Our Sacred Heritage
By: Charles Feinberg

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Necessity, an irregular chapel address. It is a formal opening of the school year, and in the light of that, it was impressed on my heart to speak in a broad, general way of some of the very vital interests of our hearts. Dr. Thomas read the scripture from Philippians 1. Authorized Version says set. Appointed for the defense of the Gospel. I want to speak this morning along the lines of our sacred trust, our sacred heritage, in the light of the tremendous theological confusion and theological education in a troubled world. Our sacred trust. Or our sacred heritage.

Recently, very recently, I came across this editorial comment. I'm quoting. "It is a gloomy moment in the history of our country. Never in the lifetime of most men has there been so much grave and deep apprehension. Never has the future seemed so incalculable as at this time. The domestic economic situation is in chaos. Our dollar is weak throughout the world. Prices are so high as to be utterly impossible. The political cauldron seize and bubbles with uncertainty. It is a solemn moment of our troubles. No man can see the end." Harper's Weekly, 1857.

You thought I was talking about the present inflation and Watergate and related matters. 1857. Over a hundred years ago, that editorial, of our troubles, no man can see the end. Well if there's not a theological solution, God help us. In this very serious, troubled world. Seriously troubled world. We have to look again to our sacred trust. Why are we here. Here is our sacred heritage.
Now the subject, our sacred heritage or our sacred trust, has been employed in our day to cover a multitude of privileges all the way from certain lifestyles to trial by jury. The preservation of the American way of life. I'm going to use it in the restricted proper sense of our religious, our biblical, our spiritual, our gospel heritage. It's going to include five factors. An infallible book. A personal God. Thirdly, an incarnate Lord. Fourth, a vicarious savior. Fifth, a returning King.

The infallible book. An inspired, infallible book was denied in earlier days of church history by men outside the church. Now it is constantly assailed by men within the church. The Bible is viewed as a book of human authorship. We're told that the Greeks were expert in philosophy. The Romans excelled in law. The Hebrews had a flair for religion. The evolutionary approach to religion has made the Bible a book among others, of equal value without unique quality or authority. The new Orthodox viewpoint understands the Bible to be the word of man which may become, under proper conducive conditions, the word of God. Now there are several testimonies that are pertinent here. The first is the testimony of the Bible itself. You cannot say it's inadmissible. It is admissible. Since in law. In law cases a person on trial has a right to testify on his own behalf. No one, no one can deny this to the Bible.

Testimony of men may or may not be true but it must be heard. Now, no one can read the Old Testament without being struck with the emphasis that it's God who speaks. Thus saith the Lord occurs hundreds and hundreds of times into the thousands. The word of the Lord came unto me saying. So Dr. Grey once said no human genius of whom we have ever heard introduced his writings with the formula thus saith the Lord or words to that effect. And yet such is the common utterance of the Bible authors. In the writing of the old testament, the Apostle Paul said, 2
Timothy 3:16, all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. The writer of Hebrews grandly declared Hebrews 1:1, God after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets and many persons, and in many ways in these last days has spoken to us in his son, whom we appointed heir of all things. Through him also he made the world. The apostle Peter testifies in 2 Peter 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but man knew by the Holy Spirit. Spoke from God. Christ. Unequivocally stated. Matthew 5:17 and 18. Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill, for truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished. Again in John 10:35. And the Scripture cannot be broken.

At the temptation of our Lord, three times he countered Satan's attacks with quotations from Deuteronomy. It is written, it is written, it is written! In his post resurrection ministry he expounded from the old testament, the law, and the prophets, and in the psalms. The things that concerned his person and his work. Phillip E. Hughes has said throughout the New Testament, indeed the whole of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is seen in the light of the fulfillment of Holy Scripture, and therefore as a vindication of the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Now for the authority of the New Testament, we have the words of Christ concerning the immutability of his statements. In Matthew 24:35. Heaven and Earth shall pass, but my word shall not pass away. We have also the value and effectiveness of the ministry the Holy Spirit from his words in this very area. John the Apostle declares for the veracity of the witness he bore
to the Lord Jesus Christ in John 21:24. Peter classed the writings of Paul as sacred writings in the last chapter of his second epistle. Second Peter 3:15 and 16.

The second testimony is that of history, and discussions of the canon the church placed the emphasis on the already present element of divine inspiration. One author has said if there was one external factor which played a decisive role in the fixing of the New Testament canon, it was the equating of canonicity with apostalicity. The fathers differed on many things, the apostolic fathers. But they were united on the doctrine of the inspiration of the scriptures. They never claimed such authority for their own writings in their wildest imagination. For the reformation leaders, the supreme authority was the word of God. Furthermore, the phenomenon of what men and women through the centuries had been willing to suffer by way of persecution, even unto death for the sake of the Bible, is not to be lightly dismissed. Finally, the testimony of the spirit of God is incontrovertible. The internal witness of the Holy Spirit aims to assure us that the Bible is the word of God. It was William Tyndale who said, I quote, the scripture is that where with God draweth us unto him but not wherewith we should be led from him. The scriptures spring out of God and flow on to Christ and were given to lead us to Christ. Thou must go along by the Scripture as by a line until thou cometh Christ, which is the ways end and resting place. An infallible Bible.

