

## PART TWENTY-NINE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN

(16:1-16)

#### 1. *The Biblical Account.*

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children; and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes; Jehovah judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction. 12

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*And he shall be as a wild ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren. 13 And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

*15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.*

### 2. *The Domestic Drama in Abram's Household* (vv. 1-6).

*The story of Hagar and Ishmael has real value for the believer.* It conveys a lesson both profound and practical. Abram, it will be recalled, was seventy-five years old when he left Haran on receiving God's covenantal Promise (Gen. 12:4) in which the promise of seed was inherent. Now Abram had reached the age of eighty-five (16:3) and the promise of seed had not been fulfilled and indeed seemed impossible of fulfillment in view of the fact that Sarai had passed the normal age of childbearing. Of course, as far as we can know, it had not been explicitly stated that Sarai was the destined mother of the long-promised and anxiously-awaited son; it seems unreasonable, however, to assume anything to the contrary. Therefore, as the prospect of her contributing to the fulfillment of the Promise became more and more remote, she seems to have reached the conclusion that this honor was not reserved for her, and proceeded to take matters into her own hands. She persuaded her husband to take her handmaid, Hagar, an Egyptian, as a kind of secondary wife (concubine), that by her he might obtain what had been denied her (Sarai). Abram evidently was not averse to the arrangement: he consorted with Hagar, and the Egyptian conceived.

*The consequences of this unfortunate event*—unfortunate because both ill-conceived and ill-timed (because the persons involved were not willing to await God's own time to fulfill the Promise)—seem to be never-ending. After all, it was God's own Promise that was involved: they needed only to await His will in the matter. Instead of so doing, however, they proceeded to take the situation in hand themselves. In spite of the many instances cited us of Abraham's faith, and in spite of the high evaluation of his faith in the New Testament writings, the fact remains that in this instance his faith was wanting in integrity, else he should have rebuked Sarai for her impatience. (But how many professing Christians in our day (or in any other day, for that matter) would have the faith to hold out for God's time in a similar situation? We are inclined to think, Very, very few! After all, Abram and Sarai were human, and we have here one of the most far-reaching of human interest stories in literature, and also another proof of the realism of the Biblical record. It is a record in which life is portrayed exactly as men and women lived it, with their frailties as well as their virtues, and their sorrows and disillusionments as well as their joys. The sum and substance of the matter is that the consequences of Sarai's rash act failed to bring happiness to any of the persons directly involved (not to mention the innocent victim, Ishmael). In a moment of elation which begat a false pride, Hagar mocked her mistress, who in turn was outraged (she had lost "face" in the eyes of the Egyptian) and vented her spleen on both Abram and Hagar despite the fact they had done only what she herself had persuaded them to do. The net result was a domestic mess in which Hagar and her son, both indirectly involved, suffered the greater injustices; a situation which is having repercussions in world history even in our own time, the twentieth century.

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*Archeological discoveries* have fully substantiated the details of this incident which occurred some eighteen or twenty centuries prior to the beginning of the Christian era. The practice of a slave woman bearing a child for a childless wife is strange indeed from the point of view of the Western world. But that this was a common practice in the patriarchal world is evident from two sources especially, namely, the Code of Hammurabi and the Nuzi tablets. Excavations at Nuzi (or Nuzu), an ancient city of northern Mesopotamia east of the Tigris—the site is now near Kirkuk in Iraq—have uncovered thousands of clay tablets in cuneiform script most of which date back to the 15th and 16th centuries before Christ, at the time when the town was under Hurrian (Horite) domination. From Par. 146 of the Code of Hammurabi we learn that a priestess of certain rank who was free to marry but not to bear children, gave her husband a slave girl in order to provide him with a son. We learn that if the concubine should then have tried to arrogate unto herself a social status of equality with her mistress, the wife should have downgraded her to her former standing as a slave. The wife, however, did not have the right to sell her to others. Speiser (ABG, 120): "This law is applicable to the case before us in that (a) the childless wife must herself provide a concubine, (b) the successful substitute must not forget her place. But these provisions are restricted to certain priestesses for whom motherhood was ruled out. No such limitations applied to Sarah." Her case is covered fully, however, in one of the published texts from Nuzi. Here we have an account of a socially prominent family (of no special religious commitments) in which the wife who is childless is required to provide a slave girl as concubine in order that the husband may have an heir. The wife, however, will have legal rights to the offspring. Moreover, if the formerly childless couple should later have a child of their own, they could not thrust out the child

of the secondary wife. "The other provisions of the Nuzi case are likewise paralleled in our narrative: Sarah is childless, and it is she herself who has pressed a concubine on Abraham (v. 5). What Sarai did, then, was not so much in obedience to an impulse as in conformance with the family law of the Hurrians, a society whose customs the patriarchs knew intimately and followed often" (ABG, 121). (HSB, 27): "Archeological evidence of Nuzi customs indicate that in some marriage contracts a childless wife was required to furnish a substitute for her husband. In oriental eyes, childlessness was the greatest of tragedies. Nuzu custom stipulated further that the slave wife and her children could not be sent away. Thus the action of Sarah and Abraham was undoubtedly consonant with the customs of that day." (JB, 31): "According to Mesopotamian law a barren wife could present one of her female slaves to the husband and acknowledge the issue as her son. The same is to happen in Rachel's case, 30:1-6, and in Leah's, 30:9-13."

*The personal element in this story* is interwoven with the societal and legal: "the basic conflict is between certain specific legal rights and natural human feelings." V. 2— Note that Sarai ascribes her failure to bear children to Yahweh's not having given them to her. Said she, Yahweh has shut up my womb, *i.e.*, restrained me from bearing. Does Sarah's action in this case stem from her lack of specific knowledge that she was to be the mother of Abram's child? Or, did she take matters into her own hands and proceed to resolve the problem on her own authority, motivated to some extent by her impatience with God? Certainly her manner of speech indicates a certain measure of *petulance*. Said she to Abram, "Suppose you go in unto my handmaid (*i.e.*, cohabit with her) that perhaps I may be built up by her, *i.e.*, that I may have children by her." And Abram "hearkened" to his wife's "voice," that is, he showed no hesitancy in approving her

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suggestion. V. 3—Sarah then took Hagar and gave her (*i.e.*, gave her in marriage) to her husband. This happened after ten years of dwelling in the Promised Land, when Abram was eighty-five years old and his wife seventy-five. Truly they had been awaiting God's fulfillment of the Promise a long, long time, but, as we see it today in the light of the Christian revelation, God could hardly have made known to them His design to produce a birth out of the natural order of such events which would prefigure the Supreme Begetting and Birth of Messiah (Luke 1:34-35). Still and all, should not their faith have remained steadfast that God would keep His commitment to them? V. 4—When Hagar knew she had conceived, "her mistress was lessened in her eyes," that is, Sarah lost caste in the eyes of the Egyptian. V. 5—that Hagar's superciliousness irritated Sarai was perfectly natural: what other reaction might have been expected? The Code of Hammurabi states expressly that a slave girl who was elevated to the status of concubine could not claim equality with her mistress (par. 146). After all, a genuine privilege had been granted Hagar, one which she might well have appreciated. Of course the whole transaction was not in accord with the will of God: The Child of Promise could hardly have been the offspring of an Egyptian. Moreover, as we have noted above, Sarah had acted in accord with prevailing Mesopotamian law. Hence we are not surprised to read that she complained to Abram about the contempt which she had received from her maid, saying, "Let this injustice come upon thee: now Yahweh must judge between us" (that is, between Sarai and Abram. (Cf. Gen. 27:13, Jer. 51:35, Judg. 11:27, 1 Sam. 24:15). "I myself put my maid in your lap," said Sarai; "not just a fanciful expression, but recognized legal phraseology" (ABG, 118). Certainly this was a very imprudent act, even had it not been actually sinful. In calling on Yahweh to "referee" the case, commentators generally agree that this was an

