

Touchstones of God's Economy

Genesis (2)

The previous installment of “Touchstones” covered Genesis 1–2. The first section of Genesis reveals God’s desire and purpose in His creation and the procedures that He takes to fulfill His purpose. The second section of Genesis covers chapters 3–11 and reveals man’s fall through Satan’s corruption. The fall of man is constituted of four successive falls.

The First Fall

The first fall of man was initiated by Satan through the deception of the serpent: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other animal of the field that Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” (3:1). The crafty serpent was the embodiment of Satan, the devil, who is the enemy and adversary of God and the tempter of man (Matt. 13:39; Rev. 12:9; Matt. 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5). He enters, immediately after the first two chapters of Genesis, to corrupt and damage humanity in order to frustrate God from carrying out His eternal purpose. Satan has constantly worked in this way and will continue doing so until he is cast out just before the last two chapters of Revelation. In every generation the goal of God’s work is to build up the Body of Christ, not only to express His Son, Christ, but also to eliminate Satan.¹

Satan’s temptation of the woman first touched her mind by questioning God’s word: “Did God really say...?” This caused her to doubt God’s word. Satan’s question stirred up Eve’s mind and prevented her from using her spirit to contact God. In this way Satan’s evil thought entered into Eve and contaminated her mind even before she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan’s temptation was the outward cause of man’s first fall, but the inward cause was the woman’s assuming the headship. Without the covering of her husband, she spoke to the serpent directly, answering his question (Gen. 3:2-3). Thus, she assumed the headship and was ensnared and deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Her failure typifies our failure in putting God aside and assuming the headship over God to act independently of Him. This always opens the way for Satan, the subtle one, to deceive us.

Once Satan had engaged the woman, he spoke a slanderous

word concerning God: “God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Satan’s word caused Eve to misunderstand God’s love and to doubt God’s heart in His forbidding man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It poisoned her emotion, causing her to dislike God. Eve then saw that the tree was good for food and a delight to the eyes. She took the fruit and ate of it, giving some to her husband, who also ate. This was the first fall. In it man failed to exercise his spirit to contact God, bypassing God and putting Him aside. Instead, he exercised his soul, reasoning with the serpent in the mind, desiring the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the emotion, and deciding with the will to take the fruit and eat it.

The consequence of this action was dreadful and manifold. By eating of the tree that God had forbidden, man transgressed God’s commandment and fell under God’s condemnation, coming under a curse (2:17; Rom. 5:14, 16; Gen. 3:17-19). He became estranged from God and alienated from the life of God embodied in the tree of life (2:8, 23-24; Eph. 4:18). But this was not all. Satan contaminated man’s soul by injecting his evil thought, feeling, and will into man’s mind, emotion, and will. Also, through man’s eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan entered man’s body and became the very constitution of sin within man; thus, the human body was transmuted into the flesh of sin (Rom. 7:8, 11, 17-18, 20). Moreover, as a consequence of the fall, man’s spirit was deadened, becoming insulated from God and losing its function toward God (Eph. 2:1, 5). Hence, each of man’s three parts—body, soul, and spirit—was damaged by the fall. Furthermore, fallen man was constituted a sinner and became the victim of death (Rom. 5:19, 12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:22). Man was spoiled in all his being from being able to fulfill God’s purpose, which is to express God in His image and represent God with His dominion (Gen. 1:26). Not only so, man’s fall caused all creation to become subject to the vanity and slavery of corruption (Rom. 8:20-21).

After the man and woman ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen. 3:7). To know that they were naked indicates that

the function of their human conscience was activated. Prior to this time their conscience was present but not needed. They were ruled by the presence of God. However, after being estranged from God, they needed their conscience to govern them. The first fall was a fall from God's presence to man's conscience. Adam and Eve also "sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves" (v. 7). The loincloths made from the vegetable life represent man's own works in attempting to cover his sinfulness; but like man's works of righteousness, they were inadequate to meet the requirement of God's righteousness that man might be justified (Rom. 3:20).

