

Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament

by

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Chapter 6

The Old Testament as the Plan of Salvation

Too many contemporary readers come to the unfortunate conclusion that the salvation offered in the OT is on a do-it-yourself basis and therefore totally out of harmony with the offer graciously extended in the NT. And since there is a relative scarcity of words for faith or believing in the OT, many wrongly infer that both the concept and the practice were unimportant. But such a conclusion can be exposed as being extremely superficial, if not also just plain erroneous.

WAS THE OBJECT AND METHOD OF PERSONAL SALVATION THE SAME IN THE OT AND NT?

Fortunately, almost all who work on the OT doctrine of salvation will agree that "grace" is involved to some extent, but therein ends the agreement. The much quoted note in *The Scofield Reference Bible* declared, "The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ."¹ Meanwhile, covenant theology affirmed, "The plan of salvation has always been one and the same; having the same promise, the same Saviour, the same condition, and the same salvation."²

But these two quotations could easily mislead many into thinking that the former position always held to at least two ways of salvation and the latter group never faltered in its view on the unity of the plan of salvation for both Testaments.

The real difficulty for both these groups is apparent when each is pressed to declare what was the object of the OT believer's faith. All too frequently the reply will be that the object of faith was "God." While it surely is claiming too much to say that the OT saints were fully conscious that the object of their faith was the incarnate, crucified Son of God--the Lamb of God, with all that that implies--it is likewise certainly claiming too little to say that OT believers were mere theists!

Accordingly, modern Evangelicals fall over each other making the point that "salvation has

1 *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 1115n.2.

2 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1872), 2:368.

always been by grace through faith--plus nothing." But the qualifications that are immediately raised are disturbing. The key question continues to be: who or what was the object of the OT individual's faith? If God were the sole object in the OT and Christ is the sole object of faith from NT times to the present, then do we have a major disagreement and a strong contrast in the method of personal salvation for the two Testaments?

The best way to approach this problem is first to analyze the Hebrew word *he'emin* with its prefixial use of the letters *lamedh* ("he believed [that]") and *beth* ("he believed in").³ This discussion in turn can be applied to Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness" (my translation).

The basic word underlying the Hebrew word *he'emin* is *'aman*, meaning "it is firm" or "it is sure." But this belief can be divided into two types, depending on which prefix (*lamedh* or *beth*) is used. The first involves believing what a person says and accepting those statements as true and trustworthy. Thus, Joseph's brothers had a difficult time getting their father Jacob to believe *that* Joseph was still alive and in Egypt (Gen 45:26). Likewise Moses feared that the Israelites would not trust anything *that* he said (Exod 4:1).

However, belief *in* someone (*he'emin be*) is more of an endorsement of another person's character, not just relying on that person's statements. The OT does occasionally give us examples of faith in another human being; Israel is twice said to believe *in* Moses (Exod 14:31; 19:9), and Achish, King of Gath, is said to have believed in (i.e., trusted) David's character (1 Sam 27:12). However, this use of believe *in* with the preposition *beth*⁴ is more frequently used of faith in God. This type of believing involves much more than accepting the statements made by or about someone; ". . . believing in asserts the total dependability of a person."⁵ But upon *what* or *whom* is that dependence put?

According to the OT, faith in God involved believing what God has promised or commanded and believing in him and his person and character. Faith was evidenced when a person "believed *in* [God's] commands" (Ps 119:66, my translation) or when "the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord" (Exod 14:31, my translation). In fact, the OT often coupled

3 I am indebted to Gordon Wenham for this discussion in his 1975-76 annual conference lecture to the Theological Students' Fellowship at Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland, *Faith in the Old Testament* (Leicester, England: Theological Students' Fellowship, n.d.), 1-24.

4 Franz Delitzsch. *A New Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1978) argues for that usage (Exod 4:31; 14:31; 19:9; Num 14:11; 20:12; and Deut 1:32). See also J. Alfaro, "Fides in terminologia biblica," *Gregorianum* 42 (1961): 462-505. Alfaro's conclusion on 504 is "the notion of faith is basically identical in the Old and New Testaments: 'to believe' entails man's complete commitment to God who reveals and saves." See also Franco Festorazzi, "'We are Safe' (Jer 7, 10): The Faith of Both Testaments as Salvific Experience," in *How Does the Christian Confront the OT?* ed. Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, Bastiaan Van Ierse, (New York: Paulist, 1967), 45-59.

5 Wenham, *ibid.*, 4.

fearing God with believing in him. Israel was to "fear not [the Egyptians]" but to "stand firm and see the salvation of God" (Exod 14:13, my translation). But when Israel failed to fear God (as recorded, i.e., in Deut 1:29, 32), it was because she "did not trust in the LORD" (vs. 32; cf. Num 14:9). Likewise, faith is linked with obedience, for unbelief is matched with rebellion against the commandment of the Lord (Deut 9:23). Unbelief and disobedience, then, are twins.⁶

The most important passage in the patriarchal narrative, however, is Genesis 15:6: "Abram believed *in* the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (my translation). The *hiphil* form of the verb "to believe" (*'āman*) is unusual in form, since it is in the perfect tense with *waw* and not, as one would expect, in the imperfect with a *waw conversive*. The unusual verb form, however, probably means that Abraham's faith had a permanence of attitude. He remained constant in his faith; he did not just believe this one time.⁷

The faith spoken of in Genesis 15:6 was a particular, and not a general, act of believing. While Hebrews 11:8-9 clearly says that it was *by faith* that he obeyed when he was called at least ten to fifteen years earlier to leave his city, Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12:1), Genesis 15:6 is the first time that Holy Scripture expressly speaks of his faith.⁸

But if Abraham had already been justified as he left Ur of the Chaldees, why was his faith belatedly on this occasion credited to him as righteousness? Only the context and the narrative of Genesis 1-14 can help us answer this question.

