

# Unsearchable Riches

A BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR GOD AND HIS

WORD

VOLUME LXXX

E. O. Knoch, *Editor Emeritus*

Dean H. Hough, *Editor*

James R. Coram, *Coordinating Editor*

Herman H. Rocke, *Translations Consultant*

CONCORDANT PUBLISHING CONCERN

15570 Knochaven Road

Santa Clarita, CA 91351, U.S.A.

## *A Prayer*

All-gracious God, midst scenes of strife,  
We bow in adoration pure,  
And ask that Thy exhaustless grace,  
Which through all ages doth endure,  
May grant us faith to trust Thee still  
And frame our hearts to work Thy will.

All-gracious God, the hand of time,  
Forever moving, as it must,  
Brings man's proud boastings to the mire  
And sinks earth's splendor in the dust.  
That we change not, be with us still  
And frame our hearts to work Thy will.

All-gracious God, this heedless world,  
Absorbed in things of sense and time,  
Grasps only after gods of gold,  
And slights the gift of love divine.  
That we respond with worship still,  
O frame our hearts to work Thy will.

All-gracious God, our days are few,  
And spent in gathering empty lore.  
So teach us wisdom that we may  
Acquire Thy lessons, taught of yore,  
And learn of Thee, our Teacher still  
To frame our hearts to work Thy will.

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JANUARY 1989  
BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY

EDITORIAL

WE BEGIN the new year with something old that still remains fresh and refreshing to our spirits. It is the first installment of a paper written by the co-founder of *Unsearchable Riches*, V. M. Gelesnoff, over 80 years ago. Entitled "The Pathway of Faith," these studies from Genesis 12-50 have never before appeared in this magazine, although we once published them in booklet form. Brother Gelesnoff died at the young age of 43 in 1921, and in the memorial to him which appeared in the December issue of our magazine for that year (pp.62,63), Brother A. E. Knoch recalled the occasion for these studies on the lives of the four patriarchs:

"The gracious and simple character of his ministry in those early days is beautifully preserved for us in 'The Pathway of Faith,' which gives a condensed report of a series of lectures delivered at the [New York City] Fulton Street meetings in 1906. With inimitable simplicity and power he presents the spiritual careers of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. In it we find an echo of [Brother Gelesnoff's] own spiritual life and the great purpose he had formed, to put God's Word above all else . . ."

Hence, "For God and His Word" became the motto for this magazine, with the conviction that as we come to know Him and what He has to say to us, we ourselves are blessed. It is, as Brother Coram writes in this issue, "Our appeal can only be to the Scriptures themselves." Similarly, we read in Psalm 119:72 that God's Words are better "than thousands of gold and silver."

It is not that we are not concerned about mankind,

our human problems and needs. But we are not dedicated to examining human longings or launching efforts for human benefit directly. Rather we seek to follow the developments displayed in God's Word in order to point to the pathway for our faith today. In this issue, for example, Brother Knoch shows how thanksgiving to God is to be replacing requests for physical blessings in the current era. In accord with this, Brother Rocke points out that the practice of praising God expands under Paul's evangel to the lauding (on-praising) of God and His glorious grace.

The pathway of faith as established by God in what He says to us has never been a popular one, but it does seem as though it is becoming less and less appreciated as our own era continues. What God has said, it is felt, somehow needs the support of our senses, of seeing, hearing, touching, even smelling and tasting, a Thomas-like faith that is established by experience (John 20:24-29). Or, at the other extreme, a mystical conviction that self-contradictory things are so (such as that God is the Saviour of all mankind but certain human beings will never be saved) or that every instruction or revelation from Genesis to Revelation remains in full force, produces much confusion in our thinking and aimlessness in our walk. How we need the clarity of Paul's pathway: ". . . that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God *for faith*: to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming to His death, if somehow I should be attaining to the resurrection that is out from among the dead" (Phil.3:8-11)!

May this pathway of faith become more and more our own.

D.H.H.

## FOUR PATRIARCHS

THE book of Genesis, or "In a Beginning," from the twelfth chapter onward, relates the dealings of God with four patriarchs; Abraham, the rock from which the Hebrew nation was hewn (Isa.51:1,2); Isaac, the medium through whom Abraham's blessing passed to the posterity (Gen.21:12); Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen.28:3); and Joseph, the man through whom a remnant is preserved in the earth, and saved alive by a great deliverance (Gen. 45:7).

These records are rich in lessons of permanent value. With exquisite, artless simplicity they demonstrate the frailty of our frame, accentuate the gentle forbearance, and illustrate the exhaustless grace of our heavenly Father. How good of God to give us these glowing records of His changeless love that we might draw lessons of wisdom and faith!

We will first seek to view these records collectively, and then examine each separately at close range.

Before proceeding, will the reader kindly charge his heart to pray for the spirit's illumination, not for himself alone, but for all the fellow saints?

The contents of this section of Genesis may be tabulated thus:

- 12:1-25:11. Abraham
- 25:12-18. Interlude: the generations of Ishmael
- 25:19-28:9. Isaac
- 28:10-35:29. Jacob
- 36:1-43. Interlude: the generations of Esau
- 37:1-50:26. Joseph

From this simple analysis it will be seen at a glance that the stories of Abraham and Joseph are cut off from those of Isaac and Jacob by the insertion of parentheses devoted to genealogical records. This arrangement seems to assign to Abraham and Joseph a peculiar place in the divine economy. Careful study justifies this inference.

The call of Abraham inaugurates a new departure in God's dealings with mankind. A man is called with a view to the formation of a nation destined to fulfill a special mission in the world. In Joseph, we see a man raised to perform a special mission to this chosen nation. Connected with the call of Abraham is the *separation* of an elect nation which occupies a peculiar place in relation to God and the nations of the globe. Bound up with the history of Joseph is the miraculous *preservation* of that nation through a time of calamity.

The outstanding feature in this story of the divine government of human lives are the theophanies, or appearances of God.

There are *seven* recorded appearances to Abraham; *two* to Isaac; *seven* to Jacob; and *two* to Joseph.

These appearances are unified by a common end; though the means and methods employed in attaining that end are different in each case. The difference is to be accounted for by the differing temperaments exemplified in these men. Variety characterizes God's works in nature. The leaves of a tree are shaped after one pattern; yet no two of them are alike; each exhibits peculiarities of its own. All planets revolve around the sun; yet each moves in its own orbit. Variety, too, characterizes God's ways in grace. The High and Lofty One deals with each child according to the capacity and quality of faith granted to him. He weaves into each thread of life the specific lessons needed.

## ABRAHAM

The appearances to Abraham are for *instruction*. Each communication results in a spiritual metamorphosis. The friend of God receives new impetus, changes his course, enters new spheres of activity, rises to a higher plane. Each vision elevates his position, widens his outlook, expands his usefulness.

“By faith Abraham, being called, obeys, coming out into the place which he was about to obtain to enjoy as an allotment” (Heb. 11:8). He is a man of *responsive* nature. When the vision comes, he follows it, even though it entail sacrifice.

From the Genesis narrative it would seem as if Abram's departure was instantaneous after, or simultaneous with, the divine command. Stephen's address to the Sanhedrin, however, shows that, pursuant to a revelation, Abram left Chaldea and set his face toward the land of promise, but for some reason tarried in Charan, and not till after his father's death did he move on to Canaan.

What was it that induced Abram thus to linger on the way?

The words of Stephen, “and thence, after the death of his father, He exiles him into this land in which *you* are now dwelling” (Acts 7:4), seem to attribute Abram's delay at Charan to Terah's influence. Terah's intention on leaving Ur was to return to Palestine; but coming to Charan, he remained there; and Abram, yielding to the paternal wish, tarried with him.

Moreover, we learn that, on leaving Charan after Terah's death, Abram took all the goods which they had gathered, and every soul which they had made their own in Charan. There they acquired souls and substance. Was not this also responsible for the delay? These men of enterprise saw a chance of acquiring

wealth, and decided to take full advantage of the opportunity.

These incidental touches afford insight into the character of the man and throw valuable light upon certain phases of his subsequent career. They inform us also that Abram was a man of strong affection and deep feeling, that he was keen and alert, alive to material advantages and the comforts of wealth. Though naturally responsive, when the claims of God made imperative demands and brought him face to face with sacrifice, the interests to be renounced exerted over him a mighty spell, and induced vacillation. At such conjunctures the Lord intervened and drew him out of predicament by a fresh vision.

In tracing these appearances of Yahweh, we would behold Abraham going from strength to strength, ascending from one altitude to another. On Mount Moriah is the zenith reached. He stands on the borderland of glory. Earthly limitations touch the fringe of heavenly actualities. There the curtain drops. The saint goes to his rest. A few touches are only added to link his narrative with Isaac's.

#### ISAAC

The appearances to Isaac are for *reiteration*. Isaac is a man *retiring*, restful, phlegmatic. Deeply sensitive, he grieves for three years over his mother's death, and goes out in the field to find rest and comfort. A lover of solitude, he well knows the soothing influence of nature over vexed spirits. The moaning of the wind, the murmur of the fountain, the rustling of the grain, possess to him inexpressible charm. A lover of quietude, he avoids din and conflict and devotes himself to peaceful pursuits, the sowing of seed, the digging of wells. He delights to watch the fields of grain undulated by the



winds; and loves to soliloquize beside the well when the cover of darkness falls upon the landscape. And withal there is in him a touch of epicureanism—he loves a savory meal.

Love of quiet may dispose to compromise. An aspect of Isaac's make-up is the danger of yielding when action is required; he is apt to retreat when he should take a determined stand. The theophanies are designed to neutralize these natural proclivities of Isaac's disposition and avert the dangers toward which they tend. Both appearances occur at critical junctures. When faith was ready to yield in the face of difficulties, the vision vouchsafed acted as a stimulus and preventative. The Lord reiterated the covenant with Abraham, adding to it fresh promises calculated to strengthen faith and nerve it for conflict. Thus the Lord drew His quiet, passive servant out of retirement by an enlargement of vision.

#### JACOB

The appearances to Jacob are for *restriction*. Jacob is of a *rushing* disposition, a man of restless activity and indomitable energy. Isaac's tendency was to lag behind; Jacob's inclination is to go ahead of God. The Lord makes known to him His intention beforehand. The condition of affairs seems unfavorable to the realization of that intention; so Jacob imagines that he must help God, and undertakes the task of securing a fulfillment of God's purpose by a clever manipulation of circumstances.

He does not rise to the level of the vision; he lowers it to his own level. Instead of complying with the terms of the promise, he seeks, so to speak, to adjust the promise to his condition. He is evermore active, always on the go; but his activity is not in line with God's move-

ments. Hence, he is in constant need of restraint. The aim of the theophanies is to check his independence and direct his energy into proper channels. Jacob, therefore, is repeatedly pointed back to positions of faith previously held but departed from.

#### JOSEPH

The appearances to Joseph are for *revelation*. The two dreams foreshadow the wonderful mission he was destined to perform.

Joseph is a *perfect* character. The story of his life is in some senses the most wonderful in the Hebrew Scriptures. He possesses in a superlative degree the virtues of his predecessors without their faults. He combines the responsiveness of Abraham with the quietness of Isaac and the astuteness and activity of Jacob.

His *responsiveness* is evidenced by unswerving loyalty to the vision. Abraham wavered at times; thrice he departed from the pathway of the divine will. Joseph neither hesitates nor deviates.

He dreams a dream, and tells it to his brethren. They do not like the message and hate Joseph for it. He dreams a second dream, and forthwith tells it to his brethren. He is unmovable. His responsiveness is unshaken by opposition; he yields neither to pressure of circumstances nor paternal influence. Nothing can change his loyalty to the vision which is set before him. Storms fail to obscure it. He follows its light with steady, unfaltering step, not daunted by adversity nor inflated by prosperity.

His *quietness* is shown by his conduct in the house of Potiphar and in prison. The quietness of Isaac was fearful, restless and resorted to policy. That of Joseph is fearless, patient and courts no favor. Without mur-

mur or resentment, he attends to his duties, trustfully awaiting the dawn of a better day.

His *astuteness* is seen both from the advice to Pharaoh and the administration of Egypt during the seven years' famine. The shrewdness of Jacob substituted a project for God's purpose. That of Joseph operated on the basis of that purpose.

Joseph can be passive and responsive; he knows how to be active and how to stand still. He does everything in season.

Abraham goes to Egypt and compromises. Joseph is taken to Egypt, yet never compromises. The wealth acquired there by the former is a compensation for dishonor. The glory and honor bestowed upon the latter is the reward of faithfulness and purity.

Isaac's policy provoked quarrels with the Philistines. Joseph's tact and discretion enabled him to live in peace with the Egyptians, though it be an abomination for these to eat with the Hebrews.

Jacob, and especially his sons, easily absorbed the customs of those surrounding them. Joseph never did so, though his whole career, in both adversity and prosperity, offered peculiar temptations in this respect.

Pure, brave, gracious, uncompromising, Joseph walks through life unscathed by sin, undismayed by opposition, undefiled by seduction. How beautiful the tribute to his character uttered by dying Jacob!

"An offshoot of a fruitful plant is Joseph,  
An offshoot of a fruitful plant by a spring,  
Whose sprigs have climbed up on the straight wall.  
The archers were bitterly enraged against him;  
They contended with him and begrudged him.  
But his bow was located in perennial steadiness,  
And the arms of his hands were supple  
Because of the hands of the Sturdy One of Jacob,  
Because there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,

Because of your father's El—  
 May He help you—  
 And the One Who-Suffices—  
 May He bless you  
 With blessings of the heavens above,  
 With blessings of the abyss reclining beneath,  
 With blessings of breasts and womb.  
 The blessings on your fathers have gained the mastery  
 Over the blessings on my progenitors,  
 Unto the yearning of the eonian hills—  
 May they come to be onto the head of Joseph  
 And onto the crown of the one singled out from his brothers.”

(Gen.49:22-26)

This is a charming story. Faith is burning, love is radiant, expectation is beaming. Their blended light illumines the darkness about him. Would God that the same could be said of all God's people today! But alas! how rare have these spiritual graces become. Faith in our great Master is at its ebb. Love for *all* the saints is rare indeed. Hope is dim. But how great is our thankfulness for the few who offer a mite upon God's glorious altar!

These four characters seem to form a cycle.

The testimony declines after Abraham, but rises in Joseph to its meridian height.

In the divine methods, too, there seems to be a perfect unfolding.

Responsive Abraham is instructed—initiated in the secrets of the Lord. The dormant faith of passive Isaac is stirred to activity. The fleshly energy of Jacob is checked and subdued. The uprightness of Joseph yields its finer graces under bruising and pressure, and is finally rewarded and crowned.

Our way is now prepared for a more detailed study of these records.

V.G.

*(To be continued)*

## PAUL'S "UNANSWERED" PRAYER

PRAYER varies greatly in the Scriptures, like all truth, to agree with the administration in which it occurs. Incalculable disappointment and distress have come to sincere saints who sought to be scriptural by copying the example of those in another era. As a whole they have the mistaken conception that, if we persist and persevere in prayer, we will certainly obtain what we want, otherwise there is something radically wrong. The best concrete reply to this is the experience of the apostle Paul.

### MESSENGER OF SATAN

Paul entreated the Lord thrice, that the splinter in his flesh should withdraw from him. It is well that we are not told exactly what it was, but we know that it was not a selfish desire for some forbidden or harmful thing, but rather the removal of a *physical infirmity*, which, the apostle probably supposed, would hinder his ministry. Can we imagine a more laudable motive? To begin with, why should God use a messenger of Satan to give Paul an infirmity, when his strength was so much needed in his arduous task of making known his gospel? Most of us would consider this a prime necessity. It is not easy to realize that it is even more important to be *kept down*. It was given to him lest he should be *lifted up* (2 Cor. 12:7).

This should appeal especially to those of us who, like Paul, have had a glimpse of the transcendent

revelations which he received, as set forth in his prison epistles. No doubt his bonds in jail were also a special dispensation to keep him humble, for why, otherwise, reveal them in such a contrastive environment? Some of us have wondered why, with such a glorious message, while we are not enclosed within prison walls, we should be so constricted in our efforts to make it known. Moreover, we, like the apostle, cannot help entreating the Lord to enlarge our sphere. It seems to be more important that His servants should be kept down, than that they should be strong and free to work their will.

In Paul's case, and doubtless in all other such situations, there was a combination of two distinct causes for his weakness, both flesh and spirit. The physical side of it doubtless caused pain and suffering, for this is the effect of a splinter or "thorn." On the spiritual side it was occasioned by a messenger of Satan, and his "buffeting" would consist of blows of a spiritual nature. The word buffet suggests punishment inflicted by those with whom there is close contact, as in the case of our Lord when tried before the chief priest (Matt.26:67; Mark 14:65), and, indeed, in Paul's own experience (1 Cor.4:11). But Satan's messenger would be limited to spiritual blows, dealt by men's tongues rather than their hands, such as the reviling and calumny, which made him the offscouring and scum of all (1 Cor.4:11-13)!

We, who look forward to be with Christ among the celestials in the future, should consider the path which He trod on earth to reach His high place. He first came *down* to suffer pain and shame during His earthly life, quite apart from that which was His as a Sacrifice for our sins by death. He also prayed to have a cup carried aside from Him, but added, "not My will, but Thine,

be done" (Luke 22:42). It is our *privilege* to have fellowship with Him in these sufferings which come to us through the opposition of the Adversary, yet are apparently due to the blows of men, and very often struck by saints who are seeking to exalt themselves in the estimation of the world.

A BACKGROUND  
FOR THE DISPLAY OF GRACE

Let it be very clear in our minds that the great grace we have received is not intended to lift us up now, in the estimation of the world. God is making a background now in order to display His grace. He does not call many wise or powerful or noble (1 Cor.1:26), so that there can be no boasting. And His servants must be kept down to properly portray His grace. Otherwise a man like Paul, instead of being an obscure prisoner in Rome, should have been seated on Caesar's throne, with seven diadems upon his brow, or at least have the triple crown of the supposed successor of Peter, for his ministry far transcended that of the chief of the apostles.

We are told that he prayed *thrice* for the removal of the splinter, the messenger of Satan. He was not answered immediately. There can be no doubt that he was heard the first time. This must have been humiliating to him, before he realized that this was intended to heighten his humiliation. God does not always "answer" the prayer of even the best of His servants without delay. It does not imply some sin or offense, as the associates of Job insisted. Like the splinter itself, it was part of the gracious discipline to keep the apostle from being unduly exalted by the transcendent revelations.

If we need special strength for doing the work which God has given us to do, and some physical weakness

interferes, it is quite in order to pray for its removal. At least, in the writer's own experience, God has answered his petitions for increased vigor, in order to do His work.

Prayer should be the constant attitude of the human heart. But specific petitions, such as this one, should not be constantly repeated, as if God were deaf or indisposed to bless. Suffering and infirmity may be a token of His care and a means of ultimate blessing, as in the case of Job. Nor does it follow that bodily weakness is used to humble in all cases. If the task assigned to a slave requires strength of body or of mind, God has other means of keeping us down. Indeed, the Adversary, being a spirit, is an adept in the use of spiritual say-spears (reviling) and vilification. Job may have suffered more from his false friends accusations than from his physical infirmity.

Twice Paul repeated his request. Is that recorded as the limit to which we should go? By that time we should carefully weigh the situation, and consider whether the evil of which we wish to rid ourselves is not a blessing in disguise. If it humbles us, that is one of the greatest of boons. Even weakness may be a means of displaying God's power. We are only an infinitesimal fraction of humanity, and partake of a minute portion of God's purpose with the whole. He created evil in order to provide a background for blessing, and to reveal Himself through it. So that we should not ask to have all evil extracted from our experience, but rather inquire as to its ultimate effect. Then we may be able to *thank* God for it, rather than entreat Him to remove it.

Paul's specific request was not granted so far as we are aware. But who of humanity, except his Lord, came anywhere near being as powerful as he? Nothing



else can compare with the power of his prison epistles. His infirmity only exemplified the grace it reveals and emphasized the transcendent power it unveils. So that, instead of persevering in prayer for release from his fleshly infirmities, Paul gloried in them and took delight in them and the outrages and persecutions and distresses which came to him for Christ's sake. Instead of praying for their cessation, He gives thanks for the privilege of bearing them. His request was refused, his prayer was not "answered," his desire was not granted, but his spirit was enlightened and *his heart was humbled*, and he bowed in subjection to God's will, which is the great ultimate of all God's creatures.

A.E.K.

*(To be continued)*

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#### EUGENE, OREGON FELLOWSHIP

Several of our friends in Oregon have made plans for a Concordant Scripture Conference to be held March 17-19 in Eugene. The Lord willing, Jim Coram will bring a series of messages, as always presenting the word of the cross, yet with special emphasis on the features and benefits of the Concordant Version. For further information, please contact Ron Williams, Box 1824, Eugene, OR 97440 (Phone 503-689-0702).

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#### EDITOR'S NOTES

We cannot avoid being aware of events in the Middle East, where Israel continues in conflict with Palestinians and with other Arab peoples. There also the conflict between Iraq and Iran, and Iraq's effort to restore Babylon are of keen interest.

The multiplication of terrorism, crime, drug use and financial instability strike us with dismay. I had occasion recently to speak by transatlantic phone with a brother in England about these matters, and he replied that we do not see these things as unbelievers do since we know that while they must occur, nevertheless they are temporary. We have been granted a view of God's "multifarious wisdom, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Eph.3:10).

D.H.H.

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Concordant Version of the Psalms

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PSALM 119:65-96

- 65 You have <sup>d</sup>dealt well with Your servant,  
O Yahweh, according to Your word.
- 66 Teach me good discretion and knowledge,  
For I rely 'upon Your instructions.
- 67 Before I was 'humbled, I was erring,  
+But now I keep Your <sup>sa</sup>promise close.
- 68 You are good and are <sup>c</sup>doing us good;  
Teach me Your statutes.
- 69 The arrogant smear me <sup>on</sup>with falsehood;  
As for me, 'with all my heart I 'preserve Your precepts.
- 70 Stolid like fat is their heart;  
As for me, I revel in Your law.
- 71 It is good for me that I was humbled,  
That I may 'learn Your statutes.
- 72 Better to me is the law of Your mouth  
<sup>f</sup>Than thousands of gold and silver.
- 73 Your hands, they have <sup>d</sup>made me and are establishing me;  
Cause me to understand +so I may learn Your instructions.
- 74 May those fearing You see me and rejoice,  
For I <sup>m</sup>set my hope 'in Your word.
- 75 I know, O Yahweh, that Your judgments are righteous,  
And You have humbled me in faithfulness.
- 76 <sup>pr</sup>Now may Your benignity become 'my comfort,  
According to Your <sup>sa</sup>promise to Your servant.
- 77 May Your compassions come on me +that I may live,  
For Your law is my delectation.
- 78 May the arrogant be ashamed,  
for without cause have they distorted me;  
As for me, I shall meditate 'on Your precepts.

- 79 May those fearing You turn back to me,  
+ Those knowing Your testimonies.
- 80 May my heart become flawless in Your statutes,  
That I may not 'be ashamed.
- 81 My soul is *all* exhausted looking for Your salvation;  
I have *m*set my hope 'in Your word.
- 82 My eyes are *all* exhausted looking for Your *sa* promise,  
' *sa* Asking, When shall You comfort me?
- 83 'Though I have become like an unused wineskin bottle,  
hanging in smoke fumes,  
I have not forgotten Your statutes.
- 84 How long are the days of Your servant?  
When shall You *d*bring judgment 'upon my persecutors'?
- 85 The arrogant dig pits to trap me,  
Who do not act according to Your law.
- 86 All Your instructions are faithful,  
But they persecute me without cause; O help me.
- 87 They would *all* finish me speedily 'from the earth,  
+ Yet I myself have not forsaken Your precepts.
- 88 Revive me according to Your benignity,  
And I shall keep the testimony of Your mouth.
- 89 For the eon, O Yahweh,  
Your word is stationed' in the heavens.
- 90 For generation + after generation is Your faithfulness;  
You have established the earth, and it shall stand.
- 91 They stand today waiting for Your judgments,  
For 'they all are Your servants.
- 92 Unless Your law had been my delectation,  
Then I would have perished in my humiliation.
- 93 For the eon I shall not forget Your precepts,  
For 'by them have You revived me.
- 94 I am Yours; save me,  
For I have sought after Your precepts.
- 95 The wicked stretch out toward ' me to destroy me,  
But I gain 'understanding of Your testimonies.
- 96 I have seen the end 'of every aspiration,  
Yet Your instruction is very wide.

## THE HUMBLLED SERVANT

THE first 8 verses here begin in Hebrew with the letter *teth*, and in fact 5 of them with the same Hebrew word (*tub*), which is rendered "well," "good" and "better" in our translation. Yahweh's dealings, what He teaches, He Himself, David's humbling and Yahweh's law are all termed *good*.

Perhaps the most unexpected of these statements is the line, "It is *good* for me that I was humbled" (v.71). But indeed the psalmist has recognized that before he was humbled he was erring (v.67). Clearly the humbling was having *good* effects.

This theme of the benefits of humbling extends into the next stanza of 8 verses (73-81), all beginning with the Hebrew letter *yod*. Now we read that Yahweh has humbled His servant "in faithfulness" (v.75). It was for good, and it reflects Yahweh's faithfulness to His chosen ones in leading them and shaping their lives truly and steadfastly toward this purpose of good. The "hands" of Yahweh (v.73) are continually at work.

The third stanza given above (verses 81-88) reflects a more somber note as the singer dwells on his *exhaustion* (this word begins with the Hebrew letter *kaph* which is featured in these verses). He is cast down as he thinks of his persecutors. But he clings to God's Word and prays, "Revive me according to Your benignity" (v.88).

This connects with the last stanza given above, where the humbled servant cries out in exultation, "For the eon I shall not forget Your precepts, For by them have You *revived* me" (v.92). Exhaustion has changed to confidence as the Psalmist is reminded that God's Word is solidly established "for the eon" (v.89). These verses begin with the Hebrew letter *lamed*, which as a prefix is used for the preposition "to" or "for." (Verse 94 begins literally, "For You, I," meaning "I am Yours.") God does not leave His humbled servant in despair to perish in his humiliation (v.92), but revives him with His faithful testimonies.

Paul put it this way: "Wherefore we are not despondent, but even if our outward man is decaying, nevertheless that within us is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor.4:16).

## HE IS YOUR PRAISE

“BEHOLD, TO YAHWEH YOUR ELOHIM BELONG THE HEAVENS and the heavens of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. But Yahweh was attached to your fathers to love them, so that He chooses their seed after them, you, out of all the peoples, as it is this day” (Deut.10:14,15).

### THE OWNER OF THE UNIVERSE

In a beginning Elohim had created the heavens and the earth. This was common knowledge in Israel. Now Moses reminded his audience that everything belongs to Yahweh Elohim, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. His grandeur as the Owner of the whole universe makes a vivid contrast with the insignificance of Israel, a nomadic tribe that had yet no country to call its own, being the fewest of all peoples (Deut.7:7).

The term “heavens of the heavens” occurs five more times (*cf* 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron.2:6; 6:18; Neh.9:6; Psalm 148:4); yet English idiom may prefer to say “the heaven of the heavens.” Similarly “holy of holies” (Heb.9:3) refers to the *one* [most] holy place; however, “the holies of holies” (Heb.9:25) represent the *two* holy places of the tabernacle.\*

Christ never entered the holy places of the temple, for these (just as those of the tabernacle in the wilderness) were only “representations of the true”; but He

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\**cf* A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.66, p.142

did enter into heaven itself (Heb.9:24). In the preceding verse they are also called "the examples . . . of that in the heavens."

In New Testament Greek, the singular "heaven" is used in Luke 12:56 where we say sky. Often "heaven" relates to the sphere in which birds fly (Matt.6:26 etc.). The voice that came *out of heaven* (Luke 3:22) was heard on the earth, and the Son of Mankind will be seen coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt.24:30). As there is a plurality of heavens, New Testament Greek uses the singular of the lowest heaven where sound and sights are perceptible on the earth.

Yet the Hebrew has no singular form for heaven and has to use the plural, such as in Exodus 20:22 where we find Yahweh saying to Moses: "You [sons of Israel], you have seen that *from the heavens* I have spoken with you [all]." And so the Hebrew would refer to the higher heaven as "heavens of the heavens," or in good English: the heaven of the heavens.

Solomon too was awed by the grandeur of "Yahweh Elohim of Israel," as displayed in His visible creation. The wise king realized that not even the heavens of the heavens were vast enough to accommodate Him; and so he prayed: "Will Yahweh truly dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold the heavens and the heavens of the heavens themselves cannot contain You; how much less this House that I have built?" (2 Chron.6:18).

The Owner of the heaven and the highest heaven where He is tabernacling in the high and holy place (Isa.57:15), also owns the earth and all that is in it, "every animal of the wildwood, domestic beasts by the thousands" on His mountains (Psalm 50:10), also all the nations of humanity. They are but miniscule elements in His creation, like a drop from a bucket (Isa. 40:15). *But* (against this background) Yahweh was

attached to Israel's fathers, the patriarchs, so as to love them and their seed, and to choose Israel out of all the peoples. In particular, He chose those who stood there before Moses on that day ("as it is this day").

#### CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

"Hence you will circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and you should no longer [or: not again] stiffen your neck" (Deut.10:16). Paul wrote that God, while judging the hidden things, will look for the real Jewhood hidden from the eyes of men, "whose applause is not of men, but of God," for true circumcision is of the heart (*cf* Rom.2:28,29).

Moses was fully aware of this spiritual aspect of circumcision; yet he knew that future generations would stiffen their neck again and would be exiled into other countries, where they would turn back to Yahweh their Elohim. Then *He will circumcise their heart* so as to love Him with all their heart (*cf* Deut. 30:6).

In the days of Jeremiah, many nations circumcised (yet not as a sign of the covenant of Genesis 17:11); but Israelites should circumcise themselves *to Yahweh* and take away the foreskin of *their heart* (Jer.4:4; 9:25,26). Since the heart is the seat of motives and decision making, Yahweh's attachment to them should motivate them to love Him and serve Him *with all their heart* (Deut.10:12).

Moses wanted his audience to make room in their hearts for a more spiritual approach to the demands and duties in everyday life (as intimated in Deuteronomy 10:17-21). He may have been the only one who truly understood what was meant by circumcising the heart to Yahweh and thus dislodging fleshly self-interest from its place of prominence in the human heart. Wherever the term "circumcision" is used, it means

“cutting off the flesh, to make room for the spirit” (as the following study about the basic meaning of this term shows).

#### THE MEANING OF THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION\*

Abram believed the divine promise about a son of his own and that his seed would be comparable to the stars in number. Thus Abram believed in Yahweh, Who reckoned it to him for righteousness (Gen.15:4-6). In this way Abram was justified by his *faith*, not by his acts. Both he and Sarai had faith, but they lacked *patience*; It is one thing to *believe* a promise, yet quite another to *patiently* wait for its fulfillment. But Abraham was justified, in this case, because the fruit of this impatience, Hagar and Ishmael, were absolutely essential as a background or foil for God's way of making true His word.

Here we have a good example of how Yahweh uses human failure in order to carry out His intention, and guides it into the channel that not only fulfills its purpose, but *justifies* the sinner. From the human standpoint, it is generally agreed that Abram failed when he generated Ishmael. Yet this narrative is given to us to show how Abram's *apparent* flaws were *justified by his faith*.

Ishmael was an essential part of the divine plan, and Yahweh used Abram's apparent failure in order to carry it out. This justifies Abram. And so, in general, evil is essential to God's purpose. Thus He can justify those who commit it, who have faith in the sacrifice of Christ, which transforms all temporary evil into eternal good.

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\*A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, excerpted and adapted from vol.49, pp.28-34



The meaning of the *sign* of circumcision should be easier to understand when considered in the context where it was first given. Hitherto Abram had been promised a seed, due to the vivifying power of *faith*, which could not come till Abram's physical power had died. Now, however, he *had* begotten a *fleshly* seed. So this must be marked with a sign that signifies the *cutting off of the flesh*. Elohim is spirit, and cannot make a covenant with decadent flesh unless it has at least some indication of its excision. *Thus circumcision cuts off the flesh, to make way for the spirit.*

#### THE SUPREME ELOHIM AND THE ABSOLUTE LORD

“For Yahweh your Elohim, He is the Elohim of elohim [plural] and the Lord of lords, the El, the great, the masterful and the fear-inspiring One, Who neither lifts up faces in partiality nor takes a bribe, the One executing [righteous] judgment of orphan and widow, the One loving the sojourner, so as to give him bread and garment” (Deut.10:17,18).

In a metaphor, Moses had advised the post-Sinai generation of Israel to circumcise their heart, i.e., to change their attitude toward Yahweh, so as not to become stiff-necked again. They should be motivated to love Him and to serve Him by visualizing His fear-inspiring majesty and greatness (as in the Exodus from Egypt, verse 21), since He is (in Hebrew superlatives) supreme God (God of gods) and absolute Lord (Lord of lords). That is to say that no other gods or lords have any significance beside Him, for He is *the* El, the only One (the Disposer and Subjector, *the* Deity).

Yahweh cares for the individual and his or her needs. He is impartial in righteous judgment and cannot be bribed by those who may outwardly obey His commandments, but fail to love Him with all their heart

and with all their soul and with all their intensity (*cf* Deut.6:4-6). Yahweh even loves the permanent resident alien (the sojourner) who lives among the sons of Israel.

#### HE IS YOUR PRAISE

“So you [too] will love the sojourner, for you became sojourners in the country of Egypt. Yahweh your Elohim shall you fear, and Him shall you serve; to Him shall you cling, and by His name shall you swear. He is [the object of] your praise, and He is your Elohim Who did for you these great and fear-inspiring deeds that your eyes saw. With seventy souls your fathers went down to Egypt. Yet now Yahweh your Elohim has made you as the stars of the heavens for multitude” (Deut.10:19-22).

The enjoinder to love the permanent resident alien in their midst would apply to the Israelitic *community* (*ye* will love, 10:19) when they were settled in the promised land. They should love the sojourner the same way as Yahweh did, “so as to give him bread and garment” (10:18). This divine concern for the fair treatment of the underprivileged (including orphans and widows) should remind the post-Sinai generation of the hard times their parents and grandparents had to endure in Egypt.

Normally, closely related members of a family would support each other in times of crisis (*cf* Lev.25:39-41), as was obviously the case with the 70-member patriarchal family; together they went down to Egypt to escape the famine. The implicit divine warning against any exploitation of orphans, widows and sojourners needed to be emphasized since they had no immediate (or extended) family to protect them. Verses 10:18,19 bring to mind Yahweh’s commandment: “You [singu-

lar] will love your associate as yourself" (Lev.19:18).

The pronouns and verb forms in verses 10:20-22 are all in the singular. Moses was addressing Israel: "Yahweh your Elohim shall you fear, and Him shall you serve; to Him shall you cling." But then the injunction is more pointedly directed to the individual: "By His name shall you swear," followed by the concise statement: "He [is] your praise," just two words in Hebrew; the second (*th'hillah*, praise) occurs only here and in Exodus 15:11 in the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) for praising Yahweh Elohim.

After the rescue from Pharaoh's army, Moses and the sons of Israel sang to Yahweh:

"Let me sing to Yahweh,  
 For He is august, yea august:  
 The horse and its rider He heaved into the sea . . .  
 They submerged as lead in the noble waters . . .  
 Who is like You, ennobled in holiness,  
 [To be] feared [in] praises\*  
 Working marvels?" (Ex.15:1,10,11).

Forty years later (here in Deuteronomy 10:21) Moses used the term "praise" in a similar context: "He [is] your praise, and He is your Elohim Who did for you these great and fear-inspiring deeds . . ." A pious Israelite would take the injunction to heart and would pray: "O Yahweh Elohim, You are my praise" (cf Psalm 109:1; Jer.17:14), and as a householder, he would use this laudation in family worship, preferably on the sabbath. He would remind the members of his household of the times of slavery in Egypt, with no appointed day of rest from continual hard service in clay and bricks (cf Ex.1:14). He would add that they all (including his servants and sojourners) must not do any work

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\*or: Fear-inspiring in praiseworthy deeds.

on the seventh day, so that they could rest and remember the deliverance from Egyptian bondage with praise and thanksgiving (*cf* Deut.5:12-15).

The householder would use the invocation, "You are my praise," at the passover meal. He would call to mind the great and fear-inspiring deeds which his father or grandfather had seen with his own eyes at the time of the Exodus (Deut.10:21), especially the events of the first passover night before they left Egypt (Ex.12:1-50). And he would explain: "We are celebrating passover every year so that you may remember the day of our going forth from the country of Egypt" (*cf* Deut.16:1-3).

In the centuries after Moses' death, the term "praise" (with reference to the Deity) was more widely used. It is recorded four times in Chronicles and Nehemiah, thirty times in the Psalms, and twenty times in the Prophets, mostly in Isaiah, such as in 63:7.

"The benignities of Yahweh  
I shall bring to remembrance,  
The praises of Yahweh  
According to all that Yahweh has dealt out  
to us."

#### PRAISE AND ON-PRAISE

In New Testament Greek, the word "praise" (*ainon*) is preferred when earthly events are in view. But when Paul brings to remembrance things in the invisible realm of the "on-heavens" (above-heavens, *ep-ouranioi*, celestials), he uses the exalted term "on-praise" (*ep-ainon*, laud):

for the laud of the glory of His grace,  
for the laud of His glory (Eph.1:6,12),  
for the glory and laud of God (Phil.1:11).

These terms refer to the benignities of the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which He has dealt out to *us*, who are chosen in Him to be holy and flawless in His sight.

[Hence, as God's chosen ones we are to put on kindness, humility, meekness, and patience with others (*cf* Col.3:12).]

And in love God has designated us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus. These spiritual realities, together with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, are in accord with the delight of His will

*for the laud of the glory of His grace,*

which graces us in the Beloved: in Whom we have the deliverance through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses in accord with the riches of His grace, which He lavishes on us.

Furthermore, our lot was cast in Christ: we were designated beforehand . . . that we should be *for the laud of His glory*, who have a prior expectation in the Christ. In Him we are also sealed with the holy spirit of promise which is an earnest of the enjoyment of our allotment, *for the laud of His glory*.

Moreover, we are praying with the words of Paul (Phil.1:9-11), that we may be sincere and no stumbling block for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ *for the glory and laud of God*.

#### SONSHIP\*

Sonship (or place of a son, *huio-thesia*, son-placing) is the special burden of Paul's epistles; for this word occurs nowhere else. In Romans 9:4 the apostle assigns

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\*A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, excerpted and adapted from vol.31, pp.21,22

it to the Israelites, "whose is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the legislation and the divine service and the promises." In their sphere on the earth, the Israelites (and not the nations) will be the ones who manifest God's glories.

We are not put under law in order that we might receive the *spirit* of sonship and may be getting the *place of a son* [i.e., the sonship] (Gal.4:5).

In this secret administration of the grace of God, we have the *spirit* of sonship now, and groaning in ourselves, we are *awaiting* the sonship, the deliverance of our body. Then we will be "conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom.8:15,23,29).

In Ephesians all of this is summarized and adopted at the beginning: In love, through Christ Jesus, our God and Father designated us beforehand for sonship, for the place of a son for Him

*for the laud of the glory of His grace.*

H.H.R.

*(To be continued)*

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#### REPOSING

Mrs. L. M. Gerringer, 95, of Modesto, California, was put to repose on December 1. In her later years, "Grandma," as she was affectionately known by many, was a supporter of the Concordant Publishing Concern. She was a personal friend of Jim and Sue Coram as well as Wilbur Smith, Jr., of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, who assists us in our tape ministry. She deeply appreciated the grace of God, through Christ our Lord, recognizing Him not only as her own Saviour but as the Saviour of all mankind.

R. W. Honour, 80, of Palm Beach, Queensland, Australia, was also put to repose in 1988. Our friend in the Lord, and for many years our agent in New South Wales, Don Osgood, sent us word of the death of Brother Honour, "a bachelor farmer. He was a rugged, amiable and gentle man, a real believer and fine man in every way, who loved the teaching of universal reconciliation."

## SPIRITUAL ENDOWMENTS

THE tremendous growth and success of the modern charismatic movement has brought considerable respectability and acceptance to practices which nearly all deemed spurious only a few decades ago. Nonetheless, many outside the movement, perhaps out of fear of the unknown and due to their aversion to activities and mannerisms which often seem strange or distasteful, too often reject its claims out of hand. Others, however, are far too ready to accept its claims, being unduly influenced by the fervor and sincerity of many a "charismatic Christian."

On the one hand, those who are profoundly impressed by the knowledge that practically all of the famous scholars and theologians of centuries past did not speak in tongues deem this fact to be a virtual disproof of the modern custom. To them, it is inconceivable that such a vast body of devout and spiritual believers would have lacked such a gift were it of God.

On the other hand, those who are deeply influenced by their own experiences, having become convinced of the rectitude of such a remarkable and intimately personal phenomenon as tongues-speaking, are nearly always full of confidence concerning the validity of their practice. Even though in most cases it is a learned skill, acquired through instruction and example, it is deemed to be a supernatural divine gift. To its practitioners, the proposition that modern glossolalia constitutes the scriptural gift of languages is generally beyond

question. The erstwhile paucity of those possessing the gift is of no moment to the convinced charismatic, for he has tasted for himself and is acquainted with countless others who have done the same. He does not *think* he is correct; he *knows* that he is.

In reply to all such imaginings and appeals to man—whether to venerated church history or to exalted contemporary experience—we can only say, “Let no one be boasting in men” (1 Cor.3:21). “If we are obtaining the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater” (1 John 5:9). It is of no consequence whatever, insofar as truth is concerned, whether any certain belief should be popular or unpopular, applauded or condemned among men. Our appeal can only be to the Scriptures themselves. What do we have to do with the flesh—including “Christian” flesh—whether in its annals or its affections?

#### THE BASIS OF LANGUAGES

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Now concerning the spiritual endowments, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant” (1 Cor.12:1). He begins by reminding them of their own former unbelief and spiritual darkness, saying, “You are aware that when you were of the nations, you were led away to the voiceless idols, as ever you were led. Wherefore I am making known to you that no one, speaking by God's spirit, is saying, ‘anathema is Jesus.’ And no one is able to say ‘Lord is Jesus’ except by holy spirit” (1 Cor.12:2,3). Before God began to enlighten them, the Corinthian believers were just as blind as anyone else, and were therefore to recognize the cause of the glorious change that had occurred in their lives for what it was, the powerful operation of God's holy spirit.

Since the Corinthians, however, were minors in



Christ and were fleshly (1 Cor.3:1,2), they were “puffed up, one over the one, against the other” (1 Cor.4:6). Consequently, they did not realize that every good thing they enjoyed, including those things which others among their brethren may not have possessed, was God’s gift to them in such a way that any boasting in themselves was completely unwarranted. “Now what have you which you did not *obtain*? Now if you *obtained* it also, *why are you boasting* as though *not obtaining*?” (1 Cor.4:7).

The apostle Paul makes it plain that *all* that we have—whether riches, health, success, understanding, self-discipline, willingness, good character, faith or even some special spiritual endowment—is that which we have but received from God. Everything we possess is given to us by God, even those things which we “take” to ourselves through much time and effort. “He Himself *gives* to all life and breath and *all*” (Acts 17:25).

When noting the differences between ourselves and others, do we ever stop to think, and then face the fact, that all these things have their own cause? They are all caused to be as they are. Do we realize, then, that it is altogether foolish to be “puffed up” about our own virtues and powers while looking down upon others in their weaknesses and incapacities?

Among the Corinthians, “not all [were] speaking in languages. Not all [were] interpreting” (1 Cor.12:30). Rather than being proud, and imagining that their fellow believers *could have* had the ability to do so but had somehow failed to supply something of their own toward the acquisition of this power, those who did have a gift of language were to understand that “there are apportionments of *graces* [OF-GRACE-effects, *charismatōn*] yet the same spirit, and there are apportion-

ments of services, and the same Lord, and there are apportionments of operations, yet the same God, *Who is operating all in all*, . . . apportioning to each his own, *according as He is intending*" (1 Cor.12:4-6,11).

At that time, the apostle Paul himself possessed a certain special endowment of language, and exercised it more than any of the Corinthians (1 Cor.14:18). And, as he said concerning another gift, that of continence, "I want all men to be as myself, also, *but* each has his own *gracious* gift [*charisma*] from God, one indeed, thus, yet one thus" (1 Cor.7:7).