irreverent use of the Divine Name and that Sarah's speech was a tirade which exhibited great passion. Abram replied, The maid is in your hands: deal with her as you see fit. In holding her husband responsible Sarai was well within her legal rights, we are told, as indicated by patriarchal law; Abram, in turn gave her full power to act as mistress toward the maid without elevating the slave, who had been made a concubine, above her original status. In the attitude of the patriarch do we detect an evidence of his peaceful disposition, or his recognition of the fact that he had already discovered his mistake in expecting the promised seed through Hagar, or an attitude of weakness in yielding to Sarai's invective, or an unjustifiable wrong inflicted on the future mother of his child? (Cf. PCG, 226). "Sarah, despite the undertaking that Hagar's sons would be counted as hers (Gen. 16:2) and thus have a claim to the inheritance, sought to drive Hagar away (Gen. 21:10). Abraham acted against the contemporary custom only when given a special assurance from God that he should do so (verse 12)" (NBD, 69). At any rate Sarah dealt harshly with Hagar, we are told; literally "applied force to her, threatened her with violence" (ABG, 118). Obviously the treatment was severe enough to cause the Egyptian maid "to flee from the face of her mistress" (v. 8).

*In evaluating the actions and reactions of the dramatic personae of this human—exceedingly human—interest story, commentators find themselves hard pressed to try to justify the conduct of the three involved. Some, of course, are inclined to be more lenient than others, as will be noted from the following excerpts. (HSB, 27): "When Abraham was eighty-six years of age Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (16:16). This incident reveals how two genuine believers may seek to fulfill God's will by normally acceptable methods but spiritually carnal ones. The promise of God was not to Hagar but to Sarah. Sarah suggested the use of Hagar, and Abraham consented to the arrangement.*

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Both were guilty. The birth of Ishmael introduced a people (the nucleus of the later Mohammedans) which has been a challenge both to the Jews and the Christian Church. It was not until Abraham was a hundred years old that Isaac was born (21:5). From the length of time between the promise and the fulfillment we can draw the lessons that God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isa. 55:8, 9). Patient waiting would have produced the desired results without the additional problems created by impatience and lack of faith. God always rewards those who have faith to believe His promises." Speiser (ABG, 119): "At the personal level, from which the author starts out, the basic conflict is between certain specific legal rights and natural human feelings. We know now the pertinent legal measures as illustrated by the Laws of Hammurabi and the Nuzi documents. The juridical background of the issue before us is as complex as it is authentic, a circumstance that makes the unfolding drama at once more poignant and intelligible. All three principals in the case have some things in their favor and other things against them. Sarah is thus not altogether out of order when she bitterly complains to Abraham that her rights have not been honored (5). Beyond all the legal niceties, however are the tangled emotions of the characters in the drama: Sarah, frustrated and enraged; Hagar, spirited but tactless; and Abraham, who must know that, whatever his personal sentiments, he may not dissuade Sarah from following the letter of the law." "The custom of a barren wife giving her handmaid to her husband in order that she might *obtain children by her* is further attested by 30:3, according to which the childless Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob, and by 30:9, where Leah, who had "ceased bearing," gave him Zilpah. The children born of such a union were thus reckoned as the children not of the handmaid, but of the wife, by adoption, the slave girl being delivered on the knees of her mistress



(cf. 30:3). Sarah, however, is unable to go through with the arrangement. Hagar's contempt for her childlessness (v. 4), being more than she can stand. Unreasonably she blames Abraham. The verse throws a significant light upon the tensions inevitable in a polygamous household." (IBG, 605). Lange (CDHCG, 418): "The moral motive or impulse of seeking the heir of blessing, made availing to an erroneous and selfish degree, is here torn away from its connection with the love impulse or motive, and exalted above its importance. The substitution of the maid for the mistress, however, must be distinguished from polygamy in its peculiar sense. Hagar, on the contrary, regards herself—in the sense of polygamy, as standing with Sarai, and as the favored, fruitful wife, exalts herself above her. The shadow of polygamy resting on the patriarchal monogamy. Isaac's marriage is free from this. It has the purest New Testament form. Rebecca appears, indeed, to have exercised a certain predominant influence, as the wife often does in the Christian marriage of modern times." Jamieson (CECG, 149): "Abram being a man of peace, as well as affectionately disposed towards his wife, left her to settle these broils in her own way. In all households where concubinage exists, the principal wife retains her supreme authority over the inferior ones; and in cases where a slave is brought into the relation with her master that Hagar held to Abram, the maid-servant remains in her former position unchanged, or although some more attentions may be paid to her, she is as much subject to the absolute control of her mistress as before. Sarai, left by Abram to act at discretion, exerted her full authority." Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP, 219): "But as soon as Sarai made her feel her power, Hagar fled. Thus, instead of securing the fulfillment of their wishes, Sarai and Abram had reaped nothing but grief and vexation, and apparently had lost the maid through their self-concerted scheme.

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But the faithful covenant-God turned the whole into a blessing."

Leupold would be more lenient in dealing with the principals in this narrative. (EG, 494): "As is evident from v. 16, Abram had been in the land about ten years. If we consider the advanced age of both Abram and Sarai, they had surely waited a long time. . . . To Sarai the thought comes that perhaps constomary devices may be resorted to. Women of standing like Sarai had their personal maids, who were their own in a special sense. They were the personal property of the wife and were appointed specially to wait upon her. The maid under consideration here happened to be an Egyptian, having been acquired, no doubt, during the brief stay in Egypt (12:10 ff.). The custom of those days allowed in a case of this sort that the wife give her maid to her husband as a secondary wife in the hope that the new union would be blessed with offspring, which offspring would then promptly be claimed and adopted by the mistress. No stigma was attached to the position of the maid: she was a wife, though not, indeed, of the same social standing as the first wife. For Sarai to take such a step certainly involved self-sacrifice, even a kind of self-effacement. It was this rather noble mode of procedure on Sarai's part that may in part have blinded the patriarch's eyes so that he failed to discern the actual issues involved. Then, also, if we consider the chief servant, Eliezer, and the excellent faith he later displays we may well suppose that the chief maid may have been a woman who was indeed imbued with the faith that reigned in the household and may modestly have been desirous of having a part in the achievement of the high purpose to which this household was destined. Yet, in spite of all that may be said by way of extenuating the fault of the parties involved, it was still a double fault and sin. First, it clashed with the true conception of monogamous marriage, which alone is acceptable with God.

