



REM post 007

How to Understand Theology
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亞伯拉罕的上帝(一) 樓建華

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Living in the Face of Death
曾劭愷

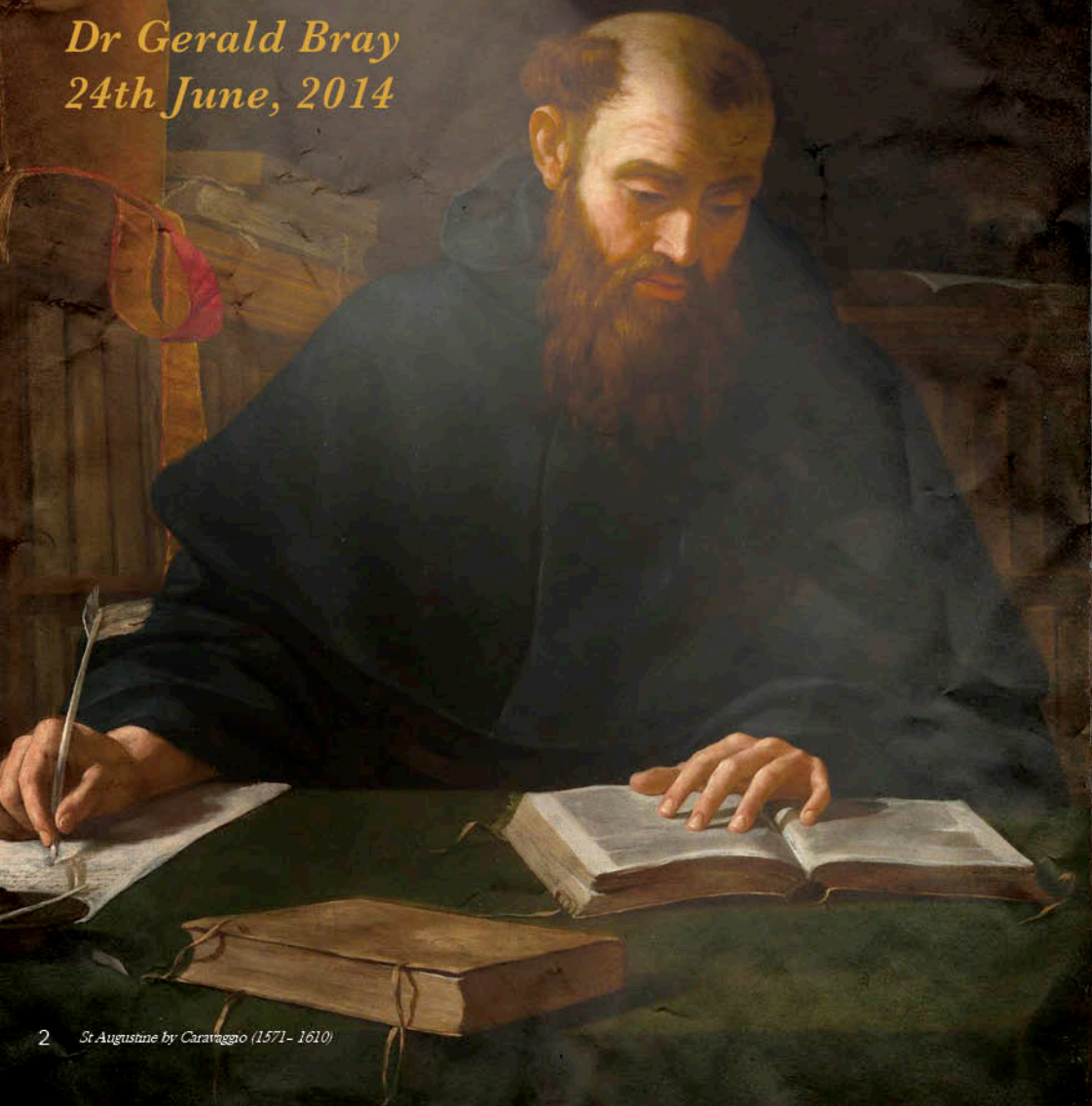
我的心，你要稱頌耶和華！
凡在我裏面的，也要稱頌他的聖名！



HOW TO UNDERSTAND THEOLOGY *Part 2*

Dr Gerald Bray

24th June, 2014



One day my mother came back from her church and she was very upset, because she had gone to a meeting and in this meeting, it was a women's meeting, and somebody had said from the front, "Do you love your husband?" And my mother had been married for forty years. And she said to me, she said, "I didn't know what to say." And I said, "What do you mean?" and she said, "Well, nobody ever asked me this question before. How do you begin to explain your entire life?" So, at this point, I got worried. So I said, "Mother, what did you say?" So she said, "Well, I said, 'yes, I love my husband'." And I said, "Oh, that's good. I'm glad you said that." And she said, "Yes, I said that because I knew it was the right answer." She said, "But what does it mean?" I said, "What does it mean to you?" And she said, "Well, I'm not really sure." I said, "What do you do?" And she said, "Well, we lived together. We have children together. We eat together. We plan our lives together. Sometimes, it's good. Sometimes, it's not so good. Sometimes, I have to do what he wants. And sometimes, he's intelligent and he does what I want. But we live like this from one day to the next." And she said, "Is that love?" So I said, "Well, I think that's a very good definition of love." I said, "Yes." I said, "You have done this for forty years and you are still happy to carry on. I think that's a very good thing."

I use this example because this is our relationship with God also. How do you explain what this relationship is like? Sometimes it's very difficult to put it into words. And this is where theology helps us. Because the difference between my relationship with God and my mother's relationship with my father is that my mother's relationship with my father is private to them. They have to work out their relationship with each other but nobody else is involved. But my relationship to God is not

like that, because my relationship with God is something that I have to share with you.

And therefore, it is important that we are talking about the same God. Because, you see, if I describe a friend of mine and let us say my friend is a champion golfer. But you say to me, "No, no, he doesn't play golf at all." Then the question is, "Are we talking about the same person?" Because we do not see this person in the same way. Now of course sometimes this happens, because we are not perfect human beings. We cannot see everything. But in our relationship to God, we are called to be united to each other. And we are called to share this relationship with people outside. And so it is important that what we say about God, that this makes sense, that people know we are talking about the same God. So when I talk to you about God, it is important for you to say to me, "Yes. That's my experience, too." Because if you do not say this, if you say, "Oh, no. You're very wrong about that", then we have a problem. Either I am wrong, or you are wrong, or we are both wrong. But we cannot both be right. And so we have to examine this and say, "Well, what is the best way to express our experience?" And this is really what theology is about. It is finding the best way to express our experience of God.