The English adjective "charismatic" is from the Greek noun for "grace," *charisma*, JOY [GRACE]-effect. It speaks of that which is the *product* of God's favor, not that which is given as a reward or due to qualification. The leaders of the modern religious movement which styles itself the "charismatic" movement, however, while placing much emphasis on speaking in tongues, nearly always insist that "the gift" is readily available to all who will merely do this or that in order to get it. Such also claim that the phenomenon of modern glossolalia is an integral and vital element in a spiritual walk. Indeed, they often thus distinguish themselves from other believers who do not share their views on this theme (or perhaps their related views concerning such things as bodily healing or forms of worship) by speaking of themselves as the dispensers of "the *full* gospel." Though they may speak of "grace," the fact is that in this matter of tongues, and concerning other endowments as well, they insist that most, if not all, finally depends not upon the grace of God but upon man and his "free will."

Nonetheless, the basis of one's possession of any spiritual endowment—in any era and under any administration—is the all-sufficient *grace* of God, the

endowment itself being possessed by its recipient solely due to His will.

“THESE LANGUAGES OF OURS”

The Greek word for “tongue,” man’s principal organ of speech, is *glōssa*, from which our word “glossary” is derived. When it is used literally (e.g., Mark 7:35) it is translated “tongue” in the CV. When it is used figuratively, as a figure of association for the body of words which are common to a community or nation, it is translated “language.”

It is beyond question that the “tongues” spoken on the day of Pentecost were normal coherent languages and not unintelligible ecstatic utterances. “And at the fulfillment of the day of Pentecost they [the twelve] were all alike in the same place. And suddenly there came out of heaven a blare, even as of a violent, carrying blast, and it fills the whole house where they were sitting. And seen by them were dividing tongues as if of fire, and one is seated on each one of them. And they are filled with holy spirit, *and* they begin to *speak* in different languages, according as the spirit gave them to declaim.

“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, pious men from every nation under heaven. Now when this sound occurs, the multitude came together and was confused, for each one hears them speaking in his own *vernacular* [*dialektos*] . . .” As these Jewish pilgrims themselves declared, concerning what they heard, “[we are] hearing, each in our own vernacular in which we were born” (Acts 2:8), “we are hearing them speaking in these languages of ours of the great things of God” (Acts 2:11).

This passage is the only passage in all the Scripture which actually describes the nature of the gift of lan-

guages given by the holy spirit, and its testimony is clear. The only other two occurrences concerning this gift in the book of Acts are in 10:46 and 19:6. There is certainly nothing in either of these passages to show that that which occurred was the giving forth of unintelligible sounds or ecstatic non-linguistic utterances. To the contrary, since no description is given, it is evident that Luke expects the reader to have prior knowledge of what he means from his explicit description already given in chapter 2.

Like those of Acts 10:46 and 19:6, the new tongues or "languages" of Mark 16:17 are not described. The entire list of items (Mark 16:17,18), however, are said to be *signs*, signs of the then-imminent terrestrial kingdom, and refer to miraculous abilities such as those exercised by the apostles. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the tongues referred to are the miraculous languages described elsewhere, in Acts 2.

Furthermore, the account itself (in Mark 16:20), besides the general record of the book of Acts, makes it evident that the commission spoken of here was fulfilled. Such practices were hardly the norm for ordinary believers even during the period covered by Acts, much less for those living beyond the close of that period.

Despite its length, 1 Corinthians 12-14, the remaining, and longest, portion of Scripture which includes any information concerning the gift of languages, does not state explicitly what the tongues are. Certain passages in 1 Corinthians 14, however, obviously refer to actual languages, while others are simply not definitive. Yet even in these indefinite passages, it can be demonstrated that actual *language* fits the context very well. Though in a few such passages some may *infer* or *suppose* the presence of ecstatic utterances,

since such passages, in fact, are simply indefinite, it can hardly be proved that even any of these texts must refer to non-linguistic, incommunicative ecstatic sounds and not to actual language.

Therefore, any who engage in non-linguistic utterances purported to be the the scriptural gift of languages, do not do so in response to revelation but to speculation. Such "tongues" are not of faith, but only of inference. It follows, then, that their supposed interpretations are merely a "parading of what one has [heard], feignedly [*eikê*, SIMULATEDLY], puffed up by his fleshly mind" (cp Col.2:18). Such "interpretations" are by no means a word of the Lord. It is not that the intention is to pretend, but that the action, nonetheless, is imitation or *simulated*, not genuine.

#### THE PURPOSE OF LANGUAGES

1 Corinthians 14:22 is the only passage which states what the purpose of the true spiritual endowment of languages is. It is preceded, first of all, by the entreaty, "Brethren, do not become little children in disposition" (1 Cor.14:20a). Regrettably, as the entire tenor of 1 Corinthians 14 makes evident, hitherto, some of the Corinthian believers had indeed been disposed to "showing off" their gift of languages. One should never seek to display even a genuine gift at an inopportune time, inexpediently, or for an unsuitable purpose. Therefore, Paul's counsel is, "in evil be minors, yet in disposition become mature" (1 Cor.14:20b).

The apostle continues on, saying, "In the law it is written that, In different languages and by different lips shall I speak to this people, and neither thus will they be hearkening to Me, the Lord is saying" (1 Cor. 14:21). Paul's inspired conclusion then follows, and let us take special note of it: "So that languages are for a

*sign*, not to the believers, but to the unbelievers” (1 Cor.14:22).

It is therefore unscriptural to regard the purpose of tongues as devotional or as a means of private prayer and praise to God. And Paul has already made it clear that languages are not for use in the ecclesia, or assembly: “I thank God that I speak in a language more than all of you. *But, in the ecclesia*, do I want to speak five words with my mind, that I should be instructing others also, or ten thousand words in a language?” (1 Cor.14:18,19).

The passage to which Paul refers is Isaiah 28:11,12. It prophesies destruction upon Israel. The context speaks of God’s judgment upon His people due to their unbelief (apparently in reference to the the invasion of the Assyrians, who spoke a language foreign to the Israelites). Paul, drawing a certain principle from this passage (which, in itself, deals with an entirely different matter), says, “*So that*” — because of the the validity of the principle which he has noted in Isaiah 28:11, 12—it is evident that God’s purpose in the gift of languages which He had given to some of the Corinthians was that their ability to speak in languages different than their own might serve simply as a *sign*, and at that, not as a sign to the believers themselves, but as a sign to the unbelievers in their locality (1 Cor.14:22).

The general principle which Paul notes in the passage from Isaiah, which he therefore recognizes as also being true in the case of any proper implementation of special languages among the Corinthians, is that whenever God speaks to those who are “in flesh” (Rom.8:9), those who are not energized by His spirit, *they will not hearken* to His message, regardless of what it may consist of, and even if its means should be most extraordinary or even miraculous.

The unbeliever receives a sign, a sign that God gives spiritual endowments, but he does not accept it. A "sign" is simply "an act or circumstance which has a meaning or message" (KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p. 270). Acts 2:4-11, on the day of Pentecost, is a specific instance in which tongues served as a sign to unbelieving onlookers. It seems likely that this was the case as well concerning the prophesied "new languages" of Mark 16:17-20, under Christ's commission to herald the evangel to the entire creation. Paul explains that languages were to continue to serve as a sign to unbelievers through the testimony of the Corinthians.

In all cases, the basic testimony set forth to the lost is that, This Jesus, Who died for men's sins, is the very Christ of God, Whom God raises and exalts to His right hand (*cp* Acts 2:32,33; 1 Cor.15:3).

It may be that the languages signified as well that the nations would be included among the beneficiaries of the evangel of Christ. Its recipients were not to be confined to the people of Israel, but would include "whosoever the Lord our God should be calling to Him" (*cp* Acts 2:39). "For thus the Lord has directed us: I have appointed you for 'a light of the nations; for you to be for salvation as far as the limits of the earth.' Now, on hearing this, the nations rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord, and they believe, whoever were set for life eonian" (*cp* Acts 13:47,48). Faith is truly the gift of God, granted to His chosen ones. Otherwise, even where God's testimony is wholly beneficent, attended by the miraculous and of the most glorious nature possible, men will still not believe what He says.

As remarkable as it may seem, the purpose of the miraculous languages was to afford a sign to the *unbeliever* (1 Cor.14:22a). This reminds us of Philippians

1:28 where Paul explains that whenever unfaithful believers oppose the truth, this is “to them a proof of destruction [or “loss”].”

In the first of these matters, a sign of divine salvation is given to *unbelievers!* In the second, proof of their error is given to *opposing* believers! Yet in both cases, because of human stubbornness (*cf* Rom. 11:32), God’s testimony serves not to establish man’s faith but as a testimony against his unbelief.

To the recalcitrant unbeliever, God’s “sign” signifies nothing. To him, “Christ crucified” is either a stumbling block or abject foolishness. Likewise, to the deceived saint, God’s “proof” proves nothing, for he already has “the truth,” no matter how strongly deluded he may actually be. Yet in each of these matters, to those who have eyes to see, God’s sign is significant and His proof is convincing.

We know, then, at least for a time and among certain believers, whether in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Ephesus, or Corinth, that the miraculous languages which attended their testimony to the saving work of Christ thus served as a sign to unbelievers.

Yet what we actually need for ourselves today — and no matter how good certain popular customs may *seem* — is the fostering (NOURISHMENT) which can only come from “*the words of the faith and of the ideal teaching which you have fully followed*” (1 Tim. 4:6). It is much easier to gain a soulish proficiency in zealous vocalizings while calling these things spiritual than it is to become *sound in the faith* (Titus 2:2), spiritually endowed so as to be loving our Lord Jesus Christ not only with good intentions, but *in incorruption*. “Grace be with all who are loving our Lord Jesus Christ *in incorruption! Amen!*” (Eph. 6:24).

James Coram

(*To be continued*)



## GRACE GIVEN TO PAUL

(Romans 15:14-16)

IN OUR DAY, over nineteen hundred years since Paul sent this letter to the believers in Rome, we can hardly comprehend the distinctiveness of its message and the boldness of the apostle in directing attention to it. Many believers even fail to notice the emphasis that the apostle places on the special character of his message, let alone grasp the significance of this stress.

But the emphasis is there; Paul does insist that there is something unique about his apostleship, and we should not ignore it. Note that in the very beginning of this letter, Paul introduces himself as “a called apostle, *severed* for the evangel of God . . . concerning His Son . . . Jesus Christ, our Lord, through Whom we obtained grace and apostleship for faith obedience *among all the nations*” (Rom.1:1-5).

And concerning his ministry, he writes, “To both Greeks and barbarians, to both wise and foolish, a debtor am I. Thus this eagerness of mine to bring the evangel to you also, who are in Rome” (Rom.1:14,15).

Later while considering God’s purpose for Israel, Paul writes, “Now to you am I saying, to the nations, in as much as I am the apostle of the nations, I am glorifying my dispensation . . .” (Rom.11:13).

It is not only that he addresses Gentiles of every sort but that the message itself is characterized by its stress on God’s gratuitous grace in Christ Jesus, and this for all without distinction. “Yet now, apart from law, a

righteousness of God is manifest (being attested by the law and the prophets), yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith, for all, and on all who are believing, for there is no distinction, for all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God" (3:21-23).

The fact that the message recognizes no fleshly distinctions between peoples actually makes a distinction between the message itself and that given to Israel which did recognize distinctions between peoples. That Christ came as "the Servant of the Circumcision" (Rom.15:8) shows that His ministry in the Land was a narrow one, at least in its immediate concerns. It was given to Paul to minister to the nations, and what he was given to say differed in many important respects from what was taught in the Old Testament or in the ministry of Jesus to the Circumcision.

The promises listed in Romans 15:9-12 are taken from all three portions of Israel's Scriptures, the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, but Paul's ministry was not primarily concerned with testifying to the truth of these promises. Here he uses these Old Testament passages to show precedence for his message but not at all to imply they were direct prophecy of his ministry. He was bringing a message to Jews and Gentiles alike that was new and different, not just in its address but in its character and its substance.

What Paul had to say *accorded* with the patriarchal promises, especially where they spoke of God's purposes for the nations. But the key for Paul's evangel was *grace*, not law or covenant, and its substance was a revelation of "the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:15). This emphasis is unique in all of Scripture.

This was a surprising, even a revolutionary message when Paul began to proclaim it, so much so that it

needed frequent repetition and clarification even within the confines of a single epistle. Consequently, now at the close of Romans, where he wraps up what he has to say about our service in the Lord, our walk and disposition toward others, the apostle relates this matter of deportment with the unusual character of his ministry. Not only the teaching which we believe, but the behavior we are to manifest has a distinctive flavor, which is exhibited in Paul's own calling and motivated by the evangel he brought.

#### PAUL'S PERSUASION

*Now I myself also am persuaded concerning you, my brethren, that you yourselves also are bulging with goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to be admonishing one another (Rom.15:14).*

To be sure, there is nothing unique in setting forth goodness and knowledge and admonition as ideals. Yet it is significant that Paul does not present this ideal behavior in terms of requirement, nor even in terms of entreaty (as he often uses), but in terms of personal conviction! Paul does not speak even in terms of *possibility* as we so often do; he is persuaded that goodness and spiritual usefulness is present in the believers, whether or not it is being enjoyed or manifested.

In addition, it is one who was born a Hebrew of Hebrews who now is persuaded of goodness in others, even non-Israelites. It is one who was trained as a Pharisee at the feet of a great and learned teacher, Gamaliel, who speaks assuredly of the knowledge of God possessed by everyday, common people, and mostly Gentiles to boot! It was one who had been a leader in his generation who speaks with confidence of the abilities of these Romans to admonish one another. It is

*he himself* who is persuaded of this concerning *them themselves*. And he speaks not of fellow Pharisees, but of Greeks, barbarians, wise and foolish, Jews and Gentiles of all sorts and even of the worst sorts since they were all sinners and enemies and irreverent.

Paul's persuasion was an aspect of his faith. In believing God's love is seen in Christ's death for sinners (Rom.5:8), this man became convinced that nothing could get in the way of this love and thwart its operation (Rom.8:38,39). So also, in believing that Christ has taken sinners to Himself apart from fleshly distinctions (Rom.15:7), Paul became persuaded that the seeds for goodness and knowledge and usefulness in service to God's glory were implanted in our hearts.

#### WRITING DARINGLY

*... Yet more daringly do I write to you, in part, as prompting you, because of the grace being given to me from God... (15:15).*

Paul was persuaded that goodness was superabounding in the believers in Rome because he knew the effects of the word of grace in the lives of those who are believing. He knew that God's spirit operates this way where there is faith in the evangel. Grace prompts us in goodness, in knowledge and ability to help others.

But also the fruit of graciousness in the believer prompts other believers in right behavior. Hence in daring to be open and frank about the effects of grace, Paul was reinforcing a quality that was already there.

To be sure, many in Rome, like us today, were immature and self-centered, so that the goodness and helpfulness that had been implanted had not made much growth in their lives. But its development in Paul, as shown by his genuine love and concern for these people and his assurance of God's power for

salvation in the evangel they believed, is calculated to encourage its growth in them.

Now this is indeed a daring approach! For human beings as we are in the flesh, it is perhaps even a hopeless and a foolish approach. But where God's grace is present, where the evangel brought by Paul is received and retained in faith, it is the right and proper approach and the only one that will effectively prompt goodness in our lives, true knowledge of God and His ways and real ability to instruct and admonish others for mutual benefit. We must never be timid about heralding God's grace or hesitant in manifesting graciousness toward others, no matter how few seem to receive the message or how strong the opposition may appear. These are channels God's spirit uses today in bringing His chosen ones to maturity.

#### GRACE FROM GOD

Paul's labors were not sustained by strength accumulated through his years of instruction in the law and dedication to the high standards it set forth. His ministry was not built on the disciplined habits of his background as a Pharisee. Instead, all that he said and wrote was in response to and in awareness of the grace which was given to him from God:

*... for me to be the minister of Christ Jesus for the nations, acting as a priest of the evangel of God that the approach present of the nations may be becoming well received, having been hallowed by holy spirit (Rom.15:16).*

It was God's grace that Paul was given this ministry: "... it delights God, who severs me from my mother's womb and calls me through His grace, to unveil His Son in me that I may be evangelizing Him among the nations..." (Gal.1:15,16); "... the grace of our Lord

overwhelms, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim.1:14); "You may not be ashamed, then, of the testimony of our Lord, nor yet of me, His prisoner, but suffer evil with the evangel in accord with the power of God, Who saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian, yet now is being manifested through the advent of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, Who, indeed, abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel of which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher of the nations" (2 Tim.1:8-11).

It was God's grace that is revealed in this ministry graciously given to Paul: "For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them" (Eph.2:8-10).

So also, as we now read in Romans 15, it was God's grace that prompted Paul to speak daringly of the remarkable effects of this grace in the believers' lives. "Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. Not according to flesh are they walking, but according to spirit, for the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus frees you from the law of sin and death . . . . For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, 'Abba, Father!'" (Rom.8:1,2,15).

A life bulging with goodness and filled with the knowledge of God's righteousness (*cf* Rom.3:21), love (*cf* Rom.5:8) and wisdom (*cf* Rom.11:33) and ability to instruct others for their benefit and to God's glory (*cf*

Rom.15:5-7) is our "logical divine service" (Rom. 12:1,2). It is our offering unto God. Here in Romans 15:16 Paul calls it "the approach present of the nations" (since he has the Gentile believers especially in mind). It is a living sacrifice of our selves, a presentation to God of a humble and mutual disposition, a walk of love, a spirit of peace, patience and respectability. This is the ideal sacrifice that Paul was laboring as a "priest" to present to God. This was a special ministry given to him, that indeed in its face-to-face aspect was coming to a close as he wrote this epistle, but that nevertheless remains full of meaning to us with vital application to our lives.

"While the priests at Jerusalem still offered the sacrifices according to the law, their ministrations were not acceptable to God, for they had rejected the true Lamb of God. God had no pleasure in the blood of slain beasts, for the hearts of the offerers were far from Him. Is it not a marvel how God, in His wisdom, finds true worshipers among the despised aliens, who offer themselves as living sacrifices well pleasing to Him? In spirit, Paul's ministry among the nations takes the place of the divine ritual at Jerusalem. He officiates as a priest. Though not sanctified by the altar at Jerusalem, they were hallowed by the holy Spirit. So it ought to be today. Though the temple worship has ceased, it is our privilege so to walk as to be a sweet savor of Christ."\*

To sum up, we have seen that the grace of God was given to Paul, making him a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations. This grace had extended to his efforts to present an offering from the nations to God, prompting the believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice to

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\*A. E. Knoch: CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.245

God, to grow in mutuality and love. For us today, this service of Paul's holds tremendous significance. It clarifies our position and makes our own mission as believers in this era more clear. We thus are learning the lesson of grace and are being trained to set aside selfish, fleshly ambitions and to be zealous for ideal acts (*cf* Titus 2:11-14).

God's holy Spirit operates in us today as it did in the ministry of Paul to the nations so many centuries ago. It is the spirit that accompanies the hearing and believing of the evangel of grace (*cf* Gal.3:5) and that bears the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control (Gal.5:22,23). Even as overwhelming grace was given to the "foremost" of sinners, producing such a wondrous offering of fragrance unto God, so may this revelation of overwhelming grace become effective in us, so that our service also becomes an approach present, well received.

D.H.H.

*(To be continued)*

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MELVIN JOHNSON

Our brother, Melvin Johnson, of St. Paul, Minnesota, fell asleep in Christ on Monday, December 12, 1988, yet we rejoice knowing that when Christ, Who is our life, is made manifest, so shall Melvin be made manifest with Him at His appearing.

He leaves many of us with fond memories of his gracious, quiet spirit in teaching God's good news by word of mouth and by the printed page, especially through the pages of the periodical, *Treasures of Truth*. We all long to manifest a greater measure of the disposition of Christ—nothing according with faction, nor yet according with vainglory—but with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self, not each noting that which is his own, but each that of others also (Phil.2:3,4). It pleased God to give Melvin a remarkable measure of this disposition, unto the edification of all who knew him. Goodnight dear Brother; we shall see you in the morning.

Elwood Gustafson



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MARCH 1989  
BEING THE SECOND NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY

## EDITORIAL

THE PATHWAY OF FAITH, currently being considered in Brother Gelesnoff's articles on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph is certainly an astounding provision. Abraham lived in a world filled with treachery and selfish ambition, yet he waited for the city "whose Artificer and Architect is God" (Heb.11:10). He could not see this city, but in the vision of faith his attention was firmly focused upon it.

Sometimes it must seem to our readers that we have no concept of what is going on in the world. Instead of dealing with the "large" issues of our day, such as wars, human rights, crime and drugs, we draw attention to the connection between ancient Israel's love for Yahweh and the charges given them for obedience. Instead of debating the rights and wrongs of conflicts in the Middle East or capitalism versus socialism we consider the changes that developed during Paul's ministry, and what the apostle meant by "maturity."

Can Brother Knoch's testimony of nearly forty years ago about unspoken prayer during the process of answering the doorbell, or hasty expressions of thankfulness to God even in the annoying interruptions of daily routine, have any relevancy today in the frenetic pace of the "computerized age"? Can Brother Gelesnoff's turn-of-the-century English prose convey spiritual edification to minds that are used to simplified "tv talk" and condensed thought? For that matter, can we even write about the Psalms in a meaningful and beneficial way today?

We are convinced that God's Word *is* relevant and

meaningful to us all, no less today than 50 or 100 or 1900 years ago. And God's Word translated concordantly should be even more edifying in the believer's life. Consequently, this is the center of our attention.

It is precisely because we have even more interruptions to our routines in 1989 than in 1951 that we need to cultivate the practice of praise and prayer. Giving time to thank God for everything that comes our way is increasingly important to us as opportunity for quiet meditation decreases. Our faith will not grow without this habit and attitude of prayer, and certainly our peace and patience and happiness will not increase.

There is much profit to be gained from a grasp of the many lessons taught by God's dealings with Israel in the past. The pattern of love for God leading to obedience, discussed in this issue by Brother Rocke, is something that bursts forth into full blossom in the evangel of grace that Paul brought. The development from physical and soulish gifts to the maturity of faith, expectation and love, which Brother Coram deals with here, applies very much to the here and now. Although the world does not take much note of these things, i.e., God's operations in the hearts and lives of believers, they are most significant.

We rejoice when other brethren proclaim the evangel of God's grace and love. And we thank our God and Father for the opportunity to compete together with them in making known God's faithful and welcome word concerning His purpose and achievements.

The more we center our attention on what God has said to us, as Abraham centered his attention on the promises given to him, the better we will be able to cope with the pressures of modern life, and the more we will be filling our proper places in this world and time where God has placed us.

D.H.H.

## THE PRACTICE OF PRAISE AND PRAYER

GOD will become our All in the consummation. The practice of praise and prayer is the approximation of this ideal in the present. In a busy life there may be little time and few occasions for formal, lengthy petitions or supplications, phrased in precise terms and given audible expression. These have their place, but are by no means essential to the constant and continuous attitude of worshipful submission, so that the least incident in life calls forth a conscious thought of thankfulness and an appeal for divine intervention. A few practical examples may help to illustrate this.

The doorbell rings. There is no time to retire to a place of prayer. We are not aware who it is, or what it is, that brings a visitor to our door, so there is no possibility of praising for specific blessing or praying for definite guidance. All that we really know is our own inability to cope with any matter apart from God, and that He is working all together for our good. Our desire is not only to be well pleasing to Him, but also to be used as a channel of blessing to others. To put all this into words would be improper and impossible, and a very bad introduction to our visitor, who would be patiently waiting outside or impatiently ringing the bell. So we bow our head in spirit, with a fleeting consciousness of thankfulness and petition to Him, and open the door.

The telephone rings. We are right in the midst of this

sentence, let us say, and want to finish it. But the telephone is not very patient. It persists in ringing, and is well calculated to make us impatient. Why should it come just at this time, when we are trying so hard to serve the saints? But such thoughts are swiftly banished by the underlying consciousness that everything—even the telephone—is cooperating for our good, and we instantly thank God for it and pray for His presence and help in responding to the message which may come over the wires. Once more, we may have no idea whatever of what is coming, so have no basis for definite petitions, although these may well follow, without saying a word, as we listen to the voice of the speaker.

#### WHAT MUST BE

In the consummation we will know that all must be *right*. Now we know that much must be *wrong*. We know God's ultimate *will*, but we do not know His present *intention*; indeed His will is much *withstood* during this eon. “It is a necessity for snares to be coming” (Matt.18:17). If we knew all that *must be*, and its purpose in God's plan, we would praise, but have little incentive to pray. As in the case of Israel, God is not leading us out of the servitude of sin into the freedom of His sons by the shortest and most direct route, for we need to learn, by the want and woe of the wilderness, the evil of our own hearts, and the goodness and grace of His fellowship and favor.

Cooperation with the inevitable is the philosopher's substitute for submission to the will of God. It is far better than fighting with your fate, but it is only the way of a slave cringing before his hard-hearted master, not of a son delighting in the doings of his father. It is fatalism, and fosters fear and despair, nor does it promote prayer. Even resignation to the irresistible is far

from the exultant acceptance of the perfect and praiseworthy will of God. No impersonal force, no matter how powerful, can take the place of a living, enlightening, loving Father, Whom we know, and whose ultimate He has made known to us. We cannot appeal to mere principles, nor applaud them, nor love them. Yet we do not merely cooperate with God, but lift our inmost hearts to Him in prayer and praise.

How ignorant were those who were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt! And how helpless! And how stubborn! Yet how essential were these failures in order to reveal Yahweh's pity and power and provision! They did not know the way in the wilderness waste. Yet they knew more than most men do today of their goal and the intervening journey. They had heard of their forefathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all of whom had lived in the promised land. We have had no such forerunners. The trials and tribulations ahead of us are hidden from our gaze. Nothing can be relied upon but the assigned manna, the water from the Rock and the shining Shekinah, for with us it is always night so far as our future down here is concerned. We are constantly driven to prayer, because of our ignorance.

What living thing is so helpless as a human infant! It can do little except to cry to its parents in its distress. Thus it is taught its need of a mother and father. But, when it becomes mature and strong, it is apt to forget that, in a higher, a spiritual sense, it is just as helpless as a babe, and its dependence on God is just as real. But few fully realize this, even after God has called them and imparted to them His spirit, so that they now cry to Him, "Abba, Father." He must graciously use weakness or failure, or some form of evil to bring them to a realization of it, so that they cry to Him as a little child. This is prayer. Eventually some may learn to

come to Him at all times with their requests, and to solve their perplexities. It is possible to live in constant communion, like a beloved son with his father. This will be the fortunate fate of all in the consummation. It will be the full fruitage of prayer.

How poor is a newborn babe apart from its parents! Unless provided with food and shelter, it would soon perish. Other animals are at least clothed, and need no protecting garments. It pleases God to bring those to whom He will allot the riches of the universe into the world as the most needy creatures of all creation. Apart from their parents, what have they? Unless provided internally with nourishment and externally with clothing and housing by those who generated them, they would perish long before they reach maturity. Indeed, a vast proportion do not develop into self-supporting, life transmitting members of the race. And is that not the case in the spiritual sphere as well? Those whom God calls seldom realize their sonship and its privileges. Hence they are much better beggars from the Father, than acclaimers of the Deity.

Most of the saints are absorbed by their private fortunes or, rather, misfortunes, and these monopolize their praise and prayer. And, indeed, they should be occupied with the way by which God is leading them into a knowledge of Himself. It would be better, however, if they were more engaged by their future expectation, the prospect that lies beyond this time of trial and testing. But far better still, let us view all from God's standpoint: "*what must be,*" as much as possible. A correct knowledge of His purpose and plan as a whole, and of as much detail as possible, is of the greatest value in our intercourse with God, and will keep us, to some extent, free from praying for that which must *not* be.

## PRAYER MOVEMENTS

Many of the great "prayer movements," have been quite contrary to God's present intention. For instance, it is God's expressed *will* that all mankind should be saved (1 Tim.2:4), and He will carry out His determination at the consummation, when all will be vivified and reconciled (1 Cor.15:22; Col.1:20). We do not need to *pray* for that. Instead, we should *praise* Him for thus fulfilling one of the deepest desires which He has implanted in our hearts. But to pray for "the evangelization of the world *in this generation*," to implore, if not pester Him "to keep His Word," to "lay hold on the promises," none of which apply to the present, leads to apparent failure and brings down dishonor and disgrace upon His great name.

We should know the great outlines of "what must be" as unveiled in God's revelation, so that we can at least avoid insisting that God must go contrary to His revealed intentions in this secret administration. But He has disclosed only the broad outlines. In order to assure the fulfillment of His promises He must also fix the fate, and determine the numberless details in the life and experience of every single soul. These He has not revealed. It is well that we should know the outline and the outcome of His plan, but it would not be well if He had revealed all the infinite incidentals of each life. What a Bible that would make! Indeed, the world could not hold the volumes! He reaches down to us through the darkness to guide us on the way. We must learn the lesson that we are lost the moment that we lose our grip upon His helping hand.

But let us not lose the comforting consolation that *all* cooperates for our good. Even that which is contrary to His will is in accord with His intention. If we let go of His hand and stray away into the darkness of distance

from His presence, *the evil itself* will be used by God to drive us back, and becomes the principal incentive to prayer and praise.

#### HUMANITY DEPENDENT

Is it not clear that mankind was created to be dependent? Its constitution and its experience are all designed for subordinate reception of blessing. Even its likeness to the Deity helps to teach the same lesson. When those below us are in harmonious subjection and obedience, they are happy. The function of generation, which normally makes us dependent infants and children and then, as parents, gives us dependents, is designed to teach us the blessed portion of thankful, trusting obedience. How many have heaved a sigh for the happy days of their childhood! How many have wished they had someone to whom they could go as a child to its parent, confident that all would be well? All these experiences are but a preparation for that delightful day when all will look to the Deity as their Father, thankful and assured that all is in His beneficent hand and heart.

#### THE BEST MEDICINE

A state of constant submission, thankfulness and assurance that God is operating all together for our good is a tree of life to all who live under its shade and enjoy its fruit. All the so-called "faith healing" of believers or unbelievers, cannot be compared to it. I have known of many who acclaimed to be healed of bodily ills by believing the evangel of the kingdom that God intervenes miraculously now, as He will in the future, so that all our ills can be instantly cured if we have enough faith. There is some distorted truth in the basic idea of so-called "Christian science," and "faith heal-



ing," for the mental state powerfully affects the physical functions (even if the faith is false), but it is far more healthful to believe the undiluted truth of God's benevolent designs, and His constant care and provision for the evils which must mar the way. We have the true, the trustworthy, the triumphant "faith healing!"

Physical relaxation is one of the best cures for the nerves. A beloved brother in Christ once came to me in a very excited state, so that he could hardly express himself. So I insisted that he be seated, lean far back, stretch out his legs, let his arms hang limply at his side, and drop his jaw so that his mouth was open. It was not long till his nervousness vanished and the tenseness of his muscles disappeared. He was relaxed and felt much better. Even more benefits may be obtained in the spiritual sphere if we fall back wholly on God and rid ourselves of the spiritual strain under which almost all of us live in this ferocious era. Its therapeutic value is greater than that of any school of medicine, for it is, to a limited degree, the normal condition of creation, which will be fully realized only after vivification.

Everyone today seems to crave *security* because he feels *insecure*. Some "lay aside something for a rainy day," although this is outmoded by insurance of various kinds, health, job, and death. The socialistic governments seek to make their subjects secure from the cradle to the grave. But the feeling of *insecurity* persists. An early experience taught the writer how little reliance may be placed in these man-made schemes. His father belonged to a lodge which paid quite a sum to survivors at death. This money came from the living members. But, as he was the last of all to die, there were no others to pay. So all the "security" was a large expense for nothing.

The only secure "security" lies in reliance on God.

Everyone is convinced of this in case of death. No one can assure any benefits to the deceased. In truth, no one can really assure a dying mortal of anything, not even taxes or death. The saints who live until the descent of Christ to the air or His coming in glory to the mount of Olives, cannot be assured of death. And then they won't pay taxes either! The only real security, without the feeling of insecurity, lies in constant contact with God in prayer and praise. Then, whatever evil comes, even it will be invaluable in its operation for our spiritual welfare.

#### DIVINE INFINITUDE

God is not only guiding the stars of limitless space, but controlling the course of the composite molecule. His hand cannot only span the universe, but His power can split the atom. Some may have thought that it makes little difference if an atom explodes or not, but now that we have heard of its unparalleled power, we are more inclined to acknowledge the importance and efficacy of the infinitesimal. A single atom may set off a chain reaction which would destroy the whole world. And, indeed, this very thing may happen with the heavens and the earth, for they are stored with fire, and a single word from the mouth of God will dissolve their elements before the coming of the day of God (2 Pet.3:7-13).

The point of the parable lies in this: Just as we do not need to pray that God will keep the sun and moon and stars in their courses, so we need not beseech that He fulfill the great promises of His inspired Word. He is faithful and will perform it even if we fail to prod Him. These things we *know*, so they are the subjects of *praise* rather than prayer. But the *smallest* things that make up our daily grind, which may have far more

influence on our present life and experience, *these* are hidden, like the Shekinah in the tabernacle, behind a beautiful curtain of the divine glories, for the light behind it is too bright for mortal gaze. We could not bear to know all this beforehand. It might be fatal. And the purpose of God would not be attained, for it would eliminate prayer, which is the principal preparation for praise.

Any single incident in our lives, no matter how trivial it may seem, may be vital to our career, or fatal to our hopes, therefore *all* should be the subject of prayer, for God alone can control our environment as well as ourselves. We may inhale one tiny, invisible germ that may cause illness or death. We may take a single step that will cripple or kill us. A single glance may lead to trials interminable. And, on the other hand, a single word, either heard or seen, may lead to fame or fortune, yes, even to salvation and reconciliation and vivification by the spirit of God. In fact, even as God chooses the stupid and the weak and the ignoble and that which is not, so that no *flesh* may boast, so He seems to select the most insignificant action by which to accomplish His purpose, so that human work may be excluded, and man may be utterly cast upon Him, even in the smallest items of his experience. A single sentence may lead a sinner to salvation!

#### PRAISE FOR DISAPPOINTMENTS

The publication of the Concordant Version is the consuming passion of my life. After years of dire drudgery and patient plodding on the part of many, it would seem to be a small and simple matter to put it into print. And, indeed, sometimes it seemed to go of itself. As a rule, however, we have had to reckon with seemingly silly yet insurmountable obstacles which hardly

ever interfere in printing secular publications. For example, no one would make the type for the Greek text. At the same time I could not get work on account of the first world war. So I gave thanks and made the type myself, after a long delay. There were other severe trials in printing, which would usually have ruined my health and disposition. Thankfulness overcame it all.

We are also concerned about the truth which has been committed to us. We are persuaded that He is able to guard it, even in this day of apostasy and opposition (2 Tim. 1:21), yet we would be glad to have all our friends join us in heartfelt thanksgiving for "what must be," for that alone is for His glory and our good. We wish to publish many books, the fruit of our toil and travail in compiling our texts and concordances and versions of the inspired Originals, such as this exposition of Praise and Prayer, and we pray for guidance to conform to His will, but would preface it with praise for the future, whether it appears to be evil or good, for it *must be as* He intends, in order to display the greatness of His grace and the grandeur of His glory.

A.E.K.

*(To be continued)*

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#### FELLOW WORKERS IN CHRIST

Sometimes, like Elijah, we feel alone in our struggle to hold fast to the sound words taught by the apostle Paul. Yet we know that many others are competing together with us in the evangel. Among these are three brothers (both in the flesh and in spirit) in Seattle, Washington: **Harold, Ken and Bob Jones**, who continue to do much in testifying to the truth of God's grace in their area. Their ministry at work (in their family meat shop), in setting up Bible conferences and classes, but most of all in face to face conversations with those they meet, as the occasion arises, has been especially fruitful in assuring others that God is working all together for good. Yet they themselves have learned this lesson through many hard experiences.

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Concordant Version of the Psalms

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PSALM 119:97-136

- 97 *wt* How I love Your law!  
The entire day it is my meditation.
- 98 Your <sup>7</sup>instructions<sup>s</sup> makes me 'wiser <sup>f</sup>than my enemies',  
For it is 'with me for the eon.
- 99 I have been caused to contemplate  
more <sup>f</sup>than all my teachers',  
For Your testimonies are my meditation.
- 100 I gain more 'understanding <sup>f</sup>than elders,  
For I preserve Your precepts.
- 101 I detain my feet from every evil path,  
That I may 'keep Your word.
- 102 I do not withdraw from Your judgments,  
For You Yourself direct me.
- 103 *wt* How savory are Your <sup>7sa</sup>promises<sup>cs</sup> to my palate,  
Better <sup>f</sup>than honey to my mouth!
- 104 From Your precepts I gain 'understanding;  
Therefore I hate every false path.
- 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet,  
And a light to my tracks.
- 106 I have sworn—<sup>+</sup> let me confirm it—  
To keep Your righteous judgments.
- 107 I am humbled <sup>fr</sup> utterly;  
O Yahweh, revive me according to Your word.
- 108 *pr* Do accept the voluntary offerings of my mouth,  
O Yahweh,  
And teach me Your judgments.
- 109 My soul is placed in my palms continually,  
<sup>+</sup> Yet I do not forget Your law.

- 110 Wicked ones have <sup>g</sup>placed a pitfall for me,  
+Yet I do not stray from Your precepts.
- 111 I am allotted Your testimonies for the eon;  
'Indeed they are the elation of my heart.
- 112 I stretch out my heart to <sup>d</sup>perform Your statutes;  
The consequence is for the eon.
- 113 I hate forked tongues,  
+But I love Your law.
- 114 My Concealment and my Shield are You;  
I <sup>m</sup>set my hope <sup>'</sup>in Your word.
- 115 Go away from me, you evildoers<sup>l</sup>,  
+So I may preserve the instructions of my Elohim.
- 116 Support me according to Your <sup>sa</sup>promise  
+that I may live,  
And let me not be <sup>c</sup>put to <sup>l</sup>shame  
<sup>f</sup>because of my hopefulness.
- 117 Brace me +that I may be saved  
And may continually heed <sup>i</sup> Your statutes.
- 118 You have cast aside all those erring  
from Your statutes,  
For their deceitfulness shows their falsity.
- 119 You have <sup>7</sup>reckoned<sup>s</sup> all the wicked  
of the earth as dross;  
Wherefore I love Your testimonies.
- 120 My flesh bristles from awe of You,  
And I fear <sup>f</sup> Your judgments.
- 121 I have <sup>d</sup>performed judgment and righteousness;  
Do not leave me to those extorting me.
- 122 Be surety to Your servant for good;  
Let not the arrogant be extorting me.
- 123 My eyes, they are <sup>all</sup>exhausted, looking for Your salvation  
And for Your righteous <sup>sa</sup>promise.
- 124 Do with Your servant according to Your benignity,  
And teach me Your statutes.
- 125 I am Your servant; cause me to understand  
So +that I may know Your testimonies.
- 126 It is the season for Yahweh to <sup>d</sup>act;  
They annul Your law.

## Let Your Face Enlighten

- 127 Therefore I love Your instructions  
More *f*than gold, +even *f*than glittering gold.
- 128 Therefore all *7*Your~ precepts do I *m*hold upright;  
Every false path do I hate.
- 129 Marvelous are Your testimonies;  
Therefore my soul preserves them.
- 130 The opening of Your words is enlightening,  
Causing the simple to understand.
- 131 With my mouth I gape; +so let me gasp,  
For I ardently desire *7*Your instructions.
- 132 Turn Your face to me and be gracious to me  
According to the custom for those loving Your name.
- 133 Establish my footsteps in Your *sa*promise,  
And let not any lawlessness have *1*authority *1*over me.
- 134 Ransom me from human extortion  
So +that I may keep Your precepts.
- 135 *c*Let Your face enlighten *i* Your servant,  
And teach me *7*Your statutes.
- 136 Rilllets of water, they descend from my eyes  
*on*Because men do not keep Your law.

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### HOW I LOVE YOUR LAW!

As we have noted, this psalm is divided into stanzas of 8 lines, each line of a stanza beginning with the same Hebrew letter. This lays emphasis on the first Hebrew word of each verse. In the following review of verses 97-136, these key, beginning words as rendered in the CV are italicized.

We might designate verses 97-104 as the “exclamatory” stanza. *How* the psalmists loves Yahweh’s law (97)! *How* savory are His promises to his palate (103)! They make him wiser *than* his enemies (98), more contemplative *than* his teachers (99) and more understanding *than* the elders (100)! While the servant detains his feet *from* evil (101), he seeks not to with-

draw *from* Yahweh's judgments (102) or *from* His precepts (104).

The next stanza rejoices in the effect of Yahweh's word as a *lamp* (105). It has led to the resolve being *sworn* in verse 106 in the midst of *humbling* (107), as well as to the *voluntary offering* of verse 108. Though his *soul* is cast down (109) and wicked ones *place* a trap for him (110), Yahweh's eonian testimonies are *allotted* to him (111). Hence he *stretches out* his heart to perform Yahweh's statutes.

Verses 113-120 praise Yahweh as "my *Concealment*" and Shield (114), the One Who *supports* (116) and *braces* (117) the hater of *forked tongues* (113). The psalmist tells evildoers to *go away* (115), those whom Yahweh has *cast aside* (118), who are reckoned as *dross* (119). His flesh *bristles* in awe of Yahweh (120).

The spirit of expectancy is strong in verses 121-128. Yahweh's *servant* (125) has *performed* His righteous judgments (121) and now looks to Yahweh to *do* according to His benignity (124). He rests upon Yahweh as his *surety* for good (122), while his *eyes* ceaselessly look for salvation (123). It is the *season* for Yahweh to act (126). *Therefore*, the servant loves Yahweh's instructions (127), and *therefore* he upholds His precepts (128).

The last stanza given above (verses 129-136) begins with praise for God's Word and ends with sorrow over its mistreatment. Yahweh's testimonies are *marvelous* (129), the *opening* of His words enlightening (130), so that the psalmist stands in awe with a gaping and gasping *mouth* (131). The plea to Yahweh is: *Turn Your face* to me (132), establish my *footsteps* (133), *ransom* me (134) and let Your *face* enlighten me (135). We can surely understand how the rejection of Yahweh's law brought *rilllets* of tears to the singer's eyes.



## THE CHARGE OF YAHWEH

“HENCE YOU WILL LOVE YAHWEH YOUR ELOHIM and observe His charge, His statutes, His judgments and His instructions all the days” (Deut.11:1).

As we enter chapter eleven of Deuteronomy we come to witness Moses' concluding summary of the “General Stipulations” that are part of the covenant renewal between Yahweh and the people of Israel. The original covenant at Sinai had inaugurated a continuing relationship that now required a renewal, not because Yahweh Elohim had changed His attitude toward the sons of Israel, but rather because the *post-Sinai generation* had to commit itself in *love* to Him, and in observance of “His charge, His statutes, His judgments and His instructions all the days.”

### OBSERVE HIS CHARGE

The noun “charge” occurs only once in Deuteronomy; it was first used by Yahweh Himself when He appeared to Isaac and told him to “sojourn in this land.” And He had added: “Abraham hearkened to My voice and kept My *charge*, My instructions, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen.26:3,5).

Here the injunction comes to mind when Elohim probed Abraham and told him to take his son Isaac and go to the area of Moriah and offer him up there for an ascent offering. We all know the story of Abraham's prompt and absolute obedience; by faith he reckoned that God is able to rouse his son from the dead, just as,

by faith he had obeyed Yahweh's charge and had gone from Charan to Canaan and by faith had sojourned in the land of promise as in an alien land (*cf* Gen.12:1-5; 22:1-18; Heb.11:8,9).

#### ISRAEL KEPT THE CHARGE OF YAHWEH

The meaning of the word "charge" must have been well known to Moses' audience, since there are more than thirty occurrences of this term in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Here are a few examples:

The passover lamb had become a "charge" of the Israelite householder. Then there was the charge to keep manna overnight for the sabbath. And an urn full of manna was to be left before Yahweh throughout the generations (*cf* Ex.12:6; 16:23,32-34).

With reference to the seven days of their consecrations, Aaron and his sons were told to "keep this charge of Yahweh that you may not die." Then there was the charge given to all the sons of Israel, "Do not defile yourselves," and a special charge for Aaron and his sons not to profane the holy Name (*cf* Lev.8:1-5,33,35; 18:24,30; 22:2-9).

Most occurrences of the word "charge" in Numbers refer to Levites who were to "keep guard" (or: keep charge) of the tabernacle of the testimony, also to keep charge for Aaron and for the whole congregation, "*according to all that Yahweh had instructed Moses*" (*cf* Num.1:53,54; 3:7,8).