It is the land promise that occupies our attention in Genesis 12, for the Lord, after reappearing to Abram (who had just reached Shechem), enlarged on the promise he had delivered to Abram back in Ur: "To your offspring I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7). Unfortunately, due to fear of famine, Abram subsequently left that very land of promise. But if famines are under the control of God, what was its purpose here? And why should Abraham fear for his life if he believed in God and in his promises? Nevertheless, God's promise remained despite Abram's poor showing: indeed, it remained in spite of his half-truth lie to Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister.

The divine promise is put to the test once again (Gen 13). This time Abram resists the temptation to help make the promise come true and instead offers Lot and his herdsmen first choice of the same land promised exclusively to himself. That God approved of this act of faith and generosity is confirmed by Genesis 13:14, for here, once again, God repeats his promise about the land, adding a word about an incalculable number of offspring. Only

6 These connections were also made by Wenham, *ibid.*, 5.

7 A Grammatical point made by H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 1:477. Leupold refers to Eduard Koenig's *Lehrgebäude der Hebräischen Sprache: Part II Syntax* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 367.i.

8 Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), I:264.

after that did Lot expose himself to being taken captive, a snare from which he had to be rescued and which act once again proved that it was God who was blessing Abram and delivering him from his enemies (Gen 14:19).

Genesis 15 shifts, however, from the promise of the land to the concern about that promised male descendant. The call for Abram to believe appears already to be signaled in the opening words of the divine vision: "Fear not" (Gen 15:1); recall the linking of believing in and fearing God). Once again Abram's attempt, by his own works, to bring about God's promise had to be rebuked; his adoption of Eliezer of Damascus as his legal son was not according to God's promises--"This man will not be your heir" (Gen. 15:4). This was good enough for Abram: "He believed in the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (vs. 5, my translation).

What, then, was the object of Abram's faith? Franz Delitzsch answered: "The promise . . . has truly Christ for its object; . . . the faith in which he receives it, is faith in the promised seed."⁹ Likewise, Leupold is just as adamant on the point, if not even more so than Delitzsch: "Now the question arises, 'Is Abram's faith different from the justifying faith of the New Testament believer?' We answer unhesitatingly and emphatically, No. The very issue in this chapter has been Abram's seed."¹⁰

Leupold does go on to qualify his answer somewhat as we all must, by saying that while Abram and the NT believer share Christ as one and the same object of saving faith, this is not to say that Abram possessed a full understanding of the Savior's future name, his future atoning work, or even the details of the freely offered and accomplished redemption. Yet in essence both the OT and NT believer had to put their trust in the Seed whom the Father had promised: that is where the similarity lies.

Traditional Evangelical theology can not let the issue rest with this exegesis; in fact, Evangelicals have done very little contextual exegesis on the Genesis 15:6 statement. Most tend to lean more heavily on the line of argumentation that Charles Ryrie restated so clearly:

Did the Old Testament revelation include Christ as the conscious object of faith? From the inductive study already made [allegedly showing that God was the *sole* object of faith, but which affirmation is modified by saying that "this God was a Saviour"] it would seem that it did not. Furthermore, the two summary statements in the New Testament which deal with forgiveness in Old Testament times indicate the same. Both Acts 17:30 and Romans 3:25 teach that Christ's relationship to forgiveness was unknown in the Old Testament. In addition, there are several specific statements which show the ignorance of Old Testament saints regarding salvation through Christ--John

9 Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 2:7.

10 Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, I:478.

1:21; 7:40; 1 Peter 1:11.¹¹

Likewise, Lewis Sperry Chafer,¹² after quoting Matthew 19:17, agreed:

True to the Jewish dispensation, He said with reference to the law of Moses: "This do and thou shalt live"; but when contemplating the cross and Himself as the bread come down from heaven to give His life for the world, He said: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he [God] hath sent" (John 6:29). These opposing principles are not to be reconciled. They indicate that fundamental distinction which must exist between those principles that obtain in an age of law, on the one hand, and an age of grace, on the other hand.

But these texts will not bear the weight they are being asked to carry. The "times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30) referred to the Athenian Gentiles, not Israel. Appropriate for Israel was the rebuke that the two disciples received on the road to Emmaus, "Oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25 KJV). The tolerance shown by the "forbearance" of God for the sins committed "beforehand" (Rom. 3:25) was only with regard to the final work of satisfaction of the justice of God in the death of Christ and not with regard to a special deal on sinning without any culpability or record of the sins during the OT days since they were done in ignorance! That some, in Israel, were just as ignorant of the Messiah and his work (John 1:21; 7:40) as were the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25) does not detract one iota from what they could and ought to have known. In fact, 1 Peter 1:10-12 specifically affirms that the only item on which those who had the Scriptures could plead ignorance was the matter of "time" (i.e., *when* the Messiah would come). But that there was a Messiah, that he would suffer, that he would be glorified as King over all, that the royal glory came after suffering, and that the prophets delivered their messages not only for Israel but also for the church is flatly declared.¹³

Some will still persist in asking: "Was this the time that Abraham was saved and justified?" We will answer that it was not the first time he believed, but it is the first time that the Scriptures expressly mention his faith. It is appropriate to bring out his faith at this point because of the prominence that the text has now given to what has been there all along (since the ancient promise made to Eve)--the promise of the "seed"--but is only made explicit by the newly raised problem of the lack of an heir to be the Seed that was promised.

Thus, the passage connects the Seed (whom we can identify with Christ) as the object of Abraham's belief. As Martin Luther taught on this passage:

11 Charles Ryrie, *the Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), 49.

12 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1922), 92.