Now you may think this is easy. But it is not necessarily easy. I have already said tonight, God is love. And if that is all I say, then we say, "Yes, God is love." But if I say then, but God also punishes sin, then I have introduced a new idea. And maybe somebody will say to me, "But if God is love, He cannot do that. How can a God who loves us send people to hell?" So then we have to explain how that is possible. This is where theology begins, trying to say something which is true but to say it

in a way that does not deny other things that are true. We have to have a full picture.

Now as I said at the beginning, there are some things that God does not tell us. But those things we do not need to know. He tells us what we need to know in order to follow Him. And that is enough for us to know, because the Christian life is a journey.

I learnt today that in Chinese, the word for “word” and the word for “road” are the same thing. And this is very interesting, because if you are going to follow the word, you are going along the right road. The important thing, if you’re going along the right road, is to know what the next step is. If I say to somebody I want to go to Shanghai tomorrow, it’s not very helpful if somebody says to me, “Oh! China is a very big country.” I’m sure that is true, but I need to get to my destination and all these other details I don’t need to know. This is what theology does for us. It is the word of God which is the way of salvation. This is how we have to understand it.

Now, there is only one God. This is very important. Because when you read in the Bible about the way God speaks to His people, the first commandment is, “You will have no other gods but me”. Now why is this important? It is important because there is a unity in the plan of God. Because there is only one God, I know that there is only one plan for the world. I know that there is only one salvation. And I know that it is the same for everybody.

There are some people who say that there is one salvation for Jewish

people and one salvation for others. "You can find this even in the New Testament. You know? The Jews have one law and other people have something else." And the apostle Paul had to say to them, "There is no difference", that it does not matter whether you are Jewish or not Jewish. It does not matter whether you are a man or a woman. It does not matter whether you are old or young because there is one savior, Jesus Christ for everybody. Ultimately, that is the guarantee of our salvation, because it is not possible for another power to come in and destroy the salvation that God has given to us. There is no other power equal to Him.

In the Book of Revelation, in chapter twelve, there is a very interesting story about the war in heaven. And this war is fought between the angel, the archangel Michael and Satan. And you know many people read this story and they do not understand it. Because they do not realize what God is doing in this story. God does not fight Satan directly. Why not? Because Satan is not His equal. Satan is lower than God. And God will not come down to the level of Satan in order to fight him, because He will not give Satan that dignity. You see what was the problem with Satan? Satan wanted to be God. He said, "I do not need God. I can be my own God." So of course this was not possible. And so God tells Satan this by sending the angel Michael to fight him, because Michael is on the same level as Satan. They are two angels. But you know what the name "Michael" means? It is a Hebrew word that means "who is like God?" It is a question. And it is God's joke. Because by sending Michael to fight Satan, God is saying to Satan, "who is like God?" To which the answer is, not you. So

this is already the judgment on Satan. That he cannot overturn the salvation of God. You see?

There is no power in heaven or on earth that can separate us from the love of God. And this is why we need to know there is only one God and He is all powerful. If you forget that, then you are opening yourself to the possibility that somebody can come and take away your salvation. And this is not possible because God is one and all powerful. It does not mean that Satan will not try to attack us. But if we understand who God is, then we know that Satan cannot succeed in what he is trying to do. Because Satan cannot win against God.

Now you may think I'm talking a great deal about Satan and not so much about God. But actually this is not true, because as children of God, we are called to be soldiers in His army. And if you are a soldier in the army, your first duty is to understand your enemy. I mean, if you carry a gun around but you don't know what to do with it, you're not a very good soldier. You need to know what that gun is for. You need to understand what your enemy is going to do. And you need to be better than him. And this again is what our theology teaches us. It teaches us to be prepared for the life that we have to live. The apostle Paul told the people in Ephesus, "Put on the whole armour of God." And that means "get the right theology". Understand what you need in order to win the battle which you are called to fight.

(to be continued...)

樓建華博士

亞伯拉罕的上帝
(一)