The tabernacle had been set up on the first day of the first month in the second year after the exodus from Egypt. "Moses was unable to enter into the tent of appointment, for the cloud tabernacled on it, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. . . . The cloud of Yahweh was over the tabernacle by day, and fire, it

came to be in it by night for the eyes of all the house of Israel in all their journeyings" (Ex.40:17,35-38).

Encamping and journeying only at the bidding of Yahweh was probably the divine charge that was best known to the post-Sinai generation. "On the day the tabernacle was set up the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony. And in the evening it was over the tabernacle as the appearance of fire until the morning. So it was continually; the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. At the bidding of the cloud, taken up off the tent, the sons of Israel journeyed afterward. And in the place where the cloud tabernacled there the sons of Israel encamped. . . . All the days that the cloud tabernacled over the tabernacle they encamped. And when the cloud prolonged over the tabernacle many days then the sons of Israel *kept the charge of Yahweh* and did not journey on. . . . Whether by day or night, whenever the cloud was taken up then they journeyed. . . . At the bidding of Yahweh they encamped, and at the bidding of Yahweh they journeyed. *The charge of Yahweh* they kept at the bidding of Yahweh by means of Moses" (Num.9:15-23).

#### OBEDIENCE PROMPTED BY LOVE

Love Yahweh your Elohim and observe His instructions! This was the charge of Yahweh that the younger sons of Israel were told to keep. They had heard about it earlier in Moses' second address when he had quoted the second commandment that ends with the words: ". . . yet doing benignity to thousands, to those loving Me and observing My instructions" (cf Ex.20:6; Deut. 5:10). Here we have (in Deuteronomy) the first of a dozen references to *Israel's love to God*. This requirement is being added to the prominent theme of obedience to Yahweh, just as in the following chapter: "It

was because of the *love of Yahweh* for you . . . that Yahweh brought you forth . . . from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Then know that Yahweh your Elohim, He is the One Elohim, the El, Who is faithful, keeping the covenant and the benignity to those *loving Him* and to those *observing His instructions* for a thousand generations" (Deut.7:8,9).

We remember the enjoinder that later became the Jewish key prayer: "Hear, Israel! Yahweh is our Elohim, Yahweh the only One. So you will love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your intensity" (Deut.6:4,5). Moses rephrased these words in 10:12,13 where we read: "And now, Israel, what is Yahweh your Elohim asking of you, save to fear Yahweh your Elohim, to walk in all His ways, *to love Him* and to serve Yahweh your Elohim *with all your heart and with all your soul.*"

#### DIVINE DISCIPLINE AND EDUCATION

In Deuteronomy 11:1 the word *charge* was used in a comprehensive sense and included all of Yahweh's statutes, judgments and instructions which Moses had been expounding to the younger generation of Israelites. They were now more or less familiar with the details of the *comprehensive divine charge*.

The renewal of the covenant required complete obedience in keeping all the instructions they had heard. But such obedience would be possible only if they really *loved* Yahweh Elohim for all that He had done for Israel so far, and for all that He was about to do in the future.

The original covenant at Sinai had been ratified *after* Yahweh had led Israel out of Egypt, had destroyed Pharaoh's army in the Sea of Weeds and had thus saved the older generation from total military defeat.

“It was because of the *love of Yahweh for you*,” Moses had said, “that Yahweh . . . ransomed you from the house of servants . . . . Yahweh Elohim will keep with you the covenant and the benignity about which He had sworn to your fathers; *He will love you* and bless you” (Deut.7:8,12,13).

Now the covenant was being renewed *before* the military campaign against the various nations living in Canaan was scheduled to begin. Yahweh had promised to make the present population of the land submit, as Moses had affirmed to the younger generation of Israelites: “Today you are ready to cross over the Jordan, to enter to tenant in the place of nations greater and more substantial than you, cities great and defended to the heavens, a people great and tall . . . . Know then today that Yahweh your Elohim, He is the One crossing over before you as a devouring fire. He Himself shall exterminate them, and *He Himself shall make them submit before you*; yet you must evict them and destroy them quickly just as Yahweh has spoken to you” (Deut.9:1-3).

With all of this in mind, Moses had enjoined on his audience: “Hence you will *love* Yahweh your Elohim and *observe His charge*.” Then he continued to say: “*You know today* (though not your sons, who have not known and who have not seen) *the discipline of Yahweh* your Elohim, His greatness, His steadfast hand and His outstretched arm, His signs and His deeds that He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to all his country, and what He did to Egypt’s army, to its horses and to its chariots, when He caused the waters of the Sea of Weeds to float over their faces in their pursuit after you; thus Yahweh destroyed them until this day” (Deut.11:1-4).

The interjection (“though not your sons . . .”) refers

to the younger people in the audience who had heard of Yahweh's greatness and His signs and His deeds, but had not seen them with their own eyes. Only the older people among them would remember the exodus, the march through the drained area of the Sea of Weeds, and Yahweh descending on Mount Sinai in fire as well as all the other events which they had experienced as teenagers. They had been under age when their parents and grandparents revolted against Yahweh (after the return of the explorers from Canaan) and said: "O that we had died in the country of Egypt or in this wilderness! O that we had died!" (Num.14:2). — And they did die, "all the men of war" (Deut.2:16), "from twenty years old and upward, everyone going forth with the militia host" (Num.1:3).

YAHWEH, SLOW TO ANGER,  
WITH MUCH BENIGNITY

Since the first passover night (that had been celebrated in Egypt, Ex.12:11) the Israelites had been reminded year after year of Yahweh's benignity when He liberated them from the oppression in the house of servitude. In the early days, after they had witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's chariots, "they feared Yahweh and believed in Yahweh and in Moses His servant" (Ex.14:31). Yet a few days later, *when Yahweh probed them at Marah (where the water was bitter), they grumbled* (Ex.15:23-25).

On the fifteenth day of the second month after the exodus, they grumbled again: "O that we had died by the hand of Yahweh in the country of Egypt when we sat over the flesh pots, when we ate bread to satisfaction." They said to Moses: "You have brought us forth to this wilderness to put this entire assembly to death with famine" (Ex.16:3). So Yahweh caused bread from

the heavens to rain on them. They called it "Manna" and ate it for forty years (thus enjoying Yahweh's benignity) until their coming to the fringe of the land of Canaan (Ex.16:35).

During these long years their grumbling went on and on; in all, the Hebrew verb forms for "grumble" occur sixteen times in the books of Exodus and Numbers. So Moses told his audience: "You know what He did for you in the wilderness until you came as far as this place [in Transjordan], and what He did to Dathan and to Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, when the earth opened wide its mouth and swallowed them up even with their households and their tents and everyone who had risen, who had walked in their footsteps, from among all Israel. For your eyes were the ones seeing *all* the great deeds of Yahweh that He has done" (Deut.11:5-7).

The post-Sinai generation had witnessed Yahweh's judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their 250 followers, and the subsequent death by the plague of 14,700 *grumbling* sympathizers (Num.16:32,35,49). Even though, at Kadesh, in the fortieth year when there was no water to drink, the [younger] people *contended* with Moses, saying: "O that we had expired when our brothers expired before Yahweh! Why did you bring the assembly of Yahweh to this wilderness to die there, we and our livestock?" (Num.20:3,4).

Thirty-eight years before, at Sinai, the Israelites had sacrificed to a golden calf and had bowed themselves down before it, saying: "These are your elohim [gods], Israel" (Ex.32:8). Practically all of them had died in the meantime. So it was the post-Sinai generation who (in the Shittim area in the plains of Moab) "started to commit prostitution with the daughters of Moab, who called the people [of Israel] to the sacrifices of their

elohim [gods]. The people ate their sacrifices and bowed themselves down to their elohim [gods]." Subsequently, 24,000 Israelites died by the plague (Num.25:1-9).

Those standing now before Moses had heard so often of the earlier signs and deeds of Yahweh, apart from the later ones they had witnessed, that *all* His great deeds were known to them; they had learned about Yahweh's benignity and about His anger. So they should *love Him and observe His charge*.

H.H.R.

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#### THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

It is commonly supposed that the purpose of 1 Corinthians 13 (even as the reference of the words "the more excellent way") is simply to prioritize and emphasize the essential place of love, regardless of the other gifts which one may possess and however excellent they may be. It is certainly true that love, at all times, is vital and is the greatest of all of God's gifts, and that this thought is *involved* in what Paul is saying here. This, however, in itself, is not Paul's thought; nor is it the reference of the words "the more excellent way."

Paul is not merely saying that "love" is the best "way" of life or that it is greater than any of the spiritual endowments, including the miraculous ones. Instead, the apostle explains that he wishes to apprise the Corinthians of a certain "*path*"; that is, literally, of a certain, distinct, divine *administration*. He reveals an economy of maturity and sets it in contrast to the administration then present under which the Corinthians had received only the first *instalment* of the knowledge of the evangel.

This "path, suited to transcendence," is one in which "faith, expectation, love—these three"—"are *remaining*" (1 Cor.13:13). Since this path (or "road," *hodos*, way), as such, is a path which is in *contrast* to the path which the Corinthians—accompanied by *all* of the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12—were *currently* traveling, yet is a path in which the gifts of faith and expectation, as well as love, are *remaining*, it follows that it is a path in which these three provisions *alone* are *remaining*. Indeed, by itself, this is clearly intimated by Paul through the striking interjection found in the phrase, "faith, expectation, love—*these three*" (1 Cor.13:13). If any additional gifts beyond these three should be *introduced* to those on this anticipated *transcendent* path (whether they should be similar to the endowments of 1 Corinthians 12 or not), in any case, these three, and these three *alone*, would be *remaining*.

James Coram



**ABRAHAM,  
FROM CHARAN TO EGYPT**

THE BIOGRAPHIES of the Bible are brief and ungar-  
nished. The Narrator describes the career of the elect  
with superhuman simplicity, calmness and fidelity.  
His purpose is to instruct and edify. Hence the account  
is given in the smallest possible compass. It is devoid of  
comment, moralizing or exhortation. There is no at-  
tempt at embellishment, no indication anywhere of  
the human propensity to elate the good and extenuate  
the bad. He is not a man, to magnify the attractive and  
minimize the somber in men's lives.

The narrative of Abraham consists of *seven theo-  
phanies* and *three deflections* from the pathway of the  
divine will, which may be shown thus:

- |      |              |                           |
|------|--------------|---------------------------|
| I.   | 12:1-3.      | First Theophany           |
|      | 12:4-6.      | Results                   |
| II.  | 12:7.        | Second Theophany          |
|      | 12:7-9.      | Results                   |
|      | 12:10-13:13. | First Deflection (Egypt)  |
| III. | 13:14-17.    | Third Theophany           |
|      | 13:18-14:24. | Results                   |
| IV.  | 15:1-5.      | Fourth Theophany          |
|      | 15:6-21.     | Results                   |
|      | 16:1-16.     | Second Deflection (Hagar) |
| V.   | 17:1-21.     | Fifth Theophany           |
|      | 17:22-27.    | Results                   |
| VI.  | 18:1-33.     | Sixth Theophany           |
|      | 19:1-38.     | Results                   |
|      | 20:1-18.     | Third Deflection (Gerar)  |
| VII. | 22:1,2.      | Seventh Theophany         |
|      | 22:3-25:11.  | Results                   |

The crowning victories of a great career are always more inspiring when they can be viewed in the light of the campaigns of earlier days. The exploits of the cloud of witnesses (Heb.12:1) are more enhancing because the winners of the trophies once lay prostrate in the ashes of defeat. Their histories are written for our learning, that inspired by their faith and warned by their failure we may imitate the former and shun the latter.

#### THE FIRST APPEARANCE

The first communication to Abram was in the nature of a call to separation. "Yahweh said to Abram, Go from . . . to . . . and I shall." When the Lord spoke thus He had in mind a great purpose comprising a group of seven blessings (Gen.12:2,3). The accomplishment of that purpose, however, was conditioned on Abram's implicit, unquestioning compliance with the command "Go from."

What a disturbing charge! The divine voice came: "Go from," and in a moment Abram's arrangements are upset, ties that had become entwined around the heart are snapped, the aspirations of the heart are crushed, and he is left stranded in darkness! Until that initial word was obeyed, God had nothing further to say.

Abram submitted to that revolutionary order. "They went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and they entered the land of Canaan" (Gen.12:5). Destination was reached in safety because they kept step with God's movement.

#### THE SECOND APPEARANCE

Reaching the land of God's appointment, Abram found himself face to face with the Canaanite. The

land is really his by divine assignment; actually the Canaanite holds it by right of conquest. Abram received it by promise, and only faith in that promise will support him in the presence of the Canaanite. Therefore, upon his arrival, Yahweh appears to reiterate the promise, "To your seed shall I give this land." (Gen.12:7).

In consequence of the appearance Abram built an altar, pitched a tent, and called upon the name of Yahweh. The altar marked his covenant relationship to God; the tent expressed his surrender to the claims of that relationship; while the calling on Yahweh betokened reliance on divine protection against opponents.

The position of Abram's tent exquisitely expresses the transforming power of faith. He dwells on a mountain, half way between Ai and Bethel. On the east (the place of sunrise) is Ai; on the west (the place of sunset) lies Bethel. Abram is in a strait between a *rubbish heap*\* and the house of God. He retires from the former and reaches after the latter, viewing both from an elevation.

Ai was a mighty city. In the days of Joshua, Israel underrated its strength and experienced defeat. But Abram "waited for the city having foundations, whose Artificer and Architect is God" (Heb.11:10). He had seen and greeted it from afar. Its holy light spelled the doom of Hamitic kingdoms. Canaan flourishes before eyes; but beyond present prosperity and military prowess looms Canaan wasted. The fiery strokes of vengeance have not yet engulfed the land; the day of retribution is still far off; but the light of truth made

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\*Ai, which occurs as a proper name here and in Josh.7; Ezra 2:28; Neh.7:32; Jer.49:3; appears as a common noun in Psa.79:1; Jer.26:18; Micah 1:6 and 3:12; and is uniformly translated *rubbish heap*.

the overthrow of that civilization a present reality, which became a potent factor in Abram's life — a factor that determined his attitude and controlled his relations with the inhabitants of the land. The flame of truth consumed base desires for things below and kindled a holy passion for things above. The city of God is Abram's source of inspiration, object of aspiration, and spring of action.

At this juncture occurs:

#### THE FIRST DEFLECTION

Canaan is struck by famine. This new difficulty clouds Abram's vision and unnerves his faith. He journeys to Egypt, the wheat market of the ancient world.

The character and history of ancient Egypt are of absorbing interest. The people and the land were in many respects unique. The fecundity of the soil, unlike other countries, was not contingent on seasonal showers; there was no rain in Egypt. The Nile inundated the country twice a year. When the waters receded, they left an alluvial deposit which fertilized the soil and caused it to bring forth. The Egyptians, therefore, regarded the Nile as the source of their phenomenal prosperity and felt themselves quite independent of the rain which God sends on the just and the unjust. Their boast was, "Mine is my waterway" (Ezek. 29:3).

Again: Egypt is bounded by the Nile and the desert. The river brought tides of prosperity; the dry, desert winds blew the scorching sands that blasted the harvest; so that Egypt was the scene of interrupted contest between prosperity and adversity — between life and death.

Furthermore, the ruthless hand of death has left a deep mark upon Egyptian history; its cold breath chills us as we delve into its lore. The monuments which

have come down to us are the mummies, the embalmed bodies of rulers, and the pyramids which are royal sepulchers. The worship of the dead was a prominent feature in the religion of ancient Egypt. Its great work of literature is the Book of the Dead.

How admirably is the spirit of the world portrayed in Egypt! That great land of art and trade and magic, lived, and moved, and had its being, apart from God: it worshiped nature but ignored the God of nature: its titanic energy was devoted to making their land beautiful and attractive — a place where God would not be missed. Decay and death — the faithful reminders of man's sin and God's sovereignty — ravaged Egypt; their mossy fingers turned its magnificence to ashes, and yet the Egyptians went on and on, and would not be warned nor turned from the error of their way.

Some places, like some characters, appear to best advantage at a distance. Self-pleasing invests them with a false halo which enhances for a time their superficial attractions and conceals their defects; but which disappears after the first desire has been gratified. Looked at from a distance, Egypt possessed, like these characters, a beauty which faded away on closer acquaintance.

Seeking escape from death, Abram plunged into the slough of spiritual death. The atmosphere of Egypt choked faith. Expediency became Abram's rule of life. He wrought deceit upon Pharaoh, with the consent and connivance of his wife, to be treated well (Gen. 12:11-16). Fear replaces hope; Bethel fades from the horizon; the godlessness of the Egyptians haunts his spirit. How is the gold become dim! How is the most pure gold changed! Prayer, tent, altar — all vanish, and Abram becomes a servile courtier at the Egyptian palace.

Doubtless Abram embarked on this course to avoid trouble. But his cunning failed utterly; it proved unwholesome to him and mischievous to the Egyptians, for it brought the very evil it was intended to avert. Yahweh touched Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai (Gen.12:17). So much for compromises. They sap the life of those who condescend to them and harm those for whose supposed benefit they are made.

The visit to Egypt was far-reaching in its effects. Pharaoh gave Abram sheep, oxen, donkeys and camels, as well as servants, in compensation for subserviency. This wealth later on proved a source of vexation. The cattle estranged him from Lot, and one Egyptian maid became subsequently the cause of much distress.

V.G.

*(To be continued)*

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#### FELLOWSHIP GATHERINGS

The Richmond Bible Fellowship will be the host for the Scriptural Study Group conference June 16-18 in Richmond, Virginia at the Best Western Airport Inn. For further information, contact Roosevelt Arrington, Route 2, Box 345, Quinton, Virginia 23141.

The annual Baldwin Summer Fellowship is scheduled for August 4-6 in Baldwin, Michigan. The theme will be "Grace." Write to Pastor Lloyd Hibberd, Grace and Truth Chapel, Box 84, Baldwin, MI 49304 concerning the schedule and accommodations.

The Saviour of All Fellowship is joining with Truth and Grace Chapel in Lansing in planning for a united gathering on August 25,26, to be held at 600 Regent Street in Lansing, Michigan. Sessions are planned at the chapel, under the leadership of Pastor Leonard Bowerman, on the theme: "In the Beginning, God." Write to Saviour of All Fellowship, 6800 Hough Road, Almont, MI 48003 for details.

Should the travels of any of our readers include a trip to South Carolina, we suggest that they visit the Pauline Church of Christ in Wagener (Route 1, Box 285, Wagener, SC 29164; 803-564-3464). The pastor is our good friend in the Lord, and former co-worker here at the Concordant Publishing Concern, Rick Farwell.

## A BOAST IN CHRIST, TOWARD GOD

(Roman 15:17-21)

THAT WHICH CHRIST effects in us, directly through the evangel concerning His death and resurrection on our behalf, is the most important fruit of our lives. We may think many great thoughts and do many helpful things, but if they do not arise from the influence of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, they will not be directly useful in the Lord's service. It is as Paul writes in Galatians, "With Christ have I been crucified, yet I am living; no longer I, but living in me is Christ" (Gal.2:20).

In accord with this, the apostle writes to the Romans:

*I have, then, a boast in Christ Jesus, in that which is toward God. For I am not daring to speak any of what Christ does not effect through me for the obedience of the nations* (Rom.15:17,18).

Paul's boast is in Christ Jesus; it is centered in Him; it fully recognizes that any ideal service that has been done has arisen from Him; it is due to the grace that is in Him.

We have already recalled the parallel statement in the second chapter of Galatians. We remember also the similar testimony of 1 Corinthians 15:10, where the apostle writes, "Yet, in the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which is in me, did not come to be for naught, but more exceedingly than all of them toil I—yet not I, but the grace of God which is with me." Then later in Philippians he declared, ". . . that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him, not

having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God for faith" (Phil.3:8,9).

These are words of a faithful brother, one who was overwhelmed by God's grace and who never once forgot that he had nothing that he had not received (*cf* 1 Cor.4:7). And concerning both those things he *had* and those things he *did*, he saw them all as they truly were, gracious gifts of God granted through Christ.

Secondly, Paul's boast was "toward God." That is, what he exulted in was for the glory of God. What Christ effected in the apostle was rightly understood as revealing something about God, about His power, His wisdom, His mercy, His grace, and above all, His love.

This pattern can also be traced through Paul's other letters. "For us there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we *for* Him" (1 Cor.8:6). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph.1:3). "And every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil.2:11).

Surely, then, a familiar Pauline pattern is laid down for us here in Romans 15, where first of all the ideal fruits of human labor are traced to Christ, and then the purpose of the labor and the meaning of the fruit is found to be the glorifying of God.

Nevertheless, these verses are not only general statements concerning Christ as the Source of our service and God's glory as the goal. As a pattern for us, Paul's example of tracing all that he does to the operation of Christ within us, and also seeing that it is all for God's glory, is most ideal. But in noting this we have not noted all that Paul is saying.

*In the context* there is something very specific in view concerning *who* was doing something, and *what*



he was doing. It was Paul who was performing a service, carrying on a ministry which was "for the obedience of the nations." It is this which is presented in Romans 15 as what Christ was effecting. He was effecting it through Paul. And it was producing a boast that was "in Christ Jesus" and was "toward God."

#### PAUL'S MINISTRY

The use of two negatives in Romans 15:18 makes the statement seem especially awkward to us, and even in Greek it is likely an unusual arrangement of words. Paul is *not* daring to speak of what Christ does *not* effect through him. To put it in positive terms we would say, Paul is daring to speak of what Christ effects. But this clearly loses something, so we try again and say, Paul is daring to speak *only* of what Christ effects through him. This latter rendering is what many modern speech versions say, and as a statement of a general principle for our lives this is most fitting. It is what we have said above, and the pattern of emphasizing *Christ* in what we think, say and do, is well established throughout Paul's letters. Indeed, this must become our pattern as well, and it will the more fully we are impressed by the glory of God's grace.

But the two negatives are joined with two singular, first person pronouns. Paul says, "*I* am not daring to speak concerning what Christ does not effect through *me*." There is something about what Christ was effecting through Paul that is being distinguished and emphasized.

Indeed, there is a point of contrast being made by these negatives, a contrast between Paul's ministry for the nations and the ministry given to others. In the ministry to the Circumcision given to the twelve apostles, Christ was effecting great things, but Paul would

speaking only of those things Christ was effecting in him for the obedience of the nations.

It is one thing to recognize that any service we do that is useful to God will be effected through us by Christ Jesus, not by our own wisdom and strength. In no way must we lose sight of this fundamental truth. The life we are living, if it is to be for God's glory, must be Christ living in us, and Christ effecting all that is good and well-pleasing.

Yet it is another thing, which now needs to be added to the first, to recognize that Paul was given a unique ministry and that we are called into faith through that ministry. In other words, we should be boasting only in what *Christ* is effecting through us, even as Paul was doing in this passage, and we should *also* come to honor and appreciate that particular work Christ made effective through the labors of Paul, as Paul was also doing in this passage.

We have already noted several passages in Paul's letters where Paul directs attention to Christ effecting good in us for the glory of God. But we need to add some further passages where the apostle also directs attention to the importance of the ministry and message given to him. A phrase in Romans 11:13 comes immediately to mind: "I am glorifying my dispensation," and we also recall the testimony in 2 Timothy where Paul speaks of Christ Jesus, "Who indeed, abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel of which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher of the nations" (2 Tim. 1:9-11).

Then in Galatians he writes of his distress over the way the Galatians were transferred away from the evangel he brought (Gal. 1:6-9). Finally, long after Paul had written to the Romans, when he became confined

in Rome, he was still drawing attention to what Christ was effecting in him through his ministry: "To me, less than the least of all saints, was granted this grace: to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations . . ." (Eph.3:8).

These and many similar passages parallel Romans 15:17,18. They may not all deal with the specific phase of ministry in view here in Romans, but they all draw attention to what Christ was effecting through Paul's service, to the glory of God.

#### THE OBEDIENCE OF THE NATIONS

Obedience is consistently related to faith in Romans; in truth the two terms are nearly interchangeable except that each focuses on a special aspect of our response to the evangel. Faith speaks of the response of the heart, the affirmation of our mind and will to the message of Christ's death and resurrection. Obedience is that affirmation expressed in our acts.

The two terms are actually joined as one at the very borders of this epistle, first in Romans 1:5 and then in 16:26. The object of the grace of Paul's apostleship is "faith-obedience among all nations," whether he was proclaiming the basic evangel of God, revealing God's righteousness, or he was making known "a secret hushed in times eonian."

This was an obedience quite unlike that imposed under the covenant at Sinai between Yahweh and Israel. Paul was bringing good news that spoke of a one-sided achievement (more like the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31, which is not literally a covenant at all), speaking of God's gracious work of justification and conciliation through the *faith* of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22), which indeed is through His *obedience* (Rom. 5:19).

That perfect faith-obedience of Christ is the firm foundation of our deliverance and expectation. This is what Paul's ministry announced. And when we believe *this message* we find that it is full of spiritual power for strengthening, encouraging and motivating us in faith-obedience. Both Paul's ministering of this evangel for the obedience of the nations and the faith-obedience that it produces in us are effected by Christ and are directed toward God.

Hence Paul would not speak of things Christ did not effect through him for the obedience of faith among the nations:

*... in word and work, in the power of signs and miracles, in the power of God's spirit, so that from Jerusalem and around unto Illyricum, I have completed the evangel of the Christ* (Rom.15:19).

Now, in more detail, Paul presents his boast in Christ. He is not puffing himself up by referring to this toil and its successful completion. The "I" in the phrase, "I have completed" is again "not I, but living in me in Christ"; it is "not I, but the grace of God which is with me"; it is speaking only of what *Christ* effects "through me."

Illyricum was the area north of Greece where Albania and parts of Yugoslavia are today. In all this area around the eastern and northeastern shores of the Mediterranean and the eastern Adriatic seas, Paul had labored in word and work. He had performed signs and done miracles manifesting the power of God's spirit.

This, then, is what Christ had been effecting through him. And Paul's boast in Christ is that this phase of his service had been completed.

Yet there is much more to be done, both in word and work, both in making known the riches of God's grace

and in struggle and toil (though indeed the struggle will become far more spiritual than physical).

Indeed, what was ahead for Paul was hardly comprehensible to him as he wrote this letter. The heralding would not be from place to place as it had been from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and the toil would not involve aching feet and sore muscles in the presence of his brethren. Eventually he would be shut away from the crowds and the bustle of life and would not be able to see what Christ was effecting through him.

Realizing this, the next words of the apostle stir us for their pathos, and then finally cheer us because of their triumph:

*... Yet thus I am ambitious to be bringing the evangel where Christ is not named lest I may be building on another's foundation, but, according as it is written,*

*"They who were not informed concerning Him shall see,*

*And they who have not heard shall understand"*  
(Rom. 15:20,21).

In verse 18 Paul referred to those things Christ did not effect through him. This involved, as we have suggested, things which Christ may have effected through others. But Paul would not speak of these things because they were not directed for the obedience of the nations.

Similarly, now in looking ahead to the further proclamation of the evangel, Paul wants to avoid building on another's foundation. The evangel of Christ which he was commissioned to bring needed to be kept distinct from the message given to others.

Against great opposition (soon to get worse), our apostle was ambitious to bring the evangel where Christ was not named, and he was confident they would understand that evangel and see Christ in it.

The words of Isaiah 52:15 as translated in the Septuagint Version came to Paul's mind. Isaiah had spoken of Messiah's return to Israel when the nations will be startled and amazed at Him; they will see Him and consider this unveiling wholeheartedly.

Now, as Paul contemplates his future labors in bringing the evangel, he is confident that it will be well received. In what he has to say, Gentiles who have never even heard of Christ will see Him and understand.

Still we may shudder over this, knowing that though this goal would be achieved, it would not come about as the apostle seemed to think. But it was the goal itself that Paul was thinking of. It was the nations being informed and seeing and understanding that he rejoiced in. This was what mattered, and Christ would see to it that it was effected!

So also you and I do not know what is ahead for us in our service for the Lord. We do not know if in the days ahead (if we are still here) we can continue to speak of God's grace in homes and halls or write or read of it in the pages of this magazine or elsewhere, or quietly talk with our families and neighbors about these things of consequence. Yet we may be confident that the evangel will still be heard and still be believed, until all who have been chosen shall see Christ in this glorious message.

This is *our* boast, then, and it is *in Christ and toward God*. It is the boast that He Who has undertaken a good work among the nations will be performing it until the day of Jesus Christ (*cf* Phil. 1:6). May it be also that we become more and more like Paul and speak daringly of what Christ effected through his ministry and boldly of what He continues to effect through it today. D.H.H.

(To be continued)

## THE DURATION OF LANGUAGES

JUST AS 1 Corinthians 14:22 is the only passage which states the purpose of the gift of languages, 1 Corinthians 13:10 is the only passage that reveals when this gift will cease. Having made mention in 1 Corinthians 12:28 of certain subordinate graces pertaining to "species of languages," Paul states that not all are speaking in these languages or interpreting them. "Yet," he tells the Corinthians, "be zealous for the *greater* graces" (1 Cor.12:31a), those spiritual endowments which are *greater* than languages or tongues.

Being *zealous* for the greater graces, however, should never be identified with any seeking to acquire whatever powers one may vainly imagine to be "available." One should be zealous for those services and servants which God *has* appointed in the ecclesia, regardless of what one's own allotment may be, and pray for the wisdom and discernment to recognize that which is faithful and true. Any personal ability to "prophecy" (1 Cor. 14:1), that is, in one sense or another to serve as God's spokesman, must be genuine and divinely appointed, not self-contrived.

Then, at this juncture, Paul declares, "And, still, I am showing you a path, suited to transcendence" (1 Cor.12:31b). The term "and" points to something *in addition* to what he has just said. The word "still" (*eti*, also rendered "more" in the CV, an adverb of time or degree) indicates that Paul wishes to continue on in order to say more than simply what has gone before

concerning the various spiritual endowments which currently obtained among the Corinthians. The sense is, that, within the scope of this present epistle, in addition to expressing the things which he has just stated, he also is showing them something more, namely "a path," one which is "suited to *transcendence*."

He does so through the agency of the following section of the epistle, which we know as chapter 13. This "more excellent way" is a course which is in contrast to and far advanced beyond that with which the Corinthians were presently acquainted through their various extant spiritual endowments.

This *transcendent* path obtains (1) during an era which is in contrast to the very time then present in which Paul was writing ("at present"; 1 Cor.13:12, *arti*, idiomatically, "just now"), and yet (2) in an era in which "faith, expectation [and] love—these three" are "remaining" or continuing on. "Yet now are remaining faith, expectation, love—*these three*" (1 Cor.13:13). Paul thus uses *arti* ("at present") in contrast to *nun* ("now," i.e., ["going on from] now" or "beyond the present period," "an adverb of time in contrast with the past"; KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.208).

It is clear, then, that the era in which this "path" may be walked, a path in which faith, expectation and love—these three—remain, is an era which extends beyond the immediate present in which Paul wrote and yet exists prior to the day of Christ's advent. Faith and expectation are of such a nature that they themselves will no longer be needed then, once faith gives way to sight and future expectation becomes present possession.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul says, "Love is never lapsing: yet, whether prophecies, they will be discarded, or languages, they will cease, or knowledge, it will



be discarded. For out of an instalment are we *knowing*, and out of an instalment are we *prophesying*. Now whenever maturity may be coming, that which is out of an instalment shall be discarded."

It is obvious that prophecies themselves, those revelations of truth made known by God's spokesmen who declared His word and will, will never be discarded. Though predictive prophecy will be fulfilled, that will hardly warrant its nullification (*katargeō*, DOWN-UN-ACT, "discard," "nullify," CV), or afford any incentive to discard God's own word. The same is true of knowledge. We can hardly afford to discard what little we know. Are we to anticipate becoming altogether ignorant in the day of Christ's advent, or, alternatively, perhaps to follow such a quest at present? Likewise, all sensible people realize that communication, or even private thought, is impossible apart from language. Undoubtedly then we shall speak by means of language, and assuredly we do so now.

It is not language that is in question but the *gift* of language which ceases. Prophecy, the word of God and of the Lord, stands, but the *gift* is discarded. Knowledge is much more abundant than ever before, since the word of God has been completed (*cp* Col.1:25), but the *gift* of knowledge itself (supernatural divine endowment apart from previous preparation) is discarded once it is rendered redundant. None of these three expressions in 1 Corinthians 13:8, "prophecies," "languages," or "knowledge," are literal. Each is a figure of speech, the common figure of association termed *metonymy* in which that which is *associated* with the subject stands for the subject itself. The sense is that the time will come when those spiritual endowments which are *associated* with prophecy, language, and knowledge will cease or be discarded.

## OUT OF AN INSTALMENT

We are told why this is so in the verse which follows: "For out of an instalment are we knowing, and out of an instalment are we prophesying" (1 Cor.13:9). It is not, as in the Authorized Version, "we know in part," but, "*out of* an instalment are we knowing." The Greek is *ek*, *out of*, not, *in*, and the incomplete verb form should be rendered "knowing," not "know." The passage does not speak of the Corinthian believers' knowledge, but of the *source* of their knowledge.

"In that era," insofar as their standing *in flesh* was concerned, the believers among the nations, "the nations *in flesh*," were "apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel"; they were "guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and [were] without God *in the world*" (Eph.2:12). After all, the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the legislation and the divine service, were *Israel's*; whose are the fathers, and out of whom is the Christ according to *the flesh* (Rom.9:4,5). At that time, neither the revelation of the secret (Eph.3:6) nor of the celestial allotment (Eph.1:3,18) which is for the ecclesia which is Christ's body had been made known. Consequently, the place and destiny of these Gentile believers to whom Paul ministered—entirely apart from the covenant of the law and yet in strict accord with the new revelations which he alone had received from the risen Christ—was most *enigmatic* (*cf* 1 Cor.13:12). There was, therefore, a great need for further unfoldings of knowledge to the Corinthians, beyond the limited instalment which Paul had already made known to them, that they might more clearly apprehend their true place and purpose.

Even then, however, the Corinthians were the body of Christ (1 Cor.12:27), for God placed the members,

each one of them, in the body (1 Cor.12:18). As Paul said, “in one spirit also we *all* are *baptized* into one body, . . . and *all* are made to imbibe one spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). Being baptized in holy spirit (*cf* Acts 1:5), even at Pentecost, was a separate matter from speaking in languages, which was also granted to the twelve. “And they are filled with holy spirit, *and* they begin to speak in different languages” (Acts 2:4).

It is perfectly false to equate either baptism in holy spirit, or filling with holy spirit, with speaking in languages. Both “baptism” and “filling” associated with holy spirit may readily be conferred entirely apart from any gift of languages (*cp* Acts 6:8,10; 7:55; 1 Cor.12:13; Eph.5:18). Conversely, one may well experience modern pseudo “tongues” apart from even the baptism of the spirit, much less its filling, while imagining that he has received both.

At the time 1 Corinthians was written, the spiritual endowments then granted were given to each “with a view to *expedience*” (1 Cor.12:7). In that era, it was *expedient* that some should exercise these various abilities associated with prophecy, language and knowledge, for the word of God had not yet fully been made known. Consequently, it was *then* true that “out of an instalment are we knowing and out of an instalment are we prophesying” (1 Cor.13:9).

Similarly, it was also true, then, “in that era,” that speaking in languages, while in need of strict regulation that all might occur “respectably and in order” (1 Cor.14:40), was not to be forbidden. “So that, my brethren, be [being] zealous to be prophesying, and the speaking in languages do not [be] forbid[ding]” (1 Cor.13:39).

The words “zealous” and “forbid” are in the incomplete verb form (as indicated in the CV by the vertical

stroke preceding them). Their reference is to the conduct of the Corinthians at the time then present.

It should also be noted that Paul had by no means instructed every individual believer either to be prophesying or to be speaking in languages. Those to whom God had not given these special graces could hardly exercise gifts which they did not possess. While the Corinthians were to be "*zealous for*" (cp 1 Cor.14:1, 39) all the spiritual endowments that God had truly given, they were not, unlike so many today, to crave, seek after, or plead for personal, supernatural or miraculous powers.

In the Greek, the sense of Paul's words is that the Corinthian believers, at present, were to be being zealous for "*the . . . prophesying,*" and were not to be forbidding "*the . . . speaking . . . in languages*" in which some were able to engage. That is, all were to be exercising zeal concerning the revelations which God was making known to them through those certain ones among them who were specially graced with the gift of prophecy. Likewise, no one was to be *forbidding* those who actually had a gracious gift of language from exercising it, even within the ecclesia.

In deference to the immaturity of the Corinthian believers, Paul had granted that, when they came together, if "two, or, at the most, three" wished to speak in a language, they had permission to do so. Yet, if they should thus speak, they were not to make a long, uninterrupted testimony in the language, but only to speak "by instalments"; that is, in brief phrases or sentences, so that someone who was able to "interpret" (i.e., "translate," 1 Cor.12:10) might readily do so for the sake of those hearing (1 Cor.14:27).

While Paul did not wish anyone to *forbid* those with a gift of language from engaging in a conservative

exercise of the gift while within the assembly, he did make his own will, and example, known, saying, "I thank God that I speak in a language more than all of you. *But*, in the ecclesia, do I want to speak five words with my mind, that I should be instructing others also, or ten thousand words in a language?" (1 Cor.14:18,19). By immediately adding the words, "Brethren, do not become little children in disposition. But in evil be minors, yet in disposition become mature" (1 Cor. 14:20), he intimated that it was certainly immature, even for that day, to fail to follow his example with regard to the exercise of this gift.

Just as it is true that certain of the Corinthians once exercised gifts of prophesy, language and knowledge, it is equally true that "whenever *the maturity* may be coming, that which is out of an instalment shall be discarded" (1 Cor.13:10). It is not simply "maturity," but "the" maturity (the Greek contains the definite article). In fact, in the Greek, "maturity" is an adjective, "mature." Therefore, "the mature" is used elliptically, the figure in which that which obviously constitutes the subject at hand is omitted for the sake of good diction, in order to avoid redundancy.

The "maturity," or "mature," even if the definite article did not appear, would have to be in reference to the maturity of the context. And since the definite article does appear, this fact is specifically emphasized, to draw our attention to it.

Similarly, in the Greek, the phrase, "that which is out of an instalment [shall be discarded]," contains merely the definite article, "the," where "that which" appears in the CV for the sake of English idiom. Therefore, in the Greek, this phrase, THE OUT OF-PART (WILL-BE-BEING-DOWN-UN-ACTED), is elliptical as well. It refers to the *nullifying* of the early, or "out of part" gifts.

The maturity of the context, beyond any doubt, is the maturing (i.e., completing or "FINISHING") of the agency of "knowing" which has just been referred to in verse 9, the partial revelation which had already been given to the Corinthians. As in verse 12, where he uses "we" and even "I" (though evidently representatively, not necessarily of himself as such), similarly, here in verse 9, when speaking collectively of the ecclesia as a whole, Paul says, "out of an instalment are we knowing, and out of an instalment are we prophesying."

The sense is, Whenever the mature *instalment* of knowledge is provided, which may then lead to a fuller "knowing," *then* the *gifts* of prophecy, language, and knowledge will "cease" or "be discarded."

#### YET THEN, FACE TO FACE

In preparing the Corinthians for the final unfoldings of his prison epistles, Paul illustrates this change by means of a figure in which a child, when reaching his majority, *discards* the activities and implements of his minority. "When I was a minor, I *spoke* as a minor, I took account of things as a minor. Yet when I have become a man, *I have discarded that which is a minor's*" (1 Cor.13:11).

This illustration is interjected between the apostle's pronouncement in verse 10, that the mature instalment of knowledge will mean the abrogation of the gifts of verse 8, and the explanation of why this is so in verse 12: "For *at present* we are observing by means of a mirror, in an enigma, yet then [whenever the maturity may be coming; v.10], face to face. At present I know out of an instalment, yet then I shall recognize according as I am recognized also" (1 Cor.13:12).

The common view of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 is that it contrasts our present experience with our future glory

in resurrection. Now we are supposed to see through a glass darkly, but then we will see face to face and know even as we are known. The apostle, however, is not comparing our experience in this life with that of the next. Rather, he is contrasting the former partial revelation, with the entirety of revelation which will be enjoyed when the finishing instalment of divine truth is made known.

It is not a matter of “now” — continuing on from now, throughout this mortal life — that we today peer through a “glass darkly,” but that the body of believers as a whole at the time in which Paul was writing were observing “by means of a *mirror*” (*esoptron*, INTOVIEWER), that is, “in an *enigma*” (*ainigma*, ENIGMA). An enigma is that which is baffling or inexplicable. As we mentioned earlier, since what knowledge the Corinthians did have was only derived from a part, or initial instalment of the total revelation which God would provide for the members of Christ’s body, any among them who were even somewhat enlightened and yet who longed for additional unfoldings, would have necessarily remained quite perplexed concerning various aspects of their own place and purpose within the divine counsels.

Were they to participate in the kingdom of the heavens and one day stand up in an allotment on the earth along with the prophets of old and all others who were worthy of this through their obedience to the law? If so, how could they enjoy such a place without becoming proselytes or practicing the law’s righteousness? These and many related matters made the time then present full of enigma.

Yet, when the mature or finished instalment of knowledge comes, Paul explains that they will then see “face to face.” The terminology in this figure (it is in

juxtaposition to “by means of a mirror”) seems to be based on Numbers 12:8 where the prophets saw “in enigmas” but Moses spoke with Yahweh directly, or “mouth to mouth.” “Mouth to mouth am I speaking with him [Moses],” Yahweh declares, “and *manifestly, not in enigmas.*” Even as the figure “face to face” answers to “by means of a mirror,” thus also, the literal “recognize according as I am recognized also” answers to “in an enigma.”

The phrase “according as” in verse 12, speaks not of degree of recognition, but of *kind* of recognition. In the Greek, it is one word, the compound *kathos* (DOWN-AS). It is an adverb not of degree but of kind. Its first element speaks of that which is foundational, what something “comes down to.”

Paul’s point is a simple one. Whenever God should *finish* His work of revealing His word, the Corinthians would then be freed from the enigmas which necessarily attend an incomplete revelation. Even as the limitations which befall a man who can only view himself by means of a mirror do not apply to those who can view him directly or face to face, thus also, now that the word of God has been completed, believers today are freed from the enigmas of an incomplete revelation.

What God has said has made it evident that the genuine gift of languages ceased to be exercised and was no longer given once the final instalment of the Pauline revelation was made known. Since that time, scripturally speaking, no one has ever “spoken in tongues.”

Let us, then, humbly set aside all forms of contemporary glossolalia, the counterfeit “tongues” of today, that we might be growing and maturing in the transcendent grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus.

James Coram



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MAY 1989  
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY

EDITORIAL

TO KNOW AND TO DO, these are both blessings from God which are sometimes put forward by teachers as though they were opposed to each other. Yet we need them both very much.

In Philippians, Paul spoke of his desire to know Christ and also to attain to a standard of living that would correspond to "the resurrection that is out from among the dead" (Phil.3:10,11). In Ephesians the apostle guides us to be praying for "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him" (Eph.1:17), and then again that we "might be strong to grasp" the dimensions of God's great operation of love (Eph.3:14-19). Yet this is followed with entreaties to worthy walk (Eph.4:1-6:9) and a steadfast faith (6:10-17), with a closing prayer for a bold proclaiming of the evangel (6:18-20).

There is no hint of conflict between the knowing and the doing. These are both set before us, and in a definite order, as vital components of the faith. Doing always develops from knowing. Knowing, likewise leads to doing.

In the "ten words" of the law given to Israel, the first concern was a recognition of Yahweh as Israel's Elohim (*cf* Deut.5:2-11), and this was followed by instructions concerned with behavior through their lives (5:12-21). Consequently, as our studies in Deuteronomy have indicated, it was a knowledge of Yahweh and what He had made ready for Israel that became the basis for "Divine Discipline" in righteousness (see p.131).

Similarly, we are reminded in Bro. Gelesnoff's article (p.139) on Abraham, that the revelation of Yahweh as the El-Who-Suffices became the foundation for a walk in integrity (Gen.17:1).

How much more, then, should the revelations of God's grace and peace in the evangel given to Paul become a sure basis for worthy walk!

The "path suited to transcendence" (see p.117) is characterized by a love that is "superabounding still more and more" because it stems from a "realization" of the good work God has undertaken among us (Phil.1:6-11).

