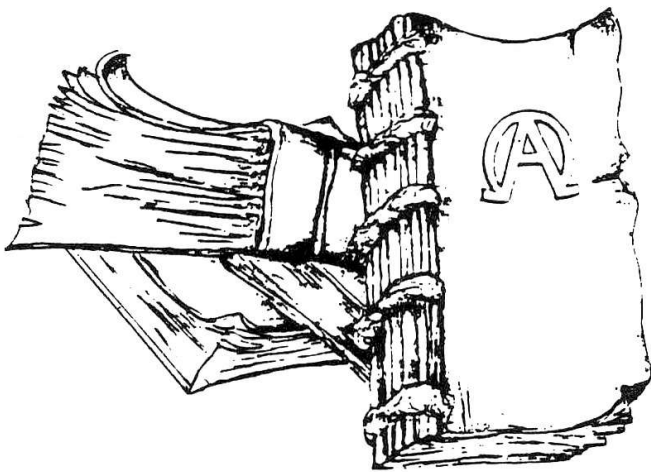


# THE BIBLE AND DAILY LIFE



by Richard Wang, S.J.  
translated by Elmer Wurth

The Bible presents Yahweh as a living God. Not only is He the creator of all things, Who has made man and woman in His own likeness, but He has also taken the initiative to enter into human history to encounter humankind.

In the Old Testament, He called Abraham, selecting him to become the ancestor of all believers, the father in faith of all peoples; from Abraham's descendants He brought forth the nation of Israel, forming them as His chosen people. Throughout their history, He continued to reveal Himself to this people, preparing them for the advent of Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time, He sent His only Son to dwell among us, to take on our human nature that He might personally experience what it meant to be a human being. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, God sent His Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God brings believers through-

out the entire world into a direct and interpersonal relationship with the Risen Jesus. From this viewpoint, the Bible may be called a history of the encounter between God and man. Precisely because of this encounter, anyone who accepts Jesus as his Saviour and becomes His disciple does not merely accept a set of doctrines or a code of ethics, but, much more, he enters into a personal relationship with the Trinitarian God - the Creator Father, the incarnate Son Jesus Christ who redeems man from his sins, and the Holy Spirit Who gives life. Without this relationship, a Christian cannot truly share in the divine life, and thus is a Christian in name only. Our Christian faith requires of us that we should engage the Triune God constantly throughout our entire lives. If we want to live in this divine engagement, we must first come to know who God is, what kind of a relationship He wishes to establish with us, and what He demands from us who have entered such a relationship with Him. In order to develop better this relationship with God, we must turn to the Bible, which is the history of God's encounter with man. Here we shall uncover the principles that govern such an encounter and the manner and mode in which they reveal themselves, so that they might serve as criteria for our own life of faith. The Bible, then, has a very intimate relationship to our daily lives. Let us explore briefly that relationship from three aspects: God's call; His sustaining guidance, and man's response.

### GOD CALLS

From the Bible we see that God is by no means a disinterested Spirit, dwelling high above and far apart from us, waiting for us to search Him out. In the Old Testament, God is seen as One Who continually enters into the history of His people, taking the initiative in calling man to Himself. He called Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Judges, Samuel, David, the Prophets, and the poor and afflicted among His people Israel.

In the New Testament, the Son of God became man and dwelt among us. While preaching the Good News, at one point in His public ministry, He chose twelve apostles. For three years He formed them, making of them the foundation for His Church. He encountered the Israelites on all social levels, in all walks of life, and of all ages, calling them



*For three years Jesus formed his apostles...*

God's call in our daily lives, we must go to the Bible where we find revealed for us the various ways in which He calls. God, as Supreme and Omnipotent, is not limited in His activity to the confines of human understanding nor restricted by the boundaries of human circumstances, but He can and does move freely through all the conditions of our daily existence, calling when and whom He chooses to Himself. But His call also has certain special characteristics which we can discern from the evidence of biblical revelation. If the manner and mode by which God calls us to Himself were totally beyond our discernment, then, even should He call, we would be completely ignorant of it, or be half-believing and half-doubting, much like Samuel who, when he heard the Lord calling him the first time (Samuel 3, 1-14), thought it was Eli. But if we know the Bible well, when God does enter into our life to speak to us, we shall be more sensitively aware of His call and more ready to respond properly to His invitation to establish with Him

to repentance, proclaiming to them the Good News of the Kingdom, allowing each one to experience His love, and inviting them all to share in the salvation which He had brought to them.

After He died, was raised and ascended into heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, He might always be present to the members of His Church. Through the proclamation of the Good News, Jesus continues to call all people to repentance, and to those who accept His message He invites to enter an intimate and abiding relationship with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we, who believe in Jesus, wish to experience

a real relationship; nor will we misinterpret His call or, even worse, pass by in ignorance of having been called at all.

### GOD GUIDES AND SUSTAINS

The Bible teaches us how God not only calls man in the practical circumstances of his daily life, but, after calling him, how He also seeks to establish a firm and lasting relationship with him. The clearest manifestation of this in the Bible is to be found in the covenant God establishes with those He calls. In the Old Testament, God made covenants with Abraham (Gen. 10, 1-21), (Gen. 26, 1-6), Jacob (Gen. 28, 1-22) and later, through Moses, with an entire people - the Children of Israel (Exodus 20, 1-21; 24, 1-11). Among the Israelites, He chose David and his descendants as kings to represent His sovereignty over His own, and He promised David that the Saviour (Messiah) would be born from His lineage (2 Samuel 7, 8-17).