Although the man created by God was spoiled by His adversary, the unchanging and everlasting God never changed His purpose and economy. Therefore, He came in to deal with the consequences of the fall and to provide a way of salvation: "Jehovah God called to the man and said to him, Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). With this question and the following, "Who told you that you are naked?" (v. 11), God did not intend to condemn Adam and Eve; He wanted to lead them to confess their transgressions in order that they might receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). It was to the serpent that God turned with His judgment, and He cursed him: "Because you have done this, / You are cursed more than all the cattle / And more than all the animals of the field: / Upon your stomach you will go, / And dust you will eat / All the days of your life" (Gen. 3:14). Jehovah's next word, spoken to the serpent in the hearing of the man and the woman, was a great promise: "I will put enmity / Between you and the woman / And between your seed and her seed; / He will bruise you on the head, / But you will bruise him on the heel" (v. 15). Both were expecting to die (2:17), but now they heard that the woman would live and have a seed. This was the first instance of the proclaiming of the gospel in the entire Bible. After hearing the glad tidings, Adam believed that he and his wife would live and not die; hence, he called his wife's name Eve, which means "living" (3:20).

The woman in verse 15 signifies first Eve and then Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 4:4). She also signifies all the people of God who take the position of a woman before God, trusting in Him, those who are represented by the universal woman in Revelation 12:1. The woman's seed is the incarnated Jesus Christ, who as the very God was born of a virgin to be a man, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 and fulfilled in Matthew 1:23. The promise in

Genesis 3:15 indicates that God Himself would come to be a human seed to bruise the head of the damaging serpent. Ultimately, the seed of the woman is enlarged to include the overcoming believers, the stronger part of God's people, signified by the man-child in Revelation 12:5. The bruising of the serpent's head by the seed of the woman refers to the destroying of Satan by the Lord Jesus through His death on the cross (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). While the Lord was destroying the serpent on the cross, the serpent bruised His heel (Psa. 22:16). The Lord's death on the cross judged Satan and cast him out, and this judgment will ultimately be carried out by the overcomers as the man-child, the corporate seed of the woman (Rev. 12:9).

In addition to the promise, God provided garments for man that anticipated the future redemption accomplished by Christ: "Jehovah God made coats of skin for Adam and for his wife and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). The animals killed by God for the coats were actually sacrifices as substitutes for the sinful Adam and Eve, and the blood that was shed was for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). This foreshadowed the substitutionary death of Christ as the Lamb of God, whose precious blood was shed to accomplish redemption, based on which God justifies the believing sinners (John 1:29; Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). God's clothing of Adam and his wife with

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skins indicates that they became one with the animal. Thus, the sinners became one with the substitute. This is union, which brings in the effectiveness of substitution. By our believing in the gospel, Christ is put upon us as our covering righteousness, and we are put into Christ, making us one with Him (Luke 15:22; 1 Cor. 1:30). Since we are one with Christ, whatever He has accomplished on the cross has become ours. In such a union, whatever Christ is, whatever He has, whatever He has done and will do, and whatever He has attained and obtained are ours. Therefore, with the hymn writer, we may lift our heads and declare, "God's Christ, who is my righteousness, / My beauty is, my glorious dress; / Midst flaming worlds, in this arrayed, / With joy shall I lift up my head" (Hymns, #295).

The Second Fall

Man fell a second time in Genesis 4. To understand the significance of this fall, we need to see clearly its background, namely, that man had already fallen, God had promised to save man, and God had revealed His way of salvation in the anticipated redemption of the animal

sacrifices. Undoubtedly, Adam and Eve not only believed in God's promise and received His way but also spoke these things to their children, Cain and Abel.

In the first fall of man, Satan, the tempter, was disguised as a serpent. In the subsequent falls Satan was still present. However, after the first fall Satan was no longer outside of man but within man, instigating him from within to act against God.