13 See my detailed linguistic argument in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 18-23, 209.

. . . here the Holy Spirit states emphatically [that he believed in God who promised] so that we should learn from this passage that all who (*after Abraham's example*) believe in Christ are justified. . . . Our righteousness before God is simply this that we trust in the divine promises (*of Christ*).¹⁴

Therefore, as Harold G. Stigers decided, it is not necessary to deny that personal salvation is being addressed here:

Paul speaks of Abram's belief, not as an example of saving faith, but as the vehicle through which the grace of God is bestowed, and so he makes the point that God's promises and favors are not *earned* but come *through* faith (Rom 4). This is the meaning of Genesis 15:6: God would give Abram a son because he trusted God to do it. He therefore was of right *character*, righteous in the eyes of God.¹⁵

Likewise, George Bush sees Abram's act as a special deed on a single occasion that was made a matter of public and lasting record (i.e., remembered to his credit), and in that sense alone was he justified.¹⁶

Will this interpretation of Bush and Stigers hold up under the accounting figure ("credited it to him for righteousness") as well as the Pauline use made of it in Romans 4? Bush believes it will, for he views Paul as appealing to Genesis 15:6 merely as an illustration. The fact that this was not the first time that Abram believed and the fact that Abram's faith did not (in Bush's view) have Christ as its grand object are the reasons why Bush is driven to say that this is a faith focusing only on one particular promise--an innumerable seed. But we have already shown that Scripture probably deliberately delayed its discussion of Abram's belief and justification so that it might make the strongest connection between the Savior (i.e., the One Seed) and Abram's justification in order that no one might dissociate justification from the Seed that was to come.

Was Abram's faith a work by which he merited righteousness or achieved some honorable mention? The subject of the accounting, reckoning, or crediting term is clearly and solely God. And even though this is the first time in Scripture that faith and justification are bound together, the intimate connection of this root *ts-d-q*¹⁷ ("to justify") with salvation in subsequent texts leads us to conclude that Paul was on good exegetical and antecedent

14 Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*, 1:265 (translator's emphasis). See also Seth Erlandsson, "Faith in the Old and New Testaments: Harmony or Disagreement?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47 (1983): 1-14.

15 Harold G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 154 (his emphasis).

16 George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols. (New York: E. French, 1838-39), 1:244.

17 See Horace D. Hummel, "Justification in the Old Testament," *Concordia Journal* 9 (1983): 9-17.

theology grounds when he argued in Romans 4:1-16 that Abram's salvation from sin was not "by works" but "by grace." Furthermore, in the context of Genesis 12-22, it is clear that every time Abram decided to extricate himself by his own works, he only dug himself in deeper. Only God's gracious gifts were effective in granting the blessings God had promised; therefore, only God's gracious act of crediting Abram with righteousness would likewise be effective. In fact, Abram was not in any position to do anything to save himself: his sin was all too evident both in his lying to Pharaoh about Sarah and in his adoption of Eliezer as his heir in spite of the promise of God. This, then, raises the problem of the OT saint's conception of sin.

WAS SIN IN THE OT MORE OF AN EXTERNAL OR AN INTERNAL PROBLEM?

There is hardly a page in either Testament that does not have at least one reference to the topic of sin. Traditionally the Hebrew vocabulary for sin has been divided into three major categories: (1) *deviation from or falling short of the law or will of God* (*ḥaṭṭā't* or *ḥāṭā'*),¹⁸ (2) *rebellion against or transgression of that law* (*peša'*),¹⁹ and (3) *guilt ('ašām) or wickedness (rāšā')* before God. Simon J. DeVries, however, divides OT sin vocabulary into six categories: (1) formal words (like *'ābar*, "to transgress"), (2) relational words (like *mā'an*, "to disobey"), (3) psychological words (like *'āwāh*, "to be twisted"), (4) qualitative words (like *'āmal*, "to do mischief"), and (6) words for the responsibility for sin (like *'āšam*, "to be guilty").²⁰

Regardless of which system of categorizing we use, sin cannot be classified as bad luck or misfortune; rather, it is a personal and deliberate deviation or defection from the person, character, or word of God, the result being a state of feeling real cessation of fellowship with God. Sin is a calculated *act*; but sin is also a *state* of real guilt before God and exposure to his punishment for that guilt. This state of guilt not only follows individual acts of sin but actually precedes sin and gives rise to acts of deviation and defection from that will or law of God. Thus, David confessed that he had been born in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps 51:5).

Unlike the mythologies of the Ancient Near East, which tended to associate sin with human creatureliness or with sexual generation, the Hebrew writers attributed the source of humanity's sin to the corrupted heart of individuals:

18 The Hebrew root involved (occurring some 580 times) is the most frequent OT root for sin.

19 Some synonyms for *pš'* are the Hebrew roots: *mrd*, to rebel, revolt; *mrh*, to be disobedient towards; *srr*, to be stubborn, obstinate; *m'l*, to act faithlessly or unfaithfully [e.g., in a breach of the covenant] and *sûg*, to turn back [from God].

20 Simon J. DeVries, *The Achievement of Biblical Religion: A Prolegomena to Old Testament Theology* (New York: University of America Press, 1983), 164.

"Every inclination of the thoughts of [the human] heart was only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5).

"These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Isa 29:13).

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9).

The fact that God regarded the person and the person's inner attitude prior to and almost as the grounds for judging the person's deeds is best illustrated in the Cain and Abel narrative (Gen 4:1-15). The syntax of verses 3-5 easily supports this notion of assigning priority to the person and the person's heart attitude. Rather than placing the verb first, as is normal in Hebrew, the subject "Abel" is placed first in verse 4. The emphasis on the individual is reinforced by linking the independent pronoun with the emphasizing particle *gam* and repeating the pronominal suffix on the verbal form in fourth position. A literal translation would be: "And Abel, even he, he brought."

This emphasis is now matched by the choice of his worship, for Abel gave of the first-born of his flock and from the fat pieces. This is to say that because he was, first, authentic in his attitude, he could then truly be generous and wholehearted in his act of worship; therefore he gave the choice portions to God.