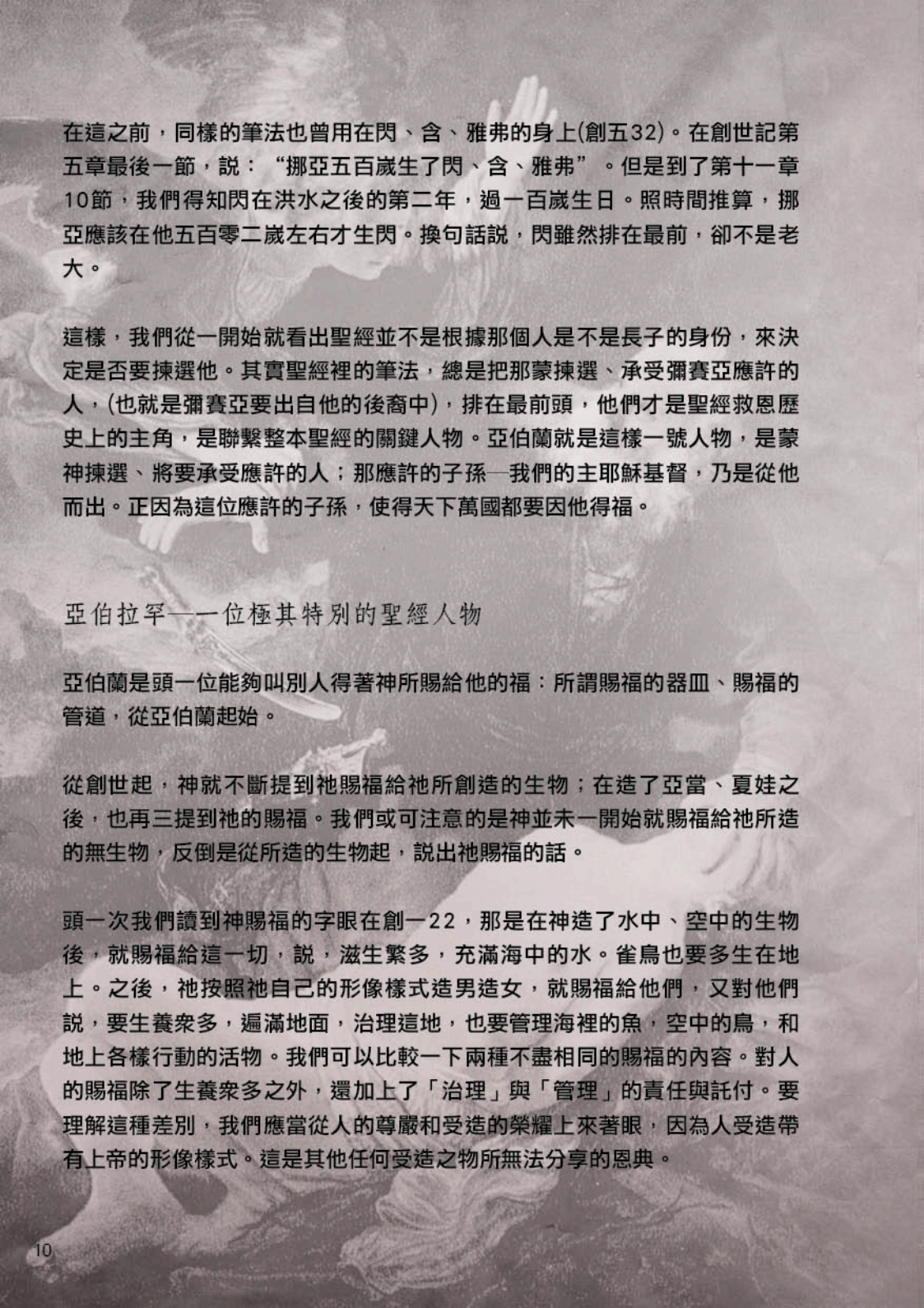


前言

這是一篇人物查經的筆記，我們要詳細研讀亞伯拉罕(和他的妻子撒拉)一生的事跡。為什麼要讀亞伯拉罕的生平？因為在亞伯拉罕的身上，有太多的經歷和事跡值得我們借鏡，可以成為我們的榜樣；當然也有一些地方可以作為我們的鑒戒。他在神的面前，在神的揀選的歷史上，在神的選民當中，甚至貫穿新、舊約聖經的內容，並在與主耶穌基督的關係上，在在都有他獨特的地位。如果在查經之後，能夠做到把亞伯拉罕這位遠古歷史中的人物，活畫在我們眼前，那麼寫作本篇筆記的目的可說是達到幾分了。若是能更進一步，也讓我們認識亞伯拉罕所認識的上帝是怎樣的一位神，使我們也能像他一般，相信神、相信上帝的話，跟著神的帶領，好像他跟著那位呼召他的耶和華上帝一樣，也在自己的屬靈路程上奔跑到底，那麼寫作此篇人物查經的目的，就更接近令人滿意的地步了。

亞伯蘭的身世與排行

亞伯拉罕原名亞伯蘭。亞伯蘭的字面含意大概是“尊貴的父”(the father is exalted)。這一個稱謂只出現在創十一26到創十七4，以及代上一27和尼九7等處經文之中。他是閃的後裔，他拉的兒子，也是以後以色列人和其他一些族群的先祖(參看創十七20)。聖經上記著“他拉活到七十歲，生了亞伯蘭、拿鶴、哈蘭”(創十一26)。而後又記著說“他拉帶著他兒子亞伯蘭，和他孫子哈蘭的兒子羅得，並他兒婦亞伯蘭的妻子撒萊，出了迦勒底的吾珥，要往迦南地去，他們走到哈蘭，就住在那裡。他拉共活了二百零五歲，就死在哈蘭”(創十一31-32)。到了十二章第4節，等亞伯蘭出哈蘭，往迦南地去的時候，已經是七十五歲了。這樣看起來，他拉應當是一百三十歲左右(或之後)生亞伯蘭的。而且從第十一章後半段裡的上下文來看，在兄弟中亞伯蘭極可能是排行最小的，並且他與他的長兄之間的年齡相差至少六十歲。他上面還有拿鶴和哈蘭。至於這兩個人誰是老大，則不是什麼太重要的問題。值得我們注意的是，雖然亞伯蘭排行在後，而聖經提到他和他兄弟的名字時，卻以他的為先。



在這之前，同樣的筆法也曾用在閃、含、雅弗的身上(創五32)。在創世記第五章最後一節，說：“挪亞五百歲生了閃、含、雅弗”。但是到了第十一章10節，我們得知閃在洪水之後的第二年，過一百歲生日。照時間推算，挪亞應該在他五百零二歲左右才生閃。換句話說，閃雖然排在最前，卻不是老大。

這樣，我們從一開始就看出聖經並不是根據那個人是不是長子的身份，來決定是否要揀選他。其實聖經裡的筆法，總是把那蒙揀選、承受彌賽亞應許的人，(也就是彌賽亞要出自他的後裔中)，排在最前頭，他們才是聖經救恩歷史上的主角，是聯繫整本聖經的關鍵人物。亞伯蘭就是這樣一號人物，是蒙神揀選、將要承受應許的人；那應許的子孫—我們的主耶穌基督，乃是從他而出。正因為這位應許的子孫，使得天下萬國都要因他得福。

亞伯拉罕——一位極其特別的聖經人物

亞伯蘭是頭一位能夠叫別人得著神所賜給他的福：所謂賜福的器皿、賜福的管道，從亞伯蘭起始。

從創世起，神就不斷提到祂賜福給祂所創造的生物；在造了亞當、夏娃之後，也再三提到祂的賜福。我們或可注意的是神並未一開始就賜福給祂所造的無生物，反倒是從所造的生物起，說出祂賜福的話。

