclusion of the nonbeliever, however, is hardly justified if the incident is inserted into its context and placed in its proper historical setting.

The birthright comprised four prerogatives. In the first place the first-born was "lord of his brethren" so that his "mother's children" were obliged to "bow down" before him (Genesis 27:29); in other words, at a certain moment the firstborn attained to paternal dignity in the family. Secondly, in the division of the paternal inheritance, the firstborn obtained a "double portion" (Deuteronomy 21:17). Thirdly, after the deluge the firstborn exercised the role of a priest in the family; eventually, however, the tribe of Levi was chosen by God to replace all the firstborn of Israel (Numbers 3:12). Finally, the firstborn received from his aged or dying father a special blessing; this blessing was prized very highly and considered as of special efficacy with God. In this blessing the father besought for his firstborn temporal prosperity and wealth, primacy among his brothers, domination over peoples and tribes, and God's special protective care and Providence. In the family of Abraham there was, in addition, the promise of peculiar spiritual blessings and privileges which were transmitted from father to son.

Although Esau was born first, the birthright

by divine election was destined for Jacob. When Rebecca in the anxieties of her pregnancy complained to the Lord, God foretold to her that the older boy would serve the younger: "two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be divided out of thy womb, and one people shall overcome the other and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). The prophet Malachias places in the mouth of the Lord a Hebraism affirming that God loved Esau less than Jacob: "I have loved Jacob, but have hated Esau" (Malachias 1: 2, 3). St. Paul (Romans 9) touches upon the same subject and shows that the election to the privilege of being a depository of God's blessings upon earth is indeed inscrutable but not unjust or unmerciful. Such election only shows that God chooses men as His instruments, not because of their merits but because of His mercy and great goodness.

Although the privileges of the birthright were to be Jacob's by the disposition of God, the manner in which Jacob entered into the possession of these prerogatives was—at least objectively and materially—sinful. The root of Jacob's sins was his want of faith and confidence in God. Both he and Rebecca knew that God had chosen him to be the heir of the promises. Like Abraham they ought to have had confidence that God would carry out His promises even if they could not then see how. Instead of this, they took matters into their own hands and committed sin.

In the first place, Jacob manifested a sinful selfishness when he turned Esau's strong desire for food to his own advantage and demanded such a high price for it. The event is narrated in Genesis

25:29-34: "And Jacob boiled pottage; to whom Esau coming faint out of the field said: Give me of this red pottage, for I am exceedingly faint. For which reason his name was called Edom. And Jacob said to him: Sell me thy first birthright. He answered: Lo I die, what will the first birthright avail me? Jacob said: Swear therefore to me. Esau swore to him, and sold his first birthright. And so taking bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate and drank, and went his way, making little account of having sold his first birthright." Incidentally, the event shows how little qualified Esau was for the office of the firstborn. The promise of future spiritual blessings was to Esau of little account compared with the desire of present gratification of appetite. His contempt for that which was an object of faith rather than of sense and sight, brings out only too clearly his profane and worldly character.

Since God decreed the birthright for Jacob even before the birth of the two boys, and since Esau relinquished all right to Isaac's blessing and to the privileges of a firstborn when he sold his birthright, it seems strange at first sight that Isaac insisted on imparting his blessing to Esau. It is probable, however, that Isaac did not consider the divine promise as in itself invalidating the right of the firstborn. It is possible, too, that he was not aware of Esau's selling his birthright, and if he did know about it, he refused to approve and confirm Esau's action; this would explain, too, why Esau came forth for his father's blessing. At any rate, Rebecca and Jacob sinned by deceiving Isaac and by telling a lie in order to obtain his blessing. Isaac, on the other hand, allowed carnal and worldly motives to weigh

with him: "Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his hunting" (Genesis 25:28). It was by appealing to his appetite for food that Jacob accomplished the deception of his father.

Two conclusions must be drawn from the Biblical narrative concerning Jacob and Esau: First, God did not transfer His blessings from Esau to Jacob in return for the latter's craftiness and dishonesty. God did not put a premium on sin. Almighty God had from all eternity chosen Jacob to be the heir of His promises. Now, the faults of men cannot alter what He had ordained; the sins whereby Jacob actually obtained the birthright and filched the blessing did not change the divine decree—just as Peter's denial of Christ did not reverse God's election of Peter for the primacy in the Church.

Secondly, the Bible nowhere approves or praises Jacob's trespasses; it does not hold up his conduct for our imitation. On the contrary, the Bible clearly shows how bitterly Jacob had to expiate his sins. He had to fly from his home and for twenty years serve under a severe taskmaster—his kinsman Laban. Rebecca, too, did her share of penance. During all these years she was separated from that son who was the light of her life. In addition, she was made weary by the dissensions in the family. Let us recall, too, how God punished Jacob through his own children, as the history of Joseph and his brethren shows. By all these trials Jacob was confirmed in piety and humility, trained to be a holy man of God, and made worthy of the promises made to Abraham. Esau, on the other hand, married two pagan Hethite women and became estranged from the traditions of his tribe, and from the Lord, his God.



*Deception and Treachery in the Old Testament*

The Bible records several other cases of deception which resemble the fraud perpetrated by Jacob and Rebecca:

1) Abraham deceived Pharaoh and Abimelech by affirming that Sara, with whom he was traveling, was not his wife but his sister:

"And when he was near to enter into Egypt, he said to Sara his wife: I know that thou art a beautiful woman, and that when the Egyptians shall see thee, they will say: She is his wife; and they will kill me, and keep thee. Say, therefore, I pray thee, that thou art my sister, that I may be well used for thee, and that my soul may live for thy sake." (Genesis 12:11-13).

"Abraham removed from thence to the south country, and dwelt between Cades and Sur, and sojourned in Gerara. And he said of Sara his wife: She is my sister. So Abimelech the king of Gerara sent, and took her. And God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him: Lo thou shalt die for the woman thou hast taken, for she hath a husband. Now Abimelech had not touched her, and he said: Lord, wilt thou slay a nation, that is ignorant and just? Did not he say to me: She is my sister; and she say, He is my brother?" (Genesis 20:1-5).

2) Isaac practiced the same deception as his father: "So Isaac abode in Gerara. And when he was asked by the men of that place, concerning his wife, he answered: She is my sister; for he was afraid to confess that she was his wife, thinking lest perhaps they would kill him because of her beauty" (Genesis 26:6-7).

3) Jahel offered Sisara hospitality and then treacherously murdered him: "And Jahel went forth to meet Sisara, and said to him: Come in to me, my lord, come in, fear not. He went in to her tent, and being covered by her with a cloak, said to her: Give me, I beseech thee, a little water, for I am very thirsty. She opened a bottle of milk, and gave him to drink, and covered him. And Sisara said to her: Stand before the door of the tent, and when any shall come and inquire of thee, saying: Is there any man here? thou shalt say: There is none. So Jahel, Haber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and taking also a hammer, and going in softly, and with silence, she put the nail upon the temples of his head, and striking it with the hammer, drove it through his brain fast into the ground, and so passing from deep sleep to death, he fainted away and died" (Judges 4:18-21).

4) Judith by lying and deception made her way into the camps of Holofernes, and when the latter became intoxicated cut off his head (Judith 9 to 12).

In passing judgment on situations such as these it is well to recall once more the following principles: first, the Bible nowhere approves or recommends lying, fraud, deception, and treachery but rather points out that divine punishment quickly overtakes those who are guilty of these sins; second, the Bible nowhere approves of the teaching that one may do evil in order that good would result; third, the Bible gives us a frank, objective, impartial history of the patriarchs without in any way minimizing or concealing their sinful conduct and evil deeds; in fact, would not the trustworthi-

ness of the Old Testament become suspect if it pictured the patriarchs as men free from all shortcomings and frailties—as paragons of virtue?

Abraham, strictly speaking, did not lie, because as he himself explains to Abimelech “otherwise also she (Sara) is truly my sister, the daughter of my father, and not the daughter of my mother, and I took her to wife. And after God brought me out of my father’s house, I said to her: Thou shalt do me this kindness: In every place, to which we shall come, thou shalt say that I am thy brother” (Genesis 20:12-13). Augustine defends Abraham as having “said she was his sister, without denying that she was his wife, concealing the truth but not speaking what was false” (c. *Faustum* 22:3). If it be said that Abraham endangered his wife’s honor and chastity in order to save his own life, it must also be kept in mind that Abraham had an absolute faith in God’s providence and protection.