Cain, on the other hand, gave more out of custom, formalistic worship and with little or no heart. It was not that he brought agricultural gifts in place of an animal or blood sacrifice. The word for sacrifice used here in connection with both men is *minḥâh*, meaning a "gift" or "tribute." It is the same word used of the grain offering in Leviticus 2.

God, however, discerned the difference, for he "had respect (= *šā'âh 'el*; note the priority placed on the person) for Abel, and [then] for his offering. But unto Cain and [then] to his offering he did not have respect" (vv. 4-5, my translation). Therefore, we affirm that the divine gaze is directed to the person first and only then to the person's worship or work. Only if the heart is found right can the individual's worship, service, or gifts be acceptable.

Too frequently people look "at the outward appearance," whereas "the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). In his contrition over the Bathsheba incident, David had to learn this same truth the hard way. It was "a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart" (Ps 51:17) that God was seeking. And this was the same battle that the prophets waged with those who attempted to substitute outward acts of piety for the necessary inward prerequisites for offering all sacrifices or gifts to God (Isa 1:11-18; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8).

B. D. Eerdmans' attempt to argue in 1903 that "Old Testament ethics do not meddle with

the inner thoughts of men"²¹ failed because he did not notice:

- (1) the place and significance that the OT gives to the heart,
- (2) the emphasis the OT places on the thoughts, intentions, and deliberations of the wicked, and
- (3) the capstone to the Ten Commandments did focus, contrary to Eerdmans' exegesis, on "desire," which pointed to the inner motives as being a proper realm for evaluating all acts.

Thus, we cannot agree with those who attempt to describe sin in OT times as being a matter more of the external act apart from any inner motive or heart attitude. This distinction is not only artificial but also entirely wrongheaded, and it cannot be sustained by the data of the OT text. The inner spiritual state of each person was indeed a matter of primary concern.

Some, however, objecting to such a personal and internal view of sin in the OT, will persist in pointing to the category of "sins in ignorance" (Lev 4:2, 13, 22, 27). Does not this category, argue our objectors, imply that most of the sin or guilt sacrifices (Lev 4:2, 22, 27; 5:17-19) were for sins that the Israelites had no idea were wrong or evil? And if that were so, how could the state of their heart attitude be a matter of concern or even enter into our description of the forgiveness process in the OT?

An alarmingly large number of students of the OT divide all sins into the two major headings of accidental and deliberate.²² The Psalmist enumerated three major headings in Psalm 19:12-13: "Who can discern his *errors* [šgî'ôt]? Cleanse me from my *hidden faults* [nistārôt]. Restrain your servant from willful sins [zēdim]" (my translation). But if the first two categories of the Psalmist ("errors" and "hidden faults") are merely two subcategories of the "accidental" heading, as Jacob Milgrom²³ concluded, then it is clear that so-called

21 B. D. Eerdmans, "Oorsprong en betekenis van de 'Tien Woorden'" *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 37 (1903): 19-35, as reported also in B. Gemser, "The Object of Moral Judgments in the Old Testament," in *Adhuc Loquitur: Collected Essays by Dr. B. Gemser*, ed. A. vanSelms and A. S. van der Woude (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 78-95. Unfortunately, many have continued to agree with Eerdmans' thesis. For example, Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 2d ed. (Newton, Mass: Branford, 1970), 393, concluded, "We must therefore agree with Eerdmans when he says that the Israelite *did not know of sins in thought*. . ." (his emphasis). See my full discussion on this point in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 7-10.

22 See Exod 21:12-14, Num 15:27-31, 35:15-25, and Deut 19:4-13.

23 Jacob Milgrom, "The Cultic ŠGGH and Its Influence in Psalms and Job," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 58 (1967-68): 115-25; also chapter 11 in idem, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 122-32.

"sins in ignorance" are actually "sins of inadvertence." Thus, the designation "unwitting" (KJV, NJV, RSV "ignorance")--i.e., "without wit," "without consciousness"--is impossible. The sins of *shegagah* are acts of negligence; the offender knows the law but violates it accidentally and without malice aforethought (e.g., in the case of accidental homicide--Num 35:22ff; Deut 19:4-10; Josh 30:-6, 9). There is also the sin of inadvertence, where the person acts without fully knowing all the facts--the ignorance was not about the law but about the circumstances--such as in the case of Abimelech's taking Sarah, whom he thought was Abraham's sister (Gen 20:9), or when Balaam was unaware that an angel was in the donkey's path (Num 22:34: "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road"). Thus, the sinner who commits a sin of inadvertence is conscious of the act, even if he or she is not always aware of its consequences.

Milgrom makes the same point about two famous texts: Job 6:24 ("Teach me and I will be silent, and make me understand my inadvertence")²⁴ and Job 19:4 ("If indeed I erred inadvertently, it is I [emphatic position of 'with me' justifies 'it is I'] who should be conscious of my inadvertence").²⁵ Job's claim is that "he should be conscious of his sins--but he is not!"²⁶ Milgrom explains further:

Thus, from the friends' viewpoint, God punishes *NSTROT* [= "hidden faults"] and the sinner's consciousness of his act is not essential for God to punish him. Job, on the other hand, will not admit to the justice of God punishing any other wrong but inadvertent wrong, the *ŠGI'OT* [= "sins of inadvertence"], acts of which Job at least was conscious when he did them though he may not have known they were sinful until later. He demands a bill of particulars. . . .²⁷

In fairness to Milgrom, however, it must be pointed out that he feels that Job's friends were championing the traditional view found in Leviticus 4, while Job becomes the first to proclaim that God holds individuals accountable for only conscious sins. We cannot agree with this stratification of the biblical evidence, for it exceeds the categories of the text itself.