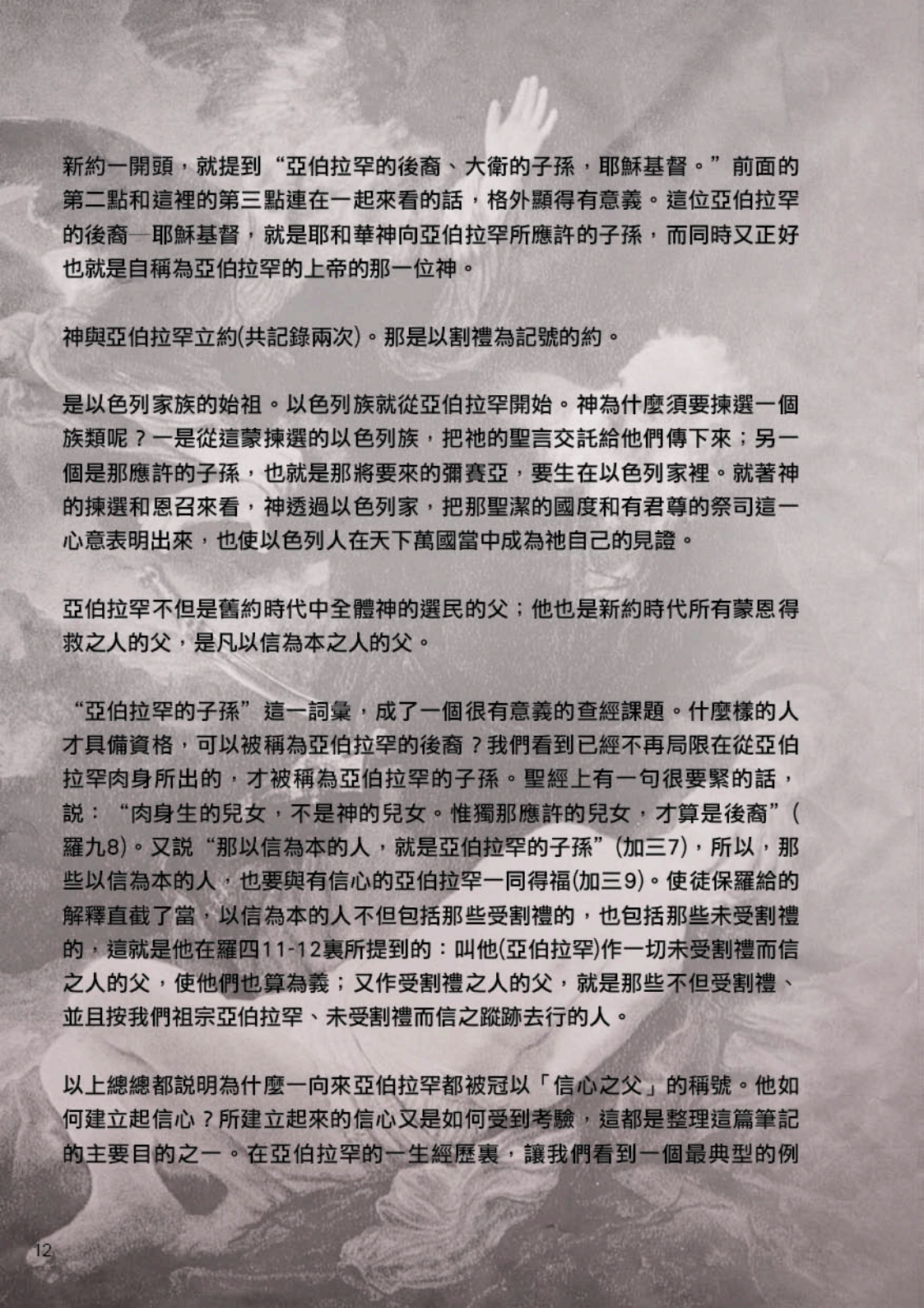
頭一次我們讀到神賜福的字眼在創一22，那是在神造了水中、空中的生物後，就賜福給這一切，說，滋生繁多，充滿海中的水。雀鳥也要多生在天上。之後，祂按照祂自己的形像樣式造男造女，就賜福給他們，又對他們說，要生養衆多，遍滿地面，治理這地，也要管理海裡的魚，空中的鳥，和地上各樣行動的活物。我們可以比較一下兩種不盡相同的賜福的內容。對人的賜福除了生養衆多之外，還加上了「治理」與「管理」的責任與託付。要理解這種差別，我們應當從人的尊嚴和受造的榮耀上來著眼，因為人受造帶有上帝的形像樣式。這是其他任何受造之物所無法分享的恩典。

神接著設立安息日，定為聖日，因為在這日神歇了祂一切創造的工。有意思的是神也賜福給這一安息日(創二3，出二十一11)。之後，神也賜福給挪亞和他的一家(創九1)。基本上賜給挪亞一家的福，在內容上與前面所提到的大同小異，都是生養衆多，遍滿了地等等。

到了亞伯蘭的身上，我們才頭一次讀到神的祝福要透過某人臨到其他的第三者的經節。這裡我們要加以區別，一方面神所賜的，有給亞伯蘭、撒萊，和他們的後裔的福，諸如叫亞伯蘭成為大國，叫他的名為大，並使亞伯蘭和撒萊他們的子孫繁多、昌盛等；另一方面，也有透過亞伯蘭把福傳遞出去的賜福，就是叫別人從他得福，甚至地上的萬族都要因亞伯蘭得福。神對亞伯蘭說“地上的萬族要因你得福。”這與前面神賜福的例子很不相同，裡頭存有一個很大的分野之處。到底天下萬國從亞伯拉罕那裡所得來的福是什麼？就是神所應許的那位子孫，也就是基督(加三16)。一切其他的福氣，都從這位基督耶穌而來，譬如所立的新約、兒子的名分和所應許的聖靈。

神稱自己為亞伯拉罕的上帝：沒有稱自己為亞當的上帝，亞伯的上帝，或是挪亞的上帝。這是為什麼呢？為什麼祂自稱是亞伯拉罕的上帝？在聖經裡，我們經常讀到“神是亞伯拉罕、以撒、雅各的神”這樣的稱謂。這是一樁耐人尋味的事，裡頭一定有很大的屬靈的涵義，我們不能不留意。是不是聖經在此暗示，神的救贖和祂的選召是不可分割的呢？以賽亞書就用了“救贖亞伯拉罕的耶和華”這樣的話，來說明耶和華神與亞伯拉罕的關係(賽二十九22)。

主耶穌在世的時候，撒都該人問過祂有關死人復活的事。撒都該人常說沒有復活，他們只相信與接受摩西五經，以為五經裡面從未講到復活之事，所以他們故意來問難耶穌。不意耶穌竟然就是取摩西五經裡的荊棘篇(出埃及記第三章)之中的一段話，來回答這批撒都該人的問難。祂說：“論到死人復活，神在經上向你們所說的，你們沒有唸過麼？祂說：『我是亞伯拉罕的神，以撒的神，雅各的神。』神不是死人的神，乃是活人的神。”這句話裡的「我是」的時態是一恆常的現在式，正好說明了在神那裡沒有死的人，祂是活人的上帝，凡屬乎祂的人，肉身雖死，在祂那裡也已復活。



新約一開頭，就提到“亞伯拉罕的後裔、大衛的子孫，耶穌基督。”前面的第二點和這裡的第三點連在一起來看的話，格外顯得有意義。這位亞伯拉罕的後裔—耶穌基督，就是耶和華神向亞伯拉罕所應許的子孫，而同時又正好也就是自稱為亞伯拉罕的上帝的那一位神。

神與亞伯拉罕立約(共記錄兩次)。那是以割禮為記號的約。

是以色列家族的始祖。以色列族就從亞伯拉罕開始。神為什麼須要揀選一個族類呢？一是從這蒙揀選的以色列族，把祂的聖言交託給他們傳下來；另一個是那應許的子孫，也就是那將要來的彌賽亞，要生在以色列家裡。就著神的揀選和恩召來看，神透過以色列家，把那聖潔的國度和有君尊的祭司這一心意表明出來，也使以色列人在天下萬國當中成為祂自己的見證。

亞伯拉罕不但是舊約時代中全體神的選民的父；他也是新約時代所有蒙恩得救之人的父，是凡以信為本之人的父。

“亞伯拉罕的子孫”這一詞彙，成了一個很有意義的查經課題。什麼樣的人才具備資格，可以被稱為亞伯拉罕的後裔？我們看到已經不再局限在從亞伯拉罕肉身所出的，才被稱為亞伯拉罕的子孫。聖經上有一句很要緊的話，說：“肉身生的兒女，不是神的兒女。惟獨那應許的兒女，才算是後裔”(羅九8)。又說“那以信為本的人，就是亞伯拉罕的子孫”(加三7)，所以，那些以信為本的人，也要與有信心的亞伯拉罕一同得福(加三9)。使徒保羅給的解釋直截了當，以信為本的人不但包括那些受割禮的，也包括那些未受割禮的，這就是他在羅四11-12裏所提到的：叫他(亞伯拉罕)作一切未受割禮而信之人的父，使他們也算為義；又作受割禮之人的父，就是那些不但受割禮、並且按我們祖宗亞伯拉罕、未受割禮而信之蹤跡去行的人。