Isaac called Rebecca his sister because she was his cousin. According to the celebrated lexicographer, Gesenius the Hebrew word “brother” was used to designate not only a brother in the strict sense but a nephew, cousin, husband, relative, members of the same race, ally and friend.

The book of Judges praises Jahel’s patriotism and her devotion to God and to the chosen people — not her murderous treachery. In the same way, Judith is praised for her strength and love of her people, not for her fraud and deception. We find something similar in the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-9): While the steward is lauded for his foresight he is not praised for the

means which he took to make provision for the future.

### Discussion Aids

1. What four prerogatives did the birthright comprise?
2. For which of the two boys was the birthright destined by divine election?
3. Indicate the sinful ways in which Rebecca and Jacob tried to obtain possession of the birthright.
4. Since the birthright was destined for Jacob, why did Isaac bless Esau?
5. Did God transfer His blessings from Esau to Jacob because of the latter's craftiness?
6. Does the Bible praise Jacob's conduct?
7. Did Jacob and Rebecca do penance for their sins?
8. Mention other cases of apparent fraud and treachery in the Old Testament? How are these cases to be explained?
9. Does the Bible approve of fraud and deceit?
10. Does the narration of the sins of the patriarchs increase your faith in the trustworthiness of the Old Testament? Why?

### *Religious Practices*

1. I will have faith in God's Providence and promises and not try to force His Hand.
2. I will be truthful in my statements and avoid all treachery and deceit.
3. I will frequently recall that one may never do evil in order that good may come of it.

## Chapter V

# Exodus from Egypt

### *The Ten Plagues*

The exodus of the Jews from Egypt was preceded by the ten plagues. These ten calamities, inflicted on the Egyptians to overcome Pharaoh's obstinacy and force him to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, were the following: pollution of the water, frogs, insects, flies, cattle pest, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the slaying of the first born of man and beast. Although profane records furnish no confirmation of the ten plagues we cannot accept the theory of the infidels that the Biblical narrative is unhistorical or that it narrates purely natural events. For Moses describes the plagues as real occurrences and as miracles; He affirms that they were due to the direct interposition of God, that they came on the appointed day and ceased at the command of Moses.

Some of the events mentioned above, it is true, occurred periodically or from time to time in Egypt; frogs bred in unusual numbers in the Nile and in the swamps; the south wind brought clouds of locusts or sand which obscured the sun. The ten plagues, however, were miraculous because of the manner in which they were produced. They came at unusual seasons, were exceptionally intense, and were not due solely to natural causes but to the direct intervention of God. The upper Nile, to cite only one instance, regularly assumes during the period of inundation a dark-red color because of the



presence of certain microscopic animalcules; but the discoloration brought about by the command of Moses extended not only to the river but also to all the canals and pools of Egypt, the water became corrupted so that the Egyptians could not drink it, and even the fishes died (Exodus 7:14-25). Finally, if the ten plagues were natural events, why did not the fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth visit the land of Goshen? Why did the tenth select its victim according to method and effect only the firstborn in Egyptian homes? Finally, would natural occurrences, so well known to the Egyptians, have produced the deep impression on Pharaoh and His court?

#### *Passage of the Red Sea*

An important event in the exodus was the passage of the Red Sea. The exact locality where the children of Israel crossed cannot be determined. Some authors maintain that at the time of the exodus the western arm of the Red Sea, now called the Gulf of Suez from the modern town near its northern extremity, extended some thirty or forty miles farther north; they admit for the actual place of crossing some point of this extension of the Red Sea. Others, on the contrary, think that in the time of Moses the northern limit of the Gulf of Suez did not vary much, if at all, from what it is today; they maintain that the crossing took place at some point at the head of the gulf, not far north of the present Suez.

The Biblical narrative clearly teaches the miraculous character of the passage of the Red Sea. Yet here, too, it is possible that God in bringing about the miracle made use of created agencies. The Bibli-

cal account explicitly brings in the wind as an agency employed by Providence to dry the land: "And when Moses had stretched forth his hand over the sea, the Lord took it away by a strong and burning wind blowing all the night, and turned it into dry ground: and the water was divided" (Exodus 14:21). At Suez, the tide together with a strong wind has been seen to drive back the Sea for a considerable distance. A strong wind has been known to make the waters of Lake Menzaleh (at the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal) recede for a distance of seven miles. Something similar was observed in Crimea in 1738.

#### *The Manna*

During their forty years' sojourn in the desert, the Jews were fed with manna, a food sent to them miraculously from heaven. The manna fell for the first time while the Israelites were in the desert of Sin, six weeks after their departure from Egypt, and thenceforth fell daily, except on the Sabbath, till they arrived in the plain of Jericho. It was like "coriander seed white" (Exodus 16:31). It fell during the night in small white flakes or grains which covered the ground and presented the appearance of hoarfrost. The manna had to be gathered in the morning as the heat of the sun melted it. On the eve of the Sabbath a double portion was gathered. The manna is described as having the taste of "flour with honey" or "bread tempered with oil." Although it could be eaten in its natural state, it was usually ground in a mill or beaten in a mortar and then baked into cakes. When kept overnight it putrefied and bred worms, except the portion which was reserved for the Sabbath.

Some have attempted to identify the Biblical manna with juice exuded by the tamarisk or by the so-called Camel's Thorn. Others think they have discovered a true manna in a lichen, found in Western Asia and North Africa, which easily scales off, and being carried away by the wind, sometimes falls in the form of a rain. But this identity is far from being established. The Biblical manna was not found under the tamarisk tree but on the surface of the wilderness. The tamarisk-manna is almost pure sugar, it does not decay or breed worms but keeps indefinitely. It could not have furnished the nourishment for forty years, or the large quantity required daily by the Israelites. The tamarisk-manna is exuded only at a certain season, whereas the Biblical manna fell throughout the year; in its season, however, the tararisk-manna is exuded daily, including the Sabbath. The Biblical manna continued to fall on their route even after the Israelites left the district where the tamarisk-manna is produced, namely, the region between the Wady Gharandel and the Wady Scheich. The lichen-manna is dry and insipid and possesses little nutritive value. The Biblical manna has always been regarded as a type and symbol of the Eucharist.

#### *The Decalogue*

The Decalogue was given directly to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai, some time after the departure of the Jews from Egypt. The Book of Exodus tells us that God was the author of the two tables of stone as well as of the law written upon them: "And the Lord said to Moses: Come up to Me into the mount, and be there, and I will give thee tables of stone, and the law, and the commandments which I have

written, that thou mayest teach them" (Exodus 24:12); "And the Lord, when He had ended these words in Mount Sinai, gave to Moses two stone tables of testimony, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18); "And Moses returned from the mount, carrying the two tables of the testimony in his hand, written on both sides, and made by the work of God: the writing also of God was graven in the tables" (Exodus 32:15, 16). The New Testament calls attention to a further detail in the giving of the law; namely, the ministry of angels. St. Stephen tells the Jews that although they "received the law by the disposition of angels," they had not kept it (Acts 7:53). St. Paul recalls to the Galatians that the law was "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Galatians 3:19). While God was the author of the Law and appeared in a sensible manner to proclaim it, the angels ordained the external circumstances which accompanied the promulgation of the law.

God's authorship of the two stone tablets is not to be understood as implying that God slowly fashioned them with corporeal hands and then carved upon them the Ten Commandments. If God fashioned the tablets, He formed them immediately and directly—together with the writing upon them—by converting pre-existent matter. Such a formation of the tablets would belong to the same category of divine works as the multiplication of the loaves or the fashioning of Adam's body out of the chemical elements of the earth. Consonantly with New Testament doctrine, the formation of the tablets and the writing upon them is to be attributed to angelic agency. Revelation tells us that on certain oc-

casions the angels assumed bodies and through the instrumentality of these bodies exercised great powers. This angelic ministry would not derogate from God's primary authorship, since the angels acted in His name and accurately reproduced His divine message.

By adoring the golden calf the Jews broke the promise which they made to God. To symbolize that God had in turn revoked His pact with the Jews, Moses destroyed the tables of stone "at the foot of the mount" (Exodus 32:19). When the Jews repented of their sin, God permitted Moses to reproduce the tables of stone together with the inscription upon them. The renewal of the tablets was intended to impress upon the Jews God's unalterable hatred for superstition and idolatry and to indicate His renewed adherence to the pact established between Himself and the Jews.