We see this clearly in the case of Cain: "In the course of time Cain brought an offering to Jehovah from the fruit of the ground" (v. 3). In Cain's offering we see a clear rejection of God's way of salvation revealed to Adam and Eve. Cain made an offering solely according to his concept and opinion, without any regard for God's will. Under Satan's subtle motivation Cain invented his own way of worshipping God, inventing his own religion. Throughout the centuries and generations there have been countless followers of Cain, people in every place and time who have invented their own religion. His brother Abel, however, "brought an offering, from the firstlings of his flock, that is, from their fat portions. And Jehovah had regard for Abel and for his offering" (v. 4). Like his father and mother, Abel believed the gospel and presented his offering to God according to God's revelation in the word proclaimed by his parents. His offering was of an animal with the shedding of blood and thus in the principle of the substitutionary death that is needed for redemption. This was fully according to God's revelation, and hence, it was accepted by God (Num. 18:17). Conversely, "for Cain and for his offering [God] had no regard" (Gen. 4:5).

In his first fall, being tempted by the devil, man failed to use his spirit. He set God aside. In the second fall man acted fully in his soul according to his thought and concept, not realizing that his soul was one with Satan, who was within him. By disregarding God's way of salvation, Cain acted in oneness with God's enemy, Satan, who was hidden in his opinion and concept.

It is evident that Cain was gained by Satan from the events that subsequently unfolded. Cain became angry and his countenance fell (v. 5). These are manifestations of a person serving God according to his own will. God warned Cain that sin was crouching at the door and that he should rule over him, but Cain went ahead and murdered his brother (vv. 6-8). This murder was motivated by anger provoked by jealousy in the matter of religion. It was the first example of the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (3:15).

When God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9). The first statement was a lie; the second displayed his

arrogance toward God. When God came to Adam and Eve after they fell, they hid and were in fear and trembling. Cain, in contrast, lied and spoke arrogantly. His actions were alluded to by the Lord Jesus in John 8:44. Referring to the devil, the Lord said, "He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks it out of his own possessions; for he is a liar and the father of it." In murdering and lying, Cain was one with the devil, Satan, who was his source (1 John 3:12). Because Cain rejected God's warning, he was gained by Satan, the murderer and liar, and became a murderer and a liar with Satan.

God's judgment of Cain was to place a greater and more severe curse on the ground. In the first fall the curse of the ground was to bring forth thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18); in the second fall the ground would no longer yield its strength to man (4:11-12). Cain was to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and he was driven from the face of God (v. 14). Following this, Cain went forth from the presence of God and built a city (vv. 16-17). He did this for his protection and self-existence. When man lost God, he lost everything—his protection, maintenance, supply, and amusement. Cain and his descendants invented a human culture, the main elements of which were cities for existence, cattle-raising for making a living, music for amusement, and weapons for defense (vv. 20-22). They were forced to do this, because they had lost God.

With the second fall of man we also see the way to escape the fall in the life of Abel and the descendants of Seth, Adam's third son. Abel escaped the fall because, unlike Cain, he did not follow his own will. Satan entered man in the first fall, and as a result, the element of Satan is in man's self with his opinion and ideas. When man follows his own will, he is following Satan and continuing in the fall as Cain did. But if man denies his own will, not walking according to it, he will escape the fall. Furthermore, Abel lived not for himself but for God; he was a "tender of sheep" (v. 2). Before the flood man ate only fruits and vegetables, not meat, so Abel's tending of sheep was only to provide offerings for God's satisfaction (1:29; 3:18; cf. 9:3). Cain, in contrast, was a "tiller of the ground," indicating that he cared only for his own living (4:2). The name Abel means "breath" or "vanity." Realizing that fallen human life is vanity, Abel despised everything outside of God and took God as the goal of his living. When Seth had a son, he called his name Enosh, which means "frail, mortal man" (v. 26). It was at that time that "men began to call upon the name of Jehovah" (v. 26). The word in Hebrew for *call* means "to call out to, to cry unto," that is, to cry out audibly. Because men realized that their lives were vanity and that they were frail and mortal, they began to call upon the name of Jehovah, the eternal One. Their calling on the name of the Lord made them rich

and strong, for they entered into the riches and strength of the One on whom they called (Rom. 10:12-13).