以上總總都說明為什麼一向來亞伯拉罕都被冠以「信心之父」的稱號。他如何建立起信心？所建立起來的信心又是如何受到考驗，這都是整理這篇筆記的主要目的之一。在亞伯拉罕的一生經歷裏，讓我們看到一個最典型的例

子，就是神如何賦予人信心，如何以漸進式的途徑，引導人的信心、充實人的信心、考驗人的信心、並堅固人的信心。

神並不救拔天使，乃是救拔亞伯拉罕的後裔。為此，天使都不得不感到驚異不已。

大約一千年前，聖安瑟倫在他的著作裏這樣說到，無男無女，神創造亞當；有男無女，神造夏娃；過了生育的年齡，亞伯蘭和撒萊竟生出以撒；到了耶穌基督的時候，有女無男，道成了肉身，成了真正的女人的後裔。這可說是與亞伯蘭相關的另一個特別的地方。

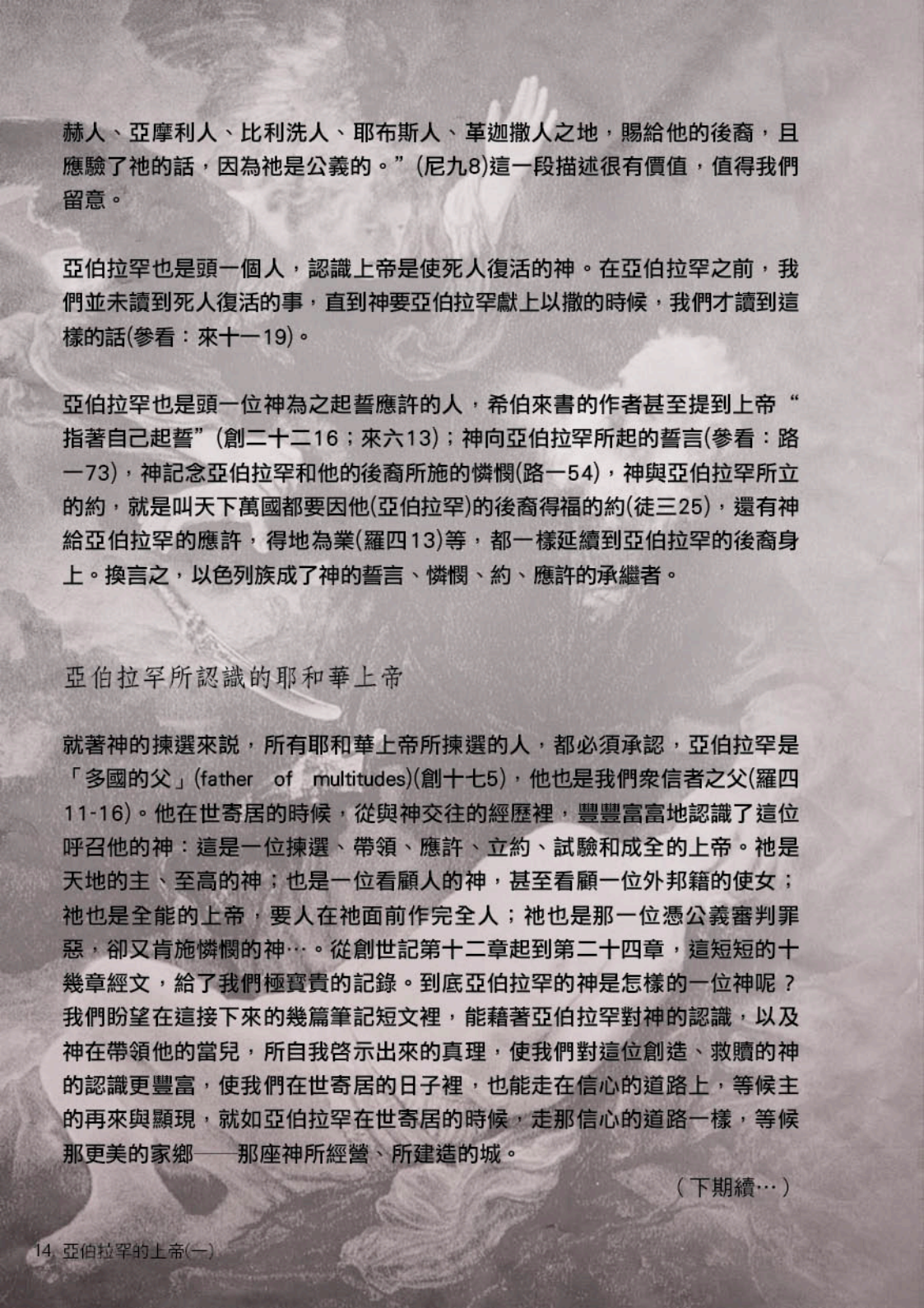
亞伯拉罕這個名字的含意是多國的父(創十七5)。既說是多國的父，就一定得先有子嗣。得兒子一事在亞伯拉罕一生中非常突出，占了很重要的比例。可以說亞伯拉罕的一生，幾乎就離不了與兒子之間的關係。

在聖經上總共三次，亞伯拉罕被稱為神的朋友(代下二十七；賽四十一8；雅三23)。除了亞伯拉罕及耶穌的門徒之外，聖經裡還有哪些人被稱為神的朋友的？

我們有理由相信亞伯拉罕也是世上第一個被神呼召、過在世寄居生活的一位客旅(The First Pilgrim)。

我們難免要問一問：為什麼神所揀選的，是亞伯拉罕，而不是別人呢？不過，問這樣的一個問題有沒有意義？神的揀選出於祂自己的意旨，並非靠著亞伯拉罕本人有什麼特別之處。即使我們能夠分析出什麼蛛絲馬跡，難道就可以提供任何幫助，使我們也成為神所選召的人嗎？雖然這麼說，在亞伯拉罕身上，仍然有許多榜樣可以供我們學習，能教導我們如何回應神、如何持守向著神的信心、如何敬畏神、又如何順從神等。