The sin of a "high hand" (*b^eyād rāmâh*, Num 15:17-36) is, in our view, something altogether different from the previous categories. It involved blasphemy against the Lord and contempt for the Word of God (Num 15:30-31). This is similar to what is called the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in the NT (cf. Heb 10:26-39). As such it becomes an unpardonable sin, since it represents high treason and revolt against God. Its symbol is the clenched fist upraised in a menacing position against God in heaven. Such sustained

24 Milgrom, "The Cultic ŠGGH," 121, his translation.

25 Ibid., 122, his translation.

26 Ibid., 122.

27 Ibid., 123.

treason or blatant blasphemy against God was a picket against heaven, and it demanded everything except forgiveness. All sins could be forgiven in the OT, and atonement was available for all types and categories of sin except blasphemy against God and his Word.

WERE THE OT SACRIFICES PERSONALLY AND OBJECTIVELY EFFECTIVE?

The repeated statement of the law of Moses on the effects of the sacrifices offered for sin in the Levitical law is "and he shall be forgiven" (Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 16). So effective and so all-embracing was this forgiveness that it availed for such sins as lying, theft, fraud, perjury, and debauchery (Lev 6:1-7). In David's case the list extended to adultery and complicity in murder (Pss 32 and 51). In fact, in connection with the Day of Atonement, what is implicit in these other lists is clearly stated: "*all* their sins" were atoned (Lev 16:21, 22; my emphasis). Thus, instead of limiting the efficacy of this forgiveness to ceremonial sins, all the sins of all the people who were truly repentant were included. It is important to note that the qualification of a proper heart attitude is clearly stated in Leviticus 16:29 and 31 where the people are asked to "afflict (*'ānâh*) their souls" (KJV). Accordingly, only those who had inwardly prepared their hearts were eligible to receive the gracious gift of God's forgiveness (cf. also 1 Sam 15:22).

Nevertheless, a major problem appears whenever the Christian introduces the argument of Hebrews 9-10 into this discussion. The writer of Hebrews states in no uncertain terms that:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship . . . because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb 10:1, 4).

This surely seems to diminish the high claims that we just finished attributing to the writer of Leviticus. In fact, Hebrews 9:9 adds that "the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper." What shall we say then about the forgiveness offered in the Torah? It would be too much to contend that the OT offer of forgiveness repeated so often in the Levitical institution of the sacrifices was only symbolic and offered no actual cleansing from or removal of sin.

The only solution is to take both the OT and NT statements seriously. We conclude then, with Hobart Freeman,²⁸ that the OT sacrifices were *subjectively efficacious*, in that the sinner did receive full relief based on the clear declaration of God's appointed servant. But it is

²⁸ Hobart E. Freeman, "The Problem of Efficacy of Old Testament Sacrifices," *Bulletin of The Evangelical Theological Society* 5 (1962): 73-9; idem, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 316-24.

just as clear that the sacrifices of bulls and goats *were not in themselves* expiatory and efficacious. The most these sacrifices could do was to point to the need for a perfect, living substitute who would, in the timing of God, ransom and deliver all from the debt, guilt, and effects of their sin. Thus, the OT sacrifices were not *objectively* efficacious; but then neither did the OT ever claim that the blood of these bulls and goats was inherently effective.

Geoffrey Grogan would not solve the problem by using the distinction Freeman has used here; in fact, he believes that the OT sacrifices were ineffective both objectively and subjectively. He cites two reasons for the ineffectiveness of the sacrifices: (1) they had to be repeated, and (2) they were animal sacrifices and thus could not truly act as substitutes for humans. But when the natural question is put to Grogan, "Did they effect nothing then?" he answers that their true function was provisional, "imposed until the time of reformation" (Heb 9:9-10 RSV). In the meantime, the OT sacrifices typified the sacrifice that was to come in Christ, and thus they were a means of grace by which the sacrifice of Christ could be channeled even to OT worshippers.²⁹

We believe that both Freeman and Grogan end up with the same position, though Freeman has the advantage in treating the fact that real forgiveness was effected in connection with a proper use of the sacrifices and with a declaration that their sins were gone and remembered against them no more.

The efficacy of the OT sacrifices, then, rested in the Word of God, who boldly announced that sacrifices done in this manner and with this heart attitude (Ps 50:8, 14; 51:16 [Heb 10:8]; Prov 15:8, 21:3; Isa 1:11-18; 66:3; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21; Mic 6:6-8) would receive from God a genuine experience of full forgiveness. Of course, everything depended on the perfect payment for this release, a payment that would occur sometime in the future. Therefore, not the blood of bulls and goats but the "blood" (i.e., the life rendered up in violent death) of a perfect sacrifice finally made possible all the forgiveness proleptically enjoyed in the OT and retrospectively appreciated in the NT. Only the lamb of God could have provided *objective efficacy*, even though the *subjective efficacy* that had preceded it was grounded on the authority and promised work of Christ.

Until the death of Christ happened, the sins of the OT saints were both forgiven and "passed over" (*parēsis*, Rom 3:25) in the merciful grace of God until the expiatory death of Christ provided what no animal ever could do and what no OT text ever claimed it could do.

During the OT period, sins were forgiven and remembered against men and women no more (Ps 103:3, 10-12)--in fact, removed as far from the OT confessor as the east is from the west! Thus, the OT saint experienced sins forgiven on the basis of God's Word and sins forgotten (i.e., "remembered against him no more," Ezek 18:22, my translation) on the

²⁹ Geoffrey W. Grogan, "The Experience of Salvation in the Old and New Testaments," *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 11.

same basis.

WHAT WAS THE OT BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The OT believer's experience of the Holy Spirit has frequently been a neglected topic of theological discussion. All too many interpreters merely brush the topic aside with some brief traditional adage that says that the Holy Spirit temporarily came upon certain OT leaders, but he did not indwell or remain *with* believers until NT times.

What else may be said on this subject, such a quick prepositional treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of OT believers is all too cursory and, in fact, inaccurate! The subject is indeed difficult, and not enough scholars have written on this theme,³⁰ at least on this theme as it relates to the experience of the OT believer.