Secondly, it involved the employment of human devices seemingly to bolster up a divine purpose which was in any case destined to be achieved as God had originally ordained. In so far the fault involved was unbelief." Concerning v. 3, the same writer says, "It must be quite apparent that 'to give as a wife' must mean 'to give in marriage.' Here was no concubinage but a formal marital union, though Hagar was but the second wife" (*ibid.*, p. 496). Again in v. 4 (*ibid.*, 497): "Now at this point the evils of polygamy begin to rear their ugly head. It is always bound to be the fruitful mother of envy, jealousy, and strife. The baser elements in man are unleashed by it. Each of the three characters now appears to disadvantage. Yet we are not compelled now to suppose that such extremes resulted as Jamieson suggests—'bursts of temper, or blows.' The fine praise that Peter bestows upon Sarai (1 Pet. 3:6) hardly allows us to think of her as degenerating into a shrew. When it is remarked of Hagar that 'her mistress was lightly esteemed in her eyes,' that need involve nothing more than that she thought that God had bestowed upon her what He had denied Sarai, and so she thought herself superior to her mistress and showed her disdain in certain ways. This attitude was bound to pain Sarai, who was, no doubt, a woman of high position, while Hagar was only an Egyptian slave." Again, on v. 5 (*ibid.*, 497): "Now Sarai's judgment becomes impaired by the bitter feelings roused in her. Hagar's wrong leads Sarai to do further wrong. Sin grows more involved. Sarai blames Abram for doing what in reality she had suggested. At least, so it seems. Luther attempts to avoid so crude a charge on her part by supposing that she rather charges Abram with showing certain preferences and honors to Hagar and so becoming the cause of her arrogance. Then her charge would be correct: 'The wrong done to me is your fault.' But the explanation that follows does not interpret the wrong thus. So we shall do better to call hers an unreasonable

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charge growing out of her wounded pride. . . . The injustice of the charge made by Sarai might well have roused Abram to a heated reply. Indeed with excellent self-control he replies moderately." Finally, on v. 6 (*ibid.*, 489-499): "Some charge Abram at this point with being 'strangely unchivalrous.' He is not suggesting cruelty to Sarai nor condoning it. He is merely suggesting the natural solution of the problem. In reality, Sarai is still Hagar's mistress. That relation has not really been cancelled. Abram suggests that she use her right as mistress. He does not, however, suggest the use of cruelty or injustice. It is not really said that Sarai did what is unjustifiable. Nor should it be forgotten that Hagar had begun to do wrong and required correction. Apparently also, according to the custom of the times, Abram had no jurisdiction over Hagar directly, for she was esteemed Sarai's maid. The Hebrew idiom, 'do what is good in thine eyes,' is our, 'do what pleases thee.' Here, we believe, Sarai is usually wronged. . . . Luther may well be followed, 'wanted to humble her.' When the problem is approached, Sarai is merely regarded as having taken steps to bring Hagar to realize that she had begun to be somewhat presumptuous, such as making her to live with the servants and perform more menial tasks. But, of course, we must allow for sinful excesses on her part. Sarai may not have proceeded with due tact and consideration. In suggesting such a course Abram may too have failed to counsel due caution. Every actor in this domestic drama may have given evidence of shortcomings in one way or another. Hagar, on her part, being somewhat self-willed and independent, refused to accept correction and 'fled from her.'" (The present writer cannot help feeling that the foregoing evaluation of the emotions of the three characters in this drama is a somewhat "watered down" version. The student will have to decide these matters for himself. It is

well to have, or course, the various presentations of this "domestic drama" so that it may be studied from all points of view.)

*Does the legal background reflected here conform to actual chronology?* The Nuzi archives, we are told, give us some of the most intimate pictures of life in an ancient Mesopotamian community. Note well the following (NBD, 69): "The remarkable parallels between the customs and social conditions of these peoples and the patriarchal narratives in Genesis have led some scholars to argue from this for a similar 15th-century date for Abraham and his sons; but there is evidence that many of these customs had been observed for some centuries, and that the Hurrians were already a virile part of the population of N. Mesopotamia and Syria by the 18th century B.C. These parallels provide useful background information to the patriarchal age, and are one of the external factors supporting the historicity of this part of Genesis."

The stories of Ishmael and Isaac also have to do, of course, with *the law of inheritance*. Indeed this is at the very root of the entire narrative, one might well say, of *all* the patriarchal narratives. The problems also involves, as we have already learned, the status of Abraham's steward, Eliezer of Damascus. Fortunately, the Nuzi archives make clear the legal aspects of this matter which is stated as follows (NBD, 69): "Normally the estate passed to the eldest son, who received a 'double portion' compared with the younger. Should a man (or woman) have no sons, he could adopt as a son a person from outside the family, even if he was a slave. Such an adopted son was expected to care for the man in his old age, to provide proper burial and the maintenance of religious rites (including the pouring of libations), and to continue the family name in return for the property. This may explain Abram's adoption of Eliezer as heir prior to the birth of Isaac (Gen. 15:2-4). Such agreements were legally void if the adopter subse-

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quently had a son of his own; the adoptee then took second place. At Nuzi this process of adoption was extended to become a fiction by which property, legally inalienable, might be sold. A further way of ensuring an heir was the custom, known also from earlier Babylonian texts, whereby a childless wife would give her husband a substitute slave-wife to bear sons. . . . Sarah, despite the undertaking that Hagar's sons would be counted as hers (Gen. 16:2) and thus have a claim to the inheritance, sought to drive Hagar away (Gen. 21:10). Abraham acted against the contemporary custom only when given a special assurance from God that he should do so (v. 12)." A survey of Mesopotamian legal procedures will necessarily arise again in our study of the careers of Isaac, Jacob, Esau, etc.

3. *The Flight of Hagar* (v. 6). It is difficult to avoid the realistic conclusion, from the language that is used here, that Sarai did actually deal "hardly" (*i.e.*, harshly) with the pregnant Egyptian maiden, so much so that the latter fled from the presence of her mistress and did not stop until she had gone a long way on the road to Shur. (1) The name "Hagar" means "flight" or something similar; cf. the Arab *begira*. The name is Semitic, not Egyptian, and perhaps was given to the woman by Abram himself, either when he left Egypt or after her actual flight into the desert. (2) The way to Shur was probably the ancient transport route to Egypt from Beersheba. Shur itself was a locality near the Egyptian border. The land was dry and parched, and Hagar evidently did not waste any time getting to the *fountain* (oasis) on this route. It seems obvious that the Egyptian was on her way back to her home country; having reached this spot, she had come far enough from Abram's tents to allow herself time to settle her thoughts and feelings, and to look back upon her experience with more soberness and justness than she could have had at the beginning of her flight. The time was fitting for the Angel of the Lord to put in appearance.