在尼希米記第九章裡，講到耶和華上帝揀選亞伯蘭時，舉出一點：說“祂(指耶和華神)見他(指亞伯蘭)在祂面前心裡誠實，就與他立約，應許把迦南人、



赫人、亞摩利人、比利洗人、耶布斯人、革迦撒人之地，賜給他的後裔，且應驗了祂的話，因為祂是公義的。”(尼九8)這一段描述很有價值，值得我們留意。

亞伯拉罕也是頭一個人，認識上帝是使死人復活的神。在亞伯拉罕之前，我們並未讀到死人復活的事，直到神要亞伯拉罕獻上以撒的時候，我們才讀到這樣的話(參看：來十一19)。

亞伯拉罕也是頭一位神為之起誓應許的人，希伯來書的作者甚至提到上帝“指著自己起誓”(創二十二16；來六13)；神向亞伯拉罕所起的誓言(參看：路一73)，神記念亞伯拉罕和他的後裔所施的憐憫(路一54)，神與亞伯拉罕所立的約，就是叫天下萬國都要因他(亞伯拉罕)的後裔得福的約(徒三25)，還有神給亞伯拉罕的應許，得地為業(羅四13)等，都一樣延續到亞伯拉罕的後裔身上。換言之，以色列族成了神的誓言、憐憫、約、應許的承繼者。

亞伯拉罕所認識的耶和華上帝

就著神的揀選來說，所有耶和華上帝所揀選的人，都必須承認，亞伯拉罕是「多國的父」(father of multitudes)(創十七5)，他也是我們衆信者之父(羅四11-16)。他在世寄居的時候，從與神交往的經歷裡，豐豐富富地認識了這位呼召他的神：這是一位揀選、帶領、應許、立約、試驗和成全的上帝。祂是天地的主、至高的神；也是一位看顧人的神，甚至看顧一位外邦籍的使女；祂也是全能的上帝，要人在祂面前作完全人；祂也是那一位憑公義審判罪惡，卻又肯施憐憫的神…。從創世記第十二章起到第二十四章，這短短的十幾章經文，給了我們極寶貴的記錄。到底亞伯拉罕的神是怎樣的一位神呢？我們盼望在這接下來的幾篇筆記短文裡，能藉著亞伯拉罕對神的認識，以及神在帶領他的當兒，所自我啓示出來的真理，使我們對這位創造、救贖的神的認識更豐富，使我們在世寄居的日子裡，也能走在信心的道路上，等候主的再來與顯現，就如亞伯拉罕在世寄居的時候，走那信心的道路一樣，等候那更美的家鄉——那座神所經營、所建造的城。

(下期續…)



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講師：鄭哲民 博士

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花

語

姜寶陞

在中華文化這塊古老的土壤上，綻放的花卉，何止千百種？！但是能獲得騷人墨客所鍾愛，常在繪畫、詞章中表露的，也不外就是蘭花、菊花、梅花、蓮花、桃花、杏花、牡丹等這幾類。說也奇怪，櫻花在神州大地上，雖也南北皆有，卻未若在東瀛受到如此的熱愛。這可能與文化思維及民族性格有關；或者是由於歷代文人生花妙筆的渲染之故。因為「江山亦要文人捧！」斯言擲地真有金石聲。

蘭花被視之為君子之花，它總愛開在山林幽谷，默然吐芬，不與春爭。少帥漢卿先生，晚年酷愛養蘭，渠曾曰：蘭花幽香淡遠，真乃君子也。

菊花，常因物取譬，以志節取勝；所謂留有秋菊晚節香是也。晉朝陶淵明一首「採菊東籬下，悠然見南山」詩句，更是千古傳誦，至今不衰。梅花，也是深得歷代文人雅士之喜愛；梅花耐寒，常在冰雪寒天中綻放，予人一種凜然正氣，象徵一種永不為艱困所屈的精神。有詩曰：「不經一番寒澈骨，怎得梅花撲鼻香。」其意境即在此。

蓮花，常喻之為高潔之意。有宋一代，周敦頤先生之「愛蓮說」一文，早已將蓮花特性描述得淋漓盡致。其文曰：「……自李唐以來，世人盛愛牡丹；予獨愛蓮之出淤泥而不染、濯清流而不妖、中通外直、不蔓不枝、香遠益清、亭亭靜植，可遠觀而不可褻玩焉。……」蓮之所以為士君子所愛者，其因蓋出自此乎？！

桃花，更是華夏兒女之最愛，可謂無桃花處則非中土。陶淵明一篇「桃花源記」，為中國人開展了一條通往「香格里拉」的精神大道；是憧憬的，也是追尋的；是心中的美麗夢土，也是知識份子所建構的伊甸園。唐時張旭的一首桃花溪詩，也寫盡了人心嚮往桃花源的情境。「隱隱飛橋隔野煙，石磯溪畔問漁船；桃花近日隨流水，洞在清溪何處邊？」人心追尋夢土，古今中外皆然。

至於牡丹及紅杏，亦為國人所愛，余因其太過嬌媚，不再贅述。走筆至此，反而思及聖經上所記載的一種花，就是百合花。每當春臨巴勒斯坦，滿山坡上皆開滿了百合花，在春風中搖曳，蔚為奇觀。有一次耶穌帶著祂的十二門徒，坐在山坡上，望著滿眼綻開的百合花，開口說道：

「所以我告訴你們，不要為生命憂慮吃甚麼，喝甚麼；為身體憂慮穿甚麼。生命不勝於飲食麼？身體不勝於衣裳麼？……你想野地裏的百合花怎麼長起來？它也不勞苦，也不紡線。然而我告訴你們，就是所羅門極榮華的時候，他所穿戴的，還不如這花一朵呢！」（馬太六章25-29節）

這段話的精義，是言及：生命的本質大過生命的表象。花之於人生，意義不可謂不大矣！倘若我們常常以賞花、愛花的心理來生活，則心靈之花必然日日開放，人生之境界也一定隨之而躍昇。

生命何其脆弱

李健安 博士

生

命是脆弱的；人無法預測明天，更無力抗拒死亡的光臨！

生命是脆弱的；人不只沒能力掌管生命，人也無能確保一生康健無恙！

生命是脆弱的！

有人問：若果老天真有眼，為何好人會受苦？

有人質難基督徒：如果基督教的上帝是真的，為何熱心的基督徒也遭遇苦難？基督徒也同樣感到困惑：為何上帝不聽禱告，醫治患病的親人？

這些問題可有答案？

猶太人拉比 Moses Maimonaise 說：信仰不是用來解釋生命，乃是用來承載生命的！宗教並不能解答苦難的懸疑，只能提供面對苦難的力量，或成為苦難的避難所。

我說：信仰不只承載生命，也足以解釋生命。

苦難有幾個來源：當始祖亞當夏娃犯罪後，地就受咒詛，因此有天災。苦難有時是人犯罪的直接後果；例如：一位抽菸廿年（無論是不是基督徒）而得肺癌的人，不要把責任往神的身上推！再者，做為人類的一份子，我們也要一起承擔世人犯罪的後果，包括因環境生態遭受破壞所帶來的疾病；而病菌沒有眼睛，分不出誰是基督徒，誰不是。苦難，有時來自魔鬼的試探，也有時是神許可的考驗，如同約伯的經歷。