In the New Testament, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, making a new covenant through His Body and Blood for all the nations (Mk. 26, 26-29). Whosoever believes in Him and is baptized into His Church becomes partner to this covenant.

Beginning with the Old Testament and continuing through the New, God expressed the interpersonal nature of the covenant which He has established with us through many different signs and symbols. The most important of these symbols was that of the marriage relationship between man and woman. By using this symbol of marriage, God has revealed His desire to establish a relationship of enduring love with every human being. In the Old Testament, God reveals in His covenant two basic attitudes towards the Israelites: one of love, and the other of fidelity. His love for His covenant people He showed in his special tender care for the children of Israel; His fidelity is seen in that once having made a covenant with Israel, He would keep it faithfully without change, even though the Israelites oftentimes were to break it themselves.

God's love and fidelity reached its climax and fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ. Through Baptism,

we participate in this covenant which Jesus has established for all mankind, and thus we come to share in the love and fidelity which God has revealed to us in Christ.

God guides and cares for those who participate in His covenant. In the past, God also entrusted to people like Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, and others, missions of a special nature, and He guided and helped them, in the concrete situations of life, accomplish these missions. Those called by God to carry out their mission in life generally met with many difficulties, much suffering and frustration, and sometimes failure. But God also helped these people to confront such problems without fear, and by relying on His special strength, they were able to overcome all evil.

As it was in the past, so it is today, God continues to entrust to those who participate in the covenant which Jesus made for all mankind the mission of discipleship, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus in the practical circumstances of their daily lives. Jesus has also promised us that all who become His disciples will experience the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their lives, so that they might not only be drawn into a more intimate relationship with Him personally, but also receive the courage to enable them to share with others the Good News they have received.

In the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, we can see that to whomever Jesus entrusted a mission, e.g. the twelve apostles, they also received God's special guidance and care. Jesus has always given this special guidance and protection to those who believe in Him and choose to follow Him. We see this clearly in the biblical accounts of His life with His disciples. Without a knowledge of the Bible, we would have no way of discerning with any degree of competence the signs and symbols by which Jesus guides and protects us through the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. It is only after learning to recognize these biblical signs and symbols that we come to understand more fully the nature of Jesus' guidance and care for His followers; and this enables us in our own encounter with Him to grow daily in intimacy with Him as we continue to proclaim the Good News to others through the power of His Holy Spirit, Who is at



work in our daily lives.

### GOD ASKS FOR MAN'S RESPONSE

God calls, guides, sustains and protects man in the actual circumstances of his daily life, but He also respects deeply our dignity and freedom. He exhorts each person who hears His call and receives His inspiration to respond freely. To cooperate freely in this way is to attain personal salvation, and also to become an instrument in the salvation of others. From God's self-revelation in the Bible, we not only come to recognize what kind of a God He is and the manner and mode of His encounter with us, but we also come to comprehend what kind of attitude He expects of us in our response to Him. Through reading the Bible, we are able to discern whether or not the call, along with its guidance and protection, truly is inspired by and comes from God. In the Bible, God exhorts us to accept His words with confidence and to trust in His benevolence and love. Furthermore, God urges believers to enter into a communion with Jesus, and with Him to search for the Father's will through the help of His Holy Spirit. Jesus teaches us to pray with Him in the words of the Our Father that "Your kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

We must believe, then, that the God Who loves us, desires also to give to us every kind of guidance and encouragement through Christ Jesus. We are called to seek the Father's Will with unceasing love in all the circumstances of our daily lives through the help of the Holy Spirit. In this way, we shall not only bring the greatest benefit to ourselves personally, but also to our neighbors.

In the Bible, God has manifested his general will for all mankind. Through the Ten Commandments, He calls us from the worship of all other gods and idols to worship Him alone as the one true God, to respect human relationships, human life and property, marital relationships, and to keep our promises, always dealing honestly with others. Only through such observances are we able to live a moral life pleasing to Him.

Besides His general will, God, in Jesus, also wants to give individual inspiration and guidance to each person

who believes in Him, and He urges us to respond to such guidance. Every inspiration that comes from God, however, must be in agreement with the teachings and revelations of the Bible. At the same time, the Bible informs us as to what kind of attitudes and approaches we must adopt when responding to God's inspiration. First, we must learn how to discern God's Will with the help of the Bible, so that we may be able to make the right decisions in the concrete circumstances of our daily lives; then, we must ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the strength to implement God's Will on a day to day basis - only by taking this step, can we integrate our faith into our daily lives. By becoming well versed in the Bible, it follows that we not only gain knowledge about God, but also, through the Bible's teaching, we can come to know more clearly how to establish the kind of practical and intimate relationship with God that will allow our life of Christian faith to develop and mature.



*Jesus urges us to respond to his guidance*

All that we have written here concerning God's calling us, His guidance and protection, as well as His exhorting us to respond to His call, may help to make us more aware of the essential role the Bible plays in our lives. Without studying the Bible and familiarizing ourselves with its content, it is impossible to live out in concrete terms our personal relationship of faith in Jesus. Of course we could discuss the relationship of the Bible and our lives from many more aspects than those mentioned here, for the Bible is a storehouse of God's revelation and serves as a guidebook for living and a source of faith; but the intent of these few words is merely to underline the vital truth that the more familiar we are with the Bible, the more we will come to understand the meaning of our existence, enrich our daily lives, and better accomplish our true purpose as God's sons and daughters, made according to His image and likeness.