The ultimate issue of both the first two falls of man was death. In the record in Genesis 5, on the one hand, we see man living and propagating, thus fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it (1:28); on the other hand, this is a record of man dying. However, with one man the end was different: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (5:24). Unlike his forefathers, Enoch did not die but was taken by God; that is, he was raptured. Hence, he escaped death, the ultimate issue of man's fall. This was because he walked with God, indicating that he took God as his center and everything, doing things not according to his own concept and desire but according to God's revelation and leading; his walking with God also indicates that he did everything with God. In order to walk with God, we must deny our self and everything that is of our self so that we may be one with God (Matt. 16:24-25). Furthermore, Enoch also received revelation from God and believed God. He called the name of his son Methuselah, meaning "when he is dead, it will be sent." By his naming his son in this way, Enoch prophesied of the coming flood, which came in the year that Methuselah died, Noah's six hundredth year (Gen. 7:6; 5:25-29). Enoch received the revelation from God that He would judge the entire ungodly generation of mankind. He believed God's word, named his son accordingly, and determined not to follow the current of the age but to walk with God to live a godly and holy life.

The Third Fall

Each fall of man was more serious than the previous fall. When a person falls, it usually involves more than one step. Adam's fall was like falling down a set of stairs. Once the first fall had occurred, it was difficult for man not to fall further. This is what the record in this portion of Genesis shows.

The third fall of man involved evil spirits mixing with man: "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took wives for themselves from all whom they chose" (6:2). The sons of God in this verse were fallen angels, who had joined Satan in his rebellion. This is proved by Jude 6 and 7, which speak of angels who did not keep their own principality (high position) but abandoned their own dwelling place, that is, heaven. They came down to earth at Noah's time, took human

bodies, and formed illegal marriages with the daughters of men. In this, they went after different flesh, just as the men of Sodom and Gomorrah did later (Jude 7). They polluted the human race by mixing it with fallen spirits. The products of their illegal marriages with men were the Nephilim, or giants (Gen. 6:4). Hence, that generation of man became impure. For the sake of the fulfillment of His eternal purpose, God could not allow such a human race to exist. This was the reason He sent the flood to exterminate that generation.

In the third fall of man, man became flesh: "Jehovah said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, for he indeed is flesh" (v. 3). As flesh, man was full of lusts, fornication, and violence (vv. 2, 5, 11). In his first fall man did not exercise his spirit; in the second fall he over-exercised his soul, inventing a new religion; in the third fall he abused his fallen body and became flesh. The flesh is the strongest and most evil enemy of God and is thoroughly and absolutely hated by God (Rom. 7:5—8:13). At the time of the flood the entire human race became flesh. Thus, God came in and told His servant Noah that He would destroy that whole generation (Gen. 6:7, 13).

In his first fall, being tempted by the devil, man failed to use his spirit. He set God aside. In the second fall man acted fully in his soul according to his thought and concept, not realizing that his soul was one with Satan, who was within him.

In the process of this fall man began by following the flesh, which is full of lusts. Hence, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (v. 5). Then he became evil and corrupt to

the uttermost: "God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" (v. 12). God's response was to withdraw His Spirit from man (v. 3). Until that time God's Spirit was graciously working and striving with man to counter man's rebellion and fall. Now the Spirit of God would not strive with man any longer. This signifies that God was forsaking man. He would send the flood to "blot out the man whom I have created from the surface of the ground, from man to beast to creeping things to the birds of heaven; for I repent that I have made them" (v. 7).