苦難在神裡有答案，只是我們不一定能夠明白；就算明白了，我們有時卻不願接受。故此，問題不在於神，乃在於我們。

更何況，信仰的最高層次不是理性上的明白，而是信心上的投靠與順服；亞伯拉罕的生命是這個真理真實性的行動詮釋【希伯來書十一-8】。

許多歷經苦難的基督徒的見證是信心的見證，更是苦難真理的註腳。透過他們的見證，要向我們再次的宣告：神沒有應許天色常藍，但卻曾應許黑雲滿佈時有祂的同在！

唯願他們的見證讓您更有信心，在人生崎嶇坎坷的道路上行走、奔跑得更輕快些！

*Living in the Face of Death:
A Christian Perspective on Death and Dying*

In Memory of my Grandfather

Shao Kai Tseng

Introduction

Understanding death is crucial to being Christian. “Christ died for me”—this, according to the seventeenth-century Puritan John Owen, is the very core of Christian faith and life.¹ The apostle states that he always carries around in his body the death of Jesus, in order to manifest the life of Christ (2 Cor. 4:10). If one does not understand death, one understands not the message of the cross and what it means to carry the cross. In this article, I will attempt to construe a general attitude towards death in our society today. I will then examine some influential philosophies of death, and trace the historical development of the particular view of death that is most prevalent in contemporary Western society. Following a brief discussion on how this misguided view of death has distorted our understanding of the gospel, I will try to offer a Christian perspective on death and dying.

General Attitude Towards Death in Contemporary Western Society

In a funeral that I attended years ago, the officiating pastor announced, “Many of us came here today to mourn the death of a young lady. However, I would like to invite you to celebrate her life with me.” A slideshow of pictures from the joyful memories of the life of the deceased followed this eulogy. The husband of the deceased, a young lady who died of cancer, broke down in tears halfway through reciting his eulogy, and her mother was weeping throughout. The officiator, however, tried his best to maintain the celebratory mood of the funeral, in order to downplay the sense of grief and loss.

This attitude towards death is not uncommon in our society today. The word “celebration” has become a euphemism in place of “mourning.” Often this euphemism is used in the name of God. The officiating pastor at the funeral of Isaiah Shoels, a victim of the Columbine Shooting in 1999, said during the service, “We are going to celebrate. We didn’t come here to celebrate the devil’s work; we’re going to praise God.”

Similar notions are found in popular culture such as movies. *Elizabethtown* (2005) portrays the romantic encounter between Drew Baylor (Orlando Bloom), a rising star in the sneaker design industry who has just been fired because of a failure that cost his company almost a billion dollars, and a flight attendant (Kirsten Dunst) whom Drew meets on his way to *Elizabethtown* to attend his father’s funeral. Alongside the romantic plot is a portrayal of how Drew learns to come to terms and eventually to celebrate his father’s untimely death. One online review reads: “As the denizens of *Elizabethtown* celebrate the loss of their prodigal son..., the film plods along waiting for Drew to embrace his loss and turn in his forced smile for a good sob.”²

The *Weather Man*, another 2005 film starring Nicolas Cage, portrays the disintegrating personal life of David Spritz, a successful Chicago weatherman. Amidst many failures and disappointments in life—he and his wife are separated, his wife is dating another man, his daughter is obese and addicted to cigarettes, his son is sexually harassed by a homosexual social worker, and he thinks that he never succeeded in trying to impress his father though in fact his father loves him very much—David learns of the news that his father has terminal cancer. Towards the end of the movie, David's mother organizes a celebratory “living funeral” in which the “deceased” gets to attend his own funeral. David is scheduled to speak at the funeral, but a power failure cuts short his speech after the opening remark. Later, David explains his celebratory speech to his father in his car, and through a brief but sincere conversation, David realizes that his father has always loved him and supported him. Soon after, David's father dies, and his wife divorces him, but he is offered a high-paying job on the national TV news program *Hello America*. David accepts the offer, and learns to embrace disappointments in life with a celebratory attitude on the surface—the movie skilfully ends with a parade on the streets of Chicago.

The celebratory mode of the funeral scenes in these movies, as well as many funerals that I have attended, seems to suggest an attitude of denial and avoidance. Our society today is unwilling, in fact unable, to confront the poignant reality of death. Paul Helm observes:

The modern western attitude to dying and death is all too obvious. It is to avoid it, to avoid mentioning it, and where mention of it is unavoidable, to use euphemisms and circumlocutions. Death is crudely dressed-up and senti-



mentalised in this way because it is so fearful and unpleasant. Because of this, and because death is often associated with deep grief and an acute sense of loss, it is sugar-coated, or even plastic-coated, the perfect vehicle for inducing superstition.³

(to be continued...)

1. John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ in Works, X* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 420. In this treatise Owen defends at length the doctrine of limited atonement over against universal atonement as taught by the Arminians and the Amyraldians. However, the defence of the doctrine is not Owen's main concern, as the entire argument of this treatise is ultimately aimed at safeguarding the "hope" and "consolation" of being Christian, which is based on the assurance that "Christ died for me."

2. www.review.mag.com/archive/600-609/602/Films.htm.

3. Paul Helm, *The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 35.

好書分享

耶路撒冷城的安危經常會牽動國際上各大政治勢力。

它究竟有什麼魅力？它的過去和未來和我們有什麼關係？

著者 Simon Sebag Montefiore 以 1967 年的六日戰爭作為追溯它歷史的終點，用說書的本事，生動的把讀者帶進它歷史中的各各重要時刻，那些聯繫暫時和永恆的時刻，那些影響人類歷史和未來的時刻.....

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the universal city, the capital of two peoples, the shrine of three faiths; it is the prize of empires, the site of Judgement Day and the battlefield of today's clash of civilizations. From King David to Barack Obama, from the birth of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to the Israel-Palestine conflict, this is the epic history of 3,000 years of faith, slaughter, fanaticism and coexistence.

How did this small, remote town become the Holy City, the 'centre of the world' and now the key to peace in the Middle East? In a dazzling narrative, Simon Sebag Montefiore reveals this ever-changing city in its many incarnations, bringing every epoch and character blazingly to life. Jerusalem's biography is told through the wars, love affairs and revelations of the men and women – kings, empresses, prophets, poets, saints, conquerors and whores – who created, destroyed, chronicled and believed in Jerusalem. As well as the many ordinary Jerusalemites who have left their mark on the city, its cast varies from Solomon, Saladin and Suleiman the Magnificent to Cleopatra, Caligula and Churchill; from Abraham to Jesus and Muhammad; from the ancient city of Jezebel, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod and Nero to the modern times of the Kaiser, Disraeli, Mark Twain, Rasputin and Lawrence of Ara

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English: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Jerusalem-Biography-Simon-Sebag-Montefiore/dp/1780220251>





The annual Easter ritual of the Holy Fire (seen from the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) was crowded, passionate and often fatal.