The history of the Mosaic tablets henceforth becomes indissolubly linked with the history of the Ark of the Covenant—a chest of precious wood and of gold in which the tables of the law were preserved. The Ark accompanied the Jews in their wanderings and frequently in their military expeditions, although it was usually kept in a sacred place in the tabernacle and later on in the temple. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. the Ark disappears from human history. According to Second Machabees 2:4-8, the prophet Jeremias hid it in an unidentified cave on Mt. Nebo.

Returning for a moment to the theophanies on Mt. Sinai, let us note that Moses did not behold there the Divine Essence. In fact, God as a pure spirit, is not perceptible by the corporeal eye nor can He



utter audible sounds. God appeared to Moses under a visible, sensible form. In this corporeal form God conversed with Moses in a familiar, friendly manner. Yet, the two conversed as friends in an obscure place. Moses was not allowed to see the face of the Lord Who spoke to him from within the cloud; he was not allowed to catch a glimpse of God's countenance under a sensible form. For God had decreed that, to avoid idolatry and superstition, there was to be no sensible representation of the Deity. Though Moses was not allowed to behold God's face, the rays of splendor which emanated from God's bright figure adhered to Moses' countenance. His face appeared "horned," that is "radiant." Possibly, too, the rays of light which emanated from Moses' face took the form of horns. These rays were a confirmation of the truths which Moses testified he heard on the Mount.

The message inscribed on the stone tablets is frequently referred to as the Decalogue. The word "decalogue" is derived from the Greek terms *deka* meaning "Ten" and *logos* meaning "word." The literal meaning of "decalogue," then, is, Ten Words or Sayings. The number ten is vouched for by several passages: "He (Moses) wrote upon the tablets the ten words of the covenant" (Exodus 34:28): "He showed you his covenant, which he commanded you to do, and the ten words that he wrote in two tables of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:13). The Decalogue designates the collection of commandments and precepts which Moses received from God amid the thunders of Mt. Sinai and which he made the groundwork of the Mosaic Law. These commandments bear on the fundamental obligations

of religion and morality and embody the revealed expression of the Creator's will in regard to man's duty to God and to his fellow creatures. Joined to some of the commandments are short explanations, stating the reason of the sanction of the precept in question. It is possible that the two tables of stone contained only the text of the commandments without this commentary, for the tables were of such size that they could be conveniently carried.

There is no numerical designation of the commandments in the book of Moses. Hence there have arisen, as the following table will show, three systems of numbering the commandments

	I	II	III
Introduction .....			1
Polytheism .....		1	
.....	1		2
Idolatry .....		2	
Profanity .....	2	3	3
Sabbath .....	3	4	4
Parents .....	4	5	5
Murder .....	5	6	6
Adultery .....	6	7	7
Theft .....	7	8	8
False Witness .....	8	9	9
Covetousness of Wife .....	9		
.....		10	10
Covetousness of Goods .....	10		

System I is followed by Catholics and Lutherans. It goes back to St. Augustine who because of a certain fitness distinguished three commandments dealing with God, in order to hint at the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Then, in order to obtain the number ten, he divided the commandment against

covetousness into two. The Lutherans, however, invert our ninth and tenth commandment. System II is given by Philo, Josephus, Origen, Gregory Nazianzus, and others, and is used by the Greeks and the Protestants (except the Lutherans). It makes two separate commandments of polytheism and idolatry, and one of covetousness. System III is used by modern Jews. It is unsatisfactory because it makes a commandment of the introductory formula in Exodus 20:1-2, which reads: "And the Lord spoke all these words: I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." System I has much to recommend it: it seems logical to group at the beginning (polytheism and idolatry) and to separate at the end (covetousness of wife and of goods); for while one single object is aimed at under worship, two specifically different sins are forbidden under covetousness; if adultery and theft belong to two distinct species of sin the same ought to be said of the desires to commit these evils.

The injunctions and prohibitions set forth in Exodus 20:1-17 are also contained in the book of Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The differences in the two enumerations are not essential and pertain rather to the reasons alleged for the precepts than to the precepts themselves. Thus the reason for the sanctification of the Sabbath in Exodus is that God rested on the seventh day, while in Deuteronomy the Sabbath is the memorial of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt. In the precept against covetousness Exodus first mentions the neighbor's house and then his wife; Deuteronomy inverts the order.

Scripture does not say how the Ten Command-

ments were divided on the two tablets. Our division, three duties toward God, and seven towards men, is based, as we have said, on St. Augustine's arrangement. Another division is given by Philo and St. Irenaeus, in which the first tablet contained precepts of piety towards God and parents, the second, precepts of justice toward fellow men. According to Philo's system of numbering commandments (System II) this would give five commandments to each tablet, twenty-eight Hebrew words on the first and twenty-six on the other (leaving out the commentary attached to the commandments).

The Ten Commandments express not only the Creator's positive will but the natural laws as well—laws which govern our being and are inscribed upon every human heart. A written law was demanded by the fact that the unwritten law had become obscured in men's souls by sin.

Christ summed up the Ten Commandments in the double precept of charity—love of God and love of neighbor. He amplified and interpreted them in the Sermon on the Mount, and proclaimed them as binding under the present dispensation (cf. Matthew 5:7). The Church, after changing the day of rest from the seventh day of the week (Sabbath) to the first, made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the Lord's Day. The Council of Trent condemned those who would affirm that the Ten Commandments are not binding on Christians.

#### *Passage Across the Jordan River*

The passage across the Jordan River is described in the following terms: "So the people went out of their tents, to pass over the Jordan: and the priests that carried the ark of the covenant, went

on before them. And as soon as they came into the Jordan and their feet were dipped in part of the water (now the Jordan, it being harvest time, had filled the banks of its channel), the waters that came down from above stood in one place, and swelling up like a mountain, were seen afar off from the city that is called Adom, to the place of Sarthan: but those (waters) that were beneath, ran down into the sea of the wilderness (which now is called the Dead Sea) until they wholly failed" (Josus 3:14-16). The drying up of the river is clearly described as something miraculous: the waters were accumulated and held back by the hand of God. But it is possible that God, in bringing about the miracle, made use of created agencies. Farther up the Jordan valley, at Adom near Sarthan, where the channel is narrow, God at a precise moment may have caused a hill to topple over into the channel and obstruct the river for several hours. A phenomenon of this kind, as Father Cornely, S.J., points out, occurred naturally in the year A.D. 1267.

#### *Downfall of Jericho*

The sacred author also records a divine interposition in behalf of the Jews in the downfall of Jericho: "And the Lord said to Josue: Behold I have given into thy hands Jericho, and the king thereof, and all the valiant men. Go round about the city, all ye fighting men, once a day: so shall ye do for six days. And on the seventh day the priests shall take the seven trumpets, which are used in the jubilee, and shall go before the ark of the covenant; and you shall go about the city seven times, and the priests shall sound the trumpets. And when the voice of the trumpet shall give a longer and broken



tune, and shall sound in your ears, all the people shall shout together with a very great shout, and the walls of the city shall fall to the ground" (Josue 6:2-5). This miracle was remarkably seasonable and appropriate. The fall of Jericho ensuing close upon the miraculous passage of Jordan, impressed on the people, prone ever to be led by the senses, that the same God who had delivered their fathers out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea, was with Josue no less effectually, than He had been with Moses. Nothing but a direct interference of the Almighty could in a week's time give a city like Jericho thoroughly on its guard and well prepared, to besiegers situated as were Josue and the Jews. Secondly, these same events cogently taught the inhabitants of Canaan that the successes of Israel were not mere human triumphs and that the God of Israel was not as the false gods of the Gentiles.

The Canaanite city of Jericho was recently excavated by Sellin. The foundations of the walls are still standing on the three sides but on the east they are destroyed. The ruins show evidences of fire (Josue 6:24).

### Discussion Aids

#### *Set I*

1. Name the ten plagues.
2. Why were the plagues miraculous?
3. At what exact place did the Israelites cross the Red Sea?
4. Describe the miraculous character of the passage of the Red Sea.
5. Describe the manna fully.

6. Can the manna be identified with the tamarisk-manna or lichen-manna?

7. Of what is the manna a type?

*Set II*

1. In what book of the Old Testament is the giving of the Ten Commandments described?

2. In what sense did the angels minister in the giving of the Decalogue?

3. In what sense is God the author of the stone tablets?

4. What did the destruction of the tablets by God and their renewal symbolize?

5. How is the Decalogue linked with the Ark?

6. Did Moses behold God on Mt. Sinai?

7. What is the meaning of the word "decalogue"?

8. To what did the commandments refer?

9. Describe the three systems of numbering the commandments.

10. In what books, besides Exodus, is the Decalogue found?

11. How were the 10 commandments divided on the two tablets?

12. Why was a written law necessary?

13. In what 2 great precepts is the Decalogue summed up?

*Set III*

1. Describe the miraculous passage across the Jordan.

2. What was the significance of the miraculous fall of Jericho?

*Religious Practices*

1. I will recite the Ten Commandments in connection with my daily prayers and fashion my life according to them.
2. I will frequently thank God for the manna of the Holy Eucharist which gives an immortal blessed life to both body and soul.
3. I will frequently recall the truth that when God destines a man for a particular office He will also give him the necessary helps and graces to fulfill it.