All of this should help us appreciate the importance of following along with Paul as he unfolds the good news of justification, conciliation and glorification, based so firmly on the obedience of Christ even to the death of the cross and on His resurrection out from among the dead. We go on "from glory to glory" as we follow his ministry "from Jerusalem and around unto Illyricum" (Rom.15:19), and then back to Jerusalem once more before being taken to Rome as a prisoner (see the articles entitled "Paul and Rome" and "Coming with the Blessing of Christ"). And then we are introduced to transcendent riches of glory and grace in Christ Jesus, unfolded in the apostles' letters from his Roman imprisonment.

Hence the prayers for wisdom and understanding become even more prominent and pressing so that we might "walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work" (Col.1:9-12).

Therefore, it is with thanksgiving to God that we look to Him for the twin-blessings of knowing what He has revealed and of doing those good works He has made ready beforehand.

D.H.H.

## PAUL AND ROME

POLITICALLY, Paul was a *Roman*, even though, religiously, he was a *Jew*. He did not go to the city of Rome until late in his career, but he was born a Roman citizen, and spent all his life within the Roman empire. These facts are not merely incidental to his personal history, but are vitally interwoven with his special mission to the nations, and form the backdrop for those grandest of all divine revelations which were penned by the apostle in his Roman room. His birth, long before his call on the Damascus road, made him a citizen of Rome and prepared him for his mission to the nations. But when he finally arrived there, he changed to a celestial citizenship, yet remained as the ambassador of the realm celestial.

The apostles of our Lord were all prepared from their birth for their part they were to play. Those with a Kingdom commission could not possibly be taken from the Romans, the political enemies of Israel. Paul, with his Roman citizenship, could never qualify. Besides, they had to be trained for their task by association with Christ for the whole period of His earthly ministry. There were others besides the twelve who had been with Him all the way from His baptism by John the Baptist, such as Joseph Bar-Sabbas and Matthias. The latter was chosen to fill the place of Judas, for there had to be one for each of the tribes of Israel (Acts 1:21-26). But Paul was severed from his

mother's womb to evangelize God's Son among the *nations* (Gal.1:15,16). That is why he inherited the citizenship of Rome.

Citizenship in Rome was not conferred by the mere accident of birth. Anyone born on Roman soil or in one of her conquered provinces was not, therefore, a Roman citizen. Paul was not a Roman because he was born in Tarsus, under Roman rule. All of the thirteen apostles of our Lord, yes, even Christ Himself, were *subjects* of the emperor, but this did not confer the special privileges of citizenship. The captain of the squadron in Jerusalem, who held a very responsible position, had bought his citizenship with a vast sum of money, for it was deemed a most valuable possession, with many precious privileges (Acts 22:27,28). But such an acquired franchise was never deemed as high as one received by birth. Paul was equipped with it by God for his apostleship among the nations of the empire, and it often stood him in good stead.

Although Paul belonged to the Circumcision, and was of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, as to ritual a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as to law-observance a Pharisee, he never claimed citizenship in Israel. In this one thing he was like the outsiders to whom he was sent, who were "alienated from the citizenship of Israel" (Eph.2:12). But when Paul actually came to be in Rome he repudiated his earthly citizenships. What he had in Christ Jesus was far superior to the privileges of Judaism, and he was more than content to forfeit them. And even his Roman citizenship went overboard, with all its terrestrial privileges, for our realm or sphere of citizenship (AV, "conversation") is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour, and for which we will be transfigured when He comes (Phil.3:4-21).

## ROME AND ISRAEL

Nationally, the Romans had stripped Israel of their sovereignty, but they had left them their temple and their ritual. Should these also be taken from them, the priests and elders would have been stripped of all their privileges and power. There had been attempts of this kind before. Rome was definitely antagonistic to the mission of our Lord and His apostles, for His Kingdom was to pulverize and terminate all such kingdoms, and fill all the earth (Dan.2:44). There was a citadel with a garrison stationed in Jerusalem, ready to put down any insurrection. They were very suspicious, and the captain thought at first that even Paul was leading a rebellion against the government (Acts 21:38).

Under these circumstances we can understand Paul's reply, "I, indeed, *am* a Jewish man a Tarsian of Cilicia, a *citizen* of no insignificant city." The captain evidently did not get the full force of this, for he ordered him to be scourged, an indignity to which no citizen of Rome should be subjected. Our Lord could make no appeal on this ground (Matt.20:19; John 19:1). When the captain knew that Paul was a Roman, he was afraid, for he should never have even bound him (Acts 22:24-29). This contrast should show us how different Paul's ministry was from the Circumcision evangel. Rome must needs be the deadly enemy of the kingdom on earth, and those who heralded it, but it *protected* Paul from the murderous opposition of Judaizers in Jerusalem.

It was the *Romans* who enabled Paul to fulfill his testimony to Jerusalem, and speak to the Sanhedrin! That was evidently the climax of his witnessing to the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15), for, the ensuing night, the Lord said to him, "Courage! For as you certify to that which concerns Me in Jerusalem, thus you must testify

in Rome also" (Acts 23:11). And it was the *Romans* who enabled him to stay two more years in the land to testify before governors and King Agrippa. They treated him very well, although he was a prisoner. Even on the trip to Rome, Julius the centurion, treated him humanely, permitting him to go to friends for casual care (Acts 27:3).

#### PAUL IN PHILIPPI

Long before this the Macedonian call brought Paul to Philippi, which is called a "colony." The Greek word *kolonia* has no equivalent in English which could give us the full significance demanded by our present study. It is also a good example of the fallacy of translating "exactly," or rather literally. It is Latin, and derived from *kolōnos*, *farmer*. It began as a colony of veteran Roman soldiers, which was founded in a subject district, as a precaution against revolt. The important point is that these veterans did not forfeit their franchise, but were counted as citizens of the capital of the empire. To all intents they lived in Rome, with the laws and privileges of the great city itself. It is helpful to know this, for Paul's privileges as a Roman citizen had great weight in such a place.

Probably Paul could have protected himself, and avoided the flogging and the stocks if he had been given an opportunity to make known that he and Silas were Roman citizens. But that would have been contrary to God's purpose. It was not yet the era for Him to smash the empires of this world, but it was time to give a little preview of His power, not only to the Romans, but to the authorities of darkness which had been the prime cause of the trouble. What a loss would it be to us, were we to lose the picture of Paul and Silas in the stocks, praying and singing hymns to God, with the

other prisoners listening! None of the gods of the nations would be worshipped under such circumstances!

I have experienced severe earthquakes, where there were jails also, but none of them shook the foundations in such a fashion that the doors were opened and all bonds were slacked! The warden clearly saw the hand of God in this, a power far greater than that of Rome. But this alone would have created a very awkward situation. The laws of Rome were sometimes very harsh. To disobey the officers and treat prisoners as he had treated Paul and Silas, when they should have been kept securely, might cost him his place, if not his life. So God's spirit countered the python spirit, and put it into the minds of the officers to release them. So they sent word to this effect. Now we have the situation to which all was only preliminary. *Paul refuses to leave without a public demonstration of his and his companion's righteousness!*

Here we have a picture of the justification which Paul preached. It is not without reason that his great exposition of justification was sent, first of all, to Rome. It was first made known to Abraham, in *uncircumcision*. But the Mosaic law made it practically inoperative. Those under law cannot possibly fulfill it, or *justify* their transgressions when they failed to do so. They were given a propitiatory shelter in the forbearance of God. They were pardoned or forgiven. But, whatever the mercy of God provided for them, they were not exonerated, exculpated, absolved, cleared, acquitted, vindicated, justified. In God's sight this can only be done by *faith* apart from the law. After showing the inability of the law, Paul expounds the grand doctrine of justification by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Let us suppose that Paul had accepted the offer of

the officers at Philippi, and had gone forth free. He would still have the stigma of the jail upon him. If they had covered up his case, or pardoned him, or forgiven him, the only possible implication would be that he had actually been guilty of some iniquity. Even a single arrest can ruin a man's reputation. There was a time when I boasted that, with one exception, I was locked in jail oftener than anyone else in town. But I always was quick to add that I went there every Sunday to preach the Gospel. Paul had quite a jail record (2 Cor. 11:23). But it would not do to start his ministry in Philippi with a crime against the *Roman* authorities. So he made known to them his Roman citizenship, and demanded a public acknowledgment of his acquittal. The officers realized that *they* had broken the law, rather than he. So they came, and he was vindicated, justified, and thus provided us with a perfect moving picture of that great grace.

#### PAUL IN ROME

Paul had already written his epistle to the saints in Rome, so was well-known to them. At Puteoli, near modern Naples, he stayed seven days with some brethren. Others came to meet him on the way to the city. In Rome, instead of being incarcerated in a jail, he was allowed to remain by himself, with a soldier to guard him. He could even call together the foremost of the Jews and speak to them. Then, for two years, he had his own hired house, free to teach all who came to him. He was, indeed, a prisoner in Rome, but suffered few restraints or indignities, doubtless due to his Roman citizenship.

He had closed his kingdom testimony to the Jews in the land when he spoke to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. But most of his ministry had been to the dispersion, to



the Jews outside the land. Rome was the appropriate place to put an end to the ministry, for it displaced the kingdom in a large part of the earth. If the kingdom had not been rejected by the Jews, he could have appealed his case to Christ, not to Caesar. The mere fact that he was compelled to do this by the Jews themselves shows, more eloquently than words, that the kingdom heralding had failed. After one more attempt to convince the Jews, he closed the kingdom message by quoting the sixth of Isaiah, just as Christ Himself had done (Matt.13:14,15). Their sin against the holy spirit's testimony as recorded in the book of Acts, could not be pardoned, either in this eon or in that to come (Matt.12:32).

#### THE TWO CHAINS

When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, he was bound with two chains, doubtless both of the same kind, at the same time (Acts 21:33). But in Rome he was bound with two chains of a totally different character, and at different times. To the foremost of the Jews, three days after his arrival, he explained that his chain was due to *the expectation of Israel* (Acts 28:17-20). As it was expressed by the apostate Jews in Thessalonica, he was guilty of saying that "there is a different King, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). This was treason, punishable with death. It is quite possible that the Jews brought this same indictment against him before Caesar, at his first defense, when all his friends forsook him, but the Lord stood with him, and saved him from being thrown to the lion. To this he added a most suggestive sentence: "The Lord . . . will be saving me for His *celestial* kingdom" (2 Tim.4:16-18).

After this Paul wrote to the Ephesians that he is *conducting an embassy* in a chain (Eph.6:20). He could

not possibly act as an ambassador of the Kingdom, for it had not been set up. Israel was no independent nation that could send an embassy to the court of Rome. Indeed, it had no national standing until recently, when the Jews who had returned to the holy land organized a government and were recognized by the United Nations. It would, indeed, be the most impudent of treasonable acts for Paul to pose as the ambassador of a subject people, who, besides, had repudiated him and sought to have him executed. What country could he possibly represent? Was he not still a *Roman* citizen?

In Rome, after he had testified to the Jews and to the nations, a tremendous change took place in his relationship to both. This was not, indeed, the result of a sudden impulse, but the crisis of gradually gathering convictions, expressed in his previous epistles. Israel's rejection of the kingdom came to the final climax when the Jews in Rome refused to believe. Hence he no longer heralded the earthly kingdom of Israel's Messiah. *He was no longer chained for "the expectation of Israel."* Many years before he had written to the Romans that callousness, in part, had come on Israel, until the complement of the nations may be entering (Rom. 11:25). Then it was still necessary to present the evangel to those Jews among the nations who had not heard. This he had now accomplished.

#### AN AMBASSADOR OF PEACE

In Paul's day, imperial Rome had not even conquered the known world, let alone the heavens. It was an independent realm, far more so than the countries beyond the Euphrates or northern Europe which were beyond the jurisdiction of the emperor or the senate. No stranger, no alien from these countries dare come

and commence heralding a kingdom that would overthrow the Roman empire. Paul did not come as a *herald* announcing the future rule of the nation of Israel over the earth. That would result in *strife*. He came as an *ambassador* from a supramundane realm offering *peace*.

“God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them” (2 Cor.6:19). This is the basis of the great change in God’s approach toward mankind today. It was first revealed through Paul, and now it was exemplified by him in his personal position in Rome. Though his flesh was chained, his spirit went everywhere. He wrote his highest epistles, to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and to his helpers Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. In them his spirit soared to heights and depths, to past and future, beyond all others. To the very last, as his closing words to Timothy reveal, he was active in spreading the evangel through his helpers (2 Tim.4:6-22).

But, if he was an ambassador of *peace*, why was he still kept in *chains*? If the ambassador of a powerful country is mistreated, it usually means war. So it would be with an earthly realm. But *God is not reckoning offenses, even if directed against His own ambassador* (2 Cor.5:19). This is a vital truth, but little known, which is nowhere better portrayed than in Paul’s closing contact with imperial Rome. The haughty city challenged God by chaining His ambassador, but He refuses to fight.

#### HINDRANCES TODAY

Let no one imagine that there are no chains, no hindrances to the expression of the evangel today (Eph.6:19). The chains are not literal, material bonds, but consist chiefly of spirit opposition, which operates

in various and devious ways. The stratagems of the Adversary are largely used to occupy the saints with terrestrial things. The churches of Christendom are more concerned with effecting peace among the nations, than with God, and this misleads many true saints. Some are turned aside to the kingdom evangel, notwithstanding Paul's plain denunciation of those who are disposed toward the terrestrial. In fact the main machinery of Christendom has been perverted by the Adversary, so as to hinder rather than help those who seek to make known the secret of the evangel.

An ambassador must look after the interests of his own country, not the one to which he is sent. If he represents a celestial realm, his prime qualification is that *he be not disposed to the terrestrial*. And, on the contrary, the heralds of Messiah's Kingdom on the earth *must be disposed to the terrestrial*. When we have finished our temporary task down here in weakness, we will be taken above to fulfill our destiny in power among the celestials, but they will remain on earth and succeed in bringing it back to God. Our realm is above, whence we look for our Saviour to qualify us in fact for that heavenly elysium, as we are now in faith.

A chained ambassador should be the symbol of the secret evangel for today. As a whole, the world rejects God's overtures of peace, and mistreats His true ambassadors. Such suffering is the highest honor that can come to a mortal in this administration of transcendent grace. May this picture of Paul in Rome help us to conduct our embassy of peace in a manner well pleasing to God, and for the honor and praise of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, until we are withdrawn into our own celestial realm!

## COMING WITH THE BLESSING OF CHRIST

(Romans 15:22-33)

THE OUTLOOK Paul had in Romans 15 concerning his future movements reflects the progress and direction his evangel was about to take. Even as he prepared his steps for one last visit to Jerusalem, his eyes were focused on the West. His expectation to bring the evangel to Rome and then go beyond that great center to Spain would not be fulfilled in exactly the manner he anticipated, but this also would reflect the message he was bringing. The physical, face-to-face heralding of the evangel would be radically curtailed, but the spiritual glories of God's revelation would still be spread abroad through the apostle's ministry.

It is most fitting, therefore, that whatever physical efforts (beyond the writing of letters) were involved in spreading these transcendent revelations, they are not detailed in the Scriptures. We know only that the message did reach, and continues to reach the hearts of God's chosen ones.

### "YET NOW"

*Wherefore, I was much hindered also in coming to you. Yet now, having by no means still place in these regions, yet having for many years a longing to come to you, as ever I may be going into Spain (for I am expecting, while going through, to gaze upon you, and by you to be sent forward there, if I should ever first be filled, in part, by you) . . . (Rom.15:22-24).*

Here we recognize there had been a certain tension between Paul's personal desires and the divine intentions. We ourselves must often experience this struggle when something we long to do is hindered because of circumstances, which are, in truth, of God, for all is out of Him. But Paul had learned to judge his course of movement "from the things about [him]" (*cf* Phil.2:23). And he saw all of this as from God.

Now as he concludes his letter to the believers in Rome, the apostle believes that the hindrances are being removed. He "expects" to go to Rome and then to go on to Spain. Everything points in this direction.

Nevertheless, Paul's expectation of going to Rome and Spain is not the same as his "expectation of the glory of God" referred to in Romans 5:2. In that case it was an expectation founded on the grace of God in the evangel which God had revealed to him. But in the present case it is an expectation founded on circumstances as they were then situated in his life. Indeed he would reach Rome, and at least through letters or representatives, if not in person, he would herald the Word in Spain. Similarly, we may be sure that Paul's ministry to Spain would be aided and encouraged ("forwarded") by the believers in Rome, and that they, in part, would fill up his needs. But Paul's words here in Romans 15 show that he was not certain just *how* this would be effected and under exactly *what* circumstances.

For us today, we may not even be as certain of our future steps as Paul, but we still may judge from that which is about us. We will sometimes find that hindrances to service that we long to perform are removed, and we can proceed in expectation. For this we will give God the praise and prayerfully look to Him in every step of the way as Paul himself set the example:

“And, saying these things, at his kneeling together with them all, he prays” (Acts 20:36).

In the meantime, as Acts chapters 20 and 21 verify, he sets his feet firmly toward Jerusalem.

“I AM GOING TO JERUSALEM”

—*yet now I am going to Jerusalem, dispensing to the saints. For it delights Macedonia and Achaia to make some contribution for the poor of the saints who are in Jerusalem. For they are delighted, and they are their debtors, for if the nations participate in their spiritual things, they ought to minister to them in fleshly things also (Rom.15:25-27).*

What were the occasions surrounding Paul that led him to turn first toward Jerusalem? Certainly not all the circumstances that pointed him in that direction are mentioned here, but those that are mentioned are of great importance, for they relate directly to the evangel Paul had been proclaiming in this epistle. The message of grace, most especially the grace of conciliation, enriched the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. They had grasped the significance of Israel's offense becoming the world's riches and their casting away becoming the conciliation of the world (Rom.11:12,15), and this was bearing fruit in their daily lives.

Obviously the word of the conciliation had led these brethren to commiserate with those poor people in Jerusalem and to feel deeply a sense of debt toward them. The saints in Jerusalem were suffering, and this surprisingly so in light of the promises made through the prophets. They were suffering because, for now, the nation was tripping (Rom.11:11), which circumstance in turn had opened the way for blessing to those of the nations (11:12).

It should be emphasized that it was the evangel of

God's peace toward all peoples that worked in the hearts of these believers; it was not something of themselves, some sort of humanistic charitableness, but an operation of God's Spirit. The realization that, "being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son" (Rom.5:10) was bearing the fruit of the spirit in these people's lives. It was not that the Macedonians were rich in gold and the goods of this world; indeed they were deep in poverty themselves (cf 2 Cor.8:2). But they felt the more pressing needs of the poor in Jerusalem, who even though they may have been followers of Jesus, nevertheless may well have looked down upon anyone of the nations. Yet none of this was considered. The love of Christ was constraining these believers in what is modern day Greece. "By no means" were they still "living to themselves, but to the One dying and being roused for their sakes" (2 Cor.5:14,15).

It was a ministering "in fleshly things," to be sure, but it reflected the spirit of the evangel Paul was commissioned to bring. And so for us as well, the word of the cross and the word of the conciliation and the glorious secrets Paul revealed later all are calculated to inspire and invigorate us in our goings and doings even in our daily lives in flesh.

#### "IN COMING TO YOU"

*... When, then, performing this, and sealing to them this fruit, I shall be coming away through you into Spain. Now I am aware that, in coming to you, I shall be coming with the blessing of Christ which fills (Rom.15:28,29).*

In going to Jerusalem Paul would be bringing a physical blessing for the poor, which he expected to "seal" (deliver safely) to them. But in going to Rome he



would be bringing and "sealing" an even greater blessing. The gift from Macedonia and Achaia would not meet all the needs of the poor in Jerusalem, and it would soon be depleted. But the gift from God for those in Rome would fill their spiritual needs and would remain and increasingly enrich them.

Yet what did Paul have to make known to the Romans that he had not already dispensed in this epistle or perhaps through the service of his friends, Prisca and Aquila, in Rome (Rom.16:3)? What "spiritual grace" (Rom.1:11) was still to be shared?

In 16:25,26 he writes of "a secret hushed in times eonian, yet manifested now," and there was still more to say concerning this word of the conciliation. Also in 2 Corinthians 12:4 he speaks of "ineffable declarations" of which he then was not allowed to speak. These would include the "untraceable riches of Christ" (Eph.3:8) which had not yet been made known as Paul wrote this letter. There was much yet to be safely delivered.

"The blessing of Christ *which fills* doubtless is an intimation of the transcendent truths which were made public by Paul after his arrival at Rome. None of the blessings before bestowed filled, in the sense of completing and perfecting. The full-orbed presentation of truth in the Ephesian epistle, written at Rome, fully meets the anticipation here expressed by the apostle."\*

Brother A. E. Knoch was certainly correct in this comment, for in Romans 15:29 Paul is clearly pointing to something that had not yet been shared with the believers. This epistle has marvelously supplied our needs with revelations concerning Christ. In particular it has announced the glories of His faith, the obedience

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\*CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.246

of the One, Jesus Christ, and in great depth the apostle has shown how this evangel becomes the power of God for salvation to everyone who is believing. These blessings must be recognized and appreciated, for they are foundational and fundamental to our faith. Yet Paul is now looking forward to his future ministry. He is coming to Rome with further revelations concerning God's blessings in Christ centered in His vast love and transcendent grace.

Such revelations would also reach Spain, and when they did, Paul would be there in spirit if not in flesh (*cp* Col.2:5). In accord with this, it is right for us to view the coming of this message to us as an extension of Paul's ministry. The apostle's service reached, and continue to reach, far beyond the northwestern Mediterranean area, to Spain and all areas of the earth. In this sense it has continued beyond the late First Century A.D. into our own days, even though the apostle has long since been put to repose.

#### ENTREATY TO PRAYER

Hence, it is in anticipation of what is still to be made known concerning Christ, that the apostle makes the following plea for prayer:

*Now I am entreating you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the spirit, to struggle together with me in prayers to God for me, that I should be rescued from the stubborn in Judea, and my dispensation for Jerusalem may be becoming well received by the saints, that I may be coming to you with joy through the will of God, and I should be resting together with you (Rom.15:30-32).*

As he entreats the brethren to pray, Paul invokes the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the spirit. It is in consciousness of Him Who died for our

sakes, Who is our Lord and Who pleads for us at God's right hand, that we are to pray. And it is in recognition of that powerful love that has been implanted in us, the conviction that God's love can never be separated from us, that we are to approach our God in prayer.

These are words of practical power and significance. When we pray for one another, let us keep our Lord Jesus Christ as the center of our meditation. When we pray in or through His Name we do so in recognition of Who He is and what He means to us. And as we pray for our brethren we do so, as Paul entreats here, with that love which God has put in our hearts through the spirit.

Again in these words we can learn much of the specific matters to be requesting in prayer. Earlier Paul had reminded us that "what we should be praying for, to accord with what must be, we are not aware" (Rom.8:26). But we can pray for others that they be rescued from stubborn opposers and that they may be carrying on their labors "with joy," and serving "through the will of God" and may be finding rest together with fellow believers.

#### GOD'S PEACE BE WITH YOU

*... Now the God of peace be with all of you! Amen!*  
(Rom.15:33).

Yet those were troubled times. For the Romans, there was political unrest all around, besides pressures from the selfish ways of society and fanatical, religious opposition. For Paul, there were riots and dangers, sorrow and pain, struggle and toil. Yet even in making mention of some part of this struggle, he cannot but end with a word concerning peace.

This peace comes from the God of peace; it comes from the God Who has conciliated the world to Him-

self, not reckoning our offenses to us (2 Cor.5:19) and Who effected this tremendous conciliation "through the death of His Son" (Rom.5:10)!

Indeed, it was especially the blessing of peace and reconciliation that Paul had in mind when he spoke here of "the blessing of Christ that fills." In many ways peace from the God of peace is a particularly unique and representative provision for believers today. It ranks with *grace* in the opening greetings of all of Paul's epistles, and it is exposed with rare emphasis in those later letters of the apostle written from Rome.

We ourselves live in times that, in certain ways, are more troubled than Paul's era. These are perilous periods (2 Tim.3:1). And yet the God of peace is still here, entreating through Paul, "Be conciliated to God!" (2 Cor.5:20), Who is over all. May He be with all of us! Amen!

D.H.H.

*(To be continued)*

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#### NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

We apologize for the delays in publishing and mailing this and the several preceding issues of *Unsearchable Riches*. Even so, we have managed to mail all the magazines by the end, or shortly after, the month of issue. Yet due to postal service delays within certain regions of the United States, the delivery of second class mailings is sometimes quite slow. After collecting and selecting the articles here in Michigan, I send them on to our California office, where Jim Coram and Nathan Lockhart, along with help from Pat Phillips in Fort Worth, Texas, do the typesetting and prepare proofs for me to arrange so as to fill the 48 pages. After this, plates are prepared and the printing is done in California, followed by folding, collating, stitching and trimming, besides stuffing of envelopes and mailing. Even with volunteer help from friends in the Los Angeles area, we are finding all these chores very taxing on our strength. Yet we are thankful to announce that our friend, Wilbur Smith, is joining our staff and will be assisting the Corams and Nathan at the California office.

## THE PRIMITIVE PASSED BY

THE PATH “suited to transcendence” (1 Cor.12:31), is the path of truth for believers today. On this pathway, only “faith, expectation, love—*these three*” are “*remaining*” (1 Cor.13:13). The gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 as a whole were concerned only with the early period of the ecclesia’s development. In that era, that entire complement of spiritual endowments was *being* given with a view to *expedience* (1 Cor.12:7), since the word of God had not yet been completed (*cf* Col.1:25). Yet now the word of God *has* been completed, through the final Pauline perfection (or “maturity”) epistles of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Consequently, since much that was once *expedient* is no longer *appropriate*, such provisions have ceased or been discarded.

Now, through the final writings of Paul, we may learn of the change within and full development of his evangel—going “from glory to glory” (*cf* 2 Cor.3:18). Thus we will be able to discern the truth which is applicable to ourselves today.

Like Peter, in an earlier era and former administration, we too need to be “established in the present truth” (*cp* 2 Pet.1:12), the truth for our *own* era and administration. We need to know, “that which concerns [*ourselves*]” (Col.4:8), that we might “stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God” (Col.4:12).

It should be no cause for alarm that we have found that only some of the specific gifts of 1 Corinthians 12

have been carried over (or rather, reintroduced) into the era of maturity. Through one means or another, God will always give us all that we need, all that is best for us, to accord with the era and the administration. For while we do find that certain gifts, in suitably adjusted form, are indeed transposed into the present administration, no mention is made of any others having been sustained.

As Paul declares, even in the perfection epistle of Ephesians, “[the ascended Christ] gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers” (Eph.4:11). This makes it evident that these services are included within God’s provision for the ecclesia today, even in the era of maturity, not only in the former era, in which the ecclesia began. Though the provision of these gifts for believers today *accords* with the presence of these same gifts in the era which preceded the present, the present provision is not necessitated by the former presence.

It is not that any of us are apostles or prophets, but that we are “being *built on* the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” the apostles and prophets of the ecclesia which is Christ’s body, “the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself” (Eph.2:20).

#### HEALING

“Many will still ask, What of the other gifts, especially healing, which is not specifically said to have ceased? The answer is not far to seek. Physical healing is clearly promised in many a passage, but it has no place in the more excellent way we are considering. Ephesians promises all *spiritual* blessings among the celestials (Eph.1:3), but there is not a single word as to physical health on the earth. Philippians brings before

us three of the most spiritual of God's slaves in this era of transcendent grace. Paul himself had a thorn in the flesh, and could not get rid of this physical infirmity, because *it was necessary for the perfection of grace*. God's power can only be perfected in infirmity (2 Cor. 12:8), and Paul, who healed others, learns the deeper lesson of abiding under the power of Christ. This was *after* he began to walk the more excellent way.

"Timothy, next to Paul, is the greatest of all the apostles for this era of grace. He, too, treads the path of perfection, and suffers 'often infirmities' for which Paul prescribes a little wine, instead of exercising his gift of healing.

"And now we are told of Epaphroditus, who risked his soul for the saints, and nearly died while he was staying with Paul, to his great sorrow. He was on the more excellent way. No one on the more excellent way ever used the gift of miraculous healing even though he had it (Phil.2:25-30).

"Before Paul received this ministry he was the greatest healer of all the apostles. He more than duplicated all that Peter did. But when the great change came, as Israel's rejection of Messiah became more apparent, he decided no longer to know Christ after the flesh; he gave notice that the signs which accompanied the proclamation of the kingdom would cease, and intimated that God had something much better in store for the saints, not on earth but in the heavens, not in the physical realm, but in the spiritual.

"Knowing Christ according to 'the flesh' (2 Cor.5:16), refers to Christ's flesh not Paul's (*cp* Rom.9:3-5). Paul certainly would not claim a fleshly knowledge of [i.e., relationship to] Him as the basis of his ministry hitherto. But he had been proclaiming Him as the Messiah of Israel, as to His *physical* relationship to the Circumci-

sion. Christ was a Jew and lived and died in their land and will restore the kingdom to them on the basis of their *physical* relationship to Him. Gentile blessing on earth must flow through this channel. Paul had been proclaiming Him as Israel's Messiah. This is 'knowing Christ after the flesh.' Healing and all the other gifts were associated with knowing Christ after the flesh. They continued in connection with that ministry.

"At that point in Paul's career when he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, he decided no longer to know Christ after the flesh (2 Cor.5:16). He was entering the more excellent way. Christ according to the flesh corresponds to the 'regeneration' (or 'renaissance,' CV), as the kingdom is called (Matt.19:28). Its proclamation leads to the kingdom and the millennium. That will be very good. It will be excellent. But Paul, in spirit, has come to the end of the millennium and enters the new creation (2 Cor.5:17). The result of no longer knowing Christ according to the flesh is that 'if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: *the primitive passed by.*'

["The primitive" is in the plural, *ta archaia*, "the primitives," or "THE ORIGINALS." The reference with regard to that which is "passed by," is to the *beginning*, or *original* economies which were concerned with Christ according to the flesh, along with *all* their attendant accoutrements. Whatever gifts we may have *in common* today with the believers of those early eras, even those under Paul's early ministry, are *incidental to*, not necessitated by, the original gifts' erstwhile presence.

We enjoy the fullness of the "untraceable riches of Christ to the nations," and are enlightened according to "the administration of the secret, which has been concealed *from the eons* in God, Who creates all, that



now [from the time of the revelations of Ephesians onward] may be made known to the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord; in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence, through His faith" (Eph.3:8-12).]

"This is the more excellent way. The new birth leads to millennial blessing of which the gifts were the sign. The new creation introduces us to an unutterably higher sphere of blessing, based on faith, which asks for no signs.

"As Paul gradually entered this path his own health became impaired, he could not cure his dearest friends; he even left one of them, Trophimus, at Miletum, sick. Ask him, in his Roman prison whether the gift of healing has become inoperative. His answer might well be, If it has not, why am I afflicted, and why is Timothy often ill, and what of Trophimus and Epaphroditus? *And there is not a single instance where healing did occur after the kingdom narrative in Acts had closed.* Physical healing is a sign and pledge of the material marvels of the kingdom on earth. While that is no longer proclaimed, such attestations to its power are out of place."\*

#### MERCY AND GRACE FOR TODAY

Though we may hardly expect the miraculous signs associated with Israel's Messianic Kingdom in an era and administration which is completely divorced from it, this is no indication whatever that we may not make our requests known to God (*cf* Phil.4:6,7). God may well be merciful to us and grant us recovery, even if,

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\*A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.xv, pp.303-305

like Epaphroditus, we should become “very nigh death” (Phil.2:27). It is not that we today are to rule out any hope of God’s mercy and grace with respect to our bodily infirmities merely because the special *gift* of healing of 1 Corinthians 12 through the hands of certain men, no longer continues. May it not be coming to that! If it is His intention, His decretive will, God will surely deliver us from any ailment—for the time He intends and to the degree He intends—whether through means ordinary or extraordinary. Indeed, in the last analysis, “A man can not get *anything* if it should not be given him out of heaven” (John 3:27).

Any today who truly experience the mitigation, remission or removal of pain or disease, enjoy their deliverance only because of God and His powerful operations. This is so regardless of the means that may be employed for this purpose and however questionable certain avenues of relief may be. For God is operating *all* according to the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). But this does not mean, if we wish to be *faithful*, that we should follow after successful “Christian healers” any more than we should consult efficient Eastern oracles.

The ecclesia which is Christ’s body, of which believers today are members, is a uniquely Pauline revelation and is not at all in view in Acts, especially in its earlier portion. Nothing is more mistaken than to claim that the present ecclesia began at Pentecost, or that we should pattern the present church order after the events and practices which come before us in the early chapters of Acts. Consequently, we need not strain our credulity to the breaking point in order to convince ourselves that the charismatic movement of today constitutes a genuine renewal of the teachings and practices of Pentecost. We should by no means expect the

miracles and special visitations of the Lord which are recorded in the book of Acts, now that the administration of the secret (Eph.3:9) has come and the word of God has been completed. Acts is simply a chronicle of the deeds of those whom it concerns, and is written from a Jewish perspective in anticipation of the terrestrial kingdom. It is a continuation of the account of our Lord's ministry as recorded by Luke, and is concerned with Israel's *rejection* of the evangel of the kingdom.

Even the most zealous "Pentecostal" believers of today who are at all objective, sometimes discount the prophecies, healings and tongues utterances which they themselves witness. This is because the prophecies are often proved false and the healings questionable, even as the tongues of little correspondence to the scriptural examples but of much correspondence to the repetitive, incoherent sounds made by their mentors and associates.

Since many pursue these "gifts" out of a clean heart, having engaged in sincere prayer that they might know the truth, they deem it impossible that the suggestion could perhaps be true that thus they are in the trap of the Adversary. Yet many such brethren see nothing incongruous in confidently insisting that those who differ with them — believers no less sincere than themselves who nonetheless deem these sensational practices spurious — are necessarily deceived by the devil.

Even where significant predictions occasionally prove accurate, this is no indication that any today are actually serving in the capacity of divine prophet. Indeed, "Who is this who speaks and it is coming to be, when my Lord did not instruct? Is not the evil and the good faring forth from the mouth of the Supreme?" (Lam. 3:37,38; *cp* Isa.55:10,11).

As to so-called faith healing, the observations of

A. E. Knoch many years ago seem applicable still today: "Some cases can be cured temporarily, but others are beyond its reach. The cases fall into precisely the same groups as other systems of mental healing. Functional diseases or functional complications which usually accompany organic maladies are usually mental in their origin, and can be cured by 'faith,' however induced. It is merely the power of mind over matter.

"Now we must concede that the appeal to God's Word is the strongest possible incentive to faith, and that mental healing under the guise of the miraculous should have far more success than appeals to philosophy or "science" or merely the power of repetition. These all depend on the fact that there is no organic disease, but only disturbances in the mental control of the body. If we add to this the immense psychological effect of mass meetings, we have one of the most powerful natural means of ameliorating functional disease.

"Everyone knows the vivifying effect of joy and happiness, and the depressing effect of worry. The mental state powerfully influences the action of all the vital organs. Even blindness and paralysis may be caused by purely mental emotions. Such cases as these can be cured by the mental healers of today, and especially by those who seek to operate under the banner of the Bible. But not one of them can accomplish the healing which attested our Lord's messiahship or the nearness of the kingdom in the days of the apostles."\*

#### THE SECRET NOW MANIFEST

Prophecy, even as special endowments of prelimi-

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\**Unsearchable Riches*, vol.xv, pp.306,307

nary knowledge, prepared for further unfoldings and maturity. Similarly, the amazing gift of languages, *once and for all*, served as a sign to *unbelievers*. For it gave evidence to man's unrelenting love of the darkness instead of the light, even where the glorious message of enlightenment was attended by such a stupendous marvel.

The present administration of God's grace, in the language of inspiration, called for an "*adjusting of the saints*, . . . for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ" (Eph.4:12,13). The time has come when the apostle is admonishing and teaching so as to be presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus (Col.1:28). This was impossible at the time when 1 Corinthians was penned. Yet later on, Epaphras, struggling for the Colossians in prayer, did so that they might "stand mature and fully assured in *all* the will of God" (Col.4:12).

It was granted to Paul, for us, "to *complete* the word of God—the secret which has been concealed from the eons and from the generations, yet *now* was made manifest to His saints, to whom God wills to make known what are the glorious riches of this secret among the nations, which is: Christ among you, [and] the expectation of glory [which concerns you]" (Col.1:25-27). "Nations" and "you" are both plural, so *en* ("in" when used with a singular object) should be rendered "among" in English. This does not refer to Christ's presence, by His spirit, within the individual believer (which was not a secret; *cf* Rom.8:9; Gal.2:20), but to the presence of the Christ of God *now* (Who, formerly, according to flesh, was associated solely with the nation of Israel) among the very nations themselves: *Christ among you!*

“Christ, Who *never* went among the nations before His ascension, met Paul outside the land, on the Damascus road, not as the lowly Jesus, but as the glorified Son of God. Gradually, in spirit, through the apostle’s ministries, He unfolds His secret purpose to be to the nations, in spirit, all that He had been to Israel in flesh, and far more. This is the secret: *Christ among the nations, a glorious expectation.* Not a subordinate place in the earthly kingdom, but a preeminent place in His celestial domains.”\*

As those who recognize that the “primitives” (or “beginning” things) are indeed “passed by,” we rejoice in the glorious unfoldings which are given to us now, those revelations which complete the word of God and afford us our position of maturity in which we are complete in Christ (Col.2:10). May God grant that our love might be superabounding still more and more in realization and all sensibility, for us to be testing the things of consequence (Phil.1:9,10). We pray as well for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of our heart having been enlightened, for us to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His allotment among the saints (Eph.1:17,18).

We are waiting for God’s Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation (1 Thess.1:10). We anticipate His presence by faith, in expectation, and through love. For, as our apostle has said, and we have discovered, “Yet now are remaining faith, expectation, love—these three. Yet the greatest of these is love. Be pursuing love” (1 Cor.13:13; 14:1).

James Coram

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\*A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.304

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Concordant Version of the Psalms

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PSALM 119:137-160

- <sup>137</sup> You are righteous, O Yahweh,  
And Your judgments are upright.
- <sup>138</sup> Your testimonies which You have enjoined are righteous  
And very faithful.
- <sup>139</sup> My jealousy gnaws at me,  
For my foes forget Your words.
- <sup>140</sup> Refined<sup>l</sup> is Your <sup>sa</sup>promise very much,  
And Your servant, he loves it.
- <sup>141</sup> I am insignificant and despised<sup>l</sup>,  
Yet I do not forget Your precepts.
- <sup>142</sup> Your righteousness is <sup>’</sup>eonian righteousness,  
And Your law is truth.
- <sup>143</sup> Though distress and constraint,  
though they have converged on me,  
Your instructions are my delectations.
- <sup>144</sup> Your testimonies are <sup>’</sup>eonian righteousness;  
Cause me to understand them <sup>+</sup>that I may live.

HE IS RIGHTEOUS

The words “righteous” and “righteousness” begin three verses of this stanza (137,142,144), in description of Yahweh and His testimonies. This is the bedrock of Israel’s confidence in Yahweh: “You are *righteous*, O Yahweh, And Your judgments are upright.” This conviction, however, was constantly being bombarded by “distress and constraint” converging on the

psalmist (v.143). Current events, judged by themselves alone, seldom support the concept of a righteous Deity. And so the singer turns to Yahweh's instructions as his "delectations" (v.138). Here he is reminded that despite appearances, Yahweh's "righteousness is eonian righteousness."

How blessed we are today to have a revelation of the righteousness of God *through the faith of Jesus Christ* (Rom.1:17; 3:21,22,26). It is this love of Christ that constrains us to walk in newness of life, unselfishly and to His honor (*cf* Rom.6:2-4; 2 Cor. 5:14,15; Phil.3:7-9). But each one of us also plead to our God and Father, "Cause me to understand" these testimonies to His righteousness "that I may live."

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- 145 I call out <sup>i</sup>with all my heart; O answer me, O Yahweh;  
Let me preserve Your statutes.
- 146 I call out to You; O save me,  
<sup>+</sup>That I may keep Your testimonies.
- 147 I precede <sup>i</sup> the morning gloaming, <sup>+</sup>that I may implore;  
I <sup>m</sup>set my hope <sup>y</sup>in Your words.
- 148 My wakeful eyes precede the night vigils  
To meditate <sup>i</sup>on Your <sup>sa</sup>promise.
- 149 Do hear my voice according to Your benignity;  
O Yahweh, according to Your judgment, revive me.
- 150 <sup>7</sup>Those persecuting me <sup>cs</sup> draw near  
with evil scheme;  
They are far from Your law.
- 151 You are near, O Yahweh,  
And all Your instructions are truth.
- 152 Long ago I came to know from Your testimonies  
That You had founded them for the eon.



HE IS NEAR

Here is one who rises early in the morning to pray with all his heart, pleading for salvation from troubles and fears. His prayers precede the earliest gloamings of the dawn (v.147) and even anticipate the night vigils (v.148). His persecutors draw near (v.150), but this danger makes him more conscious of and grateful for the nearness of Yahweh (v.151). Indeed the experiences of life are calculated to draw us closer to God in meditation on His Word and in assurance of the firm foundation of His testimonies.

Philippians 4:4-7 parallels this portion of Psalm 119 in several ways. Yet we are led to pray with joy and thanksgiving, and not just in the quiet times of the day, but always, even in the jarring hours. “The Lord is near.”

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- 153 See my humiliation, and deliver me,  
For I have not forgotten Your law.
- 154 Do contend my contention and redeem me;  
Revive me 'with Your <sup>sa</sup>promise.
- 155 Far from the wicked is salvation,  
For they do not seek after Your statutes.
- 156 Your compassions are many, O Yahweh;  
Revive me according to Your judgments.
- 157 Many are my persecutors<sup>l</sup> and my foes,  
Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.
- 158 I see the treacherous<sup>l</sup>, and I am <sup>l</sup>disgusted  
<sup>w</sup>Because they do not keep Your <sup>sa</sup>promise close.
- 159 See <sup>t</sup>how I love Your precepts;  
O Yahweh, according to Your benignity revive me.
- 160 The sum of Your word is truth,  
And all of Your righteous judgments are <sup>'</sup>eonian.

## PETITIONS AND PRAISE

It is not because he doubts Yahweh's awareness of his troubles that the psalmist pleads to Him, "See my humiliation" (v.153). But the treachery of persecutors and foes so fully occupies his own seeing (verses 157,158), that he needs the prayer of this passage in order to get his sight adjusted. Thus he moves from the pleas of verses 153 and 154 to the praises of verses 156 and 160.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:1,2, Paul requested prayers "that we should be rescued from abnormal and wicked men." And at the close of his ministry he testified with exultation that the Lord had rescued him from all his persecutions, which persecutions must be expected by all who want to live devoutly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim.3: 11,12). Then he added, "The Lord will be rescuing me from every wicked work and will be saving me for His celestial kingdom, to Whom be glory for the eons of the eons. Amen!" (2 Tim.4:18).

Here again the making of petitions has led to confident declarations of praise.

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We are planning a special issue of the magazine for our July number, to be given entirely to the subject of *Creation*. The Lord willing, it will consist primarily of selections from A. E. Knoch's studies on Genesis 1:1-3 and other articles on God as Creator and His purpose in creating. The various series of studies currently appearing in the magazine will be resumed in the September issue. But if this approach of giving an entire issue to one theme proves helpful to our readers, we will plan to follow it again on other subjects, perhaps once a year.

Here in Michigan, we are planning to concentrate on this theme of Genesis 1:1-3 in two August conferences; first in Baldwin, August 4-6, and then in Lansing, August 25 and 26.

## DIVINE DISCIPLINE

“HENCE OBSERVE EVERY INSTRUCTION which I am enjoining on you today, that you may be steadfast and enter and tenant the land where you are crossing over to tenant it, and that you may prolong your days on the ground about which Yahweh has sworn to your fathers to give to them and to their seed, a land gushing with milk and honey” (Deut.11:8,9).

Chapter eleven of Deuteronomy is the last chapter of exhortation, before the statutes and the judgments are set out which are to be observed “to obey in the land” (Deut.12:1). In his second address to the post-Sinai generation of Israelites, Moses has come to the end of the retrospective part. *In the past*, Moses had said earlier, “Yahweh your Elohim caused you to go these forty years in the wilderness, that He might make you humble, to probe you so as to know what is in your heart, whether or not you shall observe His instructions. *So He made you humble and let you hunger; then He fed you . . .* So you know with your heart that just as a man disciplines his son, Yahweh your Elohim is disciplining you. Hence *observe the instructions of Yahweh your Elohim* so as to walk in His ways and fear Him” (Deut.8:2-6).

*In the future*, in the land of promise, Yahweh will discipline Israel in a similar manner, as Moses is about to explain (*cf* Deut.11:17).