4. *The Angel of the Lord: the Theophany at the Well* (vv. 7-14). The scene is the *fountain of water* (as yet nameless) *in the desert . . . on the way to Shur*. The *Angel of Yahwe* (of *Jehovah*, of *the Lord*) "found" the young woman (by design, of course) at this spot. The Angel of Yahwe is "here introduced for the first time as the medium of the theophany. . . . 'Yahwe Himself in self-manifestation,' or, in other words, a personification of the theophany. This somewhat subtle definition is founded on the fact that in very many instances the Angel is at once identified with God and differentiated from Him (cf. vv. 10, 13 with v. 11)" (Skinner, ICCG, 286). Cf. also "And the word was with God, and the Word was God," John 1:1). Certainly the Angel's identity with Yahweh is fully confirmed in v. 13. We present here Whitelaw's five arguments (PCG, 228) for the view *that The Angel of the Lord here is not a created being* (hence not one member of "the innumerable hosts" of "ministering spirits," who figure repeatedly in the story of the unfolding of the Plan of Redemption, Heb. 1:14, 12:22; Col. 1:16, Psa. 148:2, 5, etc.), *but the Divine Being Himself*, as follows: (1) He explicitly identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions (cf. v. 13) and with Elohim (Gen. 22:12). (2) Those to whom He makes His presence known recognize Him as divine (Gen. 16:13, 18:23-33, 28:16-22; Exo. 3:6; Judg. 6:11-24; 13:21-22). (3) Biblical writers constantly speak of him as divine, calling him Jehovah without the least reserve (Gen. 16:13, 18:1, 22:16; Exo. 3:2, Judg. 6:12). (4) The doctrine here implied of a plurality of persons in the Godhead is in complete accordance with earlier foreshadowings (Gen. 1:26, 11:7). (5) "The organic unity of Scripture would be broken if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation was a creature angel, while that of the New is the incarnation of the Godhead" (cf. Col. 1:16-19, John 1:1-3, 14). Certainly by the Old Testament writers the Angel

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of the Lord is recognized as a superior being in a class by Himself: a fact which raises the question, Is the Yahweh of the Old Testament, the Covenant God, identical with the Incarnate Logos (cf. Mic. 5:2, John 10:17-18, 1 Cor. 10:1-4)? Gosman (CDHCG, 416): "The expression [Angel of Jehovah] appears here for the first time. While the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah himself, it is remarkable, that in the very meaning of the name, as messenger, or one who is sent, there is implied a distinction of persons in the Godhead. There must be one who sends, whose message he bears." Lange (*ibid.*, 416): "That this Angel is identical with Jehovah, is placed beyond question in vers. 13 and 14. The disposition of Hagar, helpless, forsaken, with all her pride, still believing in God, warned by her own conscience, makes it altogether fitting that the Angel of Jehovah should appear to her, *i.e.*, Jehovah himself, in his condescension—manifesting himself as the Angel." Note the following comment also (JB, 33): "In the most ancient texts the angel of Yahweh, 22:11, Exo. 3:2, Judg. 2:1, or the angel of God, 21:17, 31:11, Exo. 14:19, etc., is not a created being distinct from God, Exo. 23:20, but God himself in a form visible to man. V. 13 identifies the angel with Yahweh. In other texts the angel of Yahweh is the one who executes God's avenging sentence: see Exo. 12:23 ff." Note the following summarization (ST, 319): (1) The Angel of Yahweh identifies Himself with Yahweh (Jehovah) or Elohim (Gen. 22:11, 16; 31:11, 13). (2) The Angel of Yahweh is identified with Yahweh or with Elohim by others (Gen. 16:9, 13; 48:15, 16). (3) The Angel of Yahweh accepts worship due only to God (Exo. 3:2, 4, 5; Judg. 13:20-22. The "angel of the Lord" appears to be a human messenger in Hag. 1:13, a created angel in Matt. 1:20, Acts 8:26, 12:7. Again, Strong (ST, 319): "But commonly, in the O.T., the 'angel of Jehovah' is a theophany, a self-manifestation of God. The only dis-



inction is that between Jehovah in Himself and Jehovah in manifestation. The appearances of "the angel of Jehovah" seem to be preliminary manifestations of the divine Logos, as in Gen. 18:2, 13, in Dan. 3:25, 28. The N.T. 'angel of the Lord' does not permit, the O.T. 'angel of the Lord' requires, worship (Rev. 22:8, 9; cf. Exo. 3:8)." Again, *ibid.*, "Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in the later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed His final coming in the flesh." (Cf. also John. 5:13-15, Gen. 15:18-20, Mic. 5:2; Exo. 14:19, 23:23, 32:34, 33:2, cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-3; 2 Sam. 24:15-17, John 17:5, Rev. 19:11-16, etc.). We must recall here our fundamental thesis that the name *Elohim* is used in the Old Testament to designate God the Creator, and the name Yahweh (Yahwe, Jehovah) is used to designate the Covenant God. There is but one God, of course: hence the former name pictures Him in His omnipotence especially (Isa. 57:15), and the latter portrays Him in His benevolence, goodness, etc., with respect to His creatures, especially man. (Eph. 4:6, 1 Tim. 2:5).

The most thoroughgoing exposition of this title, the Angel of Yahweh, or the Angel of the Lord, the Angel of God, etc., is presented by Jamieson (CECG, 149) as follows: "Angel means messenger, and the term is frequently used in Scripture to denote some natural phenomenon, or visible symbol, betokening the presence and agency of the Divine Majesty (Exo. 14:19, 2 Ki. 19:35, Psa. 104:4). That the whole tenor of this narrative [Gen. 16:7-14], however, indicates a living personal being, is allowed on all hands; but a variety of opinions are entertained respecting the essential standing of the messenger of Jehovah. Some think that he was a created angel, one

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of those celestial spirits who were frequently delegated under the ancient economies to execute the purposes of God's grace to his chosen; while others convinced that things are predicated of this angel involving the possession of attributes and powers superior to those of the most exalted creatures, maintain that this must be considered a real theophany, a visible manifestation of God, without reference to any distinction of persons. To each of these hypotheses insuperable objections have been urged: against the latter, on the ground that 'no man hath seen God at any time' (John 1:18, Col. 1:15); and against the former, founded on the historical circumstances of this narrative in which 'the angel of the Lord' promises to do what was manifestly beyond the capabilities of any created being (v. 10), and also did himself what he afterward ascribed to the Lord (cf. vv. 7, 8 with v. 11, last clause). The conclusion, therefore, to which, on a full consideration of the facts, the most eminent Biblical critics and divines have come is, that this was an appearance of the Logos, or Divine person of the Messiah, prelude, as in many subsequent instances, to his actually incarnate manifestation in the fullness of time (cf. Mic. 5:2). Such was 'the angel of the Lord,' the Revealer of the invisible God to the Church, usually designated by this and the analogous titles of 'the messenger of the covenant' and 'the angel of his presence.' This is the first occasion on which the name occurs; and it has been pronounced a myth, or at least a traditional legend, intended to throw a halo of dignity and mysterious interest on the origin of the Arabs, by recording the special interposition of heaven in behalf of a poor, destitute Egyptian bondwoman, their humble ancestress. But the objection is groundless: the divine manifestation will appear in keeping with the occasion, when it is borne in mind that 'the angel of the Lord,' in guiding and encouraging Hagar, was taking care about the *seed* of Abraham."

*The Angel's question*, v. 8, reveals a mysterious knowledge of Hagar's experiences, designed, it would seem, to impress the fugitive "with a full conviction of the supernatural, the divine character of the speaker, and a lively sense of her sin in abandoning the station in which His providence had placed her."

*The Angel's Command*: Hagar must return to her mistress, that is, she must correct the existing wrong she has done, her self-willed departure from her regular status in life; for Sarai is still mistress, by the Egyptian's own admission (v. 8). The accomplishment of her son's great destiny must depend on her maintaining proper connections with Abram's family. *She must put duty first*, and retrace her steps to Hebron. "Plain, dutiful submission . . . is sufficient for Hagar; nor would Sarai, after this experience with the Angel became known, have asked any more."