## Chapter VI

# Special Personages and Events

### *Josue and the Sun*

The miracle of Josue's stopping the sun is recorded in Josue 10:12-14:

"Then Josue spoke to the Lord, in the day that he delivered the Amorrhite in the sight of the children of Israel, and he said before them: Move not, O sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Ajalon.

And the sun and the moon stood still, till the people revenged themselves of their enemies. Is not this written in the book of the just? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down the space of one day.

There was not before nor after so long a day, the Lord obeying the voice of a man, and fighting for Israel."

The event is explained by M. Hetzenauer, O.C., and other scholars as a miraculous prolongation of the rays of the sun.

Others, as F. De Hummelauer, S.J., maintain that at the beginning of the battle the sky became so overswept with clouds and the day so dark that to all appearances evening had already set. In response to Josue's prayer the clouds were changed into a hailstorm, and soon the sun appeared so that Josue could pursue the enemy. Hence, while there

was but one ordinary day, to all external appearances it seemed as two days.

Others, as Fr. Kugler, S.J., Van Mierlo, S.J., and Dr. Van Hoonacker contend that the ancients used to designate solar and lunar eclipses, thunderstorms, and other atmospherical darknesses as "rest" of the sun and moon (e.g., Habacuc 3:11). During the hot noon-hour in a land of heat, Josue prayed to God to make the sun "stand still"—to "rest," to be "silenced," to "cease" as the Hebrew word may be translated: in other words, Josue asked that the sun be covered with clouds so that, in their cool shade, his warriors could fight with restored strength. Josue's prayer was forthwith heard. A thunderstorm—a very exceptional thing at this time of the year—broke directly over the heads of the fleeing enemy. Big hailstones fell from the clouds "and many more were killed by the hailstones than were slain by the swords of the children of Israel" (Josue 10:11). As a result of this divine assistance, Josue overcame the enemy more successfully in that one day than he could have done in two days without God's help. And so one day became as two, and "there was not before nor after so long a day" (Josue 10:14).

#### *Witch of Endor*

Of particular interest in the first Book of Kings is the account of Saul's recourse to the witch of Endor (I Kings 28:6-25) and of Samuel's apparition to Saul. "And the woman said to him (Saul): whom shall I bring up to thee? and he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. . . . And Samuel said to Saul: Why hast thou disturbed my rest, that I



should be brought up?" According to the text, Saul did not see the apparition; only the woman claimed to see Samuel. Several theories have been advanced to explain this apparition of Samuel:

1. The purported apparition was a fraud, a case of imposture on the part of the woman. This explanation is unsatisfactory, because the prophet appeared before the witch had time to begin her incarnations.

2. With God's permission the soul of Samuel appeared in a visible form, in order to reveal to King Saul the evil which was about to fall upon him. In support of this opinion, it is pointed out that occasionally, when false gods were consulted, God Himself revealed the truth through one of His messengers; thus, through the mediation of the prophet Elias, God declared what was to happen to those whom king Ochozias sent to consult the god of Accaron (IV Kings 1:3).

3. St. Thomas holds that the apparition was not the soul of Samuel but a demon who spoke in Samuel's name and who, with divine permission, uttered a seemingly genuine prophecy. This theory safeguards the dignity of a departed soul which — whether in purgatory or in the limbo of the just — is in the "hand of God" who would not permit it to appear to men at the behest of a sinful individual.

#### *Elias and Henoch*

A peculiar difficulty arises out of a narrative in Fourth Kings which describes the end of Elias's career (IV Kings 2:2). Like Henoch (Genesis 5:24) Elias was "translated" so that he should not taste death. As he was conversing with Eliseus on the

hills of Moab, "a fiery chariot, and fiery horses parted them both asunder, and Elias went up by a whirlwind into heaven," and all efforts to find him availed nothing.

Commentators are agreed in affirming that both Henoah and Elias were transported from earth without physical death (Ecclesiasticus 44:16, 48:1-15, 49:16; I Machabees 2:58; Hebrews 11:5). They also tell us that, according to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, the two are still living in the bodies in which they were born. Scripture and Tradition are both silent, however, as to the place and the manner of their actual existence. Whether they have been endowed temporarily with bodily incorruption, a state which can exist apart from the glorified state, is not clear. Some of the Fathers identify the two prophets with the two witnesses of Apocalypse 11:3. It is the common teaching of the Fathers, on the basis of Malachias 4:4-6, that these two prophets will reappear at the end of the world to preach penance and to convert the Jews (Matthew 17:3-4, 10-12).

Theologians are likewise agreed that the two prophets are not exempt from the universal law of death; but when they come to explain how the prophets will pay the penalty of death, these theologians range themselves into two groups: the first group maintains that Henoah and Elias, like the rest of men who will live at the second coming, will die and slumber awhile and then be summoned to the judgment; many theologians subscribe to this opinion because death is a penalty for original sin. The second group maintains that those who will be living on the last day will be transformed directly

without passing through the portals of death. They hold that, although these men may not suffer bodily death, the debt of death is none the less on them and that this punishment of death will be remitted directly by God Himself, who alone can forgive all penalties due to sin.

### *Jonas and the Fish*

The Book of Jonas, unlike the other prophetic books of the Old Testament, does not contain the preaching of the author to whom the book is ascribed, but is rather a historical narrative in which Jonas figures as the principal character. The book relates how God commanded Jonas to preach penance in Nineve, the capital of the Assyrian kingdom. Jonas, however, seeks to evade the divine command. He boards a ship at Jaffa with a view of sailing to Tharsis, which some identify with Tharsis in Cilicia, others with Tartessus in Spain. A violent storm overtakes the ship. The marines finding that Jonas is the cause of their plight, cast him into the sea. A great fish prepared by the Lord, swallows the prophet and after three days casts him forth uninjured on the land.

The second chapter of the Book—which deals with the incident of Jonas and the fish—has received numerous and frequently contradictory interpretations. Some claim that the chapter is an account of a mere dream or vision; others, that it is an allegory inculcating certain divine doctrines; others, that it is a myth adopted by the Jews from the Greeks. Against all these fantastic theories we subscribe to the traditional conservative view—adopted by the majority of Catholic scholars and by the Biblical Commission—and accept the book of Jonas as his-

torical. Several circumstances point to the historical character of the book. The narrative resembles in its tone the history of Elias and Eliseus told in the inspired writings. In one of His discourses Christ attributes the same importance to the story of the queen of Sheba and to that of Jonas (Matthew 12:40-42); and, consequently, sets the same historical value on the Book of Jonas as on the Third Book of Kings.

The historicity of the specific incident of Jonas and the fish is likewise guaranteed by the words of Christ. The Jews asked our Lord for a "sign" or miracle which would establish His divinity. Christ answered that no sign would be given them other than the "sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineve shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas and behold a greater than Jonas here" (Matthew 12:40, 41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). Here Christ is contrasting facts with facts, not myth with myth, or myth with fact. Christ surely did not mean to affirm that He is greater than a mere imaginary man. Christ's berating of the Jews for their lack of real penance would have little meaning if He contrasted it with a nonexistent penance of the Ninivites. The stay of Christ in the heart of the earth is a fact and not fancy; hence the stay of Jonas in the whale's belly is a fact and not fiction. In a word, the whole force of the contrasts in this passage is lost if we hold that the story of Jonas is not a fact-narrative.

The term "fish" in 2:1, is a generic term, meaning any sea monster or huge fish, and not necessarily a whale. The Greenland whale is said to have so small a mouth as to be unable to swallow a man. But this is not true of all kinds of whales. The throat of the spermaceti whale is sufficiently large to give passage to the body of a man. However, it is not necessary to believe that the animal mentioned in the history of Jonas was a whale. There are certain sharks in the Mediterranean which are capable of swallowing a man entire and rendering him up again entire. Then there is the rorqual, also common in the Mediterranean. This fish possesses a number of parallel longitudinal folds, which commence under the lower lip, pass down the throat, and terminate far down in the abdomen. Jonas may have been miraculously embedded and detained within the spacious cavity in the folds of the rorqual mouth. Here the prophet would have been preserved intact more easily than in the powerful digestive organ of a whale.