### OBSERVE EVERY INSTRUCTION

In an urgent appeal that Moses made toward the

end of his first address in the plain of Moab in Transjordan, he used the word "instructions" as a comprehensive term, when he said: "Now, Israel, hearken to *the statutes and to the judgments* that I am teaching you today, to obey them, that you may live and may enter and tenant the land that Yahweh Elohim of your fathers is giving to you. You shall neither add to *the word* that I am enjoining on you, nor shall you subtract from it, but observe *the instructions* of Yahweh your Elohim that I am enjoining on you" (Deut.4:1,2).

The near context shows that the term "the instructions" comprehends the statutes and the judgments that Moses had enjoined on them so far, as well as those he was about to expound later.

So the word "every instruction" in Deuteronomy 11:8 stands for *the whole law*, without any subtraction, or any man-made addition. We should keep in mind at this juncture that (up to chapter eleven) the enjoinder to observe the divine law had been based on Israel's *past experience* that had become their *knowledge in the present*, as a preparation for the events still ahead of them. Yet in Deuteronomy eleven Moses is concluding his exhortations with an *outlook into the future* when they will actually enter the land and tenant it.

#### TAKE COURAGE!

Only the continued observance of the whole law would make the people *steadfast* and *encourage*\* them to cross over the Jordan river, to enter the promised land and to tenant it. The militiamen among the post-Sinai generation would remember their recent military engagements with the two Amorite kings, Sihon

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\**encourage*, the same word in Hebrew as *steadfast*.

of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, whom Yahweh had delivered into their hands, so that they were able to take over the Transjordan area (north of Moab and east of Ammon) "from the watercourse of Arnon [in the south] as far as Mount Hermon" in the north of the tableland (*cf* Deut.3:8). Thus two and a half tribes (Gad, Reuben, and half Manasseh, Num.32:33) had entered their tenancies, east of the Jordan.

At that time Moses was disturbed by the possibility that the other tribes would be deterred from crossing over the Jordan into Canaan. He had said to the spokesmen of Gad and Reuben:

"Why do you *discourage* the heart of the sons of Israel from crossing over to the land that Yahweh has given to them?" (Num.32:7). Yet the representatives of Gad and Reuben declared themselves willing to leave their families in Transjordan; all their militiamen would "cross over before Yahweh for the war" together with the rest of Israel (Num.32:27). So the militiamen of the other tribes could *take courage* in view of the expected implementation of the agreement to jointly cross the Jordan river and enter the land.

#### PROLONG YOUR DAYS

Among Deuteronomy's most characteristic phrases is this one: "that you may prolong your days [in the land, 5:33]" which occurs (with variations) eleven times. "When Moses concluded speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them: Set your heart on all the words which I am testifying among you today, so that you may enjoin them on your sons to observe to obey *all the words of this law*. For it is not an empty word for you; *it means your life*, and by this word you may prolong your days on the ground where you are crossing over the Jordan to tenant it" (Deut.32:45-47).

So the promised land will be the place where the law is to be observed and obeyed. Yet the Israelites will not be able to enjoy its tenancy unless they obey the law. Hence the renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel emphasizes obedience to the whole law. Yet this requirement is balanced and indeed outweighed by *Yahweh's promise to the patriarchs*. So Moses said (in Deut. 11:8,9): "Observe every instruction . . . that you may prolong your days on the ground which *Yahweh had sworn to your fathers* to give to them and to their seed, a land gushing with milk and honey." The possession of the land will confirm the covenant that Yahweh had sworn to the fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the renewal of the covenant with Israel, "as in this day" (Deut. 8:18).

#### GUSHING WITH MILK AND HONEY

When Yahweh first talked to Moses, from the fiery thornbush, He promised to bring Israel to "a land gushing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8,17). The phrase was used by Moses on the day of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13:5), and by Yahweh after He had "struck the people down because they had used the calf that Aaron made" (Ex. 32:35; 33:3). In Leviticus 20:24, the phrase is followed by Yahweh's statement: "I, Yahweh, am your Elohim, Who separated you from the peoples."

Meanwhile the words "gushing with milk and honey" had become well-known; they were used by the eleven unfaithful scouts to embellish the misinformation (Num. 13:27,28) they gave after they had reconnoitered the land. Joshua was the only one of the explorers who spoke in good faith: "It is a land gushing with milk and honey" (Num. 14:8). Later the phrase was once more misused by the two rebellious Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:13,14).

In Deuteronomy we find the phrase in 6:3 (followed by the "Sh'ma Yisrael," the Jewish key prayer), and then again here, in 11:9, also in 26:9,15; 27:3 and 31:20.

THE EYES OF YAHWEH ARE ON THE LAND

"For the land where you are entering to tenant it, is not like the country of Egypt, that one from where you came forth, in which you sowed your seed and irrigated it with your foot, like a garden of greens. But the land, where you are crossing over to tenant it, is a land of hills and valleys; it drinks water from the rain of the heavens; a land that Yahweh your Elohim is caring for. Continually are the eyes of Yahweh your Elohim on it from the beginning of the year until the last part of the year" (Deut.11:10,11).

Moses introduced a new motive to obedience by explaining that Canaan was a land specially cared for by Yahweh. This rugged land of mountains, hills and valleys was quite different from the flat Nile valley where the rainfall was negligible while the water from the river was available in abundance. Moses' audience, the post-Sinai generation, may have heard from their grandparents of the annual inundation of the Nile, and the man-made irrigation system by which the river waters were stored and distributed by canals over the fields. Smaller channels were hollowed out by foot in soft soil, and the foot was used for regulating the flow of water in these smaller irrigation channels. In Canaan, only a vegetable garden might be watered in a similar manner; but in Egypt the whole agricultural system was dependent on irrigation.\*

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\*The water-wheel for raising water from the Nile into the canals was probably introduced into Egypt at a later period.

Now Moses pointed out that things would be quite different in the promised land. The amount of the crop would no longer depend on human efforts, but rather on the annual rainy seasons. Earlier Moses had pointed out that Canaan was "a land good and wide, a land of watercourses, with water from springs and from the abyss, coming forth in valley and in mountain" (Deut. 8:7). But all the water from these sources would never be sufficient for Israel's farmlands to ensure proper growth of the crops. Such prosperity was dependent on the direct provision of Yahweh Himself, Who would send "the rain of the heavens" for the hills and valleys of the promised land that was under His special care: The eyes of Yahweh, Israel's Elohim, would be continually on this land, "from the beginning of the year until the last part of the year."

#### YOU WILL EAT AND BE SATISFIED

"It will come to be when you shall hearken, yea hearken to all His instructions\* that I am enjoining on you today, to love Yahweh your Elohim and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then He will give rain to your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain. You will gather your grain, your grape juice and your clarified oil, and He will give herbage in your field for your domestic beasts; thus you will eat and be satisfied" (Deut.11:13-15).

Here Moses repeats his enjoinder to hearken to Yahweh's instructions; once more he reminds his audience to love Yahweh Elohim and to serve Him with all their heart and with all their soul (*cf* Deut.6:4; 10:12).

If Israel obeyed, then, after the summer drought,

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\*Septuagint reads: all His instructions, while the Hebrew text has: My instructions; *cf* Deut.4:2,40; 6:17.



Yahweh would send the former rain in October/November, at first intermittently, thus allowing the Israelite farmer to plow his fields and to sow his barley or wheat. Then the rain would fall heavily till the end of December and continue at intervals through January and February. Yahweh would also grant the latter rain as storms and showers in March/April that would advance the ripening of the crops. In the valleys, the barley harvest might begin in May, the wheat harvest a fortnight later. The winter rains would provide water for grapes, olives and fruit trees, bring a green coat to hills and valleys, and ensure sufficient herbage for the domestic beasts. Thus the Israelites would have enough to eat and would be satisfied.

#### DROUGHT AND FAMINE IN CASE OF IDOLATRY

“Guard yourselves lest your heart should be enticed, and you *withdraw*, serve other elohim [gods] and bow down to them. Then the anger of Yahweh will grow hot against you, and He will restrain the heavens so that there shall be no rain, and the ground shall not give its crop, and you will perish quickly off the good land that Yahweh is giving to you” (Deut.11:16,17).

Moses had cautioned his audience in 6:14, not to go after the gods of the peoples around them; otherwise Yahweh would exterminate them off the surface of the ground. They would perish like the nations which Yahweh was about to destroy before their face (Deut. 8:19,20).

The dire consequences in case of idolatry, or of *withdrawal* from loving and serving Yahweh and from obeying His law are described in Deuteronomy 28: 23,24. “Your heavens that are over your head will come to be as copper, and the earth that is beneath you as iron. Yahweh shall make the rain of your land to be

dust and soil-drifts; from the heavens it shall descend on you until you are exterminated.”

This will come to pass when the anger of Yahweh grows hot against Israel, when “He will restrain the heavens so that there shall be no rain, and the ground shall not give its crop, and you will perish quickly off the good land that Yahweh is giving to you.” So Israel’s future is dependent on their Elohim Who controls both history and climate; hence their well-being in the good land will depend on their obedience toward Him and His law.

#### DISCIPLINE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the words of Paul, we are “being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them . . . as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, testing what is well pleasing to the Lord. And be *not joint participants* in the unfruitful acts of darkness” (Eph.2:10; 5:9,10).

For Israel, Yahweh Elohim had made ready the good land “for the works which are wrought in righteousness” which they should do (*cf* Titus 3:5), and they ought *not to participate* in the service of other gods. Thus Israel should walk in “His ways,” in righteousness and truth, in accordance with the words of the divine law. And this was not an empty word for them; it meant their *life*.

The enjoinders which Paul wrote down for us, are no empty words either. They are life for us, *inspired*, i.e., life-giving. They are beneficial for correction, for discipline in righteousness, so that we may be equipped and fitted out for every good act (2 Tim.3:16,17), for the good works, made ready by God.

H.H.R.

(*To be continued*)

ABRAHAM,  
AMONG THE OAKS OF MAMRE

WHEN PHARAOH learned how Abram had misled him concerning Sarai, he sent him back to Canaan along with his wife and nephew, Lot, enriched with cattle and servants. So Abram "went his way by stages from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the start, between Bethel and Ai" (Gen. 13:3).

The consequences of Abram's first deviation soon manifested themselves. Quarrels between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot resulted in the separation of the latter from his uncle. With great magnanimity Abram gave Lot the privilege of choice (Gen. 13:7-9). We do not question his generosity displayed on the occasion, but was it not inspired by Abram's recognition that his own conduct was the prime cause of the division which had taken place?

THE THIRD APPEARANCE

The Lord appeared unto Abram again, after Lot parted company with him, and said "Now lift up your eyes, and see from the place where you are, northward and to the Negev, and eastward and to the sea. For all the land that you are seeing, I shall give it to you and to your seed unto the eon . . . . Rise, walk about in the land throughout its length and its width, for I am giving it to you and to your seed, unto the eon" (Gen. 13:14-17).

"Now lift up your eyes, and see . . . Rise, walk about."

This announcement sets forth the method of spiritual progress. A vision is given that the life may be transformed. Truth is the foundation and source of practice; while true practice is the outcome of truth received and obeyed.

“So Abram moved his tent, and came to dwell among the oaks of Mamre, at Hebron; then he built an altar there to Yahweh” (Gen.13:18). Here he enters upon a new sphere of service. We have seen a pilgrim with a tent and an altar, now we shall see a soldier fighting the King’s battles. This new departure in life is the direct fruit of the sojourn at Hebron. Darting from the presence of Yahweh, Abram defeats the army of the greatest conqueror of his age, liberates the prisoners of war, recovers all the property, and returns laden with spoils. But Abram has made progress along other lines as well. Another fruit of communion appears—the grace of giving, and that at a time when we should least expect it, when life and prosperity were risked in war with the confederate kings of the invading army. Contact with the world’s sin and sorrow is the best stimulant to liberality. Herein lies the secret of giving. A contrast of the principle here disclosed with much that is in vogue today, in the matter of our finances, is by no means to our advantage. Entertainments may replenish the coffers of a church, but they introduce many worldly ways which asphyxiate life. The best remedy for financial depression is a contemplation of Golgotha. When the heart abides beneath its sacred shadow the love which prompted the great sacrifice will kindle the spirit of renunciation, and the justice that consumed it will purge the spirit of worldliness.

#### THE FOURTH APPEARANCE

Every spiritual altitude has its perils. Evil exists only

as opposition to good. Behind every force for good lurks a force for evil. Every new conquest in realms spiritual arouses new forces of opposition.

Two dangers menace Abram in the capacity of soldier: fear of death and love of gain. So Yahweh fortifies His servant against these perils of the new way by further grants of grace: "Do not fear, Abram! I am your Shield, your exceedingly increased Reward" (Gen. 15:1).

The Lord also brought him out of the tent, bade him look on the starry heavens, and said, "Thus shall become your seed" (Gen. 15:5). This was to be his reward, and he got an anterior glimpse of it. The light afflictions which are for a moment, are counterbalanced by a vision of the more abundant weight of glory which they work. "Abram believed in Yahweh, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The apprehension of his relationship deepens; faith lays firmer hold on the unseen; the covenant concerning the land is confirmed, and the former declaration, "To your seed *I shall give* this land," (12:7) is replaced by another, "To your seed *I give* this land" (15:18).

#### THE SECOND DEFLECTION

The promise of a seed called for a fresh exercise of faith on Abram's part. It was contrary to nature and therefore startling in the extreme. Sarai was barren. Both were advanced in age. Extant conditions apparently precluded a performance of the promise. The word of God made the pair feel their impotence. Conscious of inability, Abram and Sarai decided on a plan that seemed to make possible the advent of an heir. Sarai took Hagar, the Egyptian, her bond-maid, and gave her to her husband to be his wife (Gen. 16:1,2). The child born of that union was as a wild ass among

men; his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. He was debarred from the inheritance, and Abram was eventually ordered to cast him out (Gen.16:12; 21:9-14).

The Hagar-scheme originated in self-occupation and distrust of God's word. It is hard for the flesh to believe God.

Adam in Eden was tested by the word of God. God had spoken; and the question was, Will man believe God?

This was the one simple test. It was not what tradition degrades to the "eating of an apple"; the crucial test in Eden was, "Has God said?"

Our first parents failed to believe God's word, and their descendants follow their steps. Abram here meets the same test with the same sad results.

Amid the boisterous activity of this age, we, like Martha, stand in danger of devoting too much attention to side issues and neglect the one thing needed—the Word. Some time ago, while holding meetings in a Canadian town, a minister came to us at the close of a service to express his appreciation of our address. He said: "You have given us solid meat. But, you know, we preachers must use spices." We replied: "My brother, herein is the trouble; we have devoted altogether too much time to the preparation of spices and have neglected the meat." May God give us such a desire for the meat of His truth as will dispense with spices!

It is a matter of God's appointment that sinners should be saved and saints edified and nourished by the teaching of God's Word. Let us then affectionately devote ourselves to this glorious task.

We are naturally self-reliant, apt to trust the arm of flesh rather than His holy spirit, and liable to mistake perfunctory routine for whole-hearted service. The

church of today suffers from the effect of over-organization. But our multi-nominal church organization has afforded little relief. Ecclesiastical organizations are losing ground, while spiritual apathy gains on us by leaps and bounds.

#### THE FIFTH APPEARANCE

Between this appearance and the antecedent lies an interim of fifteen years. "When Abram was 99 years old Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, I am El-Who-Suffices; walk before Me, and become a man of integrity" (Gen.17:1).

With much gentleness and delicacy, the Lord lays His finger on the sore spot. "I am El-Who-Suffices," the God that is enough, the One able to perform His promise, the One Whose might is irresistible.

Here is a new self-revelation of God. After a long, monotonous silence, Yahweh appears to display His power before His troubled servant. Abram sees God in a new light, and with the new conception of God there comes a new outlook upon life, a new attitude toward men and circumstances. God makes Himself known by a new name, and Abram, too, receives a new name — Abraham, father of many nations — suggestive of fruitfulness resulting from union with God and springing from a new comprehension of His power.

God's might sweeps the obstacles which impede its advance. Its power in life means the crucifixion of the flesh, "for we who are living," says the apostle, "are ever being given up to death because of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor.4:11). The flesh which limited God's power and leaned on its own contrivances is crippled. Abraham is ordered to circumcise himself; his flesh bears the seal and mark of Yahweh's victory.

## THE SIXTH APPEARANCE

Shortly afterward the Lord appeared unto Abraham under the oaks of Mamre, and renewed the promise of a seed (Gen.18:1-10). Before departing the Lord unbosomed Himself with regard to Sodom's awful doom. In consequence of this condescension Abraham's life assumes a different phase. We have seen him as witness and soldier, now he appears before us as intercessor, pleading before the Judge of all the earth on behalf of the guilty cities of the plain (Gen.18:16-33).

Abraham knew of Lot's sojourn in Sodom. He knew, too, that Lot's influence for God there could be infinitesimal at the most; so he endeavors to supply by prayer the deficiency of a testimony marred by worldliness and inconsistency.

V. Gelesnoff

*(To be continued)*

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 GUY MARKS

Brother Guy Marks was put to repose on May 3, 1989 at close to 90 years of age. The Lord first grasped him when he was 16 years old, and his service as an evangelist and teacher spanned more than 60 years. It was while he was working with an evangelistic team that one of his brothers (both in flesh and in faith) introduced him to the Concordant Version, which eventually led to an adjustment in his understanding of the truth of God. In later years he prepared a series of tape recorded messages, a number of which have been transcribed and published as booklets and, in one case, a book entitled: *THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S WILL*.

His ministry was centered for many years near Flint, Michigan, and more recently in Grand Rapids, but he leaves many students and friends throughout the United States and Canada who mourn his passing and will miss his thought-provoking instruction. In feeling this loss, we are consoled by his own comments in his study on *glorification*: "1 Corinthians 15:26 tells us, 'The last enemy being abolished is death.' God never intended that death should reign eternally, and He planned its exit before its entrance into the world."



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JULY 1989  
BEING THE FOURTH NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY

EDITORIAL

TO BEGIN WITH, *God* created this world in which we live. The heavens and the earth did not come about by themselves, nor did they arise out of nothing. All is out of God.

This is the first revelation of the Scriptures, and it is basic to all that is later made known. In Genesis 1:1 we see God, and we see Him at work. God is; and God is active.

The second matter introduced in God's Word concerns something entirely different. The opening verse of the Bible has spoken of God's greatness, His wisdom and power, and His full involvement in the universe. But the second verse focuses attention on the most somber of all subjects: evil. The earth became a chaos and vacant and enveloped in darkness.

What is this all about? How could this have happened? Had God turned away from His creation? Indeed not, for the lesson is exactly this, that God still exists and is still operating while the cataclysm of Genesis 1:2 enters the scene. Evil penetrates into His creation, but it is part of His plan and is temporary, remaining only until it has served its purpose.

Consequently, we read that God's Spirit vibrates, and He speaks, "Let light come to be!" And there was light.

This third lesson of the Scriptures is concerned with deliverance from darkness into light. This is accomplished by the invisible power of God, termed SPIRIT, in operation with His WORD.

These three lessons are fundamental: (1) God is

active; (2) evil has entered into God's creation; and (3) God gloriously disposes of evil by the power of His spirit and His word.

Thus a pattern is laid down in the opening verses of Scripture that will be followed throughout. God will create humanity, and sin will enter into the world, and through sin, death. Fully connected with this is the revelation that God spares not His Son but gives Him up for us all, that Christ came and was obedient unto the death of the cross. And we will ask, What is this all about? How could this have happened?

Yet in Christ and His resurrection there is a powerful declaration of "Light come to be!" And so we learn that light shines forth out of darkness, illuminating the love of God.

This pattern is presented with remarkable effect in Colossians 1:13-20. God rescues us out of a rule that reflects the earth's condition in Genesis 1:2, a "jurisdiction of darkness." The ultimate extension of this jurisdiction is set before us in verse 20 by the words "the blood of His cross." Yet the victory of Genesis 1:3 is far surpassed by the victory it parallels in Colossians: "the kingdom of the Son of His love," and "to reconcile all to Him."

These and other lessons based on Genesis 1:1-3 are discussed in this issue of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine. The various articles are reprinted from previous issues, slightly edited to conform with current readings of the CV and to fit in the space available. Most of the studies were written by Brother A. E. Knoch, with a major contribution from the late Cecil J. Blay. (The author of "The Object of Creation" wished to remain anonymous.) We pray that God will add His blessing to these meditations, that we might grasp more clearly the opening lessons of His precious Word. D.H.H.

## WHAT CREATION IS

“To MAKE something out of nothing,” that is the usual definition. This is confirmed by one dictionary, which makes it: “To bring into being; to cause to exist . . . the world is regarded as brought into being out of nothing.” But we have been unable to find any confirmation for this in God’s Word. Indeed, the only passages which throw any light upon this point, teach the opposite. Peter wrote to the dispersion, “You may be subject to every *human creation* . . .” (1 Peter 2:13). No man can create anything out of nothing, even if some expositors do create doctrines out of nothing in the Scriptures, such as this. When God created the Circumcision and Uncircumcision into one new humanity, these were already in existence (Eph.2:11-15). He simply made both one by putting them into Christ.

The Scriptures teach that all is *out of God* (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor.11:12; 2 Cor.5:18), not out of nothing, unless, indeed, we insist that God is nothing. This includes all the substance of all later creations, for, as we have already seen, God’s creative acts are not confined to the beginning. Not only was the joint body of Ephesians created out of the Circumcision and Uncircumcision, but we are a new creation, created in Christ Jesus, just as all was created in Him in the beginning (Eph.2:10; Col.1:16).

In Christ we can see clearly that creation was not out of nothing. He calls Himself “God’s creative Original,”

or, as the revered Authorized Version has it, "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev.3:14). And He Himself also said, "For *out of God I came forth* and am arriving" (John 8:42). What is better evidence than a double witness from the lips of Truth Himself? It is further confirmed by our apostle, Paul, who calls Him the "Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created . . ." (Col.1:15,16). All was in Him in the beginning, even as all humanity was in Adam at first. And we feel sure that all who love Him and have tasted of His grace will be slow to say that He was nothing, when they would never think of saying that Adam, in whom we were made sinners, was nothing.

God, when He created Adam, and humanity in him, did not create it out of nothing. He used previously created soil and atmosphere. These must be continually renewed in order to keep human beings alive. If we had been created out of nothing, then it might have been our lot to live out of nothing. This, I suppose, would be very welcome to some. But those who have tried it have returned to the soil from which they sprang.

When the compiler of the Concordant Version came to define *create*, the evidence before him forced him to ignore the theological formula, and conform his definition to the usage of the word in the Scriptures. So he wrote as follows: "bring into existence *from previous material*. Man was created *out of soil and spirit*. All things were created *out of God* . . ." While this is necessarily incomplete and imperfect, due to its human origin, and we stand ready to revise it if it should be found unscriptural in any way, we have not yet found anything better. We do not care to refer to the popular definition, lest it give offense.

Probably the worst effect which this false view of

creation creates, is the warping of our thoughts as to the future. If creation came out of *nothing* it could easily return to oblivion. This would lend color to what is usually termed annihilation. On the other hand, if it originated in *God*, then it is almost impossible for a sound mind to be fully content with any other ultimate than an enriched return to its Origin. This is marvelously expressed for us in the summary of the didactic portion of the book of Romans (11:36). There we are told that, not only is all *out of Him* in creation, but also *through Him* in the eonian times, and *for Him* in the consummation, when He becomes All in all.

#### THE DURATION OF CREATION

The scientists have heaped a great deal of ridicule on the Bible, because, they said, it taught that the world was created in six days. It says no such thing, for the six days described its *restoration*, not its creation. No time is given for its creation for the simple fact that, before creation, there was no clock to measure time. No celestials were there to take account of duration.

Now, however, the latest atomic scientists claim that creation is the work of an instant, and they may be much nearer the mark. We are told a lot of the length of time in God's future plans, but when He speaks of the new creation, no period of time is given in which it occurs. It would take quite some time for a man to make a robot, but it is evident that humanity itself was created within the compass of the sixth day. An inventor often takes years to perfect a mechanism that eventually can be stamped out in an instant. Time is not an element in a miracle or a creation. Anyone could turn water into wine in a season, but to do it in an instant is the work of a Creator.

## CREATION OUT OF GOD

**IN THE BEGINNING** God created the heavens and the earth. This is the basic fact upon which we must build when we come to consider this universe of which we and our earth form a small part, and it is to this fact that every true scientist is forced to return, after threading the maze of evidence and speculation which surrounds it.

Those of us who are prepared to accept God's declarations as final and authoritative will have no quarrel with this statement, for if He has said so it is sufficient for us. Yet it is both desirable and instructive that we should seek out the relationship between God's declarations and those scientific facts which can be *proven* and established.

It can be demonstrated that the Scriptures are *never* out of harmony with any established scientific fact, and that all the theories of science which contradict or deny the Scriptures *cannot be proved*. Though there may be bodies of opinion which incline favorably to the latter there are always equally weighty opponents which refuse to accept them.

There is a prevalent idea that faith involves the unquestioned acceptance of creedal dogmas, and any attempt to prove that true faith is logical and rational is frowned upon as unnecessary; nevertheless this is a universe of law and order, and it is presumable therefore that the Divine revelation will conform to the same design, and will be found to make no demands

upon credulity, but will give the same satisfaction to the mental powers of man as it does to the spiritual faculties.

The danger is that we so often approach these problems from the wrong end by seeking to find confirmation of the philosophical guesses of men in the inspired Word, whereas the true method is to take God's declaration as the basis, and *then* to see how far the findings of science are in harmony with it.

It is important that we should learn all we can of what God tells us regarding creation, for our conception of the divine purpose in its inception will influence our thoughts concerning its consummation, and if we have wrong assumptions in regard to the foundation, the edifice erected thereon cannot be other than insecure. There are practically no doctrines of Scripture our understanding of which will not be either clarified or obscured by the nature of our views on creation.

It is not possible to enquire as to *how* creation came about, for it is beyond the scope of our limited finite minds to comprehend the Infinite. The question which we seek to answer is, What constitutes creation, of what does it consist?

The answer given in our Authorized Version in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews will not assist us:

*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (11:3),*  
for a concordant translation would render these words as follows:

*By faith we are apprehending the eons to adjust to a declaration of God, so that what is being observed has not come out of what is appearing.*

This passage is not referring to creation at all, but to

*time*, which has been adjusted to allow for the present economy to intervene between the promises made to the fathers, and their fulfillment.

But it is largely upon this passage that the philosophical-religious doctrine of creation out of nothing is based, a doctrine which has been readily subscribed to by religious people in the past, and which is so absolutely unacceptable to science.

We ask ourselves if there is anything in the Scriptures which will confirm this widely held doctrine? Many believers will, when asked, readily affirm that God made the world out of nothing, but they cannot point to any Divine declaration to substantiate their statement, for no such declaration exists.

The idea itself is quite unthinkable, like many another orthodox doctrine, and God never asks us to strain our faith in the acceptance of the irrational. "Thinking is a positive process which annihilates itself when it seeks to comprehend the nothingness of nothing." There is, in fact, nowhere in Scripture any passage which even so much as implies that this self-contradictory dogma could be true.

In reply to the suggestion that God is omnipotent and therefore equal to the task of creating something out of nothing, however it may defy our reasoning powers to comprehend it, the late Alan Burns wrote, "God can neither contradict Himself nor do that which is self-contradictory. He cannot lie. Neither can He do in physics what would answer to a lie in morals. When we can think of God's omnipotence as involving the power to make square circles, or round squares, then we may accept the suggested interpretation of what Divine omnipotence means. To create something out of nothing would be to perform a physical untruth, and it is impossible for God to lie."



There is an alternative theory, which does not command much support, and that is that the universe was never created, because matter is eternally self-existent. We must at once reject this view, if only on the ground that its acceptance would strike at the root of our fundamental conception of God, as He reveals Himself. God alone is self-existent, and to elevate matter to the same rank is to imply that it, also, is Deity. There is only *one* God.

We are left, then, with the conclusion that this material universe is created out of *something*: can the Scriptures determine for us what that "something" is?

The record of God's creative acts in the book of Genesis always shows Him as using existing substance — man was created *out of* the soil, woman was created *out of* man; in other words, men and women are soil in a new form.

Now it is a striking scientific fact that with all the marvelous variety in the form and physical state of that which constitutes our universe, it can be demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt that all matter within the universe is built of the same elements.

No chemical element is revealed in the spectrum of the sun or of any star that has not been handled in our laboratories. For a time, it is true, helium, first recognized in the sun's atmosphere, was unknown on earth, but now airships are floated with it; "nebulium," long known only from its lines in the spectra of nebulae, proves to be our common nitrogen and oxygen, in special states of ionization, that is to say, electrically charged.

This discovery has revolutionized the scientific concept of the nature of matter, and incidentally is in harmony with the implications of Scripture.

All matter, on earth, in the sun, and in the stars, in

our own stellar system and in all other stellar systems, is built up of the same fundamental units. For all the bewildering complexities of its structure and motions, for all its gigantic dimensions, all the endless variety of its contents, our great stellar system, our universe so far as it has come within the range of human observation, is an organic whole, exhibiting an underlying structural symmetry, built up throughout of the same basic elements, and governed by the same great laws.

What do we know from Scripture concerning the universe? We are told that it is *created out of God*. "Seeing that *out of Him and through Him and for Him is all*" (Rom.11:36). This is in full accord with the fundamental fact with which we started, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but the scope of this declaration is much wider, for it informs us that the whole of creation not only had its *source* in Him, but has its *course* in Him and finds its *consummation* in Him.

All is out of God. Then creation is out of God, not out of nothing, nor eternally self-existent.

But what do we know of God's essential being? We are told that He is *Spirit*, He is *Light*, and He is *Love*. Then creation is out of Spirit, Light and Love—Love which purposes, Light which reveals and Spirit which energizes.

What is spirit? It has been defined as "the invisible, intangible power of all life, action and intelligence." There are many modes or expressions of spirit, e.g., the spirit of man. These are all necessarily inferior to the One Great Spirit, the Spirit of God, Who is the Father of Spirits. The Spirit of God, then, is the Divine power which is operative in creation, so that all that makes up this universe *is spirit expressed in a tangible form which we know as matter*.

If matter is an expression of spirit, that is to say, if matter is created out of spirit, it is within the realm of logic to conclude that matter is capable of still further changes, so that the creation of man out of the dust of the earth becomes a belief for rational acceptance, and in the scriptural doctrine of death as a state of unconsciousness it can be seen that one form of matter, man, is returned to its previous form, earth.

And the spirit of man is withdrawn by God unto Himself:

*And the soil returns to the earth just as it was, And the spirit, it returns to the One, Elohim, Who gave it (Ecc.12:7).*

The Scriptures forbid our taking a materialistic view of creation, and the findings of the scientist force him to the conclusion that behind and beyond all visible phenomena there is an invisible and intangible Power.

Christ, our Lord, is the One in and through Whom God acts,

*For in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him (Col.1:16-17).*

He is God's Creative Original, and God has appointed Him as enjoyer of the allotment of the universe, and it is He who carries on the universe by His powerful declaration, for His words are spirit (Heb.1:2,3). By virtue of His office Christ is able to subject the universe to Himself (Phil.3:21), and it is God's revealed purpose to head up the universe in Christ, to reconcile the universe to Himself in Christ, and to this end He is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:9-12).

Hear Paul's grand declaration (Acts 17:24-28):

*God, Who makes the world and all that is in it, He, the Lord inherent of heaven and earth, is not dwelling in temples made by hands, neither is He attended by human hands, as if requiring anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all. Besides, He makes out of one every nation of mankind, to be dwelling on all the surface of the earth, specifying the setting of the seasons and the bounds of their dwelling, for them to be seeking God, if, consequently, they may surely grope for Him and may be finding Him, though to be sure, not far from each one of us is He inherent, for in Him we are living and moving and are . . .*

Thus from the dawn of creation, through all the travail of the years, by the way of the cross God works out His purpose of revealing His heart, that He may ultimately be All in all. He has declared it, and the human heart reaches out for the fulfillment of His declaration, even though eons must take their course ere all be brought to a consummation. Out of Him, and through Him and for Him are all things: to Him be glory for the eons!

“Give me, O God, to sing that thought,  
 Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith  
 In Thy ensemble; whatever else withheld, withhold not from us  
 Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
 Health, peace, salvation universal.  
 Is it a dream?  
 Nay, but the lack of it a dream,  
 And failing it, life's lore and wealth a dream,  
 And all the world a dream.”

C. J. Blay

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#### MICHIGAN MEETINGS

Two August conferences are scheduled centered upon the theme of Creation and Genesis 1:1-3; first the annual Baldwin Summer Fellowship, August 4-6, and then a special gathering in Lansing, August 25 and 26.

## THE THREE EARTHS

**TWO UNIVERSAL CATAclysms, one in the past and one in the future, separate the present from the first and third earths. One of these was overflowed with water in the past, and the other will be dissolved by fire in the future. Two lesser cataclysms, the deluge of Noah's day, and the fiery judgments of the days of the Son of Mankind, mark off the three eons, or worlds, which are staged on the present earth. These grand crises in earth's history are complementary, and must be carefully distinguished if we wish a clear comprehension of God's plan and purpose in relation to the place we now occupy in His universe (2 Peter 3:1-13; Matt.24:37).**

Not only the scoffers of the last days, but many of the saints, and even devout scientists who believe the promise of the presence of Christ, are oblivious of the fact that the earth has already had a double deluge by means of water, once in Noah's day, which destroyed the "ancient world" (2 Peter 2:5), and once before, of old, when the "then world" (2 Peter 3:5) was deluged with water, and perished. So terrible was this cataclysm that the world, or cosmic system which existed upon it, was destroyed. The earliest records we have of these two events are found in "Genesis," the book of Beginnings. The first and greatest of these cataclysms (the Greek term for DOWN-SURGE, deluge) is mentioned immediately after the record of creation. Then "the earth came to be a chaos and vacant, and darkness was

over the surface of the abyssal expanse [the earth's submerged surface]" (Gen.1:2).

Nothing could be clearer than Yahweh's insistence that He not only created the earth and made it and formed it and established it, but that He did *not create it a chaos*, as it subsequently became (Isa.45:18). He uses the very same words for *create (bra)* and *chaos (theu)* in Isaiah that He used in Genesis. This is hid from us in the revered Authorized Version, because it renders the word "chaos" *without form* in Genesis and *in vain* in Isaiah.

A Concordant rendering of Isaiah's words will confirm this (Isa.45:18):

For thus says Yahweh, Creator of the heavens;  
He is the Elohim, and Former of the earth,  
and its Maker,  
And He, *He* established it.  
He did not create it a chaos.  
He formed it to be indwelt.

This is not a casual remark, but concerns creation, the very same theme as in Genesis. It is not the speculation of a mortal or the guess of a human, but the asseveration of the Creator Himself, and seems to be made in the face of opposition, so emphatic is its form.

#### WATER DISTINGUISHES THE EARTHS

The main difference between the three earths is associated with *water*. The first earth seems to have been, like the last (Rev.21:1), of dry land which "coher[ed] out of water and through water" (2 Peter 3:5). The second, after its restoration, is two-thirds covered with water, called *seas*, besides the fluids in the atmosphere (Gen.1:10). The third will have *no sea* at all (Rev.20:1). The land of the first earth cohered,

literally TOGETHER-STOOD (*sunistêmi*) making one compact mass. This agrees with the account of earth's restoration, for there we find *land*, or *earth*, defined as the *dry* (Gen.1:9).

Let us not miss the spiritual significance of these facts. Water is unstable, impermanent. It moves about and evaporates. It is used as a figure of the nations, which come and go, and disappear, in contrast with Israel, the eonian nation. Not only is there no sea on the third earth, but the special permanence of the new Jerusalem is emphasized. It is like a jasper gem, with every precious stone adorning the foundation. Although all is still temporal, being in the last, vast, final eon, it is not temporary, as at present, or ephemeral, as the first earth. It has the appearance of permanence and perfection, and endures unto the consummation.

This picture of the three earths should help us to get a God's-eye view of the present turbulence among the nations. This should not distress us, as it is in accord with God's plan. Besides, it should show us how impossible it is to bring about the one unified and peaceful earth until Messiah comes. The greatest storm of all time is brewing. Like wild waves, the nations are being tossed about. Some of the oldest are in an uproar. Some that were most powerful are now weak. More changes in governments are taking place than ever before. Notwithstanding the union of the nations, men are fearful with dread of what is coming. We can be calm amidst it all, for God is riding the hurricane. He has the reins well in hand. He will guide all to the grand goal which He has revealed.

#### THE FIRST DELUGE

Given a dry earth, with a sufficient subterranean supply of water, it is easy to see how there could be a

deluge much greater than that of Noah's day. Peter says that the world on this earth *perished* (*apollumi* FROM-LOOSE). We may compare this with the future destruction by fire, when its elements will be *dissolved* (*luō* LOOSE), which uses the same Greek stem (LOOSE) without the intensive prefix (*apo* FROM). So it seems that the world of the first earth perished in a sense quite as emphatic as will be the case with the future one preceding the new creation. This was not the case with the flood in Noah's day. After a year the waters subsided into seas and left the land, in a large measure, as before.

The *perishing world* of Peter's epistle is more fully described in the statement that the *earth* became *chaos* and *vacant*, with *darkness* on the face of the abyss. It is further amplified by the fact that, when the spirit of God began its restoration, it vibrated over the surface of the *water*. It seems certain from this that the water completely covered the land. This is confirmed by the emergence of land on the third day (Gen. 1:9,10). Moreover, the fact that it is also called an *abyss*, or *abyssal expanse*, and the work of restoration separated the waters by means of an atmosphere, suggests that the gases, fluids and solids on its surface had been mixed together to form a mingled mass, which could only be called water, as it was neither a gas nor a solid, but merely contained some of these.

#### CHAOS AND VACANT

Yahweh says that He formed the earth to be *indwelt* (Isa. 45:18). He ought to know, for it was His work. We cannot reason about it, for we have no premises on which to base our logic. But there is nothing unreasonable in the implication that, if it *became* chaos and vacant, it was not so before. This becomes a certainty



when it combines with the declaration of Yahweh. The verb BE, for mere existence, is seldom used in Hebrew. Anyone reading the Authorized Version will have noticed the frequency with which the words *be, is, are, was, etc.*, are in *italics*. This indicates their *absence* in Hebrew, just as lightface type does in the Concordant Version. Hebrew is a very terse language, almost like shorthand, and simply omits whatever is not needed to convey the sense. If the verb for *was* in this place were in *italics* and absent in the Hebrew, then the popular versions would be correct. But the verb here is a form of BE (*eie*, not *eue*) which means BECOME.

The verb *eie* BECOME occurs about two dozen times in this chapter alone, and everywhere denotes a *change*, and not mere existence. In the third verse it marks a change from darkness to light. In the sixth verse, two changes occur, an atmosphere is made and waters are separated. Four times, in verse fourteen, there are changes connected with the luminaries. The *progress* of events is marked by the sixfold repetition of *becoming* evening and morning. And so it is throughout the Scriptures. In the course of my work I have had to translate every occurrence in the sacred text, and have found that this is the *sense*, even if English idiom and context occasionally demand that it be rendered *come*, or a form of *be*. These cases are always indicated in the CV. On the other hand, the forms of the copula BE are usually absent and we have to insert them in English, hence print them in lightface type.

#### WITHOUT FORM

The word *without form (theu)*, in the AV, is also rendered *confusion, empty place, nothing, nought, vain, vanity, wilderness, and waste* (Deut.32:10). How

anything can exist *without form* is impossible to conceive, and hardly prepares us for what follows. Anything with a surface must have a form. The word *chaos* is just what is needed to suggest the necessity for the work done on the first two days. It is in full accord with the term *abyss*. It also implies that the earth was not a chaos when created. Chaotic conditions are not fit to *dwell* in, yet the first earth was created for that purpose. No *human* life was ever on that earth, for Adam, the first human, was *created* later (1:27). So also were the great monsters and every living, swarming soul and every flyer (1:21).

#### VOID

The word *void* is also misleading here. To speak of an object as a void would indicate that it has no existence. But if it *contains nothing*, then it is *vacant*. This word is the complement of the word *fill* in verses twenty-two and twenty-eight where living souls are told to *fill* that sphere in which they live. Indeed, it may be in contrast to the fruitfulness and *increase* enjoined on all living souls. It seems to imply that the first earth had once been filled with some forms of life, such as plants, which are not said to have been specially *created* during the restoration of the earth, but only *brought forth*, the term used of soul life *after* the record of its creation (Gen.1:12,21,24).

Once, in a meeting, as there was a painter present, I asked him to paint me a picture of the earth as it was, *without form*. But he shook his head and gave it as his opinion that it could not be done. Then I suggested that he make it *void*. But he refused, as that would be just as impossible. No one can form any definite idea of the first earth with these words. Rather, they give a vague impression of the opposite of what God created,

a primeval chaos, absolutely unfit for habitation, and fail to even convey a clear picture of what it came to be after it was overflowed by water.

#### THE EARTH OF OLD

Confirming and elaborating the assertion of Isaiah that the earth was originally created to be inhabited, Peter speaks of it as a *world*, that is, all was systematically and orderly arranged, and provision was made to support inhabitants. But a waste and vacant abyss covered with water and shrouded in darkness is not habitable, and it can by no means be called a "world." As a matter of fact, the earth itself was not destroyed by water in the same sense as it will be by fire before the new creation. But the *world*, says Peter, *perished*. Becoming chaos and vacant conveys the same thought in different words. If we wish to express the matter literally and exactly, we would say that the *world* was restored in six days, though it is quite plain even if we say it was the earth.

A point of prime importance, which may only be inferred from the early record, is the positive statement that the earth was first formed *so as to be indwelt*. The fact that the animals and man were created later does not deny that the earth was prepared as a habitation. The fact that plants are not definitely said to be *created* later suggests that there was verdure on the surface of the earth as originally created. In other words there was a cosmic order such as would sustain life on the original earth. And this it was which perished.

#### THE ONION SKIN THEORY

The popular theory of the earth's formation in scientific circles seems to be based on the layers, or "strata," which are still visible wherever breaks in the outer

crust of the earth are exposed. These were laid down, we are told, in a definite order, at a given time, all over the earth, the oldest many millions of years ago, and resemble the form of an onion, layer on layer. As a result, we should find them all in the same order in every part of the earth. But, as there are innumerable variations in this arrangement, called "faults," sometimes more than a thousand square miles in extent, the actual facts would make a very faulty onion, for the layers are tilted and torn and in utmost disorder.

It is almost a cause for weeping that all these layers are not present everywhere today. If it were so, we could find any rock or mineral we wished right beneath our feet. If we wished to build a house, we would merely dig down to the layer of the kind of stone we desire, and construct a handsome edifice. If we want to warm it, the coal seams would provide the fuel. Or, perhaps it would be better to go down to oil. Better still, we could dig up some silver, or gold, or uranium — if it still had any value. No, indeed, the layers of the earth differ greatly in contents, in width, in extent, in order, in position, and in level. The earth is no longer a perfect structure, but a shattered wreck, so far as its outer crust is concerned.

The most important lesson the layers can teach us in our present inquiry is their *disorder*. They are so uneven and broken and tumbled about that the layman is usually struck by this fact far more than by their layer-like formation. Nothing going on now could have produced such confusion, or moved such immense masses of material. Earthquakes, to be sure, do have the same effect, but it would take a thousand severe ones united into one to disturb the strata of the earth's surface as much as has been done. Mankind could not live through such a cataclysm.

## THE RECORD IN THE ROCKS

The rocks and the remains on the surface of the land reveal the same ruin as revelation. They everywhere present evidence of a tremendous catastrophe. The strata, or layers, of which the earth is composed do not lie upon one another as they were originally formed, but are broken and tilted and in fearful disorder. Even a blind man could feel and perceive that they have been tossed about by a great cataclysm at some time after they were formed. Only scoffers at God's revelation could think of saying that all has continued normally since the beginning of creation (2 Peter 3:4).

If we examine carefully the details of the deluge of Noah's days as revealed in God's inspired Word, we will find that it has left its mark on the scroll of earth's surface quite as plainly as on the printed page. Indeed, there is ample evidence for a much greater disturbance than it could possibly have produced. The rain from above probably was instrumental in making many deposits of soil, but could hardly have broken and shifted the layers very much. The breaking up of the springs of the abyss was probably done by an earthquake. This would account for some of the displacements.