A personal God. Thomas Whitelaw, Scotland, was eminently correct when he wrote, whether or not there is a supreme personal intelligence, infinite and eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, the creator, upholder, ruler of the universe, imminent in and yet transcending all things, gracious and merciful, the father and redeemer of mankind, is surely the profoundest
problem that can agitate the human mind. The world by its own wisdom has never been able to
discover the infinite, personal God. Read the philosophers of other days and of our day as well.
The Westminster shorter catechism is singularly apt here, and I quote, Spirit. God is Spirit,
infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being. Power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Closter has said, God is not dependent upon anything outside of himself but that he is self-
sufficient in his whole being, in his decrees and in all his works. Again, it's primarily with a
reference to time and space, however, that the infinity of God is considered as the eternity and
the immensity of God. Eternity may be defined as that perfection of God which expresses his
transcendence with a respect to time. God has neither beginning nor end. Though not subject to
the limitations of time, you and I know that God is the Lord of history. He employs time for the
fulfillment of his purposes on Earth in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son. To be born of
a woman, made under the law, Galatians 4:4. That he might redeem those who were under the
law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.

God is omnipresent. He transcends space. God is unchangeable. He's immutable. Not by a
shadow of turning does he ever change. He is constant in his person, in his works, in his decrees,
Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today, ye and forever. Since all theology says Closter concerns
God and his relations with man, one's entire theological position is reflected in the doctrine of the
attributes of God. And Greider has said God is three persons existing in a single uncompounded
nature. In structural togetherness. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They're all equal in dignity,
glory, power, eternity. Without a personal God, the christian finds material creation around him
and an inexplicable mystery. Without a personal God there's no explanation for the person of
Christ. Without a personal God, man has no light on man's purpose on earth and certainly none on his eternal destiny. An incarnate Lord, basic to our Christian faith. This is all part of our sacred trust. Guarded as you would the eyes in your head. This is our sacred heritage. Basic to the Christian faith is the article which declares that God the son became man for our salvation.

John the Apostle states the truth of the incarnation in these sublime words after he said in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. If your eye drops down to verse 14, and that word that was with God, the Word became flesh and tabernacle among us. And we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. There is here the implication of deity in humanity.

The same sacred writer in his first epistle makes the incarnation the very touchstone, the acid test of truth. He took on more than a physical body. It was a complete, human personality. Paul testified to it. The writer to the Hebrews similarly, when extra biblical patterns of thought made too great a separation between spirit and matter, the dualistic viewpoint of docetism appeared. This held that our Lord's humanity was apparent, not real.

Aryanism in the 4th century placed our Lord Jesus in an intermediate position. Not completely God, and not completely man. And it was rightly accorded the position of heresy at the Nicene Council. The normative, definitive expression of this truth is that from the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. This is what it declared. One and the same son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood. Truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body. Of one substance with a father as regards his Godhead, and at the
same time of one substance with us, as regards his manhood. Like us in all respects apart from sin, as regards his Godhead begotten of the father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten for us men and for our salvation of Mary the Virgin. What was the means or avenue of the incarnation? He became man through the conception of the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Incarnation and virgin birth are inseparable in the traditional faith of the church and said F.F. Bruce rightly, our Lord's virginal conception must certainly be understood as a pure miracle. Attempts to explain it by analogies drawn from parthenogenesis in lower forms of life are worse than useless.

A vicarious redeemer. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ stand together. Calvary is the central fact of divine and human history. There the sin of man was placed on the spotless, blemishless Son of God. Because of the finished work of the cross, salvation is now, thank God, available to every believer. That's the gospel. That is the gospel. This is the gospel of redeeming grace. That death was voluntary. Christ sovereignty yielded up his spirit. He laid down his life of himself. It was a substitutionary death. Says Paul, he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. 2 Corinthians 5:21. It was more than physical death. It was separation from the presence of God the Father. After the crucifixion, Christ's body was entombed. All admit that on Sunday morning the tomb was empty. He spoke of his resurrection. Destroy this temple. Three days I will raise it again. The early church received its dynamic through belief in the resurrection of Christ. As to how the tomb came to be empty, there is the view of the Jewish leaders; the disciples stole the body. The disciples could not have stolen the body because they didn't have sufficient power to withstand the Roman guard.
Further it's incredible they should have entered into a conspiracy of falsehood. Moreover the truth of the resurrection transformed cowards into martyrs. Klausner's view, that Joseph of Arimethea. Klausner was the Professor of History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for a number of years, having come from Germany and written his doctoral dissertation on the messianic idea in Israel, and then, first in German, then he amplified it in revision in the Hebrew language. But his view that Joseph of Arimathea recovered the body won't abide scrutiny. There is no evidence for this. How could he have gotten by the guard to retrieve the body? And the theory of a professor at Harvard [name inaudible], that the women stopped at the wrong tomb, is invalid. How about Peter and John? Did they get their directions wrong too? Did the angel err also? As to the swoon theory, it doesn't account for the tremendous impression our Lord made after his resurrection. If he didn't die at that time, when did he die.