In a recent issue <sup>(1)</sup> the Minneapolis Journal brought an account of two modern cases which are analogous to that of Jonas: "Rev. John Ambrose Wilson of Queens College, Oxford, who set out to prove that the story of Jonah and the whale is true, found the two additional cases. The first actual example in modern times was that of James Bartley, whose adventure has been carefully checked by French and British scientists.

"Bartley was thrown into the water in February, 1891, in the Falkland Islands, when a whale upset his boat. His shipmates captured the whale

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(1) April 11, 1928, p. 1.



and were removing blubber the next day when they noticed convulsions in the stomach. Opening it, they found Bartley. He was restored to consciousness by dousing of salt water, but was a raving maniac. Inside of three weeks, however, he regained his reason and resumed his duties, but his skin, blanched a deadly white by the gastric juices in the whale's belly never took any color.

"Marshall Jenkins was another case. He was swallowed by a whale October 14, 1771, but was soon spewed up, considerably bruised, but not seriously injured."

"Mr. Wilson says a study of the structure of the sperm whale shows that it is perfectly possible for a man to be swallowed alive and that he could remain alive two or three days inside the whale."

New reports concerning sea monsters have come recently from Northern Pacific Coast and from Scotland. A London newspaper made exhaustive investigations of reports from the Loch Ness district in Scotland and found fifty-one eyewitnesses. A naturalist who became expert in spoor reading in Africa found tracks of the brute at Loch Ness. It is suggested that submarine volcanic eruptions account for the occasional change of habitat of these sea monsters.

### Discussion Aids

1. State the two explanations of the stopping of the sun.
2. State the three possible explanations of the apparition of Samuel at the behest of the witch of Endor.

3. Did Elias and Henoch die?
4. Are they still living?
5. Does the Bible or Tradition tell us where they are now?
6. When will they reappear?
7. Will they die?
8. Give briefly the contents of the Book of Jonas.
9. Is the second chapter of the Book true history? Explain.
10. How do the words of Christ guarantee the history of the incident of Jonas?
11. What is the meaning of the word "fish" in II, 1?
12. Describe the modern cases analogous to that of Jonas.

#### *Religious Practices*

1. I will frequently recall that I and my actions are as wholly subject to God as are the sun, moon, stars, clouds, etc.
2. I will not indulge in a vain and idle speculation about the lot of the dead but by a virtuous life on earth prepare to be numbered among the saints.
3. In celebrating the feast of the Transfiguration I will try to reproduce in my soul the sentiments with which Elias was present at the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor.
4. I will so live that the sojourn of my body in the grave after death will be only a prelude to a glorious bodily immortality.

## Chapter VII

# Job and the Problem of Evil

The Book of Job is a symposium on the age-long and ever recurring problem of suffering. The Book has been justly called the "Lamentation of Afflicted Mankind." It is divided into three parts: the introduction, the discussions or debates, and the conclusion.

In the prologue (1 to 3) we are told how God permits Satan to tempt Job, a simple, upright, and God-fearing man. In rapid succession Job loses his children and is stripped of all his possessions. Yet he bears all these trials patiently and his trust in God continues unbroken: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). Job is then struck with a loathsome disease from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. His own wife rises against him and scorns him. But even then his patience is invincible and his confidence in God continues unwavering.

Three of Job's friends—the venerable Eliphaz, the conventional Baldad, and the opinionated Sophar—come to visit and console him. After seven days of silence, they open a seven days' discussion to determine the cause of Job's afflictions.

I *First Cycle of Debates* (4 to 14): Sufferings are a punishment of sin.

*Eliphaz* (4 to 5): God never punishes the innocent; let Job, therefore, acknowledge his sins: "Who

ever perished being innocent? Or when were the just destroyed" (4:7)?

*Job* (6 to 7): I am innocent; besides there is no proportion between my sufferings and the imaginary sins imputed to me: "O that my sins, whereby I have deserved wrath, and the calamity that I suffer, were weighed in a balance. As the sand of the sea this would appear heavier" (6:2-3).

*Baldad* (8): Divine justice is immutable and must of necessity punish sin; let Job, therefore, return to God: "Doth God pervert judgment, or doth the Almighty overthrow that which is just" (8:3)?

*Job* (9 to 10): I know that God is just and that no one is pure in His sight: "Man cannot be justified compared with God. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one for a thousand" (9:2-3). But God also frequently afflicts the innocent. If I am guilty, let Him show me my sins.

*Sophar* (11): God is omniscient and omnipresent; if Job suffers, let him understand that "God exacts much less of him than his iniquity deserves" (11:6).

*Job* (12 to 14): My knowledge of God is not inferior to that of my friends. If God is punishing me, it must be for the sins of my youth.

II *Second Cycle of Debates* (15 to 21): Job has sinned.

*Eliphaz* (15): Job is a proud and wicked person, and his speech abounds in blasphemy.

*Job* (16 to 17): God is the witness of my innocence: "For behold my witness is in heaven, and he that knoweth my conscience is on high" (16:20).

*Baldad* (18): Job is guilty and is deserving of the sad lot of an unjust and impious man.

*Job* (19): May my friends have mercy on me in my excessive misery; as for me, I place my trust in God and in the future resurrection of the body.

*Sophar* (20): The prosperity of the wicked is short lived and their downfall sudden: "The praise of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill" (20:5-7).

*Job* (21): On the contrary, the wicked often prosper during their entire lifetime: "Why then do the wicked live, are they advanced, and strengthened with riches? Their seed continueth before them, a multitude of kinsmen, and of children's children in their sight. Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them" (21:7-9).  
III *Third Cycle of Debates* (22 to 28): *Job* is clearly guilty.

*Eliphaz* (22): *Job's* sufferings are due to his "manifold wickedness" and "infinite iniquities"; let him repent and God will grant him prosperity.

*Job* (23-24): Let me be tried at God's tribunal; I repeat, the wicked, too, frequently prosper in this life.

*Baldad* (25): No man is pure in the sight of God: "Can man be justified compared with God, or he that is born of a woman appear clean" (25:4)?

*Job* (26): I too, realize that great indeed are the wisdom and power of God. True wisdom is to be found not in material things but in God alone. Though presently overwhelmed with calamities I am innocent (27 to 31).



In the second part (32 to 37) Eliu, a zealous onlooker, declares that suffering is God's method of purifying, developing and strengthening virtue.

The debate closes with a theophany (38 to 40:4). In response to Job's appeal to judge his case, God answers him out of the whirlwind, and censures him for the rashness of his language. The range of God's wisdom and power are revealed in the unfathomed mysteries of the universe. The mystery of suffering is not smaller than these. Finite man then cannot hope to fathom the mysteries of God's ways.

In the epilogue (Job 42:7-16) God reprimands the three friends of Job. The latter justified by God Himself, unhesitatingly submits to the divine decrees. He has stood the test successfully, and God gives him thrice as much as he had possessed before. Job lives after these things one hundred and forty years, and sees his children and his children's children unto the fourth generation.

The various solutions of the problem of evil, stated explicitly or insinuated in the Book of Job, are deserving of further attention. The problem itself has been accentuated by the events of contemporary times and has colored profoundly the trends of modern thought. For the sake of clarity we shall study first moral evil, and then consider physical suffering as found in the human and animal kingdom.

#### *Moral Evil*

The problem of moral evil or sin cannot be solved by viewing sin as a mere evolutionary mistake or as a failure to respond to the "law of progressive life" and "highest spiritual environment."

Nor is it sufficiently explained by saying that sin arises necessarily out of man's free will. Free will does not of itself imply the power to choose wrong. God could have so ordered our circumstances and conferred on the will such instinctive tendencies that we should in every instance adopt the right course.

The affirmation that God is not bound to interfere miraculously with the normal course of events and hinder the birth of evil men is, perhaps, a more plausible solution.

The ultimate explanation, however, is to be sought in the fact that, in the present order of Providence, man's life is a probation. Final beatitude is to be a reward of personal effort, a fruit of our labors, a recompense of a hard-won victory. Such a lot inevitably implies the power to choose wrong. A probation and a struggle without the possibility of failure would be a meaningless farce.

To say that God should abstain from giving existence to a soul which He foresaw would choose the path of evil, would be to affirm that human malice can prevail against the sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom of the Creator.