## THE GREATEST EARTHQUAKE

The implication that there was an earthquake, much greater than humanity has experienced, *before man was on the earth* (Rev.16:18) corresponds with the earliest divine declaration concerning the earth after its creation (Gen.1:2). There probably was one in connection with the deluge in Noah's day (Gen.7:11). The springs of the vast abyss were rent with such force that the subterranean waters rushed forth upon the surface of the earth and joined the rain from above to

provide the water for the flood. This rending must have made a terrific seismic disturbance. But mankind had been on the earth a long time before this, so we must look for a still greater one before the days of Adam. These two quakes have left their imprint on the face of nature and their record in God's revelation. These two are in fullest accord.

In the time of the end, which corresponds with the days of Noah, there will be a great earthquake. When the sixth seal is opened there will be such a tremendous tremor that every mountain and island will be moved out of place (Rev.6:12). Again, before the seven trumpets are sounded there will be another earthquake (Rev.8:5). These would correspond with the disturbances which accompanied the flood of Noah's time. But there will be another even greater than that when the seventh bowl is poured out (Rev.16:8). This was of such great proportions that one like it has not occurred *since mankind came to be on the earth*. Does not this suggest that there was a greater before Noah and before Adam? The greatest of all shocks the earth has received seems to have been the cause of the disruption which made it waste and vacant before man was created.

A.E.K.

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DAVID J. ANDERSON

Brother David J. Anderson of Muskegon, Michigan was put to repose on June 26 at age 81. A graduate of Moody Bible Institute, he served as a pastor in Muskegon and as a missionary in the Philippines. In later years he embraced the truth of universal reconciliation and participated in the Michigan monthly fellowship gatherings. He found special delight in the apostle Paul's final epistles, and shared his valuable testimony concerning these writings with many. Together with his wife Frances, he supported and encouraged us in our work. We will miss his stable and gracious ministry, but are consoled because of our expectation in Christ.

## THE POWER OF SPIRIT IN CREATION

THE OPERATIONS of God's spirit in imparting *motion* and *life* and *intelligence* transcend human expression, and are usually too abstract for us to grasp in literal language. Hence we are introduced to it by a series of illustrations. Indeed, much of the truth of God's earliest revelation comes to us as if it were a picture book for children. So it is that in the first intimation of the mode of the spirit's operation, a word is used which is elsewhere applied to the vibratory motion of a bird's pinions when it is hovering in the air. The *tremulous action* of the vulture's wings suggest the mode of operation of the spirit in restoring the earth. Repeated and powerful impulses were given to the ruined wreck which resulted in its restoration. First there is light, as distinct from darkness. Then the gases are separated; then the fluids are parted from the solids, to form the various layers of which the present earth is composed.

### THE MEANING OF SPIRIT

How difficult it is to define spirit in literal language! But God provides a picture of it preceding even those of light and life. In the original Hebrew the word is WIND. It was a "wind" of God that vibrated over the waters and brought light. It is a pity that we cannot use this for both in other languages, for it is the inspired illustration of *spirit*. The wind *itself* cannot be per-

ceived by our faculties. We can feel and see and hear and smell its *effects*, but the power itself lies beyond our apprehension. Our Lord compared its action to a powerful blast (John 3:8). So it is that nature provides us with the clearest definition of the most intangible and spiritual of all things, the very essence of God, for He is not merely *a* spirit, but *is* literally Spirit.

A clear understanding of the very first action of the spirit of God may be of value in apprehending its further operations. The Authorized Version says that the spirit *moved*. This is correct, but it gives us no clue as to the character of its motion. The Hebrew word occurs only three times, so we will examine them all. The most helpful is found in Deuteronomy (32:11) where we read of a vulture that "*hovers* over her young." In Jeremiah 23:9 the prophet says "all my bones *are tremulous*." Not many of us have seen a vulture hovering over her fledglings. But some of us have observed a hummingbird, as it vibrates its wings when draining the nectar from a flower. I have seen a plungeon, on Lake Galilee, poised apparently motionless, by means of its vibrating pinions. Perhaps all of us have experienced the shaking of our bones.

#### THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT

The contexts give us the kind of movement which is attributed to God's spirit. It was a fast to and fro motion, which is best expressed by the word **VIBRATE**; hence we have chosen this for the standard of this stem, though it cannot well be used of birds or of man. This meaning is confirmed by the first result, which was *light*. This is now generally taken to be the effect produced by etherial vibrations on the eye. I would never seek to conform the Scriptures to the *theories* of so-called "science." But when God's revelation agrees



with the evidence of *nature*, I am convinced. All the more so, as the following events also are in agreement with our present knowledge of natural phenomenon.

In bringing us back from death into life when we first believe, the spirit of God pursues the same course. "The God Who says that, out of darkness light shall be shining, is He Who shines in our hearts" (2 Cor.4:6). First the spirit hovers over the sinner in his darkness and enlightens him through the power of God's Word. One is a fine figure of the other, in a higher realm. The Son of God, anointed by the spirit, is the Light of the world (John 1:9). We also, who have the spirit dwelling in us, are light (Eph.5:8), and children of light (1 Thess. 5:5). We must understand the meaning of the literal operation in this passage before we can fully appreciate its force in these figures.

The procedure of God's spirit in restoring the earth was quite natural in its order and results. It is evident that a great catastrophe had reduced the surface of the earth, which had been created to be indwelt (Isa.45:18), to one vast mushy mixture, in which the atmosphere and the dry land were mingled with the water.

#### PHYSICAL VERSUS SPIRITUAL

God is spirit, entirely outside the human perceptions. Our five senses, through which we contact the world about us, cannot apprehend Him. We must learn of Him through the physical universe. This, indeed, was created for this very purpose. Nature is a revelation of God written in material letters. The characters may have little value in themselves, but, as symbols, they are alive with spirit. Let us never forget that Christ came in *physical* flesh, in order that His body, His flesh, His blood, might be used to portray *spiritual* union, communion, suffering and death.

## GOD'S INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES

God's invisible attributes are described from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His imperceptible power and divinity. But men do not glorify Him or thank Him, for they are vain in their reasonings, and their unintelligent heart is darkened. They allege themselves to be wise, yet are stupid (Rom. 1:20-22). This is not confined to the uneducated by any means. Today tens of thousands emerge from our higher institutions of knowledge with degrees showing that they have reached the top of the ladder of learning, yet if one should ask them such a simple question as, "What is the lesson of light?" Or, "Why is there light?" how many could give an intelligent reply? Some of them have read the lesson ten thousand times, yet how many have grasped its meaning? And the answer is not in the back of their books.

## THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

After light has appeared and the atmosphere, the sea, and the land are restored by the spirit, they are filled with *life*. There is plant life on the earth, and animals, or living souls, in all three spheres, land, water, and air, roughly speaking, beasts, birds and fishes. The luminaries in the heavens can be seen by the atmosphere. Not only is all the *action* of inanimate substance due to God's spirit, but all *life* was brought into being by it, and still depends upon it for continuance. Whenever God spoke, it was not merely the sound of His words that brought back order into the earth, but the operation of His spirit which fulfilled His word. When *we* speak we propel a stream of poisonous gas from our mouths, which is deadly. When *He* speaks, a stream of energizing spirit issues forth to execute His assertion.

## CREATION

Creation is not confined to the making of one plant of each species, in the beginning, but of including in it all the plants of that species that will ever exist in the future. It is not a question of *evolution* and constant change to correspond to environment, but of *involution*, not in its restricted biological sense of degeneration, but of having in itself all that eventually comes out of it. Out of nothing nothing comes. Each species remains true to its original, and reverts to it when left free to do so. Each plant was created *for its species*, or, as the Hebrew more exactly expresses it, "*for its FROMS*" or *kind*, that is, those that spring *from* it. It never changes to make another species. If it unites with such a one to make a hybrid, the seed dies, and refuses to start a different species. As a result there is not a single species in the world today that was not created in the beginning. There are species that have died out, but no new ones that have evolved from the original, or have been produced by crossing.

What a relief it is to read God's own account of His creation! A single line of it is worth more than all the books ever written on evolution. Life began with vegetation (Gen 1:11). Here are a few phrases that settle the "origin of species." When God spoke vegetation into being by His spirit, He made "*herbage yielding seed*" and "*the fruit tree whose seed is in it*." Marvelous is it, and utterly beyond the power of any of His creatures, how God makes a single living thing. Men might imitate a blade of grass so as to appear like a real one, but *it would not grow*. How utterly impossible would it be to even make a dead member of the human body! Even if our eyesight were completely deceived, a microscope would soon detect its imperfections. But how can we give it life? How can we

empower it to live? Who can see with a glass eye? Wherever there is life we should perceive the "finger," or spirit, of God.

On a memorable occasion I was most powerfully impressed with the greatness of God in the smallest things. I stood before General Sherman, as the biggest of the "big trees" is named, and marveled at its tremendous bulk, the largest living thing on earth. I had seen large pine cones, or seed containers, and reasoned that its cones must, of course, be the largest of all. Instead, they were rather small. Its seed, instead of being the largest of all, was a tiny thing, light as a feather. Indeed, one could not feel its weight. How wonderful to contemplate the possibilities of this insignificant seed! In it was hidden, not only one Sequoia Gigantea, but any number of them, though it might take thousands of years to attain its full growth. I never again despised small things, if in the hand of God's spirit. So may a most insignificant act, almost unnoticed at the time, contain the potentials of great things in the future. The mere execution of an alleged traitor, long ago, will result in the restoration of all of God's creation at the consummation.

#### CONTRAST AND REPETITION

David, the sweet psalmist, has phrased these simple yet solemn thoughts most marvelously in one of his psalms (19): He says,

The heavens are *recounting* the glory of the El,  
And the atmosphere is *telling* the work of His hands.  
Day after day is uttering a saying,  
And night after night is disclosing knowledge.  
There is no audible saying, and there are no words;  
Their voice is unheard.

Yet into the entire earth their voice goes forth,  
And into the ends of the habitation their declaration.

The heavens do not only *declare* the glory of God, but *recount* them continually. The Hebrew word comes from the stem *sphr* NUMBER. Literally it means *make numerous*. A single glimpse of the glorious galaxies of the celestial sphere, especially as seen in the clear sky of a Palestine night, would amaze us and make us marvel. But it needs to be repeated night after night to be transformed into *knowledge*. Sight is the most spiritual of the senses, for it reaches far beyond the air, in which alone a sound can be heard. In solemn silence we may sit in the great school room of the universe each night and listen to the atmosphere as it tells us of the glories of His celestial handiwork.

In God's book of nature the lessons are emphasized by contrast, impressed by repetition, and enlarged by variety. Darkness is contrasted with light, day and night are constantly repeated, and almost an infinite variety of forms and colors are created for the sense of sight alone. Even the function of darkness is clearly revealed by the night. For by it alone can we see the stars, which thrill us with a glimpse of His celestial glory. We are thankful for the darkness as well as the light, for it suggests to our hearts the great truth that His highest honors are revealed through sadness and suffering.

Not only does each succeeding day repeat the tale that God is light and life, but the seasons add their lesson of the eons. The annual change from cold to heat, winter and summer, constitutes the best treatise that we have on the eonian times. The dark and dismal seasons, when death reigns in nature, when the trees shed their leaves and the vegetation vanishes, speak

eloquently of the evil eons, in which we live. But, when winter gives place to summer, then life reappears and the plants not only live, but give life to the souls that cannot get it from the soil. Here we have a picture of the eons of the eons, when resurrection recalls the dead to life and blessing will abound. Each year is a miniature rehearsal of God's grand circle of the eons.

Not only through these grand operations of God's spirit are we to learn the greatest truths of God's revelation, but how many other pictures are there in the book of nature which illustrate the details of His revelation! The heavens and earth not only show us the vastness and variety of His material forms, but portray the greatness and multifarious diversity of His spiritual creation, above all, His own grandeur and infinity. Each form, each plant, each animal has characteristics and powers which reveal the hand of its Creator. Many of these are used in His Word in order to illustrate His relationship to mankind, especially in rule and religion. Our Lord is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God. These animals serve their highest purpose in picturing His reign and His sacrifice.

Beyond the lesser creatures of God's creation, man himself is a material means of revealing God, for, as the Hebrew name indicates, Adam is *like* the great *Disposer*, in that he is set over the rest of soul life on the earth. Yet he is as God not only to those below him here, but his history on earth is a much higher and greater revelation of God to the spirits of the heavens than that provided by the lower creatures.

#### CHRIST'S PHYSICAL FORM

The highest and deepest of all means of revelation is found in the Man Christ Jesus. Before He emptied

Himself and came into the likeness of humanity He was outside the sphere of human perception, so could not fully exercise the principle function for which He was created, which was the Mediator, through Whom God reveals Himself. Therefore it was that He became flesh and tabernacled among us. He became a material mortal, that men might perceive Him and that He might die in such a fashion as to reveal the deepest recesses of God's love. Let us always remember that, though His God is spirit, and His message spiritual, it was necessary for us, that He assume tangible material form in order that we should know and love God, Who is spirit.

All of this should show us how essential symbols are for the revelation of God. The material of which they are composed may be of little value, yet the message which they convey of infinitely precious worth. We do not throw away our Bible because it is only a bit of paper and ink, which in another form, may be almost worthless. We value it above all other books because of the spiritual wealth it brings us.

#### BODY AND BLOOD

The physical constituents of Christ's body and blood were formed from the soil and the spring of Nazareth. His mother, His father, His brothers and all His neighbors were made of the same material. I have been in Galilee and noted nothing remarkable either in the place or the people. His physical flesh could not feed the world or His blood assuage its thirst. It had little material value. Yet it was holy and undefiled, and infinitely precious when offered as a sacrifice to God. When the Scriptures stress its value, this lies in that which it represents. The blood and body, offered up for mankind, stand for His *suffering* and *death*, which will justify mankind and reconcile the universe.

*Spirit* is the power that God used to restore the ruined earth. Later, when Adam caused an even greater ruin in a higher sphere, *only spirit* could restore humanity to God. Only God's Word can dispel the darkness with light, and replace death with life. This is the chief lesson found here, at the very forefront of revelation. *And nothing else was needed.* God begins here with spirit, and this remains the power throughout unto the end. During man's immaturity spirit was displaced by many material forms, which were only tangible representations of spiritual things, but these are laid aside when man becomes mature.

The lack of God's spirit, and the futility of all man's efforts to satisfy and save himself by any other means, lies at the basis of all history, human or divine. Notwithstanding the tragedy of the last six thousand years, man is still seeking for peace and plenty from many other sources. Even those whom God has called, who hear His Word and have learned to rely upon Him for salvation, for the most part have not fully learned the lesson taught us at the very beginning of the Bible. The spirit of God is the only power to restore the wreck that man has made.

We, who have all *spiritual* blessing as our peculiar portion, should be better able than all others to learn the lesson of God's spirit, and enjoy the light and life and love that He imparts. May all who read these lines be partakers of this bliss.

A.E.K.

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#### LILLIE HARVARD

Our sister Harvard of Welland, Ontario, was nearly 100 years old when her earthly sojourn ended in early May. Her glory was in the cross of Christ and in the great victory of His vivification, which filled her heart with peace and joyful expectation. Our consolation goes out to her son and our brother, John Harvard.



## THE OBJECT OF CREATION

FOR WHAT PURPOSE is man in the world? This question is asked by all thinking men, but who is able to answer it? The solution is found in the Scriptures alone, and even there it is not on the surface. It is one of the "deep things of God," hidden from the carnal mind, from the religious as well as from the intellectual searcher. It can be revealed only by God's spirit. To say that we can know why man was created, may seem a stupendous claim to many. Yet the purpose of man's existence may be determined by those who are guided solely by His Word, not by what they think, nor by the philosophical notions emanating from the human brain.

We learn of a first act of creation by God through the texts which tell us of His having originated the Christ, His Son. In Colossians 1:15 the latter is called the "Image of the invisible God," as well as, "the Firstborn of every creature." The word "image" means a visible representation and must speak to us of God's longing to be revealed. His objective in originating Christ was that this One should be His revelation. The word "firstborn" in the Scriptures is a figure of speech, denoting the highest in rank and station, the one who is to take his father's place. Christ appears as the Origin or Beginning of God's creation (Rev.3:14). He was there before anything else existed. No other being, no solar system, no speck of matter, was made before Him. There has been much theological discussion about whether the pre-human Christ was born from or creat-

ed by the Father. All this is vain, for, in His case, there is no vital difference between the two thoughts. In Hebrews 2:11 we read that He is not ashamed to call the many sons, whom He glorifies, His brethren, because He and they are out of One. All—that is the entire universe—is out of God (Rom.11:36; 1 Cor.8:6).

But it is through Christ, as Paul discloses to us in such majestic words as these: “For in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth . . . all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him” (Col.1:16,17). “For us there is one God, the Father, *out of Whom* all is, and we for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, *through Whom* all is and we through Him” (1 Cor.8:6). Since the invisible God wishes to be revealed, the One Who is His visible Image was brought forth in order to serve in this capacity. After bringing forth His Son, God needed intelligent beings to be the recipients of His revelation. We have no clue whatever as to when the creation of the heavenly bodies began, or when and with what kind of creatures these may have been populated. The only thing we do know is, that there was a wonderful world already in existence before our earth came into being.

In Job 38:4,7, God Himself asks: “Where were you when I founded the earth? . . . When the stars of the morning jubilated together, And all the sons of Elohim shouted with joy?” This one short passage teaches us wonderful and most important facts: that there were beings allowed to look on when God called some new, marvelous masterpiece into existence, ones who were able to appreciate the power and wisdom exhibited, and to rejoice in it. And it seems as if this grand and glorious universe was then not marred by any discordance, any trace of rebellion, enmity, sin.

Now some might think that this must have been a perfect world, a world which enjoyed a perfect revelation of God, which was therefore capable of bringing the most perfect satisfaction both to Him and to the creatures which He had made. But this was not so. All that His creatures were then able to see was a Creator of unlimited power and ability. His innermost heart remained hidden from them. They could know Him as the embodiment of might, but not as the embodiment of love. They could not know good as long as there was nothing to contrast it with. They did not know evil. They did not know what it was to overcome evil and to develop good to its sublimest height in the struggle with sin. The Deity they could grasp resembled the One Whom countless unbelievers admire in nature. The Christ, His Revelation, could be worshiped only as a disclosure of awe-inspiring power and splendor, far above the weakness of the creatures, forcing all who beheld Him to fall at His feet as dead.

God knew that another revelation was needed; needed for His own sake, for the sake of His Christ, and for the sake of His creatures. It was the revelation of evil. The old theological quarrel, whether Satan fell from a state of perfection, or whether he was created as the personification of wickedness, is worthless, for even had he once been good, God made him so that he could *become* the very embodiment of everything that is evil. And that is what he was made for. He was a necessity for God's most sublime revelation

We have already referred to the earth's foundation as having taken place later than the creation of the celestial hosts. And the fact that Satan exercises power over this earth makes it most probable that it was made in order to become the scene on which the great struggle between good and evil was to be enacted. It is

beyond question that Satan rules today. He himself tells Christ that all the kingdoms of the world were given to him and that he gives them to whomsoever he wills (Luke 4:6). Paul calls him the god of this eon (*aiōnos*, AV "world"; 2 Cor.4:4), and John tells us that the whole world is lying in the wicked one (1 John 5:19).

We also know that there was a disruption of the world, which may be attributed to the misrule and failure of the one who dominated it. This disruption is clearly suggested at the forefront of revelation. This harmonizes with the great truth that God did *not* create the earth "without form and void" (AV), or rather, "a chaos and vacant" (*cf* Isa.45:18, CV), but that it *became* thus (Gen.1:2, CV), and surely for a good reason.

Thus far we have an almighty God Who is Spirit and therefore invisible for those He has made. We have His visible Image, the Christ, and we have a universe of suns and stars along with intelligent beings, created for the purpose of receiving the revelation of God, in order that He should be satisfied through their heartfelt response to it.

And, to activate this revelation, we have Satan, a being of incredible cunning, ability and power, to whom God gives a stage, a platform, on which he is to demonstrate just what he can do in opposition to God, and what his capacities are able to achieve while yet fearfully estranged from his wonderful Creator. The stage is the earth, on which Satan is allowed to display his true character. A fine object lesson for the hosts of heaven!

But will this alone accomplish God's purpose in creating evil? Where would the revelation of God's heart come in? Where the revelation of the unutter-

able superiority of Christ over every other being, not as the Most High, but as the Most *Worthy* of all? Where the revelation of the value of absolute dependence on God in contrast to Satan's career of self-will and self-elevation? How would it benefit the witnesses of his misrule, if he were permitted to go on eternally as he has started to do, without his sin ever coming to a consummation, bringing about his utter defeat and the triumph of good?

The heavenly onlookers might even become accustomed to behold him running about on the earth, resisting God, yet never having an opportunity of really challenging Him; opposing Christ, yet never able to harm Him; resolute against all who were untouched by sin, but never in a position to tempt and mislead them. It would soon turn out to be a sort of platonic enmity of evil against good, never coming to a real decision. It would never become an adequate revelation of the depths of grace hidden in God and of the lengths to which His love would go; nor of the depths of iniquity in Satan, and evil's awful culmination. Something more was needed.

So God went about to restore the ruined earth for the scene of His crowning revelation. This calls for circumstances in which Satan would have an opportunity to attack God, demonstrate all his antagonism toward God, and go to the incredible lengths of actually murdering God's Representative. Then, when he believes that he has triumphed over God, he must discover that he has brought about his own complete and final defeat, as well as the glorious victory of the One He wished to destroy.

Satan could never touch the Christ who existed in the form of God. In order that He might be challenged by Satan unto mortal combat, the Son of God had to

empty Himself of His divine majesty and take on a body adapted to this struggle, a body that could be hurt, broken, and sacrificed. As the first specimen of such a being, God created the first man, Adam.

It is hard to express in human words all that it must have meant to God when He formed this wonderful creature in His own image. Man had to be God-like to such an extent that the Christ could become a man without sacrificing His real status. Even in the glory, Christ is and always will be a Man. This one fact places man far above all the principalities and powers of the heavenly realms. Christ never took on their likeness, and God did not choose them to be the instruments of His crowning revelation unto the rest of creation. Once we grasp that we were made in order that Christ could, in our form and likeness, reveal to the universe what God is, what He Himself is, and what Satan is, we can only bow our heads in adoration. Such a vision, once it dawns upon us, is overwhelming. It is an answer to the question of our existence that surpasses in its marvelous grandeur all human explanations, as God's wisdom surpasses ours. But there it is, hidden in the Scriptures.

Paul says in Colossians, that Christ, on the cross, in stripping off the sovereignties and authorities (of wickedness, for Satan has many underlings), boldly made a show of them, triumphing over them in it. This certainly was no show for the people looking on. They saw nothing but utter weakness, defeat and death on Golgotha. It was a show for the benefit of all the heavenly hosts. And Peter speaks (1 Pet.1:12) concerning Christ's sufferings and the glories to follow, into which the messengers are yearning to peer. That is why Christ always calls Himself the Son of mankind and again and again says that His task on earth is "to

reveal the Father." But this had to be in the form of a man. It was evidently a revelation superior to the one which He could become to the universe in His pre-human glory.

In Philippians we find much light on this subject. Christ emptied Himself of His divine form in order to become a man, and as a man became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Golgotha was the reason for His becoming a man, for it was God's central revelation to the entire creation. What is set before us on the cross cannot be surpassed by any other unveiling, or exhibition of power, splendor and majesty.

Evidently Satan craved to bring man under his power as soon as mankind appeared on the scene. In this way he wanted to wreck God's purpose with humanity. And yet he has only fulfilled it. God's wisdom, in truth, surpasses all our comprehension. Every move which His enemy makes against Him, He turns into victory for Himself, and into defeat for Satan.

Had man remained innocent, there would never have been a cross on this earth. It would not have come to a Golgotha. Christ would not have become a man. The history of mankind would not have been what God needed for His purpose. Living in a magnificent garden, with no other task than to pick luscious fruit and associate with harmless animals—no member of such a humanity could ever become "a theater to the world and to messengers" (1 Cor.4:9), as God's plan demanded.

When Satan without effort misled the first human beings, he surely believed he had frustrated God's purpose. Now these creatures would no longer be dangerous to him. Now he would keep them in bondage, use them as his instruments to fight the Creator. On the very same day he learned from God Himself

how terribly mistaken he had been. Now he himself had brought about the conditions necessary for the advent of the true Son of Mankind into his own domain! The very one whom he deceived first, the woman, would bring forth his destroyer. From now on, there would be a "seed," which, standing on God's side, would be the enemy of Satan. His final dethronement by this Seed was now certain.

The entire story of mankind that follows is a work of God, step by step, to reach the cross on Golgotha. The nation that was to bring forth the One Who hurts the serpent, and at the same time, under Satan's leadership, become the instrument for His crucifixion, furnishes us example after example, how God prepares it for its destiny, how Satan in his turn tries everything to frustrate God's plan, and how he only gives God another opportunity to turn all his evil doings against himself.

If Satan had perhaps thought that man, after having become a sinner, would now never be able to conquer him, he overlooked the marvelous depths of God's plan of redemption. Adam, in spite of his innocence, was soulish. He was "flesh." This was never a match for Satan. God's intention was not to overcome Satan by a sinless first Adam, who knew neither good nor evil. To conquer a being like Satan, divine strength was needed. Evidently God had invested His enemy with so much power, that the struggle between him and the Christ had to be in truth a deadly combat. Else it would only have been a sham. It would never have meant for God, nor for Christ Himself, nor for Satan, nor for creation, what God intended. But because Adam did not remain innocent, humanity could receive in Christ a new Head, a second Adam. After the disqualification of the first Adam, another One, immeasurably better, took his place. Never would humanity



have welcomed the second Adam without the bankruptcy of the first one. God let Satan win a seeming triumph with his seduction of man, in order to turn evil into good by a far higher plan of love.

Though Christ was to hurt the head of the serpent on Golgotha all alone, yet He was also to make a multitude, called out of the mass of mankind, conquerors, in order that they might in due time reign together with Him. What no son of the first Adam was able to become through the life he inherits, he now could be through the life communicated to him by the Second. But how could man receive this divine life without first recognizing his own corruption? When God permitted Satan to poison man with sin, He made room for His life in all who are willing to consign to death the life of the first Adam. In this way Satan will be conquered by men after all. But by men, who, by the spirit of God, have received a power which the first Adam, in his innocence, never could know. If anyone thinks that redemption is nothing but restoration of innocence, as was found in paradise, then he is sadly mistaken. God let Satan rob man of this in order to give him His own righteousness instead. And if man was not to exalt himself in consequence of this fact, he had first thoroughly to learn the misery of his own sinful state.

With all his cunning and slyness, with all his desperate efforts, Satan, completely blinded, only brings about his own destruction. He himself makes provision for the cross on which he is defeated. He does not foresee what it will mean for himself. He works into the hands of God. That is the drama of the universe, the spectacle which holds all the heavens spellbound. Because of this, mankind came into existence, to play the different parts which this stupendous event demanded. Satan surely did not realize what he would accomplish for the entire creation on Golgotha.

One is in fact tempted to speak of divine irony when one grasps how God lets His enemy, step by step, exert himself to bring about the cross, always hoping to harm his Creator, and yet only serving the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom.

Golgotha had to be, for God's sake. If God longed for the responsive love of creatures capable of appreciating what He is, nothing else could reveal to them everything that is in His heart as the cross could. There He gave His Beloved One for His enemies. There He provided for the reconciliation of every being which had been estranged from Him. There He made manifest His perfect justice when He justifies all who believe in Him. There He showed to a wondering universe the unfathomable depths of the wisdom which finds a way to finally do away with all sin, without leaving the least flaw on His own righteousness. Never will His creatures cease to find new marvels in the cross of Christ.

Golgotha had to be, for Christ's sake. He was not only to be adored and honored as the mighty representative of the all-powerful God, but to be worshiped as the One Whose obedience, self-denial and love surpassed everything that had been realized before. Christ was to be given the highest place above every other creature, not only because of His rank, but also because of His deeds. How could creation bring Him such heartfelt adoration, if He had only been the Most High, because God made Him thus? The cross proves Him to be worthy of all honor, because of what He *did* there, quite apart from His divine station. If God wanted to "highly exalt" Him (super-exalt, OVER-HEIGHTENS; Phil.2:9), He could do it no better way than by first abasing Him to the depths of suffering and shame. Because He endured that, God gives Him a Name that is above every name. Because He descended so low,

every creature will gladly and joyously acclaim Him as the One fit to be the Most High. Golgotha brought to Christ a wealth of honor to be had in no other way. Therefore it had to be, for His sake.

And Golgotha had also to be, that God might give Satan the crowning opportunity to display the depths to which wickedness can go. Nothing like what he did there could ever have been considered possible by any intelligent being among the heavenly hosts. Now they may see what evil can come to. Now they may grasp its awful potentialities. But Satan, at the peak of his triumph, in reality was defeated, utterly brought to naught, displayed in all his iniquity before the horrified witnesses of his deed, and made a public show by the conquering Christ. Though God still lets him exercise dominion on earth, he is constantly overreaching himself, constantly showing his incapacity to accomplish anything perfect. God looks on calmly at his efforts to make some show of his capabilities, to lift humanity to all sorts of heights. God turns everything he does into a great failure while He holds ready His Christ. God will dethrone Satan finally, when his time is over. And then the terrible state to which he has brought the earth will be the foil for Christ's wonderful reign, which is to undo all he has done.

Hitherto we have contemplated only the grand and overwhelmingly glorious aspect of what it means to be a man. There is still another, darker side. Man was not only to be the creature in whose form Christ could become God's crowning revelation. He was also to be the medium through which Satan reveals himself in his turn. The first man was trapped by Satan and brought under his sway. From then on, all men were used by him more or less to carry out his plans. Satan needs men to accomplish his aims. And God lets him

have them. That was also according to His plan. The great tragedy featuring the conflict between good and evil, this spectacle for all the universe, is acted out by man. Tools of Satan on one hand, instruments of God on the other.

It is necessary that we also give due emphasis to the somber side of man's role, a side which should well keep us from all self-exaltation. We surely have nothing to boast of. And God was wise to have it be that way. If ever a human being should elevate himself because he wears the image of God, because he exists in the likeness of Christ, let him realize that not a single one of his race remained as God created him, that man fell short at the very start of his career. But that does not alter the fact that man carries out God's intention. Quite the contrary, man had to become a sinner for the same astounding reasons that there had to be a cross: for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for Satan's sake and for his own sake. That justifies God in making man so responsive to sin, that he gave way to it in the face of the first temptation God put in his path. If God had not wanted it to be thus, He could well have kept man from ever knowing evil.

But a neutral humanity was not what God needed, for man has a special task in the universe, or else his creation, different from the heavenly hosts, would have been, to say the least, superfluous. God needed sinners and enemies to reveal to the onlooking witnesses His power to redeem and reconcile, to take what Satan had spoiled and reshape it to something much higher; to make mere innocents into conquerors; former slaves of His adversary into victorious overcomers, with the great enemy under their feet. He needed sinners, in order to awaken in them a response of gratitude and love, by saving them from their cruel bondmaster, such

as would satisfy His heart. Their never-ending praise for His deliverance is something He would by no means want to go without. Surely, man had to become a sinner for God's sake.

And he had to become a sinner for Christ's sake. Christ yearns to have others partake of the glory which He Himself enjoys. He longs for a reward for His sorrows, namely, to be given those whom He delivers through His own blood. He needs a complement, a bride as well as a body, consisting of those whom He has made worthy to share His future reign, on this earth as well as in the heavenly realms. And such must be prepared for these tasks in the same way that He was prepared for His place above all. This preparation is by the cross. Christ died on it a literal death. His redeemed ones identify themselves with Him in this death, accepting God's curse on the old humanity, as expressed through the cross. By dying to everything involved in the term "flesh," and living by the indwelling power of the risen, victorious Christ, they become what He seeks in order to satisfy His heart. And that which counts for God, when it comes to the gratitude and fervent love from those who are delivered from Satan's thralldom, counts for Christ in the very same way. Would He want to be without the praises and thanks of creatures whom He Himself redeemed at such tremendous cost? Any such adoration would be impossible in sinless man. Only a sinner needs crucifixion. In order to go literally to the cross, Christ took on Himself the sin of the world. In order to go figuratively to the cross, a man must realize his own shameful deserts.

And man had to become a sinner for Satan's sake, that is, so that he might carry out his enmity to the full. God is also just to His great adversary. He furnish-

es him with material to give him an opportunity, to show what he can do. God lets him have billions of men, great empires, vast resources. Now let him prove that he can build a happy, peaceful world without God, that he can satisfy the craving of men's souls, that he can fill the void within them by what he has to offer. Power and glory, lust and pleasure, education and civilization, anything and everything that can be had, except the One Who alone can fill the human heart. But man would have never been Satan's dupe and tool had he not been estranged from God. That was the necessary preparation for Satan's great demonstration, which he stages in his realm, the earth. Where has his rulership led to? Wars upon wars, sorrows upon sorrows, one form of government and administration of earth's affairs following upon the other. Every one a failure, every one ruined by the sin and selfishness of those concerned. And the greatest disappointment for humanity under his leadership seems just ahead, when man proposes to build a better world by his own plans and powers, blind to the fact that a hidden hand works behind the scenes; blind to the fact that Satan's public bankruptcy is almost due, ousted as ruler of this world-system, to usher in the rule of Christ.

And man had to become a sinner for his own sake. If God and Christ need human love and gratitude to satisfy the longings of Their hearts, it is the same with him. He needs the unutterable and never-ending joy of thanking and adoring a Saviour and Redeemer from his former woes. He could not appreciate freedom without having experienced slavery. He would not be able to value God's righteousness, had he not become unrighteous. He could not realize the grace of the cross, had he not been in need of it himself. And, last of all, he could never have been prepared for his station

with Christ upon His throne, had he not been deep in the depths of shame and sin and helplessness. Only with this experience behind him will he be fit for the exaltation which God has prepared for him. Without it he might glory in himself. Now he can only glory in Christ, knowing that through His indwelling power alone he will be counted worthy of this, the highest place in all the universe.

And if we still need more scriptural proof to show us that God made man in order to bring about His crowning revelation to all that He created, let us consider what Paul says in Ephesians 3:8-10: "to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ . . . that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God . . ." And how can all the celestial beings, together with the terrestrial and subterranean ones, bow the knee in the name of Jesus (Phil.2:10), because of His having gone to the cross, if they have no knowledge of this event?

Surely what is written is true: "That which the eye did not perceive, and the ear did not hear, and to which the heart of man did not ascend—whatever God makes ready for those who are loving Him. Yet to us God reveals them through His spirit, for the spirit is searching all, even the depths of God. . . . Thus also, that which is of God no one knows, except the spirit of God. Now we obtained, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may be perceiving that which is being graciously given to us by God" (1 Cor.2:9-12).

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We sadly report the death of Brother Otis B. Kirkland of Wagener, South Carolina, November 22, 1988, and of Brother Chester E. Perkins of Mesa, Arizona, on March 23, 1989.

## LIGHT

The earth lay buried in the depths of night,  
 Though night was not yet named. Upon its face  
 Black darkness hung, and from the realms of space  
 No sun or moon poured forth its radiance bright.  
 Then issued the decree, "Let there be Light!"  
 And at those words, the mists of blackness sped.  
 Thus Light increased, while fast the darkness fled  
 In full submission to that unseen Might.

And so with us. When countless troubles fall  
 Upon our heads, and round us evils crowd,  
 We seem enveloped by a dismal pall,  
 And cannot of ourselves pierce through the cloud,  
 But look to Him Who first caused light to shine,  
 And through the gloom we catch the gleam Divine.

John H. Essex

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The little phrase "the stars also" (Gen. 1:16, AV) marks a crisis in my life. I was intensely interested in the stars, and awed by the immensity and glory of the universe, and intended to make astronomy my life work. I also decided to read all the great books. Being too poor to buy any, I commenced with the Bible given to me sometime before by my parents. But I insisted on *understanding* what I read. Nevertheless I did not dally with the first part of creation, as I supposed it to be. But when I came to the "lights," and read that God made "the stars also," as if they were a mere side issue, I was quite overwhelmed. In my studies I had been utterly amazed at their number and immensity. To dismiss them with the terse touch, "the stars also," seemed incredible. It greatly enhanced my awe of the Bible, and led me to study it closely. But, as I expect to take up astronomy later, when I visit the stars, I change my vocation to the study of the Scriptures.

A.E.K.

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We may well say that when God created man He did not merely foresee the *possibility* of sin, but that He foreknew its *certainty*. Yet the certainty of sin's entrance into the world through His withdrawal of His spirit, was no greater than that of the certainty of its disappearance and eradication, when He again makes the universe the temple in which He dwells.

Alan Burns



## EDITORIAL

"THE SILENCE OF GOD," as some have called it, is a matter that often puzzles modern man. Many ask why God does not immediately and openly pour out His indignation against the "irreverence and injustice of men," rather than reveal it gradually through the debilitating consequences of their actions (*cf* Rom.1:18-32). Would not our world be better off if great wickedness were quickly visited with divine retribution?

The believer, however, has received an evangel of peace, declaring "that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them" (2 Cor.5:19). And in this word of conciliation we are learning to affirm, "Lo! Now is a most acceptable era! Lo! Now is a day of salvation!" (2 Cor.6:2). The "secret of lawlessness" (2 Thess.2:7) may grow apace, but the endowments of faith, expectation and love remain (1 Cor.13:13) as bulwarks of strength and optimism in the believer's heart. God is not silent to us, but speaks continually through the gift of His Son.

Great and spectacular revelations of divine power were given to Israel when they left Egypt, at Sinai in the wilderness and at other occasions in their history. It was in recounting these events that they were strengthened and encouraged in their daily lives. And so that they might keep these visible events in mind, the nation was assisted by visible, symbolic reminders such as brow-bands (see the article, "Walk in All His Ways") or ceremonial enactments such as the Passover and Sabbath observances (see p.219).

But we have none of these things, for we walk by faith and not by perception (2 Cor.5:7). The great and spectacular events of our lives lie in spiritual enlightenment associated with the gift of believing. Similarly, the reminders of the grace of our calling and the love of God commended unto us do not consist in outward things like amulets and the keeping of sabbaths. If our thoughts and our actions are not motivated and directed by faith itself producing its effects within us, then they cannot be well pleasing to God (see the articles on Genesis 22 and Romans 16).

What we *see* are wars and hate, greed and murder, sometimes associated even with concepts of God in terms of wrath and retribution and stern and unyielding demands. What we *believe* is that God spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all (Rom.8:32). What we *see* are clawing and scrambling to get to the top of the heap, but what we *believe* is that Christ humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross (Phil.2:5-8; see also the article, "Gracious Presentation"). We plead and offer thanksgiving for all mankind because we realize that God is the Saviour of them all. And in this we taste of a mild and quiet life (*cf* 1 Tim.2:1-4).

Faith trains us to look beyond what we see to what we learn of God in the evangel. Faith looks at the invisible and is convinced that indeed God is the One Who is operating all things (see p.195), and He is doing this for a glorious consummation. This is what God has placed in our hearts, and we take this faith with us wherever we go; it is with us whatever happens to us; it is our meditation and the root of our prayers, the source of our peace and happiness and the basis of our walk. To the eyes of faith God is not hidden, and to the ears of faith He is not silent.

D.H.H.

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*All Out, Through and For God*

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## IT IS GOD WHO . . .

### IT IS GOD WHO IS OPERATING ALL

*. . . seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!* (Rom.11:36).

God's deity is gloriously presented in the section of Romans starting with chapter nine and climaxed by the scripture above. His supreme and absolute power is shown against the dark background of Israel's national unbelief and stubbornness. God has concentrated here several sharply outlined examples of the truth that He "is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11).

We will point out some of those examples.

### IT IS GOD WHO AVOWS THE PROMISE

*. . . who are Israelites, whose is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the legislation and the divine service and the promises; whose are the fathers, and out of whom is the Christ according to the flesh, Who is over all, God be blessed for the eons. Amen!* (Rom.9:4,5).

With all of her advantages, Israel, as a nation was and is unbelieving. Will not her unbelief nullify the promises? Here is the short conclusive answer: "The word of God has not lapsed" (Rom.9:6).

That answer points to the One Who can say: "All My counsel shall be confirmed, and all My desire will I do . . . Indeed, I speak! Indeed I will bring it about! I formed. Indeed, I will do it" (Isa.46:10,11).

## IT IS GOD WHO CHOOSES

*For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling . . . (Rom.9:11-13).*

“That the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice”—we find this principle throughout Scripture, and here in Romans 9 we see that it applies not only to believers but also to those whom God chooses for other purposes.

God chooses some *to oppose His will*. In fact, “God locks up all together in stubbornness” (Rom.11:32). This is not a sign of His displeasure; it is a necessary part of the process by which He is bringing all to a knowledge of His power, wisdom and love, that He may be All in all at the consummation.

Pharaoh’s part was to oppose God’s will, spoken through Moses, “Let My people go.” Pharaoh made a strong start, but he weakened early, so “Yahweh made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast” (Ex.9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10).

God was operating in accord with the counsel of His will. “For the scripture is saying to Pharaoh that ‘For this selfsame thing I rouse you up, so that I should be displaying in you My power, and so that My name should be published in the entire earth’” (Rom.9:17,18).

## IT IS GOD WHO MOLDS

*Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor? (Rom.9:21).*

This parable pictures God as a Potter, with the right to mold humans to suit His purposes. Their protests are pictured as absurd, akin to clay protesting to an earthly potter.

Apart from the evangel, protests claiming that God is unfair might have a point. Seen coupled with the revelation of God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith (Rom.3:21), the Molder's creation of vessels of indignation is righteous, resulting in the infinite blessing of all His creatures.

"Will anyone contend with his Former?

The earthenware with the ceramists?" (Isa.45:8).

#### IT IS GOD WHO PROVIDES RIGHTEOUSNESS

*For they, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, were not subjected to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing (Rom.10:3,4).*

God gave Israel a law of righteousness, but not for righteousness. Through mankind's own efforts, "not one is just, not even one" (Rom.3:10), not even with a holy and just law of righteousness, given by God through Moses. Yet through the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, God, in His supremacy, justifies the lives of all mankind (Rom.5:18).

As far as we are concerned, the demonstration of law's impotence is officially over. "For Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing" (Rom.10:4).

It is God's righteousness that is revealed in the evangel, and His righteousness is "for all, and on all who are believing" (Rom.3:22).

#### IT IS GOD WHO GIVES ISRAEL A SPIRIT OF STUPOR

*What Israel is seeking for, this she did not encounter, yet the chosen encountered it. Now the rest were calloused, even as it is written, God gives them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to be observing, and ears not to be hearing, till this very day (Rom.11:7,8).*

Israel, as a nation, is "a stubborn and contradicting people" (Rom.10:21) although God has consistently preserved a "remnant" of believers in Israel "according to the choice of grace" (Rom.11:5). "God does not thrust away His people whom He foreknew" (Rom. 11:2).

But why are the rest unbelievers? Why is unbelief and rejection of the Son of God virtually Israel's national policy? We must be sympathetic: *God gives them a spirit of stupor* (Rom.11:8).

And this is not a recent development; rather, He had begun to do so even in Isaiah's day, for he was directed to proclaim this very thing. "Go, and you will say to this people: 'Hear, yea hear, yet do not understand; And see, yea see, yet do not know.' Stouten the heart of this people, And make its ears heavy, And make its eyes squint, *Lest* it may see with its eyes, And with its ears, it may hear, And with its heart it may understand, And it gets healing again for itself" (Isa.6:9,10).

Though this decree of Yahweh was originally declared in Isaiah 6, it was later invoked in two important crises in history, both by the Lord Himself and by the apostle Paul.

Remember our Lord's explanation to His disciples about why He spoke in parables. To the disciples it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, not to others. "Therefore in parables am I speaking to them, seeing that, observing, they are not observing, and hearing, they are not hearing, neither are they understanding" (Matt.13:12,13). In that day, "filled up in them [was] the prophecy of Isaiah" (Matt.13:14a).

Indeed, God is operating in the affairs of mankind. He has a purpose which requires humans to act ignorantly (but only temporarily) *in opposition to His revealed will*.

Upon another occasion, many years later, in which the Isaiah passage was cited by Paul, something of special importance to the members of the present ecclesia was revealed. At Rome, Paul had called together those who were foremost among the Jews. Paul expounded the Scriptures to them, certifying to the kingdom of God, besides persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning till dusk (Acts 28:23). Some were persuaded by what he said, yet others disbelieved (Acts 28:24).

In response to their disagreements among themselves, one with another, Paul declared, "Ideally the holy spirit speaks through Isaiah the prophet, to your fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say, In hearing, you will be hearing, and may by no means be understanding, And observing, you will be observing, and may by no means be perceiving, For stouted is the heart of this people, And with their ears heavily they hear, And with their eyes they squint, Lest at some time they may be perceiving with their eyes, And with their ears should be hearing, And with their heart may be understanding, And should be turning about, And I shall be healing them.' Let it be known to you, then, that to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God, and they will hear" (Acts 28:25-28).