True, most are familiar with the Spirit's presence and activity in creating the world (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; Isa 32:15) and in sustaining the created order (Job 34:14; Ps 104:30). Again, most concede it is the Holy Spirit who gave wisdom, understanding, and basic skills to such OT men as Moses (Exod 18:22-23; Num 11:17), the seventy elders (Num 11:16-17), and the craftsman of the tabernacle, Bezaleel (Exod 31:2-11).

But where many interpreters disagree or display a poor grasp of the subject is at the experiential level. Here most conclude with the fact that the OT prophets were men who "had the Spirit" (Ezek 2:2; 3:24; Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14; Mic 3:8). Other than this Spirit of revelation given to the prophets, OT men and women would need to wait until the age of the Spirit anticipated by Jeremiah (31:31-34), Ezekiel (Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; 39:29), and Joel (Joel 2:28-32) had come.

But a moment of careful reflection will reveal that something has been left out. If the Holy Spirit was not active in the individual lives of ordinary believers in the OT, would this mean that they were unregenerate? Since the Holy Spirit is the only One who can bring new life and effect subjectively the salvation that Christ would secure for them objectively, did this mean that OT believers did not possess faith--which is always said to be a gift of

³⁰ The best known recent work in the United States is by Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976). But the most original discussion, albeit brief, is by Geoffrey Grogan, "The Experience of Salvation in the Old and New Testament," *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 12-17. Grogan refers to J. C. J. Waite, *The Activity of the Holy Spirit Within the Old Testament Period* (London: London Bible College Annual Lecture, 1961). See also Carl Armerding "The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 92 (1935): 277-91; 433-41; M. R. Westall, "The Scope of the Term 'Spirit of God' in the Old Testament," *Indian Journal of Theology* 28 (1977): 29-43; and P. A. Nordell, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Spirit of God," *The Old Testament Student* 4 (1885): 433-44.

God (effected by the Holy Spirit) and not of works, lest any man or woman (e.g., lest Adam, Even, Noah, Abraham, David, or Isaiah) should boast (Eph 2:8-9)?

There is no evidence, some will object, for such a high claim. Surely this is merely a theological inference based on NT theology! But is it? Did not Jesus himself expect better theology from Nicodemus, even though he was still in OT times, or at least in a pre-Cross situation? When Nicodemus made his discreet nocturnal inquiry about salvation, Jesus openly spoke about the need for a new birth by the work of the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus reacted by expressing surprise and intellectual confusion: he had not known of such requirements. That, in turn, provoked Jesus' rebuke: How can you claim to be a teacher in Israel and yet not know something as elementary as the need for being born again? (John 3:10). Presumably our Lord held Nicodemus responsible for the teaching in Ezekiel 36:26-27. Likewise, Nicodemus was perhaps familiar with David's prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10 RSV). Indeed, had not David worried that God would "cast [him] . . . away from [his] presence and take . . . [his] holy Spirit from [him]" (Ps 51:11 RSV)? Had not Israel as a nation also "grieved his holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10)?

It is possible, though it cannot be proven, that Paul is claiming in 2 Corinthians 4:13 that our faith is the product of "the same spirit of faith" (by which we Christians believe and therefore speak) that worked in the lives of OT saints. Paul had just quoted Psalm 116:10, "I believed; therefore I said. . . ." His claim, then, is this: the same Holy Spirit who authored the faith of the psalmist who believed--and who thereby was also enabled to speak--is the identical Holy Spirit who enabled me, Paul, and all NT Christians to believe and, therefore, likewise to speak.

However, there are even greater difficulties to our thesis that have not been faced as yet. What shall we say about those NT passages that appear to suggest that the Holy Spirit had not been given in the OT or even in the days of our Lord? His advent would, in fact, only take place at Pentecost. These NT texts are:

Matt 3:11 (and parallels) "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (versus John's baptism with water only).

John 1:33 "He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit."

John 7:37-39 "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

John 14:16-17 "The Father . . . will give you another counselor [who will] . . . live with you and will be [or, is] in you" (my translation).

John 14:26 "But . . . the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things and will remind you

of everything I have said to you."

- John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, . . . the Spirit of truth . . . , he will testify about me."
- John 16:7 "Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you."
- John 16:13-15 "When . . . the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will tell you what is yet to come."
- John 20:22 "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"
- Acts 1:5 ". . . in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
- Acts 11:15-16 "The Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us . . . [as] the Lord had said . . . 'You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"
- Acts 15:8 "God . . . showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us."

The evidence is almost overwhelming, and it is no wonder that for many the subject is closed. These verses seem to say all that needs to be said on the subject. However, there is room to question the absoluteness of these passages. First of all, we must delete from this list the references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11 with its parallels; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:15-16; and 15:8). This was a unique work of the Holy Spirit by which he, for the first time, incorporated all believers into one new body, his church.

This interpretation is certain because the promise of John the Baptist and Jesus points forward to such a work, one that is just days away from happening in Acts 1:5 as the disciples tarried in the Upper Room. With the birthday of the church at Pentecost in Acts 2 and the apostolic interpretation in 1 Corinthians 12:13 pointing back to it, we have locked in the meaning of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body . . . and were all given the one Spirit to drink."

Likewise we must exclude those verses that specifically promise the apostles that they would be the ones through whom the Holy Spirit would reveal the NT canon (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15). The apostles, not we NT believers, heard "everything" Jesus taught them (Jn 14:26) and had "been with [him] from the beginning" of his earthly pilgrimage (John 15:27). Almost every cult that attaches itself to the Christian faith has in one way or another abused the context and meaning of these three texts on Jesus' promise concerning the NT canon. It is tragic to continue to hear Evangelicals join in this parody by claiming that they too are the recipients of new truth from the Holy Spirit. Let these Christians prove that they walked with Jesus in Galilee and that they heard these words from Jesus'

very own lips, and then we will listen to their extravagant claims.