Therefore, in the third fall of man we see that Satan had corrupted man to the uttermost and that God determined to destroy the man whom He had created for His purpose. Seemingly, God was defeated. However, a factor emerged to provide God a way to continue to carry out His original purpose with man: "Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah" (v. 8). Through Noah's life and work God gained the victory over His enemy and changed the age.

In the life of Noah we see the way of salvation from the

third fall. First, he walked with God (v. 9). This indicates that he must have been influenced by the godly living of his forefather Enoch (5:22-24). Noah was able to walk with God in that crooked, perverted, and adulterous generation because he found favor, or grace, in the sight of Jehovah (cf. Heb. 4:16). Grace is God coming to us to be our life supply, our strength, and our everything. Such grace enabled Noah to overcome the flesh and to live a righteous life.

Second, Noah received the revelation of the ark and prepared the ark according to this revelation. In this, like Enoch, Noah believed in the word of God. When God told him that the flood would come, he believed Him. When God instructed him to build an ark, he built it. When God told him to enter the ark, he did so. When God told him to stay in the ark, he stayed, and when God told him to come out of the ark, he came out. He walked completely according to God's word. Because he believed the word of God, he was saved. He did not assume the headship, like Adam, but took God as His center. He did not follow his own opinion or concept but denied himself, taking God's opinion as his opinion. As a result, he was saved and delivered from the fall.

According to 1 Peter 3:20-21, the ark that Noah built is a type of Christ, not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ, the church, which is the Body of Christ and the new man (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 3:10-11). Noah built the ark with materials and in dimensions that typify the elements of Christ's riches (Gen. 6:14-15; Eph. 3:8-11; 4:12). Thus, he not only walked with God, but he also worked together with God to build God's building, as did the apostles (1 Cor. 3:9-12). By building the ark and entering into it, Noah was saved from God's judgment on the evil generation through the flood. But he was also separated from that generation by water and ushered into a new age (1 Pet. 3:20). Likewise, by building the church as the corporate Christ and entering into the church life, we will be saved from God's judgment when He judges today's evil generation through the great tribulation (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; 1 Thes. 5:3). Moreover, we will be separated from that generation and ushered into a new age, the age of the millennium (Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10).

The Fourth Fall

After the flood, God authorized man to rule over other men (Gen. 9:6). Prior to this, man was under the rule of his own conscience. However, the rule of the human conscience did not work well, and man fell further into wickedness. Therefore, after the third fall of man, God committed His authority to man, and human government began. In the fourth fall man forsook God's authority completely. At Babel he collectively determined to build

a city and tower in outright rebellion against God. The fourth fall was a fall from human government to a collective rebellion of the whole human race against God (11:4). This was most serious, much more so than the previous three falls, where God's throne was not challenged.

Undoubtedly, the fourth fall was the result of Satan's instigation. Satan instigated this rebellion, because his intention is to overthrow God's authority. According to Isaiah 14:13-14, Satan said, "I will ascend to heaven...I will exalt my throne...I will make myself like the Most High." Hence, the thought of overthrowing God's authority is entirely of the evil one, Satan. At the time of the fourth fall he imparted into man the thought of overthrowing God's authority, causing man to rise up collectively to oppose God's right and authority.²

First, man said, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." (Gen. 11:3). The phrase *come, let us* indicates that they conferred and discussed their intention to rebel. The building of the city and tower of Babel was of bricks, which are the result of human labor through the burning of the God-created earth. In contrast, God's building is by stones, which are produced by God's divine work through creation and transformation (1 Kings 6:7; Matt. 16:18; John 1:42; 1 Cor. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 21:18-20). The earth is for growing life (Gen. 1:11). To make bricks is to kill, to burn, the element of the earth that grows life. In figure, the earth signifies humanity (2:7; 3:19; Matt. 13:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:47). Thus, the rebellion instigated by Satan kills the element within man that grows the divine life by burning it out, and it misuses man to build up a man-made and godless life.