Paul's pronouncement, "Let it be known to you, then, that to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God, and they will hear," holds intense significance for us. For it is only thus, through God's temporary "casting away" of the nation of Israel, that the conciliation of the world is effected (Rom. 11:15). Thus Israel's "discomfiture" becomes the nations' riches; Israel's offense brings salvation to the nations (Rom. 11:12).

IT IS GOD WHO LOCKS UP ALL IN STUBBORNESS

*For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all* (Rom.11:32).

It is God Who laid in Zion the Stumbling Stone and the Snare Rock, Who gave both the law of righteousness and that which was the consummation of law for righteousness—Christ!

It is God Who broke Israel out of the olive tree, and it is God Who will graft her back in again after the nations' position in the olive tree is terminated. This period of Israel's callousness will last "until the complement of the nations may be entering" (Rom.11:25); whereupon, "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom.11:26).

The nations were stubborn but were shown mercy. Israel was disturbed by this ("this mercy of yours"), but only that now they also may be shown mercy.

All must be stubborn, but only that all may be shown mercy. This stubbornness is a necessary prelude to mercy. Man's condition of being locked up in stubbornness is as much the work of God as is His merciful response to this very stubbornness of mankind!

This simple fact is not commonly emphasized. Yet Paul's statement is hard to misunderstand; it is unequivocal and literal: *God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.*

IT IS GOD WHO IS THE SOURCE,  
THE COURSE, AND THE OBJECT OF ALL

*O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen! (Rom.11:33-36).*



We can only be awed by such a tremendous revelation, and by the grace of the One Who reveals it to His creatures. Surely He is able to do superexcessively above *all* that we are requesting or apprehending (Eph.3:20).

God's revelation of Himself ranges from His attributes made apparent in His creation (*cp* Rom.1:20) to the infinite scope of Romans 11:33-36 quoted above. *Out of Him is all*—His power makes up all matter and life. *Through Him is all*—His operations are responsible for the history of the universe. *For Him is all*—His purpose and love will bring all to a glorious consummation.

His riches far exceed our comprehension. He needs nothing from us, except our love, and that need is being satisfied through the obedience of the Son of His love. Though we often find His ways inexplicable, His "untraceable ways" fit all the experiences of our lives together in order to carry out His purpose. We can know that His judgments—"inscrutable" though they may be to His suffering creatures—are moving us all toward His goal, that of His own greatest glory and of our highest blessing.

So our passage climaxes this section of Romans. In the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters we have seen an overview of Israel's history, especially of her unbelief and of her rejection of Jesus as the Christ. But the constant theme in these chapters is God's operation of *all*. He even brings about blessings to the world and to the nations by Israel's very failures.

The promises made to the fathers are drawing nearer and nearer to realization. The day will come when "all Israel shall be saved, according as it is written . . ." (Rom.11:26). *As a nation*, "all" Israel will be saved. Then "national policy" in Israel will be to believe. In

the kingdom, with Christ as King, Israel will be established as the head of all the nations. It is clear, then, that in the phrase "all Israel shall be saved," the "all" refers to the entire *nation* of Israel.

But notice how the application of the term "all" expands, as Paul first develops and then consummates his revelation. Israel was stubborn, and still is, but God will show her mercy. That is a part of the grander principle, the principle of God's dealings with mankind, both nationally and individually. God will show mercy to Israel and to all mankind, "for God locks up *all* together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to *all*" (Rom.11:32).

Yet by the time we reach verse 36, the scope of the "all" is expanded infinitely, in order to include all that exists and all that occurs. All that has gone before, throughout universal world history, is shown to be of God, "seeing that" it is comprised in the glorious universal principle, which is: "out of Him and through Him and for Him is *all*: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!" (Rom.11:36).

R. B. Killen

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#### THE CREATOR

The theme of God as Creator was considered during special times of fellowship (nine days in all) held in various places in Michigan and Ontario in recent months.

In his talks, Dean Hough followed the outline given in the July editorial of this magazine. Phil Scranton stressed that the starting point of the revelation of God is creation, and the starting point of creation is Jesus Christ. Using Isaiah 65:17,18, Leonard Bowerman showed how creation is related to elation concerning the "futures of the future." During the Lansing sessions, Jim Coram pointed out that God not only created all we see (Acts 14:15) but also the arrangement of things, i.e., the WORLD (Acts 17:24). Other speakers included Lloyd Hibberd, Clyde Severn, Ted McDivitt, Elwood Gustafson and James Andrews. The hospitality and concern for one another was a delight to all.

## WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS

“HENCE PLACE THESE MY WORDS IN YOUR HEART and in your soul, and tie them as a sign on your hand, and they will come to be\* as brow-bands between your eyes. Teach them to your sons, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you arise. Write them on the jambs of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your sons may be many on the ground about which Yahweh had sworn to your fathers to give to them, as many as the days of the heavens over the earth” (Deut.11:18-21).

The term “these my words” (11:18) links back to preceding basic enjoinders such as “fear Yahweh your Elohim . . . walk in all His ways . . . love Him” (10:12), “hence you will love Yahweh your Elohim and observe His charge” (11:1), “love Yahweh your Elohim and . . . serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (11:13). These words remind us of those in the Jewish key prayer, the Sh’ma Yisrael: “Hear, Israel! Yahweh is our Elohim, Yahweh the only One. So you will love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your intensity” (Deut. 6:4,5; cf Mark 12:30).

Referring to the words of the Sh’ma, Moses had told the younger generation of Israelites: “Tie them as a sign on your hand, and they will come to be as brow-

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\*or: [let] them come to be; same verb form as in 6:8.

bands between your eyes; write them on the jambs of your house and on your gates" (Deut.6:8,9).

#### FROM BROW-BANDS TO AMULETS

The term brow-bands occurs only three times in the Old Testament, twice in Deuteronomy (6:8; 11:18), and once in Exodus 13:16. In a similar phrase (Ex.13:9) Moses had used the term "reminder" instead of "brow-band." He wanted his audience as well as future generations always to be mindful of the statutes of Yahweh, such as the celebration of unleavened cakes and of sacrificing to Yahweh every firstborn male (Ex.13:7,15).

It was on the morrow after the first passover that the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses (on the eastern frontier of Egypt) toward Succoth, their first stopping place (Num.33:3-5). Here Moses told the people: "You are to *remember this day* on which you went forth from Egypt" (Ex.13:3). After having explained the hallowing to Yahweh of every firstborn male, Moses admonished them: "And it comes to be as a sign on your hand and as brow-bands between your eyes that [or: for] with steadfastness of hand Yahweh brought us forth from Egypt" (Ex.13:16). Observance of the stipulation concerning firstborn males should remind future generations (13:14) of the first passover night when the tenth plague killed the firstborn of Egypt, while those of Israel were spared because of the blood of the flawless flocklings on the jambs and the lintel of their houses (12:5,7).

To the Israelites at Succoth, the admonition about signs and brow-bands sounded like the one they had just heard in connection with the celebration of unleavened cakes, since it had begun with a similar sentence structure: "And it comes to be for you as a

*sign* on your hand and as a *reminder* between your eyes that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a steadfast hand Yahweh brought you forth from Egypt. You will *observe this statute* [about unleavened cakes] at its appointed time from days to days" (Ex.13:9,10).

This statute became part of the law of Yahweh. In a bold figure of speech, the people should have it on their lips [in their mouth], and in their perception [between their eyes], so as to regulate their actions [by the hand]. Moses did not ask the Israelites at Succoth to heed *his* two admonitions about the sign and the reminder, but rather to observe the statute given by *Yahweh*. Obviously his two admonitions were not taken literally, at least not by the people in Succoth at that point in time.

After their exodus from Rameses, they were resting at this first stopping place, taking the unleavened dough out of their kneading troughs (which they had carried on their backs), and baking their unleavened cakes in hot ashes or in the desert sun (Ex.12:34,39). It was on this occasion that Moses gave the instructions for eating unleavened cakes during the seven days of the month of Aviv (the month of the exodus). All the elders of Israel would listen attentively and then go forth and speak to their assigned groups of people among the myriads and myriads of Israelites in Succoth (*cf* Ex. 12:21,37).

Forty years later, in Transjordan, Moses expounded the whole law to the post-Sinai generation of Israelites. In Deuteronomy 6:8,9 he spoke of physical reminders pertaining to the Sh'ma Yisrael; its words were to be written on the jambs of their houses and on their gates when they became settled in the promised land.

Since the Babylonian exile phylacteries have been customary for observant Jewish men; the text of the

Sh'ma Yisrael and other pertinent verses were inscribed on small strips of parchment that were enclosed in tiny leather cases, one of them strapped to the forehead, and the other to the left arm when the Sh'ma was recited.

Our Lord Jesus did not disapprove of using such phylacteries, but rather of the ostentatious way of the scribes and the Pharisees who broadened them in boastful showiness with which they wanted to impress others. They had degraded the brow-bands to mere amulets (*cf* Matt.23:5; KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.14).

WITH ALL YOUR HEART  
AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL

Understanding is with the heart, the seat of motives and reasoning. Hence (in Deut.11:18-21) Moses admonished his audience to place the words of the instruction in their hearts so that their souls would be established for the task of teaching their children, not just occasionally, but rather in a continual way of life. They should talk to them about Yahweh at bedtime and in the morning, while sitting in the house or walking on the road. Of course, the parents would not tell their children mere abstract formulations of their own belief in Yahweh and His law; they would rather talk about their grandparents' years of slavery in Egypt, and the wondrous acts of Yahweh, how He brought Israel safely through the Sea of Weeds, and how He fed them in the wilderness for forty years. So the children would come to love Yahweh with all their heart and with all their soul.

Deuteronomy 11:19-21 is a repetition of thoughts that we have read earlier in the second address of Moses (*cf* Deut.4:9,10; 4:40; 6:2,6-9). Most of the audience could not hear Moses himself speaking, being

too far off in the crowd of myriads and myriads. To them Moses' words were transmitted through all the elders who repeated his words to their assigned groups, just as other elders had served in this way forty years before in Succoth. And the people would better grasp the substance of Moses' instruction when it reminded them of something similar that had been told before. Hence it was not irksome for Moses to be repeating some of his statements in his address, since it was for the people's certainty and security in the things they heard.

#### FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE EUPHRATES

“For if you should observe, yea observe all this instruction which I am enjoining on you today, to obey it, to love Yahweh your Elohim, to walk in all His ways and to cling to Him, then Yahweh will evict all these nations from before you, and you will tenant in the place of nations greater and more substantial than you. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall become yours. From the wilderness and the Lebanon, from the Great Stream, the stream Euphrates, as far as the western sea shall become your territory. No man shall station himself in your presence. The awe of you and the fear of you shall Yahweh your Elohim put over the face of the entire land on which you shall tread, just as He has spoken to you” (Deut.11:22-25).

The introductory particles “for *if*” in verse 22 prepare the audience for the contingency that is dealt with in verses 26-29. *If* Israel (those present and the future generations) should observe and obey the familiar basic injunction to *love* Yahweh their Elohim, so as to *walk in all His ways* and cling to Him (*cf* Deut.10:12,13,20), then the divine promises of 4:38 and 9:1-3 and 11:23 still stand: Israel shall conquer and tenant

the promised land, for Yahweh will cross over the Jordan before them and will evict those greater and more substantial nations that are now dwelling there.

Yahweh Himself had outlined the extent of the promised land in Deuteronomy 1:7, from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon in the north, from the Mediterranean in the west to the Euphrates in the northeast. This outline was in accord with Yahweh's contract with Abram: "To your seed I give this land, from the stream of Egypt as far as the Great Stream, the stream Euphrates" (Gen.15:18).

If the people would have loved Yahweh and walked in His ways, He would have put the awe and fear of Israel over the *entire* land, as outlined above. Yet only for a short time, in the days of king David, did Israel control this vast area.

#### BLESSING AND MALEDICTION

"See! I am setting before you today blessing and malediction: the blessing if you should hearken to the instructions of Yahweh your Elohim that I am enjoining on you today, and the malediction if you should not hearken to the instructions of Yahweh your Elohim, and you withdraw from the way that I am enjoining on you today, by going after other elohim [gods] whom you have not known. When it comes to be that Yahweh your Elohim shall bring you into the land where you are entering to tenant it, then you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the malediction on Mount Ebal.

"Are they not across the Jordan, behind the sunset road into the country of the Canaanite, who is dwelling in the Aravah toward Gilgal beside the oaks of Moreh? For you are crossing over the Jordan to enter and to tenant the land that Yahweh your Elohim



is giving to you. When you tenant it and dwell in it, then observe to obey all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today" (Deut.11:26-32).

The treatise of the "General Stipulations" (as part of the first covenant renewal between Yahweh and Israel) has come to a close. The Israelites of the post-Sinai generation are now called upon to renew their status as Yahweh's people. They have all the motivations to choose between obedience or disobedience to the law, so as to make the right decision. They are now sufficiently acquainted with Yahweh's steadfast hand Who controls both history and climate; and they have grasped the substance of the scroll of the covenant (Ex.20:2-24:7) and of Moses' words which he had spoken to them "according to all that Yahweh had instructed him concerning them" (Deut.1:3).

They are now going to hear about the "Specific Stipulations," followed by the rules for the covenant renewal ceremony at the twin mountains Gerizim\* and Ebal (chapter 27), and by details about blessings and maledictions (chapter 28). Thus they will be prepared to cross the Jordan and to tenant the land that Yahweh is giving to them, as long as they observe all the statutes and the judgments (Deut.11:32) and walk in all His ways.

H.H.R.

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\*A Samaritan temple was built on Mount Gerizim in the fourth century B.C.

*(To be continued)*

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PSALM 119

We have published portions of the Concordant Version of Psalm 119 in seven previous issues of *Unsearchable Riches* (vol.LXXVIII, pp.215,285; vol.LXXIX, pp.24,146; vol.LXXX, pp.18,19,61-63,127-129). The concluding 16 verses of this Psalm are given on the next page.

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*Concordant Version of the Psalms*

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PSALM 119:161-176

- 161 Chief men, they persecute me gratuitously,  
+Yet my heart stands in awe <sup>f</sup>before Your word.
- 162 I am elated<sup>l</sup> over Your <sup>sa</sup>promise  
Like one finding much loot.
- 163 I hate what is false, and let me always abhor it;  
I love Your law.
- 164 Seven times in a day I praise You  
<sup>on</sup>For Your righteous judgments.
- 165 Much peace is for those loving Your law,  
And there is no stumbling block for them.
- 166 I look forward to Your salvation, O Yahweh,  
And I <sup>d</sup>perform Your instructions.
- 167 My soul keeps Your testimonies,  
And I <sup>l</sup>love them very much.
- 168 I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,  
For all my ways are in front of You.
- 169 May my appeal come near before You, O Yahweh;  
According to Your word, cause me to understand.
- 170 May my supplication come before You;  
According to Your <sup>sa</sup>promise, rescue me.
- 171 May my lips utter praise,  
For You <sup>t</sup>each me Your statutes.
- 172 May my tongue respond to Your <sup>sa</sup>promise,  
For all Your instructions are righteous.
- 173 May Your hand <sup>b</sup>be ready to help me,  
For I have chosen Your precepts.
- 174 I ardently desire <sup>y</sup> Your salvation, O Yahweh,  
And Your law is my delectation.
- 175 May my soul live and praise You,  
And may Your judgments help me.
- 176 I have strayed like a lost<sup>l</sup> flockling;  
seek Your servant,  
For I have not forgotten Your instructions.

ABRAHAM,  
FROM GERAR TO MORIAH

AFTER the doom of Sodom, Abraham went to Gerar (Gen.20:1) and assayed once more the tactics which had proved so disastrous in Egypt, and the ministry of intercession temporarily ceased. The man who not long ago interceded for Sodom now imperiled the whole land of the Philistines.

He swerved from the service of prayer and was restored on condition that he pray for Abimelech, who had been endangered by his disloyalty (Gen.20:17,18).

Before advancing, let us note how variously the theophanies following the return from Egypt affected Abraham.

The third (Gen.13:14-17) dealt with the land and influenced his *surroundings*; the fourth (Gen.15:1-5), that of the seed, determined his *companionship*; the fifth (Gen.17:1-21), the self-revelation of God as El-Who-Suffices, moulded his *character*; lastly the sixth (Gen.18:1-33), unraveling God's secret purpose, directed his *service*.

The junctures at which occur the three deflections represent the vulnerable points in the life of faith. The first blow is directed against a separated walk; the second against trust in the Word; the third against prayer. The adversary always concentrates his assaults on these three citadels of sainthood.

Deflection from God's path exposes the believers to Satan's attacks; and he is ever on the alert to take

advantage of opportunities and utilize them to the best of his ability. Yet Satan is but an agent in carrying out God's disciplinary plans; and when we fall into his hands, and experience the influence of his mighty spells, it is only for the purpose of diverting us from hidden shoals and leads us to a closer walk with God. Satan's malignity, and the magnificent results which the wisdom of God accomplishes through its medium, remind one of the painter, who, actuated by jealousy, flung a sponge at the canvas of his rival, intending to obliterate the scene, but producing by the merest accident the very effect which the artist's utmost efforts had failed to secure. God's purposes are at times born in obscurity, but the very gloom from which they emerge heightens their aftereffect.

#### THE SEVENTH APPEARANCE

When the seed was first promised, Abraham questioned God's ability to perform His word. Later, the Lord appeared to him as the El-Who-Suffices, and shortly afterward the child of promise was born.

In the process of time God tried Abraham again, and said, "Take now your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go by yourself to the Moriah area and offer him up there as an ascent offering on one of the mountains which I shall indicate to you" (Gen.22:2). Faith is now tested on the spot of antecedent defeat, only the ordeal is now severer because the light possessed is greater. Abraham has seen God's victory over the flesh; he is about to see His triumph over Satan's power—death.

Past failure has strengthened Abraham's hold on things unseen, and demonstrated the unthinkable reaches of divine power; so when the order comes to offer Isaac he carries it out unhesitatingly. He has not

the remotest idea how God can deliver Isaac; he knows that God is All-Sufficient and therefore equal to the emergency of the occasion.

When the appointed place was reached, Abraham said to his young men, "You sit here with the donkey while I and the youth shall go thus far; there we shall worship, and we shall return to you" (Gen.22:5). His faith shows itself equal to the crisis. But a severer test was ahead. As the two advanced toward the mountain, Isaac said to his father: "Behold the fire and the wood; yet where is the flockling for the ascent offering?" (v.7). Could he say to the child of his love, "You are the ascent offering, my son?" His answer was, "Elohim shall provide for Himself the flockling for the ascent offering, my son" (v.8). How gloriously his faith soars above impediments!

The summit of the mount is reached; the altar is built; the wood laid in order; Isaac is bound, and laid on the altar, upon the wood; Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. At this juncture the voice of the messenger of Yahweh is heard from the heavens: "Do not stretch out your hand on the youth, and do not do anything to him; for now I know that you fear Elohim, since you have not kept back your son, your only one, from Me" (Gen.22:12). Lifting up his eyes, Abraham beheld a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for an ascent offering instead of his son. Then Abraham called the name of the place Yahweh-yireh, returned to his young men, and rose up and went to Beer-sheba.

Yahweh-yireh means "Yahweh shall see." But the word *yireh* admits of another rendering, namely *provide* (as rendered in verse 8). By combining the thoughts suggested by the two readings we grasp the stupen-

dous truth that the God of *vision* is the God of *provision*. The foresight and omnipotence of God are two wings of an eagle that soar into the empyrean bearing Abraham upon their pinions.

The design of the Lord has been attained. His servant has entered into fellowship with Himself concerning the sufferings of the Holy One; his heart vibrates — in a small measure of course — with the same feeling which agitated the heart of God when He gave His Son to die for us. Human experience can go no further this side of the grave. The curtain drops upon the scene, and the saint goes to his rest in hope of a better resurrection.

Now my readers, will you give up conformity to the world? If so, you may, every one of you, be transformed at this moment. Respond to His love! You may make your abiding place in Christ, and have all the power and glory which comes to those who possess Him. You may, like Abraham, advance from the miserable condition of a poor up-and-down, in-and-out, wretched man, on to the glorious vantage ground of a transformed man — a transformed woman — a triumphant believer on the pathway of faith!

V. Gelesnoff

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#### CERTIFYING THE EVANGEL OF GRACE

In past months, besides our own meetings here in Santa Clarita and Pasadena, California, I have had the opportunity to take part in fellowship gatherings in Tuscon, Arizona, Eugene, Oregon, Seattle and Lopez Island, Washington, and in Lansing and Almont, Michigan. This fall a conference is scheduled once again in Greenville, South Carolina as well. In every place the greatest need seems to be for the believers truly to grasp the simple truth that *God* is our Saviour and that, ultimately speaking, we are not at all our own saviour. May we be likeminded with the apostle Paul who said, "in the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor.15:10), not with Herod Agrippa, of whom it was said, "he gives not the glory to God" (Acts 12:23).

James Coram

## ABRAHAM'S UNFOLDING FAITH

THE UNFOLDING faith of Abram went through many phases before it was perfected by the offering of his only son, Isaac (James 2:22). Each of these had a special quality and has been characterized by giving it a name.

The *obedience* of faith brought him to the promised land (Gen.12:4). The *humility* of faith gave Lot the first choice (Gen.13:8). By the *strength* of his faith he conquered the kings (Gen.14:15). The *firmness* of faith enabled him to believe when all hope of an heir seemed futile (Gen.15:6). The *boldness* of faith led him to intercede for Sodom (Gen.18:23). In the *joyfulness* of faith he named the son of promise (Gen.21:3). By the *loyalty* of faith he submitted to Sarah, and expelled Hagar and Ishmael (Gen.21:14). In the *gratitude* of faith he planted a tamarisk (Gen.21:33). In its *perfection* he offered up his only son (Gen.22:2).

It is said that the Canaanites, among whom Abraham dwelt, made a practice of propitiating their deities by sacrificing their dearest possessions, even their children (2 Kings 3:27). But, in his case, besides Isaac being an *only* son, the fruit and fulfillment of faith, it seemed to be directly contrary to all of Yahweh's previous promises. Yet many tests had shown him that God could even bring back from death. He himself had been deadened before he generated Isaac. Abraham was quite prepared actually to slay his son, for he reckoned that, even so, God was able to rouse him from among the dead (Heb.11:19). Thus we are given

a parabolic representation of the important fact that the chosen nation is the fruit of *faith*, and the resurrection power of God, but *not* of the *flesh*.

#### FULLY ASSURED

Abraham's faith assured him that, even though he should offer up Isaac as an ascent approach, his son *must* later be alive to fulfill Yahweh's promises concerning the seed, seeing that "In Isaac shall your seed be called." "He reckoned that God is able to rouse him from among the dead, also, whence he recovers him in a parable . . ." (Heb.11:18,19). This is evident from his words to the two lads who were left behind: "*We shall worship, and return to you*" (Gen.22:5). Usually, Abraham is represented as terribly distressed, his heart sorrowing in anticipation of the loss of his son, and shuddering at the thought of shedding little "Laughter's" blood. But that is not the reaction of faith. That is the fruit of unbelief. No, he seems to have given no sign of unbelieving trepidation, because he had the assurance that, whatever he did, Isaac must live to fulfill God's promise.

They went together, Isaac carrying the load of wood, while his father had the fire and the knife. Isaac evidently realized that they were about to offer a sacrifice, so was perplexed as to the victim, for that prime essential seemed to have been forgotten. Very diffidently, he asks permission to speak. When his father assents, he points out that they have the wood and the fire for an ascent approach, but no flocking. His father's reply was such as no one without perfect confidence in the Subjector could have expressed: "*Elohim shall provide [see] for Himself . . .*" (Gen.22:8). He knew that this must be so, but how it would be done he could not say, and he did not venture to express a



conjecture. It was doubly fulfilled, once at the time, by a divinely provided ram, but not fully till the death and resurrection of the great Antitype, God's beloved Son, our Saviour.

#### FEARING GOD

Even in this day of transcendent grace, we are exhorted to carry our salvation into effect with *fear* and *trembling* (Phil.2:12). So long as we are in our mortal flesh we cannot help having a holy awe in view of the fact that, apart from faith in Christ, and reliance on God's grace, we are not able to do a single thing or speak one word, with absolute confidence that it measures up to the divine ideal, and is perfectly acceptable to our Creator and Subjector. To do that which we ourselves would doubly dread to do, in fact would not dare to do, at the divine behest, must have a powerful motive. No *man* could have persuaded Abraham to sacrifice his son. Only the fear of Elohim could cause him to commit such a murderous deed as this.

#### GOD PROVIDES

As Abraham had told Isaac, God saw the need of the sacrificial victim, but it was not a flockling, as Isaac proposed. There were different grades of ascent offerings, which correspond to the faith of the offerer. The highest was taken from the herd, the second from the flock, the third from the flyer. God's opinion of Abraham's faith, and the value He put upon His offering is shown by the *ram* which He Himself had foreseen. This was the highest, for it closely foreshadowed the supreme sacrifice of His Own Son on Golgotha (Lev. 1: 2,3,10,14).

#### EVIL

This transaction has a close bearing on the so-called

problem of evil. Was it good or evil for Elohim to charge Abraham to do this? Was it not an evil merely to truss up his son and then act as if he were about to murder him? But this was only a typical preview of that future scene in this very vicinity, in which God's own Son was not merely trussed up, but cruelly crucified, not only menaced with a knife, but pierced with a lance head, and not simply threatened with death, but actually forsaken by His God and left to die. This, the greatest evil ever committed, was due to the deliberate decision of Elohim, so that it could actually be rehearsed here long before it took place. Yet, out of this, the greatest of all evils, will come the greatest and grandest good.

In conclusion, may we look beyond the picture presented by Abraham and Isaac, to the *Inaugurator and Perfecter* of faith Who, for the joy lying before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of God (Heb.12:2). Isaac was only a type, a dim shadow of the One Whose faith led Him to descend from the highest heights of glory to the deepest depths of shame, and has called us to share the fruits of His faith with Him, by blessing us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials (Eph.1:3).

A.E.K.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

In our warehouse, we recently discovered a small supply of **THE SIMPLE STORY OF THE UNIVERSE** by William Bentley (\$5.95). We also have limited supplies of the following titles: "Eonian: Age-lasting or Everlasting?" (\$1.50), the July, 1989 *Unsearchable Riches* (special Creation issue, \$1.50), and **THE CHURCH EPISTLES** by E. W. Bullinger (\$10.00). A list of miscellaneous new and used books which we have on hand (such as the American Standard Version, 1901, the Darby translation, and various out-of-print Concordant publications) is available upon request.

## GRACE AND OBEDIENCE

THERE are certainly parallels between the evangel of the Uncircumcision and that of the Circumcision, but these parallels do not include the *necessity* of our doing such things as avowing our faith verbally (though we gladly do so) or obediently persevering (though we seek to do so). We do not “do” *in order* to live, but *because* we live (*cp* Rom.10:5; Rom.8:1b,2).

If we genuinely believe, it is evident that we have been called and are among the chosen. Though it is the desire of our heart to be faithful to the Lord, it is not *necessary* for us to obey in order to have future eonian life.

When we are vivified, seated together among the celestials, rejoicing in eonian life and glory, this will not be the generosity of God’s reward, but a display of the transcendent riches of His *grace* (Eph.2:5-7). Eonian life under the Circumcision calling, however, *is a reward*; it is only for those who are worthy (Luke 20:35), for those who are *doing* righteousness (1 John 2:3,4,14; *cf* 1 John 3:7-10). Though most cannot see this, this is the basic distinction between the gospel of the Circumcision and that of the Uncircumcision.

Yet it is necessary for us to obey if we would *reign* during the future eons (2 Tim.2:12a), if we would enjoy the allotment of God’s “*kingdom*.” In Greek, the noun “reign” (or “king[dom]”) is *basileia*, and the verb “reign” is *basileuō*. Paul is very clear, and we are not to be deceived: those whose continued, habitual activity

(or "practice," *prassō*) is that of the works of the flesh, "shall not be enjoying the allotment of the [*reign*] of God" (Gal.5:21; *cp* 1 Cor.6:9; Eph.5:5). The literal English equivalent of the Greek is, "THE-ones such PRACTICING, KINGdom [i.e., reign] OF-God NOT WILL-BE-tenanting."\*

That is, those who have habitually practiced the works of the flesh, will not be taking part (having a "tenancy" or "allotment") in God's *rule*. Those who do not *endure* now, will not *reign* then.

Yet this is not at all to say that those who do not endure now will not *live* then. Since eonian life is a matter of *grace*, it follows that, on the one hand, there is nothing we can do to gain it, and on the other, that there is nothing we can do to lose it. "We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose, yet we *all* shall be changed, in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor.15:51,52a). In that day, we *all* shall be changed, not merely those among us who have endured. "Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, *then* you also shall be manifested together with Him in glory" (Col.3:4).

We must distinguish between the allotment of God's *kingdom* and the allotment of *eonian life*. Though we will not all take part in God's reign, nonetheless we will all *live* under its jurisdiction. It is immediately following Paul's words in which he soberly declares that the unjust, indeed, shall not be enjoying the allotment of God's *kingdom*, or *reign*, that he joyously adds the following contrastive statement: "*But* you are bathed off, *but* you are hallowed, *but* you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God" (1 Cor.6:11).

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\*CONCORDANT GREEK TEXT, p.551; sublinear, Gal.5:21

As those who have been justified (pronounced righteous) in God's grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Rom.3:24), we have the *expectation* (not merely a possible "hope") of *life eonian* (Titus 3:7). Therefore, we will *live* throughout the coming eons—not to mention be *saved* from the indignation of God (1 Thess.5:8-10)—even if it should be that we do not *reign*.

Besides, those who do reign will no more be able to boast in themselves in their endurance than those who live will be able to boast in themselves in their membership in the ecclesia. *All* will then say, "in the *grace* of God, I am what I am" (*cp* 1 Cor.15:10). Indeed, if we cannot say this at present ourselves, we are not *faithfully* enduring in the first place, but are instead only boasting in ourselves, according to human tradition; if so, we can hardly expect to be among those who will reign.

Let us soberly recognize that those who are practicing the works of the flesh will not be "tenanting" (or having an allotment in) God's reign. Yet let us happily rejoice that, "being justified in that One's grace, we may be becoming enjoyers, in expectation, of the allotment of life eonian" (Titus 3:7).

If we would faithfully endure, it will be necessary for us to learn what we must do unto this end. Instruction precedes obedience. For this we will have to learn how to "*correctly* cut the word of truth" (2 Tim.2:15), as Paul says, "that you may know that which concerns you" (Col.4:8).

For example, concerning the matter of deciding for days, it is not that the law has been "done away," or that the sabbath has been changed to Sunday. It is only that the believers of the nations did not need to keep the law of Moses to be saved (Acts 15), as even the

Jerusalem leaders recognized. The "law of God," when the reference is to what was given through Moses, is spoken of interchangeably as the law of Moses and that of the Lord (e.g., Luke 1:6; 2:22-24,39; John 1:17; Heb.10:28). The claim which some make that while the "law of *Moses*" has been rescinded, the "law of *God*" must be obeyed by "Christians" today not only to be faithful but to be saved at all, is unwarranted.

As used by most, there is much more mischief and confusion concerning the word "Christian" than there is light and understanding. Paul managed to write all of his epistles without employing it even once. In the Scriptures, this expression (*Christianos*, ANOINTED- [Latin suffix]) is a *worldly* term of contempt for the followers of Christ. When we are speaking from a secular vantage point, perhaps we might use it ourselves (though without any contempt) of any today who are naming the name of the Lord. But we would do well to confine our usage to this application.

What some call "God's law" — that is, to speak plainly, the Ten Commandments and perhaps certain other laws from the books of Moses — is that which is said to constitute timeless righteousness. However reasonable and scriptural this notion may seem to be, it simply is not true. We do not seek to obey *as such* even a single one of the laws given through Moses. Similarly, we do not inconsistently set aside the fourth commandment, that enjoining sabbath-keeping, while seeking to heed the remaining nine ourselves. Not at all. It is merely incidental to our own obedience that, for example, Moses instructed the Israelite to honor his father and mother (the fifth commandment of the "ten words"). We are to follow the apostle Paul fully in his teaching (2 Tim.3:10). *That* is why we, *like* Israel, are to honor our parents also (Eph.6:1-3).

Anyone who is at all acquainted with the Pauline writings is aware that the apostle places much emphasis on the importance of the believer's *obedience*. He employs the imperative mood and gives many entreaties—clearly and directly—whenever he wishes to present the Lord's directives concerning us. In so doing, he sometimes presents various instructions to us that were indeed first given as laws for Israel of old, often interpreting them in a fuller and more exalted sense (e.g., Eph.5:28). *Yet there is no such instruction anywhere in his writings concerning the sabbath*. Likewise, he nowhere teaches that the will of God with respect to the believer's walk may be found within the books of Moses. May these facts speak to us, concerning the genuine teaching of our apostle, who dared not to speak any of what Christ did not effect through him, "for the *obedience* of the nations" (Rom.15:18).

#### ZEALOUS FOR LAW, SAVED THROUGH GRACE

Among the Jews there were tens of thousands who had believed, and they were all inherently zealous for the law (Acts 21:20). Under the economy of the law, it was essential that the believers should display their own righteousness (Matt.5:20). If they would enter into life, they must "keep the precepts" (Matt.19:17). Throughout their generations they were to teach their sons, "It shall come to be righteousness for us when we observe to do all this instruction before Yahweh our Elohim, just as He had enjoined on us" (Deut.6:25).

Understandably, then, at Jerusalem some from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, assuming that any believers of the nations would have to become proselytes and keep the law even as they (*cp* Matt. 23:15; Isa.56:1-7), "rose up, saying that [these] must be circumcised, besides charging them to keep the law

of Moses" (Acts 15:5). So the apostles and elders there gathered together to see about this matter (Acts 15:6).

"Now there coming to be much questioning, rising, Peter said to them, 'Men! Brethren! You are versed in the fact that from the days at the beginning God chooses among you, that through my mouth the nations are to hear the evangel and believe. And God, the Knower of hearts, testifies to them, giving the holy spirit according as to us also, and in nothing discriminates between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Why, then, are you now trying God, by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are strong enough to bear? But through the *grace* of the Lord Jesus we are believing, to be saved *in a manner even as they*'" (Acts 15:7-11).

The idea behind the Greek phrase for "in a manner even as they" (*kath on tropon kakeinoi*), is that the Jews themselves would only be saved (through the grace of the Lord Jesus) based upon the same method or by the same means as that which God was already using to save the nations. Since the Jews had to bear the yoke of the law anyway, though they, like their fathers, were not strong enough to do so, it was evident that God would have to employ extremely powerful means if they should ever be saved. And if there was to be any expectation of their being able to keep the law satisfactorily, they would have to be regenerated—that is, they "must be begotten anew" (John 3:7b). Through the holy spirit of God they were enabled to do what was otherwise impossible.

Concerning all such ones the apostle John writes, "Everyone\* who is believing that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God. And everyone who is loving Him Who begets is loving him also who is begotten by Him. In this we know that we are loving the children of God,



whenever we may be loving God *and may be doing His precepts*. And His precepts are not heavy, *for all\** that is begotten of God is conquering the world. And this is the [agency of] conquest that conquers the world: *our faith*" (1 John 5:1-4).

"*Everyone\** who is begotten of God, is not doing [i.e., practicing] sin, *for His [God's] seed is remaining in him, and he [relatively speaking] can not be sinning, for he is begotten of God*" (1 John 3:9; *cp* 1 John 1:8).

In light of all this, the fact that these Jews were believing through the *grace* of the Lord Jesus becomes much more meaningful to us. This believing of theirs itself had only occurred since they were "to be saved," though in the same *manner* (*tropos*, through the same "method" or "means") which God would use for the salvation of the nations.

God's method for effecting salvation—the means which He always employs—is the power of His own word: He speaks and it is done; for He *causes* the testimony of His word to be fulfilled. His creatures are merely the men of His counsel (Isa.46:11). His word, which fares forth from His mouth, never returns to Him empty. But rather, it does whatever He desires, and prospers so as to accomplish that for which He sends it (*cp* Isa.55:10,11).

#### A DOOR OF FAITH

During the conference at Jerusalem, a time was provided so that the entire multitude might hear the

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\*"Universal" terms must always be interpreted according to their context. They always refer to all who are in view — within the scope of the context or in the nature of the case. In this instance, the words "everyone" and "all" have in view (and are confined to) all those who are called into Christ through the evangel of the Circumcision.

testimony of Barnabas and Paul. As at Antioch, they informed the Jerusalem assembly of whatever God had done with them, explaining *not* how He had pointed those of the nations to the existing door of proselytism but how He had "*open[ed]* to the nations a door of *faith*" (*cf* Acts 14:27). Moreover, Barnabas and Paul wisely unfolded "whatever signs and miracles God does among the nations through them" (Acts 15:12). As a result, the Jewish believers were afforded assurance that their ministry was of God.

It must have been astonishing for these Jewish believers to discover that Paul, unlike themselves, was *not* compelling the nations to be judaizing (*cp* Gal.2:14). Yet since they recognized that *God*, nonetheless, had entrusted Paul with the evangel of the Uncircumcision "according [i.e., just as surely] as Peter [with that] of the Circumcision," knowing the *grace* which *was* being given to *Paul*, James and Cephas and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship even so (Gal.2:7-9). As Peter had said before to the doubting apostles and brethren of Judea concerning the nations, "If, then, God gives them the equal gratuity as to us also, when believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I—able to forbid God?" (Acts 11:17).

Consequently, having pointed out that the words of the prophets (his citation is Amos 9:11,12) are in *agreement* in principle with this ministry of Paul's, James says, "Known from the eon to the Lord is His work" (Acts 15:18). That is, from of old God has known what His work would include, and, astonishing as it may be, His work includes this ministry of Paul's among the nations—even though it is apart from the law (*cp* Acts 18:13).

"Wherefore, *I* decide," says James, "not to be harassing those from the nations who are turning back [or

“turning about”] to God, but to be writing an epistle to them to be abstaining from ceremonial pollution with idols, and prostitution, and what is strangled, and blood. For Moses, from ancient generations, city by city, has those who are heralding him, being read on every sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:19-21).

James is saying that if any among the gentile believers *should* be directed of the Lord to become proselytes, they could readily find synagogues where Moses was being heralded every sabbath and thus be afforded instruction in his writings. *If* this should occur, any subsequent law observance by such gentiles would not be wrong. But, in light of Paul's unique and yet faithful ministry among the nations, it becomes evident that gentile believers must not be *charged* to keep the law of Moses or told that they cannot be saved apart from circumcision.

However, James did consider it necessary to burden the gentiles with a few instructions of his own (though he claimed they were the counsel of the holy spirit as well), even terming them, “essentials.” Yet these instructions were only concerned with abstinence from idol sacrifices, blood, strangled animals, and prostitution. It is interesting to note what he deemed absolutely “essential” while also noting that they were the *only* things he included in this category.\*

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\*Evidently, the purpose of these *decrees* was merely to make it possible for the Jews to have social fellowship with the believers among the nations without offending Jewish ethics. A Jewish believer, due to the proscriptions of the law, would be asking for all its curses should he be found eating at the same table with a gentile who had served an idol sacrifice, or strangled meat, or blood. Though it is true that Paul, when passing through Syria and Cilicia “gave over” James' decrees to the believers there (Acts 16:4), later on he practically repealed them when he made the eating of meats offered to idols a matter of individual conscience (1 Cor.8:1-13; cp Eph.2:15).

Since not even James, through his personal decrees, had attempted to enjoin sabbath observance upon the nations, and since any such decrees as those which he did make are now "erased" (Col.2:14) and "nullified" by Christ Himself (Eph.2:13-18), Paul says, "Let no one, *then*, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of those things which are impending—yet the body is the Christ's" (Col.2:16,17), and, "you are complete in Him" (Col.2:10).

Regardless of the value of any such individual rules, since the decrees which James had set forth are not to be viewed as obligatory, it is even more unwarranted to suppose that various points of the law of Moses, such as those having to do with food and drink and various days, ought to be observed. After all, not even James had said that these things should be attended to, much less had Paul given any such instruction!

Most do not seem to realize that Paul, the apostle of the nations, was extremely critical of any who had received his evangel who were nonetheless "scrutinizing" days (Gal.4:10) and otherwise seeking to "judaize" (*cp* Gal.2:14), to follow the ways of the Jews by attending to those things which pertain to the covenant from Mount Sinai (Gal.4:21,24,30).

If any should wish to observe the sabbath, to whatever extent, as a matter of sheer personal preference, that is one thing, whether or not such a decision should reflect mature judgment. But, in any case, there should be no suggestion that it is somehow pleasing to God for us to do so any more than to circumcise, or that those who do *not* follow the practice of observing days, including the sabbath, are necessarily displeasing to Him.

James Coram

*(To be continued)*

## GRACIOUS PRESENTATION

“FOR THE LAW THROUGH MOSES WAS GIVEN; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The law was given through Moses in a dreadful and awesome manner. Thick clouds of darkness were draped over the mountain. Thunder crashed, lightning flashed, and smoke billowed up to the heavens. Anyone, man or beast, touching the edge of the mountain was to be killed (Ex. 19:11-21). But when Jesus Christ came, the unsanctified crowds pressed in upon Him, and those touching the edge of His garment were healed.

Today we have a message of grace: the word of the conciliation. Yet we may find ourselves at a loss regarding its presentation, especially when met with hostility or indifference. Christ’s presentation of Himself to His nation, as recorded in John’s account, provides us repeated examples of gracious dealing that fully accord with a message of grace.

That Christ should be approved and officially recognized by the Pharisees and Sadducees as the Messiah was vital to the message of the kingdom being “at hand”. But Christ was not solicitous of such approval. Instead He performed His works and taught His doctrine and left it to the officials whether they would accept Him or not. He knew it was all in God’s hands. “No one can come to Me if ever the Father Who sends Me should not be drawing him” (John 6:44,65). The Lord did not compel anyone to believe in Him, but He

looked for and rewarded the faith that was given from heaven (John 4:46 ff; 8:19,47; 10:26,27).

It would be natural for one seeking a political position to spend most of his time at the capital, rubbing elbows with those in authority. But the Lord spent most of His time outside of Jerusalem, developing those with faith. John marks the visits of Christ to Jerusalem and Judea as if they were designed to be an intermittent prick in the nation's conscience (John 2:13; 3:22; 4:3,47,54; 5:1; 7:3; 10:22; 11:7; 12:12). Christ was not underfoot at the capital, nor did He pester the nation's officials for approval. This exemplary behavior was foreshadowed in David's life. Contrary to the constant prodding of Joab, he would not lift his hand against the persecuting Saul, but he waited upon God to fulfill His promises. We also should be patient with the message of grace and wait upon the Lord to enlighten. Let us not be guilty of besieging others with our doctrines or of striving to make our own disciples.

One of the key issues of John's account is the origin of Christ. How could our Lord be the Messiah from Bethlehem when He was a Nazarene (John 7:40-43)? Christ could have answered this objection had He so chosen, but instead, He was silent. Why? If the miracles and character of His teaching were insufficient to convince, then God had not enabled belief, and no explanation would satisfy critical minds. Similarly, we have dealings with some who cannot believe in Christ or the evangel. A question of the feasibility of some matter blinds the eyes of their faith. Though we should try to help all grow in the realization of the truth, it is not our task to convince the skeptic. As in the days of our Lord's ministry, the servants who draw the water know where the wine comes from, but the chief of the dining room may be ignorant (John 2:9).

How should the message of grace be presented? Although Christ employed many methods to make His message clear, He never compromised His teaching. There were times when followers would say, "Hard is this saying! Who can hear it?" (John 6:60). Many turned away from Him. And, at such a moment as that, instead of encouraging the twelve, His closest, He challenged them too, asking if they also would have (John 6:67). So also, the message of grace should be presented clearly, but it should never be compromised.

Finally we note that Christ chose His conflicts. He never avoided a conflict that was necessary (John 11:7,8), even if that conflict was to be His crucifixion (John 12:23-28a; 13:1). He faced these situations with a strength and determination that sprang from His utter trust in His God and Father. When Pilate threatened to crucify Him, He replied, "No authority have you against Me in anything, except it were given to you from above" (John 18:11).

On the other hand, Christ avoided many conflicts that would be fruitless and would deviate from the ideal performance of God's will. He eluded the multitude that would use force to make Him king (John 6:15), and He avoided being arrested (John 7:44) and stoned (John 8:59; 10:31,39).