*The Angel's Revelations* were three: (1) she must return and submit herself to her mistress, v. 9; (2) she will be the ancestress of countless offspring, v. 10; (3) She shall bear a son and this son shall bear a name that shall always be a reminder to all concerned that God in a very signal way heard the cry of this woman in her hour of great distress, v. 11. "Ishmael" means literally "God hears." "Yahweh hath heard thy affliction": the inference is unavoidable that Hagar in her distress had cried out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It should be noted that the three consecutive verses here, 9, 10, 11, begin with the same statement, "And the Angel of Yahweh said unto her."

5. *The Prophecy Concerning Ishmael and His Seed*  
(vv. 11, 12).

(1) By disposition Ishmael shall be "a wild ass of a man": "a fine image of the free intractable Bedouin character which is to be manifested in Ishmael's descen-

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dants" (Skinner,, ICCG, 287). Ishmael will be among human families what the wild ass is among animals (cf. Job 39:5-8, Jer. 2:24). "Ishmael descendants are the desert Arabs who are as intractable and vagrant as the wild ass" (JB, 33). (2) "*His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him,*" thus descriptive of "the rude, turbulent, and plundering character of the Arabs" (Jamieson, CECG, 150). This describes "most truly the incessant state of feud, in which the Ishmaelites live with one another or with their neighbors" (Keil and Delitzsch, (BCOTP, 220). (3) "*And he shall dwell over against all his brethren*" ("over against" means "to the east," cf. 25:18). The geographical meaning is included here, but much greater significance is to be attached to this statement. Ishmael and his progeny shall live in defiance or disregard of their own kinsmen (cf. Deut. 21:16, "to the disregard of" the older son of the unloved wife). This passage indicates also that "Ishmael would maintain an independent standing before (in the presence of) all the descendants of Abraham. History has confirmed this promise. The Ishmaelites have continued to this day in free and undiminished possession of the extensive peninsula between the Euphrates, the Straits of Suez, and the Red Sea, from which they have overspread both Northern Africa and Southern Asia" (Keil-Delitzsch, *ibid.*, p. 221).

VV. 13-14. Hitherto Hagar's position had been growing increasingly difficult, but now she knew that Yahweh cares, that He was looking after her, that He is "a God who sees." She aptly invents the name for Yahweh, *El Roi*. "*El Roi* means 'God of vision.' *Labai Roi* may mean, the well 'of the Living One who sees me'; to this place Isaac was to come, 24:62, 25:11" (JB, 33). (To Hagar, Yahweh was the "God who sees" in the sense of being the "God who cares." Leupold (EG, 506): "No mortal to whom God appeared ventured to look directly

into or upon the glorious countenance of the Lord. Even Moses in answer to his special request could not venture to take such a step (Exo. 33:23). So here very tersely Hagar described what happened in her case. When Yahweh appeared, she indeed conversed with Him; but only as He departed did she 'look after Him.' So at least she appears to have understood that no sinful mortal can see God's countenance directly and live (see Exo. 33:20). So she did not even attempt so rash a thing. But to her God now is a God 'who sees me,' i.e., 'cares for me.' Hagar's experiences became known, and as a result of what she said, the well came to bear the name descriptive of her experience. God is called "the Living One." "Quite properly so, because the fact that He has regard for the needs of those who call upon Him, stamps Him as truly a Living God and not a dead conception." *The Location of the well*: between Kadesh and Bered (v. 14). "Bered" has never been located. "Kadesh" is the site commonly designated Kadesh Barnea (cf. Josh. 15:3, Num. 13:3-26, Deut. 9:23, etc.), forty miles due south and a little to the west of Beersheba. Skinner (ICCG, 228): "In Arab tradition the well of Hagar is plausibly enough identified with 'Ain-Muweilib, a caravan station about 12 miles to the W. of Kadesh. The well must have been a chief sanctuary of the Ishmaelites; hence the later Jews, to whom Ishmael was a name for all Arabs, identified it with the sacred well Zemzem at Mecca." Leupold (EG, 503): "So it comes to pass that two vast nations, the Jews and the Ishmaelites, are descended from Abraham. No further spiritual advantage is attached to the advantage of numbers" (cf. v. 10).

*The Birth of Ishmael* (vv. 15-16). Certainly there can be no doubt that Hagar did as the Angel of Yahweh told her to do, and having returned to Abram's household at Hebron, she bore him a son in his 86th year. He gave

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the child the name *Ishmael*. It appears that he may have regarded Ishmael as the promised seed, until, thirteen years later, the counsel of God was more clearly unfolded to him (cf. KD, COTP, 222).

### 6. *The Historical Fulfillment of the Prophecy.*

The fulfillment in history of the oracle (v. 12) concerning the future of Ishmael's seed is precise in every detail, and unqualifiedly stamps the prediction a prophetic revelation from God. The details of this fulfillment are presented so authentically by Dr. Henry Cooke (*Self-Interpreting Bible*, Vol. I, *The Pentateuch*, pp. 238-239) that we feel justified in reproducing it here verbatim, as follows:

"Ver. 10-12. Here it is foretold that Ishmael and his seed should be *wild free men, like wild asses*: mischievous to all around them, and extremely numerous. For almost four thousand years the fulfillment has been amazingly remarkable. Ishmael had twelve sons, who gave rise to as many tribes or nations, called by their names, and who dwelt southward in Arabia, *before the face or in the presence* of their near relations, the Ammonites, Moabites, descendants of Keturah, Edomites, and Jews (17:20; 21:13, 18; 25:11-18). All along they have been a nuisance and plague to the nations around them; infamous for theft, robbery, revenge, pillage, and murder. It has therefore been the continued and common interest of mankind to extirpate them from the earth. But though almost every noted conqueror who has appeared in the world, whether Hebrew, Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, Roman, Tartar, or Turkish, has pushed his conquest to their borders, or even beyond them into Egypt or Arabia Felix, not one has ever been able to subdue these Ishmaelites, or deprive them of their freedom. The mighty Shishak, King of Egypt, was obliged to draw a line along their frontiers for the protection of his kingdom from their

ravaging inroads. The Assyrians under Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, and the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, greatly harassed them, and almost extirpated some of their tribes (Isa. 2:11-17, Num. 24:22; Jer. 25:23-24, 49:28-33).

“Provoked with their contempt, Alexander the Great made vast preparations for their utter destruction; but death cut short his purpose. Antigonus, one of his valiant captains and successors, provoked with their depredations, more than once, but to his repeated dishonor, attempted to subdue them. Flushed with his eastern victories, Pompey, the famed Roman general, attempted to reduce them; but his army being recalled when they had hopes of gaining their purpose, these wild Arabs pursued them, almost at their heels, and dreadfully harassed the Roman subjects in Syria. Augustus, the renowned emperor, made one or more fruitless attempts to subdue them. About A.D. 110, Trajan, one of the most powerful emperors and valiant generals that ever filled the Roman throne, with a mighty army, determined if possible to subdue them, and laid siege to their capital. But storms of hail, which are scarcely ever seen in this country, thunder, lightning, whirlwind, swarms of flies, and dreadful apparitions in the air, terrified or repulsed his troops as often as they repeated their attacks. About eighty years after, Severus, another warlike emperor, determined to punish their siding with Niger, his rival, by an utter reduction of them. But, after he had made a breach on the wall of their principal city, an unaccountable difference between him and his faithful European troops obliged him to raise the siege, and leave the country.