Above left: The Mufi Amin al-Husseini meets Hillel, who admired his fair hair and blue eyes. His cousin, Khalid al-Husseini (above right), was an aristocratic warrior and Arab hero of 1947-8, whose death was a blow to Palestinian hopes. His funeral on the Temple Mount (below) was a chaotic, tense occasion; some mourners were killed by guns fired in the air.



The prayers at the Western Wall in 1944 to commemorate the dead of the Holocaust show the tiny, constrained area permitted for Jewish worship.



Asmahan: Arab singer, Duzze princess, Egyptian film star, spy and temptress of David Ben-Gurion.



Jesus' Crucifixion, depicted by van Eyck in this painting, was almost certainly a Roman execution, backed by the Temple elite, to destroy any messianic threat to the status quo.



After four years of independence, Titus (left), the son of the new Roman Emperor Vespasian, arrived to besiege Jerusalem. Centre: The city and its Temple were destroyed in the savage fighting; archaeologists in a hurried haste and the heap of Herodian stones as they smashed Herod's Royal Portico. Bottom: The Arch of Titus in Rome celebrates his Triumph in which was displayed, and this coin, inscribed 'Iudaea Capta', commemorates the victory.



Herod the Great's son Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, mocked Jesus but refused to judge him.



King Herod Agrippa was an urbane, hippy-godaddy adviser and the most powerful Jew in Roman history. His friendship with the psychotic Empress Calpurnia saved Jerusalem, and he later helped raise Claudius to the throne.



picture is from the book
Jerusalem: The Biography
English version (paper back)

你該知道，末世必有危險的日子來到。因為那時，人要專顧自己，貪愛錢財，自誇，狂傲，謗讟，違背父母，忘恩負義，心不聖潔，無親情，不解怨，好說謊言，不能自約，性情凶暴，不愛良善，賣主賣友，任意妄為，自高自大，愛宴樂，不愛神，有敬虔的外貌，卻背了敬虔的實意；這等人你要躲開。

但你已經服從了我的教訓、品行、志向、信心、寬容、愛心、忍耐，以及我在安提阿、以哥念、路司得所遭遇的逼迫、苦難。我所忍受是何等的逼迫；但從這一切苦難中，主都把我救出來了。不但如此，凡立志在基督耶穌裏敬虔度日的也都要受逼迫。只是作惡的和迷惑人的，必越久越惡，他欺哄人，也被人欺哄。但你所學習的，所確信的，要存在心裏；因為你知道是跟誰學的，並且知道你是從小明白聖經，這聖經能使你因信基督耶穌，有得救的智慧。

聖經都是神所默示的（註：或譯：凡神所默示的聖經），於教訓、督責、使人歸正、教導人學義都是有益的，叫屬神的人得以完全，預備行各樣的善事。





Rev. Lou Teaching in Hong Kong

Students gathered around Rev. Lou discussing Bible teachings after Sat. night class. Thank you Dr. Lou for your wonderful July class last week in Hong Kong and see you soon.





Princip was apprehended directly after the assassination

1914年8月3日，德國向法國宣戰，入侵當時中立的比利時，揭開第一次世界大戰序幕...

On August 1st, 1914, the German Empire declared war on Russia. At the same time, in his famous "balcony speech," Emperor William II portrayed himself and the German people as victims: "If our neighbors do not give us peace, then we hope and wish that our good German sword will come victorious out of this war." Two days later, Germany declared war on France and invaded neutral Belgium. Those shots marked the beginning of the First World War.



A Japanese lithograph showing the Japanese fighting German troops during the conquest of the German colony Tsingtao

薩拉熱窩事件（奧地利德語：Attentat von Sarajevo），又稱斐迪南大公遇刺案，在1914年6月28日於巴爾干半島的波斯尼亞和黑塞哥維那（當時為奧匈帝國領土）的首府薩拉熱窩發生。當日為塞爾維亞之國慶日，奧匈帝國皇太子斐迪南大公夫婦被塞爾維亞族青年普林西普（一名隸屬塞爾維亞恐怖組織「黑手黨」的波斯尼亞學生）於拉丁大橋槍殺。這次事件後，由於塞爾維亞拒絕合作，同年7月奧匈帝國向塞爾維亞宣戰，這次事件成為了第一次世界大戰的導火線。



號外！號外！德國開戰了！
August 1914: Extra! Extra! Germany goes to war!



Around a million soldiers from the Indian Army participated in the European, African and Mideast theatres of World War I (pictured in France at top). More than 70,000 Indian soldiers died during the war.





Military drills, soldierly obedience:
Young men had to stand to attention.
And young women had to do their
part as well, from home. A shadow
hung over Germany's youth in the
summer of 1914. And then came war.

Recruitment of bearers, like these in
German East Africa, caused lasting
local trauma



事先幾乎沒有人能夠預見第一次世界大戰的極度恐怖...
Very few had any idea of the horrors awaiting in WWI...



Erdogan surprised the international
community by describing the Otto-
man mass killing of Armenians as
"inhumane"

一戰後，協約國(法、俄、英、義、美等國)簽訂了多個
秘密協議，瓜分了“奧斯曼帝國”，為今天中
東地區的宗教和種族沖突埋下禍根。

一百年過去了，西方政客遺留下來的後遺症卻
繼續的惡化，以眼還眼以牙還牙的仇恨和眼淚
正在中東不斷的疊積，歐洲人在一次和二次大
戰的深切痛苦中體會到和平的可貴，可惜世界
其他的地區還有一段漫長的學習之路要走...



A.Chen

眾稅吏和罪人都挨近耶穌，要聽他講道。

法利賽人和文士私下議論說：「這個人接待罪人，又同他們吃飯。」

耶穌就用比喻說：

「你們中間誰有一百隻羊失去一隻，不把這九十九隻撇在曠野，去找那失去的羊，直到找著呢？」

找著了，就歡歡喜喜地扛在肩上，回到家裏，就請朋友鄰舍來，對他們說：『我失去的羊已經找著了，你們和我一同歡喜吧！』

我告訴你們，一個罪人悔改，在天上也要這樣為他歡喜，較比為九十九個不用悔改的義人歡喜更大。」

「或是一個婦人有十塊錢，若失落一塊，豈不點上燈，打掃屋子，細細地找，直到找著嗎？」

找著了，就請朋友鄰舍來，對他們說：『我失落的那塊錢已經找著了，你們和我一同歡喜吧！』

我告訴你們，一個罪人悔改，在神的使者面前也是這樣為他歡喜。」

路加福音 15:1 ~ 10



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