God wishes all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth. He deals patiently, not willing that anyone should perish but that all should return to penance. Having destined us to a supernatural end, He also gives us the means of attaining that end. Christ is universal Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer; His graces are intended for all without distinction. God does not arbitrarily predestine some to damnation and others to glory. To each He gives sufficient aid to reach his supernatural des-

tiny. If man does all that lies within his power, God out of His abundant mercy will continue to bestow His help until man has reached the haven of eternal safety. If man disregards or abuses God's graces, the result—eternal separation from God—is to be attributed not to God but to man's perverse will.

God can never be the cause of sin, because every sinful act is a departure from that divinely established order whereby all creatures tend to God as to their last end. While God is the cause of the being and energy of every action, He is never the cause of any deformity in the action; such deformity is attributable to the human will alone. If God delivers some to a reprobate sense, it is only because they already have such a disposition. He merely does not hinder them from following their sinful ways, even, as we are said to expose a person to danger if we do not protect him. Nor is God the cause of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, if by these is meant a positive aversion from Divine Light and cleaving to evil. God, however, of His own accord may withdraw His illuminating and inspiring grace from those who are not worthy and who resist Him; without this grace there arise in the souls of such individuals a blindness of the mind and hardening of the heart.

Whenever God permits moral evil, He renders it subservient to His own good purposes. Thus the iniquity of pagan emperors called forth the heroic virtues of the martyrs. A man who sins, who acts in defiance of his reason, places himself on the plane of irrational creatures. As long as he remains in this perverse state, God treats him as one of them: he ceases to be an end but becomes a means to the

good of others. The sinful will of the wicked affords the necessary occasion for the exercise of the highest virtue. Struggle against the evil examples and seductions of the world is not only a proof of virtue but also a means of its growth and development. The attainment of virtue on the part of the good outweighs the harm of moral evil.

### *Physical Evil*

The presence of physical evil in the human race is frequently alleged by contemporary writers as an argument against the existence of a good and omnipotent God. If God is Supreme Goodness, they contend, why does He allow these evils to arise? If He is omnipotent why does He not remove them or deliver us from them? For those who have lost sight of all spiritual standards, whose only aim in life is material well-being, comfort, and prosperity, the presence of bodily suffering is naturally an insoluble enigma. For the humanist, pragmatist, and hedonist the existence of suffering must necessarily admit of no explanation or justification.

In offering a solution of this vexing problem, let us recall to mind certain fundamental facts and principles. In the first place, many physical evils are not of God's appointing but of man's approving. A large proportion of the tragedies in life are due directly or indirectly to human beings themselves, to their stupidity and perversity. There is no need of blaming God for their origin or assuming the burden of reconciling them with God's purposes. Again, many of the disasters which overcome man are due to the changes which he himself has introduced into the realm of nature. The vast mechanisms of nature are thrown out of gear and forced to

operate in abnormal ways, the pent-up energies are carelessly or unskillfully handled, and dire sufferings follow.

Secondly, we must keep in mind the fundamental truth that we have not here a "lasting city," but seek one which is to come. Man's true end is not earthly pleasure but the possession of God, the Supreme Good. Physical evil is one of the most important factors in enabling man to attain this end. Were it not for trials and tribulations men would scarcely ever think of the future life and of their true end.

Thus, far from being irreconcilable with the wisdom of the Creator, pain fulfills an important office in human life. In the light of this truth we can understand, to some extent at least, the purposes of those natural calamities which from time to time overcome some section of the human race. The overwhelming power of these forces of nature, and man's utter helplessness before them, rouse man from his habitual religious indifference, fill him with reverence for the Creator and with fear of violating His moral laws. In many instances, it is true, human existence is cut off prematurely and its purpose apparently frustrated. But when life is considered as a probation, it matters little whether man lives his full years or not. An early death, instead of being a loss, is in God's Providence frequently an immense gain.

#### *The Sufferings of Animals*

In speaking of animal sufferings it is well to abstain from all vain and silly sentimentality. Animal and human sufferings cannot be considered as being on the same plane or level. Animal suffer-



ings may resemble human sufferings by reason of their physiological processes but differ essentially from them as to their psychological reality. Whereas the animal is endowed merely with sensitive apprehension and memory, man possesses an immaterial intellect which transcends the limitations of time and space and gathers up the past and future into the present. Because of past recollections and future anticipations, man suffers collectively, as it were, and with corresponding intensity.

Pain, where it does exist, is a natural consequent of the animal's nature and bodily organs. Immunity from pain would demand a perpetual miracle. It would be contrary to God's wisdom to create a sentient nature and forthwith reverse the system of natural laws which govern it.

A wise government provides for everything according to the mode of its nature. It would be contrary to the divine plan not to allow creatures to act according to the mode of their several natures. But by the very fact of creatures so acting, there arises evil in the world, since mutual contrariety and inconsistency result in mutual destruction. If God created certain creatures, for example, carnivorous or insectivorous, His wisdom demands that provision be made for them in accordance with and not in opposition to their respective natures.

### Discussion Aids

1. Give briefly the contents of the three divisions of the book of Job:
  - a) prologue
  - b) dialogue
  - c) epilogue

2. On what vexing problem does the book touch? How does it solve it?
3. Is sin an evolutionary mistake?
4. Does sin arise necessarily out of our free will?
5. Give the reasons for the existence of sin in the world.
6. Does God arbitrarily predestine any one to damnation?
7. Is God the cause of sin? Does He harden any one's heart?
8. Why does God permit evil?
9. For whom especially is physical evil a vexing problem?
10. Enumerate all the possible reasons why suffering exists in the world.
11. Is animal suffering on the same plane as human suffering? Why?
12. Explain why animal suffering exists in the world.

*Religious Practices*

1. I will accept sufferings as an expiation of my sins and as an occasion of merit.
2. I will accept all sufferings as a reminder that we have not here a "lasting city" but seek one which is to come.
3. I will frequently recall that the purpose of my existence is not earthly pleasure but the possession of God, the Supreme Good.

## Chapter VIII

# Old Testament Morality and Religion

Why does the Bible—especially the Old Testament, the inspired word of God—contain accounts of crimes, sins, vices, and immoralities—narratives which, to say the least, are very disedifying?

The Old Testament was written for people who had just emerged from slavery and from close contact with the gross immorality of Egyptian paganism. Its pages contain many statements which we consider as extremely blunt and shocking but which the Hebrews, who were not accustomed to the countless conventions of the modern world, regarded as acceptable modes of expression. Of course, we must not suppose that the whole Old Testament was read aloud to young boys and girls. As a recent author so well puts it, "an indiscriminate reading of it is by no means commendable for the young and immature and the abnormally weak. Moses and the prophets did not write for such; no more than the authors of detailed treatises on anatomy or the marriage law intended their works for school libraries."

Secondly, the Old Testament describes the ravages of original sin within the human race. Every sin, vice, and crime depicted on its pages, is a concrete manifestation of that law which Adam introduced into humanity by his fall and which is recorded in the opening chapters of the Bible.

Finally, the Old Testament pens humanity's yearnings for a Redeemer; if the Jews and patriarchs were represented as morally perfect, if the sacred authors had published only expurgated accounts, much of the Old as well as of the New Testament would be unintelligible, and the coming of a Saviour to free humanity from sin would have been meaningless.

The actions of the Jews, it is true, were frequently evil and immoral. But the ethical principles of the Old Testament were always praiseworthy, and ranked much higher than those of the pagans. The Old Testament code is absolutely good; it teaches nothing immoral or contrary to the natural moral law. The ten commandments alone are sufficient evidence of this fact. Nowhere in Sacred Scripture does God command or approve evil. That the Old Testament code is not as perfect as that of the New is easily explained. God, who in His infinite knowledge knows that human nature progresses very slowly in the paths of virtue, adapts His precepts to men as He finds them and gradually leads them to higher degrees of perfection.

The commandment of neighborly love holds a prominent place in the Old Testament. Certain laws concerning the love of enemies suggest the spirit of the "Our Father"; "He that seeketh to revenge himself shall find vengeance from the Lord; and He will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbor if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest" (Ecclesiasticus 28:1,2). The oppressed rarely failed to find a defender. The prophet Elias severely rebukes King Achab for having taken away the vine-

yard from Nabet. Nathan reprimands king David for murdering Urias in order to marry his wife.