We are left with John 7:37-39, 14:16-17, and 16:7. Do these verses teach an absolutely new appearance of the Holy Spirit in the NT? We answer, "No." Not only has John 3:5-10 suggested otherwise, but so do three other passages: Matthew 10:20, Luke 11:13, and 12:12. When Jesus sent out the twelve, he assured them that "it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:20). This mission was clearly before his death and the advent of the church at Pentecost. Likewise, when Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he concluded, "If you . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). Finally, Jesus taught the crowd that those who believed on him should not fear the possible harassment that could come from interrogation about their reasons for believing in Jesus, "for the Holy Spirit [would] teach [them] at that time what [they] should say" (Luke 12:12).

The most interesting text in this group is John 14:17. "You know him, for he lives *with* (*para*) you and *will be* [or *is*] in you" (my emphasis). *Para* (Greek "with")

does not denote a merely fluctuating relationship, for the same preposition is employed in [John] xiv. 23 of the abiding of the Father and the Son [already] in them. It is doubtful that our Lord intended a contrast at this point. It is more likely that He desired to assure them that the One of whom He spoke was no stranger to them. He was going to indwell them in a new way, but this does not mean that He had not been present with them in a real sense already.³¹

A second observation can be made about the text in John 14:17. There is just as strong and just as early manuscript reading for the present tense "is in you" as there is for "will be in you." The two forms *estai* and *esti* were very easily confused, but, as B. F. Westcott concludes, ". . . the present tense appears to be less like a correction."³² Thus, the Holy Spirit already was "with" (*para*) the OT believer and was present (*esti*) in those who believed.

If the OT believer already possessed the Holy Spirit, why then was Pentecost necessary? When John added the comment in John 7:39, "The Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified," we must observe with George Smeaton that:

He does not mean that the Spirit did not yet exist--for all Scripture attests His

31 Grogan, "Experience," 13-14. See also Wood, *Holy Spirit*, 86, on the present perfect verb *menō* ("dwells"), who differs from John Walvoord (*The Church in Prophecy* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964], 37) on the distinction that Jesus makes between the Holy Spirit's being "near" Old Testament saints and being "within" New Testament saints.

32 B. F. Westcott, *the Gospel According to St. John* (1881; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 206.

eternal pre-existence; nor that His regenerating efficacy was still unknown--for countless millions had been regenerated by His power since the first promise in Eden; but that these operations of the Spirit had been but an anticipation of the atoning death of Christ rather than a giving.³³

Smeaton went on to say that next to the Incarnation and the Atonement, Pentecost was the greatest event in all history. The necessity of Pentecost and the visible coming of the Holy Spirit was this:

He must have a coming in state, in a solemn and visible manner, accompanied with visible effects as well as Christ had and whereof all the Jews should be, and were, witnesses.³⁴

Concluded Smeaton, "Thus Pentecost was openly signaled as the day of the mission of the comforter."³⁵ It is this event that Joel pointed to and Peter witnessed in part when the Holy Spirit was poured out on "all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

Our summary of the experience of the OT believers' participation in the ministry of the Holy Spirit cannot be put any better than Geoffrey Grogan concluded:

Hence we may say that the *full* N.T. experience of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ from Pentecost onwards is at one with that of the true saints of the O.T. in that it was always a regenerating experience, bringing men to newness of life, but that there is an important difference. It is not simply that the Spirit now operates on the basis of the perfect character of Jesus. Presumably [the Spirit] had already done this in anticipation even in the OT. Rather it is that [the Spirit] operates on the basis of that character *as now revealed historically* and so held before the minds of those who now experienced His activity in their hearts. For example, men in OT days had the command of God to love Him and to love their neighbor. However, our Lord had said "a new commandment I give you, that you love one another . . . (John xiii.34). There was . . . a partial realisation of it [in the OT]. . . . Now, however, the standard has been perfectly revealed in [Christ]. . . ."³⁶

Just so, the Holy Spirit already regenerated and was "in" OT believers, but it was necessary that he come visibly and formally to validate all that had been proleptically experienced in the OT, just as Calvary was necessary to validate all that had been offered in the name of the coming sacrifice and atonement of Christ.

33 George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 49.

34 *Ibid.*, 53, citing T. Goodwin, *Works* (Edinburgh, 1861), 6:8.

35 *Ibid.*, 54.

36 Grogan, "Experience," 17.

WHAT HOPE DID OT BELIEVERS HAVE OF LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE?

Thomas Ridenhour states what all too frequently is taken as the final word on this subject of life after death in the OT: "There is no 'uniform and sure doctrine of the afterlife' offered in the Old Testament."³⁷ Only one passage in the OT is counted as a "clear and undisputed reference to the resurrection of the dead"³⁸--Daniel 12:2. With this opinion Robert H. Pfeiffer concurred, "The doctrine of the resurrection is first stated as a dogma in Dan 12:2 . . . a doctrine unknown in the Old Testament before the third century."³⁹ Harris Birkeland adds Isaiah 26:19 to Daniel 12:2 as "the only passages where the existence of a belief in an eschatological resurrection is testified beyond doubt."⁴⁰ But Manfred O. Meitzen would remove even these two texts, for in his view "The Old Testament teaches virtually nothing about resurrection or life after death."⁴¹

Why were the Hebrews so bankrupt in this area when all over the ancient Near East there existed a considerable amount of writing about life after death (e.g., the Gilgamesh Epic, the Descent of Ishtar into the Netherworld, the Book of the Dead, the Pyramid Texts)? Whole cultures reflected on this subject and provided for life in the next world. Indeed, the whole economy of the Egyptian state was geared to providing for the Pharaoh's life (and the lives of his loyal subjects and servants) in the next world--thus those massive pyramids. By the time Abraham arrived in Egypt, the pyramids of Gizeh would already have been five to seven hundred years old! Accordingly, it turns out that so-called primitive patriarchal men and women thought more on the question of life after death than does modern man. The people of that day lived with life and death--they heard the screams of women in labor and heard the death rattle of the aged. Modern urban dwellers seldom are forced into such life and death situations, for we insulate ourselves from both ends of the spectrum, using hospitals, wards, rest homes, and the like.