“In the seventh century of the Christian era, these Ishmaelites, under Mahomet, their famed impostor, and his successors, furiously extended their empire, and their new and false religion, through a great part of Asia and

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Africa, and even some countries of Europe (Rev. 9:1-11). Since the fall of their empire, the Turks have made repeated attempts to subdue them; but instead of succeeding, they have been obliged, for near three hundred years past, to pay them a yearly tribute of forty thousand crowns, for procuring a safe passage for their pilgrims to Mecca, the holy city, where Mahomet was born. If, to fulfill his promise, God has done so much for protecting the temporal liberty of miscreants, what will he not do for the salvation of his people!

“Ver. 12—The ‘wild ass’ (pere, the Hebrew word here translated ‘wild’) was the emblem of wild, rude, uncontrollable freedom—total disregard of the law and social restraint (Job 24:5, 11:12). Such has ever been, and still is, the character of the Arab. He roams free through his native desert. No power has been able to control his movements, or to induce or compel him to accept the settled habits of civilized life. His hand has been, and is, against every man who, without his protection, enters his country; and the hand of every surrounding ruler has been and is against him. Yet he dwells to this day, as he has done for nearly forty centuries, in the presence of all his brethren. He meets them on the east, west, north, and south; and none can extirpate or subdue him. . . . *Against every man and every man’s hand against him.* The descendants of Ishmael were divided into tribes, after the manner of the Jews, differing to a certain extent in dispositions, habits, character, and government. Many of them made great advances in civilization and learning; and exhibited the ordinary aspect of powerful, settled, and regular communities. Still there has been a vast number, of whom the Bedouins are most generally known, who have, in all ages, practically and literally realized this prediction, and lived, as they still do, in a state of uninterrupted hostility with all men, seeking no home but the desert, submitting to no law



but their will, and acknowledging no right but their sword; 'their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them.'—'*And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*' To ascertain the meaning of this sentence, we must recollect that one peculiarity in the prophecies concerning the Jews—another branch of the Abrahamic tree—was, Deut. 28:64, '*And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.*' Now this was foretold of the child of the promise, the descendants of *Isaac*; but of *Ishmael*, the son of the bondwoman, it is said, *He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*, that is, while *Israel* shall be *scattered, dispersed, and outcast*, Isa. 11:12, from the land promised to *Abram*, *Ishmael* shall abide in the land promised to *Hagar*. The event has verified the prediction, and proved that it proceeded from him who 'determined the bounds of their habitation.' *Israel* is scattered in judgment as chaff of the thrashing-flour; *Ishmael* abides immovable as *Sinai*." (Cf. Luke 21:24, Acts 17:26). (Explanatory: the name *Arabia Felix*, as used above, has reference to *Yemen* and surrounding area; *Arabia Petraea* was the name by which the northern part of the Arabian world was known, that which bordered on the *Negeb* and the adjacent *Sinaitic peninsula*. The latter derived its name from the capital city, *Petra*, of the Aramaic-speaking *Nabataean Arabs*. *Petra* was some fifty miles south of the *Dead Sea*. The *Nabataeans* derived from *Nebaioth*, son of *Ishmael* and brother-in-law of *Edom* (*Esau*): cf. Gen. 25:13, 28:9, etc. It should be noted here that the *Apostle Paul* (Gal. 4:25) identifies "*Agar*" as the *Arabian name* of *Sinai*. "It is not clear where *Paul* thought *Sinai* lay; but *Strabo* speaks of drawing a line from *Petra* to *Babylon* which would bisect the regions of the *Nabateans*, *Chaloteans* (*Havilah*), and *Agreans*. The last-named people, who appear as *Hagrites* in 1 *Chronicles* 5:19, may well have furnished the

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name for Hagar. Indeed, *El Hejar*, an important Arabian road junction, may preserve the name of the Hagrites. Their earlier habitat may have been more westerly. That Hagar is 'Egyptian' suggests residence in the north Sinaitic area" (Kraeling, BA, 69). It would be well for the student to familiarize himself with the archaeological discoveries at Petra: it is one of the most important historical centers of the ancient Near East.

We cannot close this phase of our study without remarking that the age-long conflict between the sons of Isaac and the sons of Ishmael has reached fever heat in our own time, following the establishment of the Jewish state of Israeli, and threatens to plunge the world into another global war. One of the anomalies of the present situation is the collusion of the Arab world under Nasser the Egyptian dictator, a Mohammedan, with the atheistic totalitarian state of the Russian Leninists, particularly in view of the fact that Islamism is the most rigidly monotheistic "religion" in the world. Even in our day, moreover, the Arab political regimes are despotisms in the true sense of the term: they have none of the characteristics of a democracy. It is interesting too that the Turks, although Mohammedans also, are of Mongolian extraction and hence do not aline themselves with the Arab world. These various facts call for an examination of the term "anti-Semitic," which is bandied about so loosely, as meaning only "anti-Jew." But the Arabs are also Semitic, as are the Egyptians, the Ethiopians, and other peoples of the same part of the world. The languages usually classified as Semitic are the Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Arabic. Thus it will be seen that "anti-Semitism" is a term which cannot be used rightly to designate only those who are opposed to Jews. It is time for these "weighted" terms, phrases, and cliches, to be stripped of their overtones and used in their true signification.

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

*The Friend of God*

Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; cf. Jas. 2:23.

Many eminent philosophers, essayists, poets, etc., have written eloquently on the subject of friendship. Aristotle, for example, in Books Eight and Nine of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, tells us that "there are three kinds of friendship, corresponding in number to the objects worthy of affection." These objects (objectives) are usefulness, pleasure, and virtue. Virtue, in Aristotle's thought, means an *excellence*. He writes: "The perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue. For these friends wish alike for one another's good because they are good men, and they are good *per se*, that is, their friendship is something intrinsic, not incidental. "Those who wish for their friends' good for their friends' sake are friends in the truest sense, since their attitude is determined by what their friends are and not by incidental considerations." To sum up: True friendship is that kind of affection from which all selfish ends are eliminated. This Aristotelian concept is indicated in Greek by the word *philia* (brotherly love), as distinct from *eros* (passion, desire, lust) and from *agape* (reverential love). Cicero, in his famous essay *On Friendship* (*De Amicitia*) writes in similar fashion: "It is love (*amor*), from which the word 'friendship' (*amicitia*) is derived, that leads to the establishing of goodwill. . . . in friendship there is nothing false, nothing pretended; whatever there is is genuine and comes of its own accord. Wherefore it seems to me that friendship springs rather from nature than from need, and from an inclination of the soul joined with a feeling of love rather than from calculation of how much profit the friendship is likely to afford." One is reminded here of Augustine's doctrine of *pure love for God*: "Whosoever

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seeketh of God any thing besides God, doth not love God purely. If a wife loveth her husband because he is rich, she is not pure, for she loveth not her husband, but the gold of her husband." "Who seeks from God any other reward but God, and for it would serve God, esteems what he wishes to receive, more than Him from whom he would receive it" (See Everyman's Library, *The Confessions*, p. 52, n.). That is to say, the noblest motivation to the Spiritual Life is neither the fear of punishment nor the hope of reward, but love for God simply because He is God (cf. John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-21).