The punishments prescribed in the Old Testament are much more humane than those inflicted by Babylonia and Assyria. The maxim, "eye for an eye," was the code of primitive society and only meant that the punishment was to be equal to the crime. Blood-revenge—the personal retaliation for the murder of relatives—was based on much the same principle. Blood-revenge was an ancient deep-rooted custom and, before the organized administration of justice, a method of punishment well calculated to deter men from crime. In territories without governing powers, the institution of blood-revenge—though at times open to abuse—was of considerable benefit, for if a man had no one to take revenge for him, he would be in constant danger of losing his life by violence. Now, the Old Testament gives a record of this ancient custom; but it surrounds it with safeguards and strives to eliminate its abuses.

But what about the so-called vindictive psalms in which the sacred writer hurls the curse of God against his enemies (Psalms 34; 51; 53; 57; 58; 67; 108; 136)? Recently in the Anglican Church the Houses of Convocation of Canterbury recommended that in the use of the Psalter in public worship Psalm 57 and portions of other maledictory psalms be omitted. In dealing with these imprecatory psalms we must judge them—not in the light of the higher and New Testament morality—but in the light of their own times. The Jews had, on the one hand, a profound sense of God's justice and holiness. On the other hand, they did not as yet have the full



light of revelation on the future life with its rewards and punishments. They did not fully understand that, if a moral adjustment is not made in this life, it will surely be made in the next. And hence the psalmist sought the sanctions of morality in the blessings and punishments of this life. At any rate, it would be wrong to regard the vindictive psalms as the expression of personal hatred and revenge for the psalmist's enemies. They are denunciations of sin rather than of sinners, prayers that God's holiness and justice be vindicated and sanction for morality established.

The slaying of certain peoples in Canaan (Josue 11) by the sword of the Israelites at God's command cannot be alleged as an argument against God's goodness. The destruction of these "nations" (small fortified towns) is always represented in Sacred Scripture as a just judgment of God sent upon them because of their heinous wickedness. These nations—such as the Canaanites, for example—had not only fallen into total apostacy from God but into forms of idolatry of the most degrading kind. The most atrocious cruelty and the most defiling unnatural vices were part and parcel of their observances (Leviticus 18:21 ff.; Deuteronomy 12:3 ff.). In spite of many warnings from God, they had proved themselves incorrigible. It would be impossible to acknowledge God as the moral governor of the universe, if on occasions, at least, He did not summarily remove from His dominions these masses of hopeless depravity. God, the Lord of life, inflicted this righteous judgment by the hand of the Israelites and commissioned them to be His executioners. Did not God execute a similar judgment

Himself directly, when He caused fire and sulphur to drop down upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, or when He caused the immoral city of Pompei to be buried by the volcanic eruptions of Mount Vesuvius? If innocent men and children were slaughtered together with the Canaanites, God redressed in the hereafter these inequalities which arose out of the acts of His Providence here below. Finally, we must not forget the many texts which enjoin kindness toward the foreigners who agree to dwell peaceably in the midst of Israel.

The destruction of the Canaanites was necessary in the interests of mankind at large. On account of their degeneracy they were extremely dangerous to the one true religion of Israel. Their godlessness was a menace to the preservation of the true faith and the true worship. Had Josue been more lenient, the heathen would have remained in large numbers in the midst of God's people. There would have been intermarriage and a gradual melting down of the whole into one nation.

When one considers the strong tendency which the Jews manifested all through their history to imitate their pagan neighbors, it is clear that the pure and lofty idea of God, which is the very heart and soul of revealed religion, would have been lost, and worship would have become as debased as was that of the Phoenicians and Moabites.

Nor does slavery stand out as a disgraceful blot on the pages of the Old Testament. In all things not directly connected with divine worship, the Israelites lived according to customs of the times. Slavery was then incorporated into the structure of society and a sudden freeing of the slaves would

have meant a general cessation of work. Furthermore, the Jewish law was far more considerate of the slaves than were the laws of pagan nations. Slaves in pagan countries were mere chattels, enjoying no rights, and liable to death at the mere caprice of the master. The slaves of the Jews, on the contrary, enjoyed many rights. A slave who lost an eye or a tooth by the brutality of his master, thereby became free. The murder of a slave was punished by death. The master was bound to provide for the marriage of his female slaves. The children begotten in slavery belonged to the master who had to care for them. When a Jew in need sold himself into bondage, he was emancipated during the next Jubilee Year. Even during the bondage he was to be treated rather as a hired hand than as a slave (Leviticus 25:39). All the slaves of the Jews were allowed to participate in the sacrificial repasts and in the paschal supper (Exodus 12:44). The New Testament—especially that Magna Charta of emancipation, the Epistle to Philemon—laid down the principles for the abolition of slavery. However, it took centuries before liberation was fully attained: the elimination of a factor, which is an important part of the social texture, must of necessity be slow; secondly, to throw the slaves at once on their own responsibility, might have placed them in a condition which would have been worse than slavery.

There is no evidence to show that human sacrifices formed part of the official worship of Jahve. The few instances that are mentioned in the Old Testament are related as something most exceptional. Abraham did not actually sacrifice his son;

the sacred writer describes the heroic trial of Abraham's faith as something unique. When God stopped the hand of Abraham, He indicated to that patriarch and to all posterity that He desired not the life of man but prompt obedience of mind and heart. If Jephthe really sacrificed his daughter (Judges 11:29-40) the Bible does not commend him for it; the sacred writer makes no comment on the action of Jephthe but draws a veil over the tragedy, thereby giving us to understand that Judaism did not sanction Jephthe's conduct; at any rate, the action of that crude chieftain cannot be taken as proof that the religion of Israel sanctioned human sacrifices. Micheas (Micheas 6:6, 7) asks what God demands of man? He enumerates in the form of a climax the costly gifts which man might offer to God; he mentions human sacrifices but only to reject the supposition.

The Old Testament permitted polygamy and divorce. But, as our Lord Himself explained, "from the beginning it was not so"; these things were permitted to the early Jews "because of the hardness of their hearts" (Matthew 19:8). In the beginning unity and indissolubility of marriage were the rule. But in the measure in which polygamy and divorce prevailed among the neighboring pagan tribes, the Patriarchs and their descendants also fell into these abuses. God, however, merely tolerated this state of affairs; He never commanded or commended it. When Christ came, He restored marriage to its original status and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament.

Infidels contend that the Jewish religion was polytheistic both by origin and in theory. They

base their claim on the following three arguments: (1) The Hebrew term for God, namely, "Elohim," is a plural noun; (2) the term had a polytheistic home; (3) the sacred writers make frequent reference to "other gods." But the arguments do not and cannot warrant the conclusions drawn from them.

(1) The term, "Elohim," it is true is plural in form. But in the Old Testament it is treated as a singular noun, taking a singular verb, pronoun, or attribute. It is a plural of majesty or power. (2) Even though the word had a polytheistic home, it does not follow that Israel retained all the original connotation of the term. Christianity borrowed many pagan words (Deus, pontifex) but put its own meaning into them. (3) In regard to the expression, "other gods," why expect that every Jew of antiquity be a trained theologian and speak as such? The Jew was not a theoretical thinker. The Semitic mind was pre-eminently practical. And so it is well possible that the early Jews did not always think out the logical consequences of their monotheism. It sufficed for the ordinary Jew to know that Jahve was his Lord and Master, the God whom he must worship.

Hebrew monotheism brought with it a truly spiritual worship, the only worship in antiquity worthy of the name. It always regarded idolatry as an abomination and a sin. Polytheism, female deities, mythology, animal worship, human sacrifices, ritualistic prostitution never formed a part of the Jewish religion. It had none of those barbarous and immoral practices which disfigured even the highest religions of antiquity. Paganism, on the other hand, did not clearly grasp the relation between religion and ethics. It countenanced the most



hideous vices. Its gods and goddesses were generally regarded as indifferent to sin, and were themselves charged with the grossest violations of the moral code. The ethical code of the Old Testament, while lower than the teaching of the Gospel, stands out in antiquity as a lofty spiritual rule of life. It emphasizes the relation between religion and ethics, and bases man's obligation on the thought of God's holiness and love. The religion of Israel does not suffer by comparison with the best and the highest religions of antiquity. Such a comparison only serves to bring out into clearer light the transcendence of that religion and the utter impossibility of accounting for it on purely natural grounds.

#### Discussion Aids

1. How explain the presence in the Old Testament of narratives of crimes, sins, vices, and immoralities? Give three explanations.
2. Did the Jews have a high ethical code? Prove your statement.
3. Was the Old Testament code as perfect as that of the New Testament? Why?
4. What commandment holds a prominent place in the Old Testament?
5. What was the meaning of the Old Testament maxim, "eye for an eye"?
6. Why did the Old Testament tolerate the custom of blood revenge?
7. How explain the vindictive or maledictory psalms?
8. Is the slaying of certain peoples in Canaan an argument against God's goodness? Give three reasons.