As far as the biblical evidence is concerned, even before the patriarchs, kings, or prophets reflected on the subject of an afterlife, Enoch was "taken" (Gen 5:24) to be with God, and the mortal was swallowed up by immortality. Indeed, he entered the very presence of God. If we accept the canonical evidence at face value, that one event should have settled

37 Thomas E. Ridenhour, "Immortality and Resurrection in the Old Testament," *Dialog* 15 (1976): 109, citing, in part, H. H. Rowley, *Faith of Israel* (London: SCM, 1970), 167.

38 Rowley, *ibid.*

39 Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1948), 778, 479. See also John H. Otwell, "Immortality in the Old Testament," *Encounter* 22 (1961): 15, and Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, trans. John Penny Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 185.

40 Harris Birkeland, "The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament," *Studia Theologica* 3 (1950): 77.

41 Manfred O. Meitzen, "Some Reflections on the Resurrection and Eternal Life," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (1972): 254.

forever the theoretical question.

By Abraham's time such a hope was so deeply embedded in the general ethos that there was no reason to explain it even to Abraham's servants, who no doubt knew that their master's mission was to sacrifice his only son on Mount Moriah. However, Abraham calmly announced to his attendants, "We will worship and then we will come back to you" (Gen 22:5). In case we missed how such a feat was possible after a human sacrifice, Hebrews 11:17-19 explains that Abraham believed "that God was able to raise [Isaac] up, even from the dead!" (my translation). Why should we think this to be too advanced a doctrine, if in the second millennium B.C. Gilgamesh Epic, Utnapishtim (the Babylonian Noah) believed that his friend Enkidu could be raised from the dead by an act of the gods?

If Job represents that same patriarchal ethos, then his discussions on this topic are also amazing. Job inquires, If a tree is cut down, is there hope for that tree? Yes, he concludes. Sometimes the cut-off trunk of the tree *will sprout, or shoot forth*, again (Job 14:7). However, "If a man dies, will he live again?" (14:14a). Yes, answers Job: "All the days of my hard service will I wait until my *sprouting, shooting forth or release* comes" (14:14b, my translation). Even the warmly debated Job 19:25-27 affirms⁴² that there is hope beyond the grave. Common to all the varying translations is this minimal assurance: "I know that my redeemer lives; and that he will at last arise to vindicate me: and after my death and the decomposition of my skin I shall see God" (my translation).

No less certain were at least three psalmists. The Davidic Psalter affirmed: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Ps 16:10). In the hymns of the sons of Korah, this conviction grows to a full declaration: "But God will redeem me from the grave, He will surely take me to himself" (Ps 49:15, my translation).

From Asaph's songs came the realization (just when the psalmist had almost concluded that good things happen to bad people and there was no sense in trying to live a godly, righteous life) that the final destiny of the wicked was different from the destiny of the righteous (Ps 73:17). The prospect of a personal and real fellowship with God beyond the grave struck this Psalmist again: "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory" (Ps 73:24).

The grave was not the end. Instead, the eighth-century prophet exclaimed, "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. . . ; the earth will give birth to her dead" (Isa 26:19).

If the OT case is that there is the hope of personal fellowship with God beyond the grave and after death, where does the negative attitude come from? Antoon Schoors points to three texts in Ecclesiastes (2:14-16; 3:19-21; and 9:1-3). Even though Schoors concedes that

⁴² See Kaiser, *Old Testament Theology*, 181.

the Preacher recognizes that "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7), he is still certain that "According to Koheleth, life 'under the sun' is closed with death, which is final. He shares the opinion of his people that a dead person is only a shadow, which leads a completely inactive existence in Sheol. . . . Death is even more final than it is in other texts of the Old Testament."⁴³

But Schoors, like many modern interpreters of Koheleth, insists on translating *miqreh* as "fate, accident" (Eccl 2:15; 3:19; 9:2) rather than that which "meets" men as an "event," "happening,"⁴⁴ or even an "outcome." Nowhere does Koheleth hint at anything like the power of a blind force that is found in paganism. This same word appears in 1 Samuel 6:9, where the pagan Philistines want to set up an experiment using the natural affection of a cow for her calf before they will pass off what was no doubt a case of the bubonic plague in each city the ark visits as a mere happenstance, or a chance occurrence (*miqreh*).

Even more serious is the persistent refusal of interpreters to reckon with the articles preceding "go upward" and "go down" in Ecclesiastes 3:21 and instead treat the verse as an interrogative. Therefore, it is usually translated as "Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal does down into the earth?" But the text clearly has an article, not the sign of the interrogative, before the two participles. Hence the meaning is just the opposite of the so-called one "fate" for humanity and animals. It reads: "the spirit of man [is] the one going upward, but the spirit of the beast [is] the one going down to the earth." The only event that the righteous and wicked share is death.⁴⁵ But the argument of the writer of Ecclesiastes is that life must take on a qualitative difference now, for after death comes the judgment (Eccl 3:17; 11:9; 12:14). But how could such an idea count if when old men die they cease to exist? Since men will be judged, Koheleth urges full, happy, but moral participation as long as we have breath and strength in this life.

The God of the OT is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 6:3; cf. Luke 20:37-38). The prospect of life after death in the OT is not as fully developed as it is in the NT, but there can be no doubt about the fact that OT saints believed they would see God and enjoy his presence.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward Rediscovering The Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House Academic Books, 1987.

43 Antoon Schoors, "Koheleth: A Perspective of Life After Death?" *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 61 (1985): 302-3.

44 See the most recent commentary, J. A. Loader, *Ecclesiastes: A Practical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 29, 44, 107-8.

45 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Ecclesiastes: Total Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 69-72.