The Bible states unequivocally that he did rise from the dead. And mark you, the Jews do not claim this for Moses. The Buddhists do not claim this for Buddha. Muslims do not claim this for Mohammed. Floyd Filson has rightly said, biblical theology finds its clearest starting point and interpreting clue in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without the resurrection, the cross was futile, and worse than useless. By it he became the first fruits of a new humanity. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 shows the importance of that resurrection. Here was the emphasis in apostolic preaching. Alan Richardson has rightly said, every book in the New Testament declares or assumes that Christ rose from the dead. The resurrection is one of the irrefutable evidences of the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. The Ascension is given twice by Luke.
Last Chapter of the third gospel, Luke 24 and in Acts 1. 11 new testament books refer to this act of exaltation. Resurrection and ascension are closely bound together. comprising the exaltation of the crucified savior. The ascension is essential to Christ's sovereign rule over his church. The ascended savior is the merciful high priest of his own. And now in conclusion, he is the returning King.

A returning King. Scripture teaches that Christ will return personally. Not through an emissary or representative. Bodily, not symbolically or in spirit. Visibly, not hidden from human view, as he is now, and gloriously. Not in humiliation. Not in weakness. Not in lowliness.

In short, the exact counterpart of his first coming is demanded by the plain sense of scripture testimony. What was begun in the coming in grace will be completed in the coming in glory. The hope of the church and of the world. The grace of God appeared to all men bringing salvation. And we're looking for the blessed hope and the glory of the appearing of our great God and savior. What was begun in the coming in grace is going to be finished and realized and consummated in the coming in glory.

We read, so Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins of many shall appear a second time, Hebrews 9:28, not to bear sin to those who eagerly await him. He appears for salvation. It's got to be personal, bodily. This same Jesus, Acts 1:11 is going to be visible. Every I shall see Him. Revelation 1:7. It's gonna be glorious when it comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the Holy Angels. The poet put it beautifully this way. Thou art coming, oh my savior. Thou art coming, oh my king. In thy beauty all resplendent. In thy glory all transcendent,
Well, may we rejoice in sing! Coming in the opening East, herald brightness slowly swells. Coming, oh my glorious priest. Hear we now thy golden bells.

23 of the 27 New Testament books make reference to it. It's mentioned more often than the first coming. The Apostles Creed. The Nicene Creed. The Athanasian creed. All speak of this expectation of Christ's Return, as do later confessions in different branches of Christendom. Now there are great differences of interpretation that have existed and still do on details of the return. And we must also distinguish between details that are our primary importance and those of lesser importance. But whatever the position all who believe the Bible are agreed that Christ returns to consummate his redemptive work to judge men and to reward them. Other considerations apart, there is agreement that the exact hour of His return is unknown, hence the need for heart preparation for the advent. It's an incomparable stimulus to holy living. Says the Apostle John, he that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. It is a wonderful stimulus. An animating impulse to devoted service. They turn to God from idols, the Thessalonians believers did, out of paganism, turned to God from idols, to serve the true and the living God. And to wait for his son from heaven. Even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come, his return can be viewed only with terror by the unbeliever.

God has given the unbelieving world a witness that there is a day of judgment because he already has a sign. The resurrected Christ. He is in existence. He lives. He is available. He will judge all ungodly men. Charles Burdman of Princeton Seminary stated it well when he wrote, the return of Christ is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. It's embodied in hymns of hope. It forms the climax of the creeds as the sublime motive. The very sublime motive for evangelistic and
missionary activity and daily it is voiced in the inspired prayer. Even so come, Lord Jesus. No one truth is more inspiring than that of the return of Christ. No other can make us sit more lightly. By the things of time, none other is more familiar as a scriptural motive to purity, holiness, patience, vigilance, and love.

Strengthened by this blessed hope, let us press forward with passionate zeal to the task that awaits us, friend. Till oar of ransom nature. The lamb for sinners slain. Redeemer, King, Creator, in bliss returns to reign. May God enable all of us to be faithful stewards of the manifold grace and mystery of God. May God grant it. Now we are going to be led in our benediction as we rise.