The title *Friend of God* undoubtedly comes from the passages cited above from Isaiah and Second Chronicles. It is given to Abraham also by Clement of Rome (*Ad Cor.* chs. 10, 17). It was Abraham's special privilege to be known by this title among the Jews, and to our own day he is known also among the Arabs as *El Khabil*, equivalent to "the Friend." We recall here what God had to say in praise of His "servant Job" (Job 1-8), and when His praise was challenged by the Adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), God accepted the challenge and *proved* Job's uprightness by his steadfastness under the pressure of the most terrible calamities. We may rest assured that when God speaks approvingly of one of His great servants, He speaks the truth as always. So it was in Abraham's case: when God called Abraham His Friend, we may sure that the patriarch was His Friend with all that this term means to God Himself.

A man may have all the silver and gold in the world, but if he has not friends, he is poor. He may operate factories and mills, live in mansions of brick or stone; he may possess acres of real estate, vast rolling plains and valleys; he may have oil wells scattered about, everywhere; indeed he may be a billionaire, but if he has not friends, he is nothing. The most priceless possession in this world is a true friend. It is a wonderful thing to have in one's heart true friendship for others. It is a sanctifying senti-

ment that ennobles the soul and enhances one's conviction of the dignity and worth of the person. But if to be a friend of man is wonderful, how much more wonderful it is to be a friend of God! Remember the definition of a friend by a woman in mourning: "A friend is one who comes in when the world goes out." I believe that the business of Heaven must have stopped for just a moment when God pronounced above the bier of Abraham the words, "My Friend." What an epitaph!

What was it in Abraham's career that made the patriarch worthy of being called the Friend of God?

1. Abraham *believed* God. The faith of Abraham was of such quality that the patriarch has gone down in history as *the father of the faithful* (Rom. 4:11, 16; Gal. 3:9, 3:23-29). Abram was seventy-five years old when the Call came to him. The Call was specific and the Divine promises were definite. He was to establish a family and father a great nation; his name was to be great; and through him all the peoples of earth were to be blessed. *That was what God said.* Faith is taking God at His word, and, nothing doubting, Abram gathered his substance together and all the family, including Lot, his brother's son, and left Ur of the Chaldees. At Haran they left the rest of their immediate kin behind and they themselves pushed on to an unknown destination. They went by faith, not knowing whither they went or where the end of their journey would be. Theirs was in every sense of the word *the pilgrimage of faith*. (Rom. 10:8-17, Heb. 11:8-12). Faith is the substance of things hoped for (that which stands under hope) and a conviction with respect to things *not seen*. So it was in Abram's case: "he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:1, 8; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Note Gen. 12:1-4. God *said* to Abram, etc., etc., and "Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." Where else can we find so great a communication so simply expressed? And where an

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answer expressing so much in so few words that mean so much to the human race? *That Call to Abram and Abram's response changed the entire course of human history.*

2. Abram heard the Call, and Abram *obeyed*. (1) His faith led to works of faith. We hear a great deal about "faith only" as equivalent to conversion. There is no such thing as "faith only": the Bible does not teach salvation by "faith only" any more than it teaches salvation by "baptism only" (1 Pet. 3:21). What would "faith only" be? What could it be but a pseudo-intellectual acquiescence that lacks any kind of real commitment? But Christian faith includes not only belief and confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16, 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10), but also the commitment of the whole man—in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Rom. 12:1-2)—to the authority and example of Christ (Col. 3:17). (2) Hence, the testimony of James that "as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:14-26). James' argument is twofold: (a) Faith that does not manifest itself in works (acts) of faith is dead, because it is only profession without practice; (b) even the devils believe and tremble: how worthless, then, must be faith alone! But does not this contradict what the Apostle Paul says in Rom. 3:20, "By works of law shall no flesh be justified" (accounted righteous) in God's sight. At first glance this statement from James appears to be diametrically opposed to Paul's teaching: for (1) Paul says, Rom. 3:28, "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law," whereas James asserts that "faith without works is dead," and that man is "justified by works and not only by faith" (Jas. 2:26, 24). (2) Paul speaks of Abraham as justified by *faith* (Rom. 4, Gal. 3:6 ff.), James says that he was justified by works (v. 21). (3) Paul, or the writer of Hebrews, appeals to the case

of Rahab as an example of *faith*. (Heb. 11:31), but James cites her as an example of justification by *works* (v. 25). Gibson (PC, James, *in loco*): "The opposition, however, is only apparent: for (1) The two apostles use the word *erga* in different senses. In St. Paul it always has a derogatory sense, unless qualified by the adjective *kala* or *agatha*. The works which he denies to have any share in justification are 'legal works,' not those which he elsewhere denominates the 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:22), which are the works of which St. James speaks. (2) The word *pistis* is also used in different senses. In St. Paul it is *pistis di' agapes energoumene* (Gal. 5:6): [*i.e.*, faith working through reverential love]; in St. James it is simply an orthodox creed, 'even the devils *pisteuousi*' (v. 19); it may, therefore, be barren of works of charity. (3) The Apostles are writing against different errors and tendencies: St. Paul against those who would impose the Jewish law and the rite of circumcision upon Gentile believers; St. James against 'the self-complacent orthodoxy of the Pharisaic Christian, who, satisfied with the possession of a pure monotheism and vaunting his descent from Abraham, needed to be reminded not to neglect the still weightier matters of self-denying love.' . . . (4) The Apostles regarded the new dispensation from different standpoints. With St. Paul it is the negation of the law: 'Ye are not under Law, but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). With St. James it is the perfection of Law." The term "works" has come to indicate different categories of human acts. (1) By works of the Law the Apostle Paul surely has reference to human acts included in the keeping of the Mosaic Law, both the Decalogue and the ritualistic aspect of it. Obviously, no human being *does* or even *can* keep the Ten Commandments perfectly: the sad fact is that all "have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). One must obey the requirements of the Decalogue to be considered a "moral" man: unfortunately in the view of

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the commonality morality is usually identified with respectability. Christianity demands infinitely more than obedience to the Law of Moses: it requires total commitment to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2), the royal law, the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 2:8, Matt. 22:34-40, Jas. 1:25, 2 Cor. 3:17), of which Love is essentially the fulfillment (Rom. 13:10). *Law is designed to distinguish right from wrong, and to protect the weak from the strong, but Law is powerless to save a single human soul. Salvation is by grace, through faith* (Eph. 2:8): *Grace overtures and states the conditions, and man by faith accepts and obeys, and so receives the fulfillment of the Divine promises.* (2) Again, in the gobbledygook of medieval psuedo-Christianity, such practices as indulgences, penance, counting beads, bowing before images, keeping feasts and fasts and solemn processions, sprinkling holy water as a feature of ritualistic priestly "blessings," extreme unction, praying souls out of purgatory, etc., etc., were often categorized as "works" by the Protestant reformers, beginning, of course, with Luther. But in our time Protestantism has ceased to protest: it too has drifted into a crass legalism and spiritless ritual (when not superseded entirely by the much-vaunted "social gospel"), a form of religion lacking the spirit thereof (hence, lacking the Holy Spirit), a state of the inner man which Jesus throughly despised. The two sins which He anathematized above all others were *formalism* and *hypocrisy*. (Cf. Matt., chs. 5, 6, 7, 23). (3) The works which James writes about are of a different kind altogether. They are works which proceed inevitably from the truly regenerated heart, from a living and active faith, the faith that leads to just such works of faith, without which religion is nothing but an empty shell, a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal (Cff. Matt. 3:7-9, 25:31-46; Luke 13:3, 3:7-14; Gal. 5:22-24; Jas. 1:27, 2:14-26, etc.). James is simply reiterating here the universal principle laid