9. Did the Old Testament permit slavery?
10. Did human sacrifice form a part of Old Testament worship?
11. Did the Old Testament permit polygamy and divorce? Why?
12. Was the Jewish religion polytheistic?

*Religious Practices*

1. I will frequently thank God for His graces which enable me to avoid the sins and crimes committed by men of pre-Christian times.
2. I shall follow the more perfect teaching of the New Testament concerning the love of neighbor: "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45).
3. I shall frequently recall my responsibility before God for the many graces which He gives me daily.

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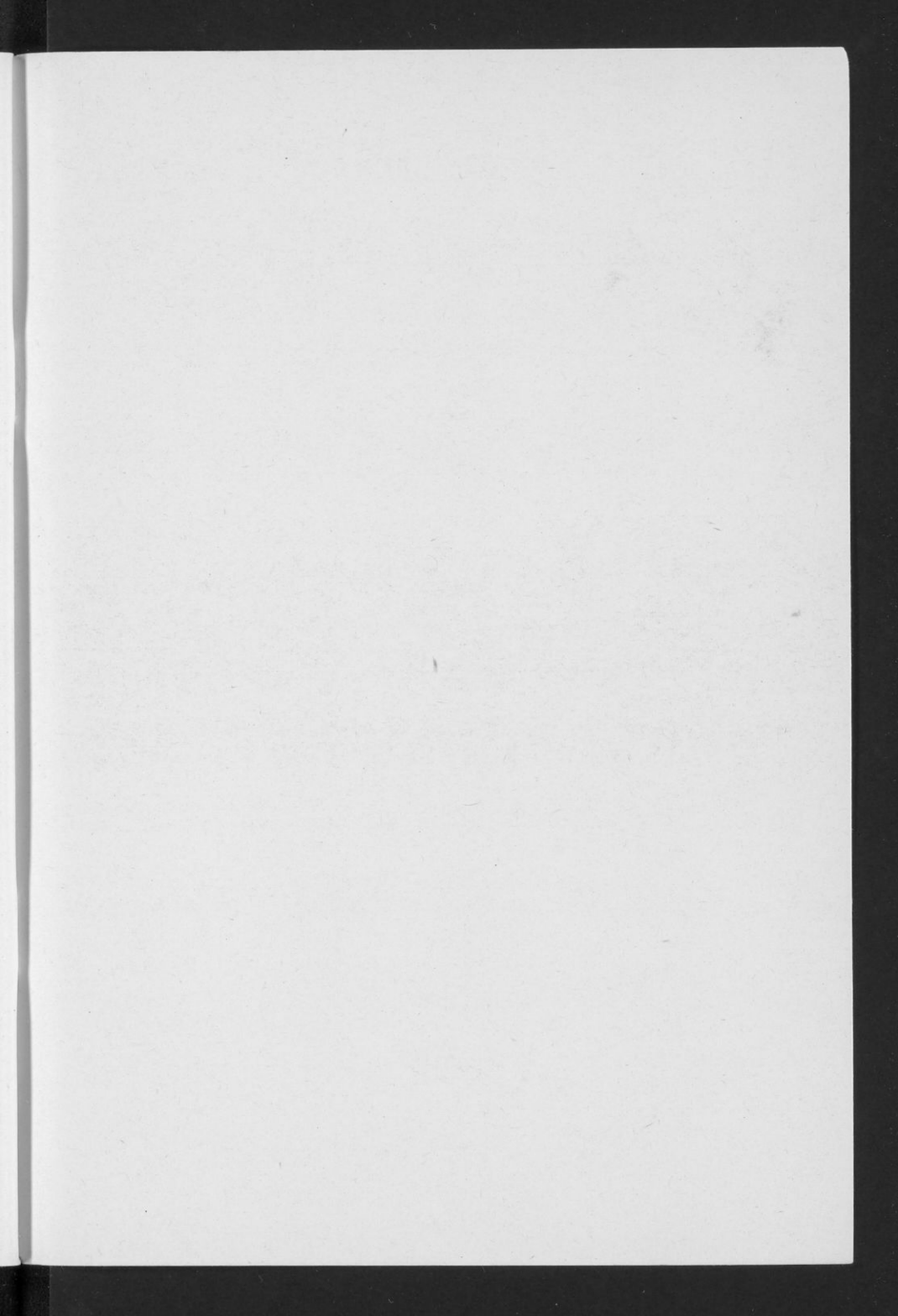
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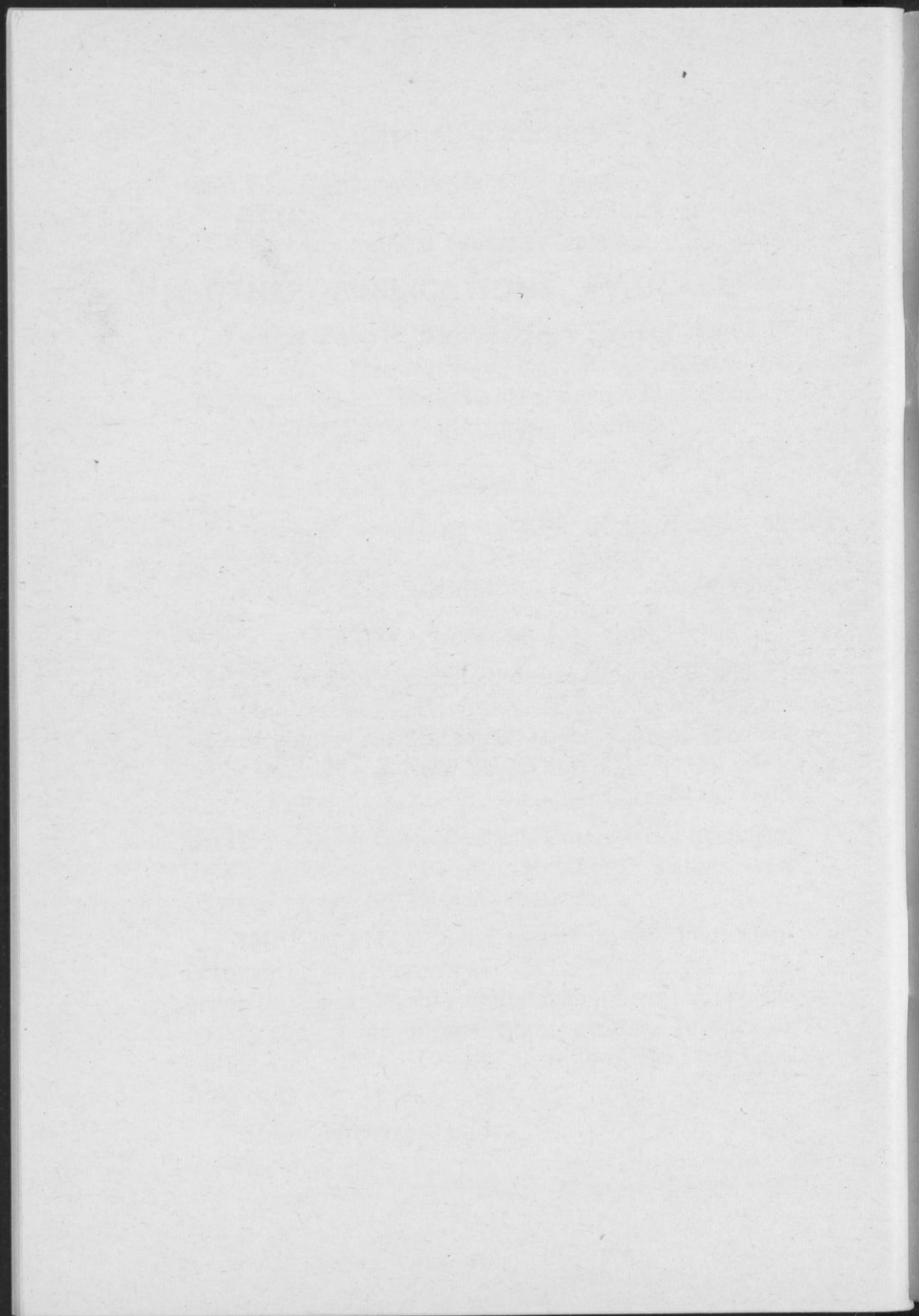
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