Then man built a city and a tower whose top was to be in the heavens (Gen. 11:4). This signifies that man had forsaken God and replaced Him with a man-made, godless culture, following the example of Cain (4:17). The tower was for a declaration; it was an epigraph for the city. It was built to make a name for men, indicating that they were renouncing God's name and exalting themselves. How different this was compared to the days of Enosh, after the first fall, when men began to call upon the name of the Lord (v. 26)! Since the city of Babel is a symbol of a godless life built by men apart from God, the tower of Babel is a declaration that their life denied God and rejected His right and authority.

According to historical records and archaeological evidence, the city and tower of Babel were full of the names of idols. Thus, at Babel man followed Satan, exalted himself to oppose God, rejected God's name, denied God's right and authority over man, and fell into idolatry.

God's judgment on the fourth fall is seen in Genesis

11:7-8. Jehovah said, "Come, let Us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (v. 7). Jehovah then scattered them from there over the surface of all the earth, and they ceased building the city (v. 8). God judged rebellious humankind with division and confusion so that they might not be able to form an alliance against Him. In their living, humankind was scattered, divided, and no longer able to live together in one place (vv. 8-9). In their language they were no longer able to have the same speaking, that is, the same understanding, opinion, and concept (vv. 7, 9). In contrast, in the proper church life there is oneness and harmony: all the believers have one mind with one opinion and have one mouth with one speaking (1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5-6; Phil. 2:2; 4:2).

In the fourth fall of man, the rebellion at Babel, man fell to the uttermost. God had no way to deal with this fall, to provide a way of escape from it, or to give man a way of salvation from it as He had done in the previous falls. Eventually, God had to forsake the created race of Adam and to call one man, Abraham, out of that race so that He

might still have a way to fulfill His original purpose in creating man (Gen. 1:26-28). This we will see in the next installment of "Touchstones," which will cover the third and final section of Genesis, Jehovah's calling.

by Jim Batten

Notes

¹See Genesis 3:1 note 1 in the Recovery Version. This article draws extensively on the outline and footnotes in the Recovery Version.

²For a fuller development of this understanding, see Lee, *Revelations* 73-85.

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Paul's Use of the History in Genesis in His Epistle to the Romans

The book of Genesis is divided into two main sections: the first section covers the first ten and a half chapters and relates the history of the created race, with Adam as the father and head; the second section covers from the middle of chapter eleven through the end of the book and relates the history of the called race, with Abraham as the father and head. The history of the created race as recorded in Genesis culminates in the building of the tower and city of Babel (*Babylon* in Greek). Names of idols were written on this tower, meaning that the whole created race had turned to idolatry. Thus, Paul says the human race had exchanged God for idols (1:23, 25).

Paul wrote Romans 1 according to the history narrated in Genesis. Beginning with the time of Cain, man disapproved of holding God in his full knowledge and gave Him up. Mankind forsook God and built the city of Enoch, the first human culture as recorded in Genesis 4. With that culture the human race descended into corruption and remained in a state of corruption until the flood came as God's judgment upon them. By God's mercy, eight persons were saved through the ark, which typified Christ. The number eight is the number of resurrection, indicating that these people were saved and preserved in resurrection. In a sense, Noah was the head of a new race. However, not long afterward the descendants of Noah also gave up God at Babel in Genesis 11. When they exchanged God for idols, the forsaking of God was complete. The giving up of God was not completed before the flood; it was completed afterward by the descendants of Noah, who fell into idolatry.

Fornication followed idolatry. After Babel, Sodom emerged. Sodom was a city of fornication. In the English language we have the words *sodomy* and *sodomites*, which signify the most shameful acts of fornication. The inhabitants of Sodom violated their own nature and caused great confusion. At the time of Genesis 19, the human race, which had exchanged God for idols, had fallen into sodomy. As a result, every kind of wickedness burst forth.

This was the background of Romans 1. Romans 1 was written according to the history of the human fall: disapproving of holding God, exchanging God for idols, falling into fornication, and producing every kind of wickedness.

From *Life-study of Romans* by Witness Lee, pp. 65-66