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down by Jesus, and confirmed by human experience, that a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 7:16-20). (4) Baptism, the Communion, the tithes and offerings, almsgiving, worship, praise, meditation, prayer: by no stretch of the imagination can these acts be designated "works"; first, last, and always, they are acts of faith. They proceed only and inevitably from faith, and only from faith that is far more than mere intellectual assent, that is, from faith that is as living and active as the Word itself (Heb. 4:12). When God commands, faith raises no questions, but proceeds to take God at His word and to do what God commands to be done. Genuine faith will never start an argument at the baptismal pool. (5) Of course, *the motivating principle of the Spiritual Life from beginning to end is faith*. Repentance is faith deciding, choosing, will-ing; confession is faith declaring itself; baptism is faith witnessing to the facts of the Gospel (Rom. 6:17-18); the Communion is faith memorializing; worship is faith praising, thanking, adoring; the assembly of the saints is faith fellowshiping, etc. Any act that is Christian must be an act of faith. From the cradle to the grave the true Christian lives and acts, to the best of his knowledge and ability, by faith (Rom. 5:1), and by a faith that is full commitment.

3. This principle of *obedient faith* runs throughout the Spiritual Life, indeed it motivates it and controls it. God recognized Abraham as His Friend on the ground that Abraham did what He commanded him to do. This does not mean that he was perfect, but that his disposition, as in the case of Noah (Gen. 7:1, 6:22), was to obey God in all things. Of course, as we all know, Abraham did "slip" a little from the plumb line at times (cf. Amos 7:7-8), but admittedly the temptation was great. Abraham, like all of us, even the most devoted Christian, was a creature with all the weaknesses of his kind. It is difficult for any of us to attain a state of complete trust either

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in God or in our fellows, and many times we are compelled to cry out, as did the Apostles of old, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). But we have the assurance that "like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 103:13), and we have His promise that His grace is sufficient for our support if we will but call on Him for spiritual strength that we may need (2 Cor. 12:9, Rom. 8:26-28, 1 Cor. 10:13, 2 Pet. 2:9, etc.).

Conclusion: God requires—and expects—the same obedient faith on the part of His saints in all Dispensations, in ours as well as in those preceding it. Jesus makes this so clear that no one can misunderstand or claim ignorance as an alibi. "If ye love me," said He, "ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Again, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But our Lord hath greater love than this, in that He laid down His life even for His enemies, for the sin of the whole world (John 1:29). Again: "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). *The obedience of faith is the ultimate proof of friendship.* This—our Lord Himself declares—is the essence of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:24-27). Practice, He tells us, rather than profession, is the ultimate evidence of one's faith (Matt. 7:21-23). He is the Author of salvation to one class only—"unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

"Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." It would be "blind faith," to be sure, to do what a *man* commands *just because he commands it*. But it is intelligent faith to do what our Lord commands *just because He commands it*. It is always intelligent faith to do what is commanded by Perfect Wisdom, Perfect Justice and Perfect Love, as incarnate in the Logos, God's

Only Begotten. This is true, simply because Perfect Wisdom and Justice and Love would command only that which contributes to the good of His saints. Surely, then, Abraham deserved the title, Friend of God. Gen. 15:6—“And he [Abraham] believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.” Abraham’s belief manifested itself in obedience: when God called, Abraham heard, believed, and obeyed: this is what faith always does, if it is truly faith. Hence, when the ultimate proof came on Moriah (Gen. 22:2), the patriarch did not question, quail, or fail. He met the test in a sublime manifestation of the obedience of faith (Gen. 22:9-14). “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Would you be a friend of God? Then believe as Abraham believed, obey as Abraham obeyed, trust as Abraham trusted, walk as Abraham walked, give as Abraham gave (Gen. 14:18-20), sacrifice as Abraham sacrificed (Matt. 12:46-50, 10:37), die in faith as Abraham died in faith, anticipating that City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Will you not come now and start on that same glorious pilgrimage of faith that leads the faithful to that same City, New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2)?

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY-NINE

1. What important lessons are to be obtained from the story of Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael?
2. What, probably, was Sarai’s motive in proposing that Abram take Hagar as his “secondary wife”?
3. What are some of the apparently never-ending consequences of this event?
4. What was the status of a concubine under Mesopotamian law?

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5. Why do we say that this event was ill-conceived and ill-timed?
6. Do you think that the Apostle's statement in Acts 17:30 has relevance in respect to this event? Explain your answer.
7. On what grounds are we justified in criticizing Sarai and Abram for their hasty action?
8. How does this story point up the realism of the Bible?
9. What was Hagar's sin following the awareness of her pregnancy? How did Sarai and Abram react to Hagar's attitude?
10. Explain how archeological discoveries have substantiated the details of this story. What do we learn from the Code of Hammurabi that is relevant to it? What do we learn from the Nuzi tablets?
11. What was Sarai's attitude toward Abram at this time? What was Abram's reply?
12. Why do we say that Sarai used the Divine Name irreverently (v. 5)?
13. How is Sarai's treatment of Hagar variously interpreted (v. 6)?
14. Is it conceivable that Abram might have been prepared to accept Ishmael as the Child of Promise? Explain your answer.
15. What does this incident teach us about the quality of genuine faith?
16. Was not the sin of Abram and Sarai their failure to await God's own pleasure as to the fulfillment of His promise? Explain.
17. What always happens when men presume to take matters of Divine ordination into their own hands?
18. Explain how Leupold deals more leniently with the principals in this story.
19. How was childlessness regarded in patriarchal times?
20. Explain the special far-reaching significance of the childlessness of Abram and Sarai.

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21. How does the legal background reflected in this story conform to the actual time element?
22. Explain how the stories of Ishmael and Isaac have to do with the law of inheritance in the Patriarchal Age.
23. What caused Hagar to flee from Sarai's presence?
24. What is indicated by the direction of Hagar's flight? Explain what was meant by "the way to Shur." What and where is the Negeb?
25. Describe the theophany which occurred at "the fountain of water."
26. Discuss fully the problem of the true identity of the Angel of Jehovah (Yahwe).
27. What interpretation of this title is in greatest accord with Biblical teaching as a whole?
28. Cite other Scriptures in which this Personage is pictured as taking a prominent role.
29. What reasons have we for not thinking of Him as a *created* being?
30. What reasons have we for thinking of Him as a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Eternal Logos?
31. What was the threefold revelation of the Angel to Hagar? Explain the Angel's question, command, and promise, respectively.
32. State the details of the prophetic statement concerning Ishmael and his seed.
33. What did Hagar learn from this visit of the Angel of the Lord?
34. What did Hagar name this famous well? Explain what the name means? What is its probable location?
35. Where did Hagar go, following the Angel's visit?
36. Show how the Angel's statement regarding the destiny of Ishmael's seed is fulfilled throughout history and even in our own time.
37. What is occurring today between the seed of Ishmael and Isaac's seed?

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38. Explain the full meaning of the term *anti-Semitic*. How is it being used erroneously today.
39. On what grounds are we justified in accepting Abraham as the Friend of God?
40. What is the norm by which our Lord Jesus distinguishes His friends from "followers afar off"? (Matt. 26:58).