Though these situations are much more dramatic than any we face, still they are applicable to our circumstances. Holding forth a message of grace demands that we face some conflict. But there will also be useless confrontations that are best avoided, since they will yield nothing more than weariness to the spirit and occasion for the flesh to vaunt itself. May we be gracious in the ministry of grace.

## BEING SAVED

(Romans 16:1-23)

THE EVANGEL is God's power for salvation as Paul tells us in Romans 1:16 and develops throughout the letter. Now in the last chapter we see this truth demonstrated in the lives of individual believers. We have been told that the evangel trains us to present ourselves to God as if alive from among the dead (Rom.6:13; 12:1). Now in Romans 16 we get a glimpse of what this means in practical terms. We have heard the good news that God has sent His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh for condemning sin in the flesh (Rom.8:3). Now we observe the powerful effects of this welcome message in the actions and attitudes of more than 30 people who are retaining the evangel in their hearts, and so are *being saved* continuously through their lives (cf 1 Cor.15:1,2). As believers they *shall be saved* (Rom.5:9), but in addition, as faithfully holding to the word of the cross, they are *being saved* all along (1 Cor. 1:18).

### A WORD OF COMMENDATION

*Now I am commending to you Phoebe, our sister, being a servant also of the ecclesia in Cenchrea, that you should be receiving her in the Lord worthily of the saints, and may stand by her in whatever matter she may be needing you, for she became a patroness of many, as well as of myself* (Rom.16:1,2).

The apostle is himself the most remarkable example of the power of the evangel for salvation. In the midst



of the weariness and troubles of his ministry, while "the solicitude for all the ecclesia" pressed upon him daily (*cf* 2 Cor.11:21-28), and now after the concentration and care required in composing this epistle, there was still spacious room in Paul's heart for the concerns of others. He mentions most of these believers by name, often with their individual contributions and realms of service in mind. Here was one who had been wretched in his unrelenting efforts as a Pharisee to become perfect "in relation to the righteousness which is in the law" (Rom.7:24; Phil.3:6). But now he is being saved from that miserable pride and self-centeredness and is filled with compassion for others.

God had *commended* His love to this persecuter of His called-out-ones, by giving His Son for him while he was still a sinner (Rom.5:8), and had overwhelmed him by His grace in calling him out as a special instrument to make the evangel known to the very ones he had most despised.

Now by commending Phoebe to his fellow believers in Rome, Paul is commending God's love as it operated in him. By commending this woman with a pagan name,\* and by identifying her as his sister and patroness, the apostle displays his salvation from the narrow viewpoint of his training into the broad outlook of God's love for sinners. What a changed person he has become! What a testimony to the power of the evangel!

And Phoebe also was being saved. We may assume she was a woman of means from the fact that she had become a patroness of Paul and many others. She had learned the joy of giving from her wealth to others in the Lord's service. But even beyond this, and most amazing of all, is the fact that she had become "a

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\*Phoebe is the feminine form of a name used in pagan mythology.

servant of the ecclesia in Cenchrea." A wealthy patroness, but also a humble servant, this was salvation indeed!

Where did this salvation come from? Surely it came with the revelation that her life before had been a slavery to Sin, and now, "thanks be to God," she was obeying "from the heart the type of teaching" to which she had been given over, and being freed from Sin, she "was enslaved to Righteousness" (Rom.6:17,18).

To this service had evidently been added the privilege of being entrusted with delivering this letter to the believers in Rome. And now they had the privilege of showing her hospitality and meeting her needs, as Paul had already instructed: "Let love be unfeigned . . . contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality" (Rom.12:9-13). Such was the behavior that accompanied the believing of the evangel.

#### WORDS OF GREETING

*Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus (who, for the sake of my soul, jeopardize their own necks, whom not only I am thanking, but all the ecclesias of the nations also) and the ecclesia at their house (Rom.16:3-5a).*

Few of Paul's friends were as close to him as this couple. They were tentmakers by trade, like Paul, and he stayed with them in Corinth (Acts 18:3), and they went with him to Ephesus (Acts 18:18). Several years earlier they had lived in Rome but had left because of the expulsion of Jews from that city by the emperor Claudius (Acts 18:1,2). Wherever they lived, they welcomed the assembled believers into their home (*cf* 1 Cor.16:19). And now they were once more in Rome, while again they hosted the ecclesia as they came together for fellowship.

Prisca\* and Aquila had jeopardized their lives for Paul. We do not know what they had done, though perhaps it was connected with the riot in Ephesus described in Acts 19. But it is clear that here were two Jews who far from joining in opposition to Paul continued to do all they could to foster his ministry. In this letter the apostle had conjectured that "for the sake of a good man, perhaps someone may even be daring to die." Evidently that was the disposition of Aquila and Prisca toward Paul. But it had surely not developed from their common roots in the nation of Israel (for indeed, Paul had deemed that a forfeit) but rather grown from their believing of the evangel.

No doubt the prospect of seeing these beloved fellow workers again when he reached Rome, provided Paul some measure of joyful anticipation. But even here we cannot be certain that this hope was fulfilled. For when the apostle wrote his last letter, Prisca and Aquila had again left Rome and were with Timothy, apparently in Asia Minor (2 Tim.4:19). But whether near or far apart, they were Paul's "fellow workers in Christ," and this was the important thing. They knew the salvation of being in Christ and of working together with others in making Him known and manifesting His disposition.

#### PERSONAL GREETINGS

*Greet Epanetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruit of the province of Asia for Christ. Greet Mary, who toils much for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives and my fellow captives who are notable among the apostles, who also came to be in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Ur-*

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\*The diminutive form of her name is used in Acts: Priscilla.

*banus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stacys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, attested in Christ. Greet those who are of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who are toiling in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved, who toils much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren with them. Greet Philologos and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greeting you are all the ecclesias of Christ (Rom. 16:5b-16).*

Paul either had heard about these believers from others (perhaps from Prisca and Aquila) or had known them personally and now they had gone to Rome. In any case, he makes special mention of them among all those in the captital city, and in doing so draws attention to God's power in their lives. They were those who especially were being saved from the tyranny of the flesh, such as described in Romans 7, and the infirmity of faith pictured in Romans 14.

Their "present-tense" salvation is characterized by their toil and testedness in the Lord and the family-like closeness that Paul feels toward them. These are traits that must be traced back to the evangel which is God's power for salvation.

Epanetus, Ampliatos, Stachys and Persis were beloved. This does not mean that Paul did not feel love for the others, but it implies that these believers had a particularly strong grasp of God's love from which nothing could separate them (Rom.8:35-39). One who knows the love of God and walks in that love will be beloved of others.

Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis are marked

out for their toil in the Lord, while Urbanus was Paul's fellow worker in Christ. Just as bearing the infirmities of the impotent is based on Christ's example of pleasing not Himself in Romans 15:1-4, so we may be sure that the toil of these believers was motivated and sustained by the evangel making its home in them. Surely their hearts were much occupied with thoughts of the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ, as presented, for example, in Romans 3:22 and 5:19. And this was bearing much good fruit.

Andronicus and Junius (v.7) and Herodion (v.11), and then later on, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (v.21) are termed by Paul "my relatives." Perhaps he meant that they were Jews, and like all Israelites they were his relatives according to the flesh (Rom.9:3). But the sense of spiritual kinship, as suggested by the words "brother" and "sister" (as well as "mother" in verse 13) is surely the primary one in any case. Later Paul was to speak of all believers as belonging to God's family (Eph.2:19).

Here is a salvation that many can identify with in the twentieth century. Feelings of estrangement in the world, of rootlessness, of not belonging, are prevalent in our own times. No doubt this was true in Paul's day as well, and if so, those who most appreciated the truth that we are members of one another (Rom.12:5) would best manifest the sense of loyalty and unity that the word "relative" suggests.

Apelles was "attested in Christ." As such, he must have made real progress in "testing what is the will of God, good and well pleasing and perfect" (Rom.12:2). Before God granted him faith, we realize he must have been as the rest of humanity, not testing God to have Him in recognition (Rom.1:28), nor testing the things of consequence (*cf* Rom.2:18), but now, having sub-

jected his heart to the impressions the evangel offers concerning God and His Christ, Apelles had become attested in Christ, one who was settled and steady in the faith.

#### THE CLOSING ENTREATY

*Now I am entreating you, brethren, to be noting those who are making dissensions and snares beside the teaching which you learned, and avoid them, for such for our Lord Christ are not slaving, but for their own bowels, and through compliments and adulation are deluding the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience reached out to all. Over you, then, am I rejoicing. Now I am wanting you to be wise, indeed, for good, yet artless for evil. Now the God of peace will be crushing Satan under your feet swiftly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you! (Rom. 16:17-20).*

Paul found much good to say about the believers in Rome. Yet there were also things that were not so good. "How soon dissension and division crept in among the saints! Even before they had received the truth in its fullness, men came with smooth words to draw them from it. Hence the necessity for some authoritative written standard, as this epistle, to which appeal could be made when the truth was in danger."\*

#### DANGERS OF FALSE TEACHINGS

The danger lies in the effect error has on our present lives. We are "being justified gratuitously in [God's] grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). We shall be saved from indignation through Him (5:9) and shall be of the resurrection also (6:5). Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those

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\*A. E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*, p.246

in Christ Jesus (8:1). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:38,39). But when we are not retaining the evangel that we accepted, as presented here in Romans, we fall back into the worries and doubts and fears described in Romans 1:18-3:20, and other places such as 7:13-24. We are saved in Christ and will be saved from future condemnation, but unless we are holding fast to the glorious gospel of God's grace we may easily be losing the present salvation of joy and peace in Christ.

These verses describe what being saved is not. Departure from the teaching of the evangel creates dissensions and distractions. It opens up a pattern of self-interest, "slaving for [our] own bowels," and delight in "compliments and adulation." It takes our attention away from God's righteousness through the faith of Jesus Christ and centers it upon various schemes and systems of human effort. It exalts the flesh and human intellect rather than God's love commended in the gift of His Son for sinners.

#### OBEDIENCE

Obedience that "reaches out to all" begins with an awareness that "good is not making its home" in our flesh (Rom.7:18). It is founded in a recognition that righteousness is a gratuity given to us through the obedience of the One, Jesus Christ (Rom.5:17,19). It thus fully accords with the evangel which Paul has presented in this epistle.

To be "wise for good" is to be settled in this evangel. It is not the world's wisdom, for that insists that man be challenged and disciplined by rules and regulations, but it is God's wisdom which is the "word of the cross" (1 Cor.1:18-31). This is the wisdom that realizes that "with Christ have I been crucified" (Gal.2:20). And to

be "artless for evil" is to be "fully assured" that what God has promised He is able to perform (Rom.4:21). We will have neither time nor drive for selfish schemes when we become aware that God is working all together for our good (Rom.8:28).

It is in connection with our obtaining the conciliation (Rom.5:11) that God crushes Satan under our feet. When we grasp that God is the God of peace, that He was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself (2 Cor.5:19), we are strongly protected from the fiery arrows of the wicked one (Eph.6:15-17). Dismaying doubts and anxieties concerning the future are taken away where there is a recognition of this great evangel of peace.

#### GREETINGS FROM OTHERS

*Greeting you is Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.*

*I, Tertius, the writer of the epistle, am greeting you in the Lord. Greeting you is Gaius, my host, and of the whole ecclesia. Greeting you is Erastus, the administrator of the city, and Quartus, the brother (Rom. 16:21-23).*

We do not yet know these fellow believers, except as we have met them in this chapter. But we are reminded, by these words, of a oneness and a closeness that exists among all who belong to the body of Christ. Our anticipation grows for that day when we will all be together with the Lord, Paul, Timothy, Tertius, Quartus, you and me, and all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. In the meantime we have been refreshed and encouraged by these "cameo portraits" of some who were being saved over 1900 years ago.

D.H.H.

*(To be continued)*



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR NOVEMBER 1989  
BEING THE SIXTH NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY

EDITORIAL

THE EIGHTY YEARS of publication of this magazine has not been without struggle and discouragement. *Unsearchable Riches* has continued to take a stand for certain unpopular aspects of the evangel brought by Paul such as justification through the faith of Jesus Christ, conciliation of the world through His death, our position "among the celestials," and the reconciliation of all through the cross of God's beloved Son. One of the fiery arrows associated with this stand is the disturbing insinuation that we must be wrong since almost no one else has shown agreement with us, and few even show any interest in these things.

Yet we must speak of what we believe. Hence in this issue we speak of Paul's evangel and of the gratuity revealed in it. The message of conciliation, the secret of the evangel, is noted once again in these pages. We also give attention to the effect this grace has on our behavior and disposition. Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness. In considering Isaac and Moses as well, our contributors wish to relate the lessons of their lives to the faith given to us in the overwhelming grace of God.

But now, let us take this matter one step further. Since we believe that God saves us in grace alone through the death and resurrection of Christ, and that He has graciously called us into the body of Christ, and that He will eventually bring all under the Headship of Christ—since we believe that all of this is *God's* purpose and achievement, we cannot boast either in our own believing of it or any sufferings we have because

of this believing. Faith and afflictions also are gratuitous gifts from God.

This is exactly what Paul says in Philippians 1:29. "For to you it is graciously granted, for Christ's sake, not only to be believing on Him, but to be suffering for His sake also." Some have thought that while salvation is a gift, present service for our Lord and future rewards are solely connected with our own self-determining actions and self-discipline. Yet all is ultimately founded on the work of the cross. That God chooses to give salvation to us upon our believing does not change the fact that the cross is the actual foundation of this blessing, for indeed faith is graciously granted to us. Similarly, that God chooses to settle some in faithful service "for Christ's sake" and then to give them rewards, does not change the fact that the honor of usefulness and the allotment of reigning are truly based on the faithful obedience of Christ, for indeed our sufferings are graciously granted to us.

It is not that we are claiming any superiority of faith or of endurance in afflictions. We do not wish to make comparisons, and we eagerly applaud and give thanks for the contributions of others. But above all else we want to boast in the cross of Christ. If we or our brethren have any measure of faithfulness and patience and endurance, it is graciously granted by God. And so any rewards received in association with such faith and service are also to be traced to the faith of Jesus Christ and His obedience even to the cross.

In looking ahead to 1990 we are making plans to give special attention to the work and achievements of the cross. The editor would be glad to hear from our readers for their thoughts concerning this most central theme of the evangel. Write: Dean H. Hough, 6800 Hough Road, Almont, MI 48003, U.S.A. D.H.H.

## ISAAC'S PATHWAY

THE LIFE OF ISAAC is dealt with in Genesis 25:19-28:9. Our primary concern is to take in the entire history at one view, in order to see the relation of part to part and understand their setting in the whole narrative.

The story is made up of two domestic pictures at different stages of life separated from one another by an account of the personal experiences of Isaac. First, we learn the circumstances attending the birth of Isaac's two sons, the tendencies displayed by the children in adolescence, and the divine intention respecting them. Next comes the recital of the two theophanies to Isaac. And lastly, the blessing of Jacob and Esau, followed by certain events in their early manhood.

Perhaps the simplest form in which to exhibit this arrangement of contents is the following:

25:19-26.	Birth of Esau and Jacob	Isaac's Family
25:27-34.	Esau and Jacob: Childhood	
	26:1-33. Isaac	
26:34-27:46.	Blessing of Jacob and Esau	Isaac's Family
28:1-9.	Jacob and Esau: Manhood	

We glean from this analysis that the dealings of God directly with Isaac are confined to a single chapter (26).

To trace the story of the divine dealings with a human soul, from the day of its spiritual awakening, down through the labyrinthine paths of earthly pilgrimage, is a recital of absorbing fascination. It holds us with a spell more powerful than that of any other narrative. Step by step, through the vicissitudes of life,

we trace the gradual progress of the spirit in the path of truth, the vision of God becoming clearer and more splendid as the years roll on.

Two movements are discernible in the life of Isaac. The first is a movement of *declension*; failure pervades it all. The testimony is *rejected*; the witness *repudiated*; men are *repulsed* from the light. The torch of truth burns dimly, because Isaac lives in the fear of men.

The second movement is one of *ascension*. The light of truth shines unclouded, because Isaac has reposed his trust in God, walks in communion with Him, and takes a decided definite attitude toward the inhabitants of Canaan. The testimony is *received*; the witness *respected*; men *respond*.

It is written in the Proverbs (29:25):

A man's over-anxiety becomes a trap for him,  
Yet he who trusts in Yahweh shall be made impregnable.

The two periods of Isaac's life furnish a living demonstration — an inspired commentary, I might say — of the practical working of the two antithetic maxims of this saying of the wise king.

The events of Isaac's career range themselves around the two theophanies; thus:

26:1.	The Famine	
26:2-5.	The First Theophany	First Movement
26:6-22.	Results	<i>Declension</i>
26:23.	Journey to Beer-sheba	
26:24.	The Second Theophany	Second Movement
26:25-33.	Results	<i>Ascension</i>

By reading Genesis 26:1 on from chapter 25:11 we shall notice the connection between certain events.

“And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that Elohim blessed Isaac his son. Isaac was dwelling by the well Lachai-Roi . . . And there came to be a famine in the land — aside from the former famine that occurred in the days of Abraham.”

The relation of the famine to the blessing is thus brought to our notice. The adversary is ever ready to contest the blessings which the Lord bestows and to dispute every inch of the road to spiritual progress. As in the case of Abraham, the bestowal of initial blessing on Isaac is met by a counter move of the enemy seeking to intimidate the witness.

The tactics of the evil one present nothing but a weary repetition, monotonous in the last degree. He first attacks those strongholds the surrender of which involves the loss of God-consciousness: then he magnifies and enthrones the material and substitutes sensual pursuits for spiritual aspirations; and at last he leads his dupes to thorough concentration upon self.

#### THE FIRST APPEARANCE

The advent of the famine shook the confidence of Isaac. Perturbed by gloomy forebodings, he altered his plans, and went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines to Gerar. This step—so it appears from the divine communication—was taken with the evident intention of repairing to Egypt, and the prime object of the theophany was to foil this project. “You must not go down to Egypt. Tabernacle in the land of which I apprise you. Sojourn in this land, and I shall be with you and bless you.”

He Who guides His people by the skillfulness of His hands, gives His children meat in due season, and administers each lesson at the proper moment. The message to Isaac is admirably suited to his environments. The famine has cast a shadow across his path and marred the unalloyed blessing hitherto enjoyed; the journey to Philistia has upset the accustomed round of daily routine and enshrouded the future in disquieting precariousness. With a direction and a pair of

promises the Lord meets the situation at every point.

"Tabernacle in this land." This guiding word creates a citadel of certainty amidst uncertainty.

"I shall be with you and bless you." These two promises shield him from the threatening clouds that have appeared on the horizon. The first promise is intended to fortify Isaac in the presence of the Philistines, while the second is calculated to allay the apprehensions aroused by the famine.

To the believer the world is a school and life a discipline. The curriculum in the school of life comprises two lessons: the insufficiency of self and the all-sufficiency of God. The impartation of this twofold lesson constituted the grand object of the wilderness training of the Hebrews.

The Israelites suffered from two evils: they *overestimated* their own strength and *underestimated* God's power.

"All that Yahweh speaks *we shall do*" was their estimate of self, and that in view of the fact that the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai (where these words were spoken) was a long series of murmurings and rebellions against Yahweh's ways.

"Is El able to arrange a table in the wilderness?" (Psa.78:19) was their estimate of God. Subsequent history fully demonstrated what *they* could do in departing from the living God, and what depths of grace the *Lord* could show in pardoning their transgression.

The self-discovery which accompanies moral failure contains the key to new and larger experiences. Through sorrow He leads us to a new sphere, and bids us look out upon life from a new point. Circumstances are but unexpected examinations which reveal to us the grade attained in the school of faith and accentuate the possibilities that lie beyond the crisis, if we will

only renounce confidence in the flesh and trust Yahweh's love alone.

Isaac, confounded by the famine, weakened in faith and leaned on his ability to handle the situation diplomatically. When the presence of God is not real to faith, human conduct is easily influenced by circumstances and dominated by the opinions of men. The peace-giving promise "I shall be with you," did not overshadow Isaac; fear took possession of his heart, and his one aim was to win the approval of the "men of the place." He feared to say of Rebecca, she is my wife, "lest the men of the place kill him" (Gen.26:7). "Otherwise I might die on her account" (26:9) is now the mainspring of all his actions.

In process of time the duplicity of Isaac was discovered. His own conduct betrayed the falsehood of his former affirmation and made it plain to Abimelech that Rebecca was not his sister, but his wife. Startled by a sudden discovery of the futility of his method, Isaac confessed to misconduct, admitting at the same time the cause which prompted it. The Italians have a fine proverb, "Lies are short-legged." The gist of it is, that no matter how much ahead of truth falsehood may get at the start, truth is sure to overtake it. If Isaac had forgotten this lesson, he had such a forceful, practical demonstration of its truth that he was not likely to forget it again.

Fear is contagious. On learning that Isaac was afraid of the Philistines, Abimelech becomes in turn afraid of him. He remembered his experience with Abraham. Although he had taken Sarah unto him in consequence of deliberate misrepresentation of facts on the part of Abraham, God said to him in the visions of the night, "You are to die . . . If you are not restoring her, know that you shall die, yea die, you and all who are yours"

(Gen.20:3,7). His kingdom had been brought face to face with destruction; and now Abraham's son, following the father's tactics, lays the country open to the same peril. Abimelech grasps the gravity of the situation, and, to avert a possible catastrophe, issues a decree: "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death, yea death" (Gen.26:11).

Isaac, at last, has nothing to fear! Thanks to the successful issue of his diplomacy, he enjoys rest. The king's decree insures him immunity from the men of the place. By a stroke of policy Isaac has brought to his support the secular arm and, protected from interference, devotes himself to agriculture, farms a district, sows seed, and finds a hundredfold because the Lord blesses him. And the man waxed great, and he grew more and more until he became very great: and had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and a great household. The Lord remained true to His promise of blessing, notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of His servant. He remains faithful, He cannot disown Himself.

The peace thus secured was not durable, however. In the course of life we may outgrow certain outward circumstances and inward conditions which have been instrumental in our temptation, and pass from moral strait and stress to ease; but there is no hopefulness in this, unless the rest achieved is the palm of victory over sin; otherwise the quietude we enjoy is but a moral lethargy presaging the approach of spiritual insensibility. How often the attainment of a long cherished end leads to spiritual stagnation!

But the Lord has a wonderful way of startling His servants from the even tenor of their way. Deep and wonderful is the principle underlying God's disciplinary methods. He punishes His people with the very



things for the sake of which they sell His glory. King Asa is a pattern case. At the commencement of his reign Zerah, the Nubian (Ethiopian), came against him with an army of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots. Asa betook himself to prayer, and said, "O Yahweh, there is no one to help him who has no vigor against the many. Help us, O Yahweh our Elohim, for we lean on You, and in Your Name we have come against this throng." The Lord answered the king's prayer. The Nubians were smitten; the land of Judah enjoyed rest for over thirty years, and many Israelites from the Northern kingdom fell to him in abundance, when they saw that the Lord His God was with him (2 Chron.14:9-15:9, CV).

Toward the close of Asa's reign, the king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent any further exodus of his subjects. But Asa, instead of resorting to fasting and prayer, as at the first, robbed the treasury of the temple, and sent a present to the king of Syria, with a message: "Go, annul your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he should go up from me" (2 Chron.16:3, CV). The king of Syria hearkened to Asa, and invaded Samaria. The Syrians smote several Israelitish cities, forcing Baasha to withdraw from Judean territory, and abandon the building of fortifications.

Asa wanted to avoid war. When Baasha retired, Asa thought to have accomplished his object, and possibly congratulated himself upon so felicitous an issue of the negotiations. But truly God's thoughts are not our thoughts! When Asa returned to Jerusalem the prophet met him with the following message: "Were not the Nubians and the Lubim a vast army, with chariots and horsemen, very many? Yet because you leaned on Yahweh, He gave them into your hand. For Yahweh,

His eyes go to and fro through all the earth to show Himself steadfast on behalf of those whose heart is poised toward Him. In this you have been unwise, for henceforth there will be wars for you" (2 Chron.16: 8,9, CV).

"For henceforth *there will be wars for you*"—the very thing Asa endeavored to avert. He sold the interests of God to obviate war, and God punished him with *war!*

The operation of the same principle is also discernible in the case before us. Isaac employed cunning to escape strife, and God punished him with *strife!* May we lay to heart this solemn principle.

We have already noted the phenomenal wealth acquired by Isaac subsequent to the issuance of a decree by Abimelech. The Philistines, however, could not view with equanimity the greatness of an alien whose prosperity they attributed to the favor shown him by their king. Their animosity is roused to a high pitch, and cries for vengeance. The situation has become intensely acute. Abimelech is alarmed. The ill-feeling of his subjects toward Isaac increases the chance of guiltiness being brought upon his kingdom. The Philistines have already expressed their resentment in the spiteful act of filling Isaac's wells with sand. Quarrels arose between the servants of Isaac and the herdsmen of Gerar. A casual word might intensify the friction, and precipitate a crisis at any moment. The occasion called for decisive action to prevent disaster. Accordingly, Abimelech says to Isaac: "Go away from our people for you are much more staunch than we" (Gen.26:16). It is Isaac's wealth acquired under the king's protectorate that has become a menace to the land.

Yet Isaac was slow to retire, and lingered in the

valley of Gerar. There he dug two wells which provided strife between the servants of Isaac and the local herdsmen. Thereupon he removed from thence, and dug another well for which they strove not. Isaac interpreted the absence of strife as a divine monition, saying "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land," and on the strength of this intimation move onward toward Beer-sheba. This move was epochal and inaugurated the dawn of a new era.

#### THE SECOND APPEARANCE

The journey to Beer-sheba was a step in the right direction. By what is termed "the force of circumstances" Isaac is thrown back upon the divine path. On reaching Beer-sheba the Lord appeared unto Isaac the same night, and said, "I am the Elohim of Abraham your father. You must not fear, for with you am I. And bless you will I, and increase will I your seed for the sake of Abraham your father."

"You must not fear, for with you am I." This bares the cause of failure and points out the remedy. With what gentle, unwearied patience the Lord repeats the lessons which we have failed to learn!

In consequence of the theophany Isaac built an altar, called upon the name of Yahweh, and pitched a tent, openly avowing his allegiance to God and dependence on Him for protection. At this place Isaac's servants dug a well.

Here, at this juncture, Abimelech went to Isaac from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. It is significant that Abimelech's visit occurs as a parenthesis, interrupting the narrative of the well. This fact teaches that the digging of this well demonstrated something to Abimelech, and the latter's visit proved something to Isaac.

The Philistines kept close watch over Isaac after his withdrawal from their land. They anxiously awaited developments, wondering what would become of the man whose welfare they thought depended on their favor. With eager eye they followed his movements, and behold, his prosperity increases, the blessing doubles, he waxes very great, and none can stand before him.

#### ABIMELECH'S VISIT

Abimelech is now convinced—and his coming with a friend and the captain of his host proves that he voiced the consensus of opinion—that Isaac's prosperity depended not on his patronage, but on the God Whose name Isaac invoked, and the fear of God fell on the Philistines. On Isaac's inquiry, "For what reason do you come to me?" Abimelech replied, "*We see, yea see, that Yahweh has come to be with you—you are now the blest of Yahweh.*" This was equally true before, no less so than now; but Isaac's conduct had veiled the movements of God's arm, and befogged His operations. But since Isaac has recanted and eschewed his former manner of procedure and publicly called upon Yahweh, the truth blazes in full radiance on the opponents. The working of God is now seen and acknowledged by all. His enemies confess the power of God, and seek reconciliation with His servant.

Isaac, too, discerns in Abimelech's visit and stupendous affirmation a manifest token of Yahweh's working—a token of His fulfilling the promise confirmed to Abraham with an oath on Mount Moriah; "Your seed shall tenant the gateway of its enemies." Hence the naming of the well Beer-sheba—*well of the oath.*

V. Gelesnoff

*(To be continued)*

## ISAAC, THE SON OF PROMISE

YAHWEH is the Elohim, or Subjector, of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob (Ex.3:15). His dealings with this trinity of humans is the clue to their own special position among mankind (Matt.22:32; Mark 12:26; Acts 3:13; 7:32). But they provide us also with lessons in those realms of truth which we have in common with them, such as *justification by faith*, by Abraham (Rom.4:1-3; Gal.3:6), and *promise*, by Isaac (Rom.9:7,10; Gal.4:28), and *choice*, by Jacob (Rom. 9:13).

### THE PROMISED SEED

Above all else, Isaac was the *promised seed*, and we should consider this as typical of him, rather than his personal traits or shortcomings. Secondly, his *name* denotes "Laugh-Causer," and as a consequence, we should not expect him to be *tested*, as Abram was, or *tried*, as Jacob was by his brother and father-in-law. Three identical Abrams could not teach us more than one. Three different characters have three different lessons to teach. If we seek to find a perfect character among the physical seed of Adam, that would be a serious mistake, for God needs only One such Man, Who came later. All the others must be imperfect until the perfect Son transfigures them into His likeness.

As Isaac was the first of the promised seed, and in him all the rest of the seed is called, we must go back before his birth to understand his history. As soon as

Abram reached the center of the land, Yahweh appeared to him and said, "To your *seed* I shall give this land" (Gen.12:7). Here, first of all, only Isaac was in view. Later, after Lot had parted from Abram, the promise was repeated, but included Abram himself (13:15) and all his physical progeny, for it was compared with the *soil* of the land in order to show how multitudinous it would be. Later, after Abram had refused to be rewarded for the rescue of the Sodomites from the confederate kings, he complained, "Behold, You have given no seed to me," though he already had a substitute, Damascus Eliezer (Gen.15:2,3).

#### ISAAC, THE STAR SEED

This time the seed is not as the *soil*, which probably figures Abram's physical offspring in the land, but a much higher and more glorious one (Gen.15:5). Even this also would be beyond computation. The stars figure the *spiritual* seed, who would *believe*, like Abram. The term, *thus* in Genesis 15:5 seems to indicate more than *number*, and suggests a higher degree of *likeness*. When the promise was confirmed by a *covenant*, then the boundaries of the land defined it as from the stream of Egypt to the Euphrates (15:18).

#### SIMILARITIES WITH ABRAM

Outwardly, Isaac's history is remarkably similar to that of Abram's, for he was blessed for his father's sake. He was respected by Abimelech. His wife was barren. He exposed her to danger. He had two antagonistic sons. He had family trials. He had trouble with his wells and those Abraham had dug. All this, especially the last item, should help us to see that Isaac's function is to be *like* his father spiritually, even as the Son is like the Father. Isaac does not originate, for

Abram dug the wells, but he does act as an intermediary through whom the water may be enjoyed. He is a figure of the Father's Son.

#### NOT ALL ISRAEL, ARE ISRAEL

The vital lesson for us, and for fleshly Israel, is elaborated for us by the apostle Paul in his Roman (9:7-10) and Galatian (4:28) epistles, when he declared clearly and emphatically that *not all those out of Israel these are Israel*. Abraham had other offspring besides Isaac. More than a decade before his birth, Ishmael was born. And even Abram could plead, "O that Ishmael should live before You!" (Gen.17:18). So is Israel today. And many true believers have the same feeling that he had. This will be fulfilled in the future when all Israel shall be saved (Rom.11:26). Ishmael, although divinely named "Hearing-is-Subjector," must not be a child of faith, or of promise like Isaac, but of the *flesh* of the *slave* woman, Hagar. So are the other seed of Abraham who fail to have his *faith*.

#### SEED NOT CHILDREN

Abraham had further offspring besides Ishmael, after the death of Sarah, by Keturah ("Incense"). His name and the fact that Abraham's life was, figuratively, a resurrection life, for he had to be vivified in order to generate Isaac (Rom.4:19), has in it a faint suggestion of Abraham's spiritual seed *among the nations*. In all he had eight, but there were only six by Keturah. But by no means do we wish to intimate that these six were the seed of *promise*, for they were no more promised, as Isaac was, than the believers among the nations today. Her name could be a physical intimation of a secret spiritual reality. These sons were *sent away* with a present, and had no more right to the promised

land than we have. In fact, we do not look forward to any physical blessings on the earth at all.

#### ISAAC'S SEED

As with Abram, Isaac's seed was long delayed. He was forty years old when he married Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian. They did not do as Abram and Sarai had done by bringing foreign flesh into the succession, but entreated Yahweh, so that their sons were very evidently an answer to prayer, and a further development of God's plan to reveal His future ways by means of His dealings with the patriarchs (Gen.25:21).

#### THE DIVINE CHOICE

The great lesson taught by the twins is so solemn and weighty and hard to believe that we again refer our readers to Paul's inspired explanation, given us in Romans 9:11-13: "Not as yet being born, nor yet putting into practice anything good or bad, *that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling*, it was declared to her that 'The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,' according as it is written, 'Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate'" (cf Gen.25:23; Mal.1:2,3).

In order to help us believe it, the apostle adds testimony from Moses and Hosea and Isaiah, and introduces Pharaoh and the potter, all in order to prove the simple proposition that the Subjector does, not only as He wills, but what *appears* to us to be unjust, in order to turn transient harm into permanent blessing. When Moses asked Yahweh to show him His glory, He announced the divine declaration: "I will be gracious to whom I am being gracious and will have compassion for whom I am having compassion" (Ex.33:19; Rom.



9:15). This is not culled from a human creed, but it is the Subjector's own statement, not of faith, but of *fact*. Paul deduces from this that the fate of a human does not depend on willingness or work, but altogether on God's mercy.

#### HARDENING

It is not difficult to discern God's mercy in the case of Isaac, but it takes a measure of faith to acclaim His treatment of Ishmael. So another case is brought in to strengthen the divine standpoint. Pharaoh is told why he was raised up to such a pitch of power, but few seem able to accept it. "For this sake I keep you standing, in order to make you see *My vigor*, and that *My Name* may be related in the entire earth" (Ex.9:16). God's glory *must be* displayed, for that is the greatest blessing that can come to mankind. Is it not the highest wisdom and mercy to harm one man, or cause a nation to suffer for a brief period, if that helps all humanity for the eons and beyond? Ashamed am I that I ever lent an ear to any "explanations" which suggest that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, so that I contradicted the Supreme!

#### THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Paul clinches his contention by going back to the beginning and basing his argument on the formation of humanity (Gen.2:7). Like a potter, Yahweh Elohim took soil from the ground and formed it into a human. But mortals seek somehow to push Him out of His place and form themselves, forgetting that they are soil, and that they can no more form themselves than the clay used by a potter can shape itself on the wheel. The potter whirls the wheel and shapes the clay as suits *himself*, to suit his purpose. But no mortal potter,

no matter how skillful he may be, can compete with the great Creator, Who made both him and his wheel, and Who has designs in His heart which include the universe. He has forms to fashion far finer, and more splendid than mortals ever dreamed.

#### GOD'S GLORY

Not in Damascus Eliezer, not in Ishmael, not in the sons of Keturah, but in Isaac would the seed be called. But the divine Potter will fashion again the vessels of dishonor, though they be given to destruction for awhile. "For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all . . . seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!" (Rom. 11:32,36). A.E.K.

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#### FRED JOHNSON

A member of the Hopi Indian tribe from Oraibi, Arizona, Brother Johnson served as a missionary to his people for many years. He was a staunch believer in God's purpose to reconcile all through the blood of Christ's cross, and he reported little opposition to this truth among the Hopi people once they were given faith in Christ's saving work for themselves. He died on July 18, around 90 years in age.

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#### RUSSELL ANDERSON

Brother Anderson, of Kenmore, New York, died on June 13 after a short illness. He and his brother, the late Charles S. Anderson, were born to parents who followed the teaching of Charles T. Russell, hence the brothers' given names. But later they came to see the truth of God's purpose to save all mankind. Our condolences go out to his widow, Ada.

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#### EDWARD SCHMITT

We have received notice of the death of Brother Edward Schmitt. In earlier years he had attended the "Concordant Bible Class" in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and he retained his appreciation for Paul's evangel in his retirement years in Tucson, Arizona.

## ATTUNED TO GRACE

GRACE is usually defined as favor, and in the case of sinners as unmerited favor. But this is a narrow sense for a word with broad meaning and application. Grace involves the whole method of operation employed by God that accredits all glory to Himself.

God is “. . . the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will” (Eph.1:11). All is out of God — all originates in Him. All is through God — He is the great Cause behind everything and brings to pass everything that happens. All is for God — everything serves His purpose, and nothing can come to be apart from His design (Rom.11:36). These verses are true regardless of our belief, appreciation or understanding. But a vital part of our life and service for God depends upon our realization of this truth. And that vital part involves this matter of grace.

Paul tells us plainly that very few who are wise, powerful or noble are among the ranks of the calling in grace. The reason for this is to exclude all boasting of the flesh (1 Cor.1:26). And the Scriptures give abundant examples of how “the stupidity of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor.1:25). Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an oxgoad; Sisera, captain of the Canaanite host, was slain by a woman with a glass of milk and a tent peg; Gideon and 300 men defeated the hordes of the Midianites with pitchers, torches and a shout; the shepherd boy defeated Goliath with a sling; Jehosh-

aphat placed the singers in front of the army as the people went out to face the enemy—not a sword of Judah was unsheathed, yet it took three days to carry away the spoil; Israel, the smallest and weakest nation, will rule the earth; the ecclesia, unworthy of the smallest earthly blessing, is blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing among the celestials.

Great and mighty are the workings of grace, and the glory always belongs to God. Yet before we can be profitable instruments of grace in God's operation, we may need some adjustment. Probably all of us have some degree of talent or self-reliance which sets us askew to the framework of grace. Thus it is necessary for God to bring about the trials and testings that dispel the confidence of the flesh and encourage reliance upon God.

Paul's life is full of examples that illustrate the principles of grace. Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was energetic and intelligent. But because he was self-reliant and capable, he needed to be schooled by the Lord in the workings of grace. How significant it is that his life of service to the Lord began with three days of blindness and helplessness. His second letter to the Corinthians abounds with such experiences, but we will focus on the one in which the light of his self-confidence flickered out.

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which came to us in the province of Asia, that we were inordinately burdened, over our ability, so that we were despairing of life also. But we have the rescript of death in ourselves, that we may be having no confidence in ourselves, but in God" (2 Cor. 1:8,9).

We cannot be sure what incident in the apostle's experience is referred to here, but that is immaterial.

What Paul wanted the Corinthians to realize was the depth of despair to which he had sunk: “. . . so that we were despairing of life.” The difficulties appeared so insurmountable that, to Paul, it seemed pointless to continue living. Possibly the reader has experienced similar feelings. But the Lord did not leave Paul in that condition. Soon Paul was to say, “. . . we are not despondent . . . Being, then, courageous always . . . we are encouraged . . . we are ambitious always” (2 Cor.4:1,6; 5:6,7,9).

What then was God’s purpose for giving Paul such an experience? The answer is not far to seek. Paul said he had an official decree of death in himself so that his confidence would not be in himself but in God (2 Cor. 1:9). We should also look for the same design in the trials we face. Realizing that all things are of God, we can find our afflictions turning ourselves from self-confidence to reliance upon God. When the glory goes to God, grace can work mightily in and through us.

There was a time in Israel’s history when Judah was attacked and mostly overrun by Assyria. The rabshakeh (field commander) of Assyria sent a message to king Hezekiah, saying that if Hezekiah was depending upon Egypt for help, he was like a man who was leaning upon a fractured reed. The reed would break under his weight and pierce his hand (Isa.36:4-6). This is a perfect example for us. Dependence upon our own abilities or plans to accomplish something for God may yield a result worse than failure.

God can and may use the most talented of individuals. Moses is an example. He was a prophet, politician, diplomat, military strategist, leader and poet. But the Scriptures also tell us that he was the most humble of men on earth (Num.12:3). It was not the education of Egypt that so thoroughly prepared Moses. It has been

said that he still needed his B.D. degree, not "Bachelor of Divinity" but "Backside of the Desert." God schooled him for forty years before he was ready to lead the people.

One's disposition toward himself and toward God is the key issue. Let us remember that it is God Who is accomplishing things. This is the lesson of grace, and if we are to be used of Him, we must be attuned to His glorious operation of grace.

J. Phillip Scranton

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#### BABYLON IN THE NEWS

Several readers have sent us newspaper clippings of various articles concerning Iraq's efforts to restore the city of Babylon as a tourist attraction. The President of Iraq has offered \$1.5 million to any Iraqi who can solve the puzzle of how Nebuchadnezzar managed to water the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon." Recently there was a two-week festival held there featuring singers and performers from many other countries, with "tens of thousands" in attendance at this cultural extravaganza held in Babylon, about 55 miles south of Baghdad. For two weeks, Babylon's reconstructed palaces and temples echoed with music, opera, and dance, including songs written 6,000 years ago deciphered from stone tablets.

"Babylon was the center of the world's civilization, arts and culture and it is right that it regain that fame again," said Munir Bashir, chief director of the festival.

All of this seems to support our conviction that the references to Babylon in the book of Revelation concern the literal city in its ancient location, not Rome or some religious institution.

As A. E. Knoch once wrote, "*Do not explain God's explanations!* When a place is 'spiritually' called Sodom and Egypt (Rev.11:8) [we are to] insist that these places are not meant (for only one could be), but are figures for Jerusalem. But Babylon is not figuratively so-called. It is not explained. It is the explanation. The divine exposition is that the woman is a city (Rev.17:18). . . . It is a literal city, . . . on the plain of Shinar, on the banks of the Euphrates. Nothing could be more striking than to find this city, the first capital to rule the world at the beginning of the 'time of the gentiles,' once more exalted to a supremacy over the kingdoms of the earth" (THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST, pp.440,441).

## THE SABBATH AND THE EVANGEL

ALL SCRIPTURE is truth for today concerning the subject with which it deals and with respect to those who are concerned in it. All Scripture is *for us* in the sense that it is in some way beneficial to us, whether for teaching, exposure, or correction; and it is all given to us with a view toward our instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16), so that we might know what is true. This is all unto the end that the man of God might truly be "equipped, fitted out for every good act" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Nonetheless, it is by no means ideal for us to take to ourselves those things in the Bible which do not belong to us. Such practices are mere religious thievery, no matter how hallowed by antiquity. It is vital that we keep this consideration continually before us as we seek the will of the Lord concerning the question of the sabbath. May we not become imprudent, but rather be *understanding* what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).

### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"The very First Commandment is evidence that the law was given only to the nation of Israel, for they only were brought up out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). The fact is that the Fourth Commandment, concerning the sabbath day, likewise is restricted to that nation.

"Israel's greatness, however, consisted partly in this very observance, for 'what great nation is there which has statutes and judgments so righteous as *all* this law

that I am putting before you today?' (Deut.4:8). It was one of their special *prerogatives* (Rom.3:1; 9:4; not the *giving* of the law, but the *legislation*) in which they boasted (Rom.2:23), and a part of the oracles of God, which were their chief advantage over the other nations. Negatively, we are told that the nations, who have not law shall perish without law and be judged by their conscience (Rom.2:12-16).

"It should be freely and fully acknowledged that our Sunday is a purely heathen holiday. It is not even referred to in the Scriptures, the phrase 'first day of the week' in the Authorized Version notwithstanding ('one of the sabbaths,' CV). We need hardly say that 'the Lord's day' is a modern misuse of a term which should be applied only to the day of the Lord spoken of by the prophets.

"The law was a wise provision for God's earthly people and many of its enactments are fraught with physical and moral benefits which may profit us. To rest one day in seven is undoubtedly a good plan and well worth observing as a rule of health, provided it be kept out of the domain of lawkeeping. It is the  *motive*  that matters. Yet the first sign that such a custom has become a  *legal*  observance is the repudiation of Sunday for Saturday—the seventh day—which was the day that God sanctified."\*

#### THE SABBATHS OF THE ALMIGHTY

"In the seventh day," when God's work of the previous six days was  *finished* , "He is  *ceasing*  . . . from all His work which He does. And the Elohim is blessing the [i.e.,  *that* ] seventh day and hallowing  *it* , for in it He  *ceases*  from all His work . . ." (Gen.2:2,3). Since the

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\*cf  *Unsearchable Riches* , vol.LXIV, pp.267-271, A. E. Knoch



glorious work of the previous *six* "days" was now finished, God set apart the following *singular* period and pronounced a "blessing" (i.e., a favorable word) upon it. He did so inasmuch as the purpose which it was to serve was that of an agency of *association* in order to point to the previous longer period in which He had fully accomplished the astounding creative work which He originally had resolved to perform.

All the sabbaths of the Scripture remind us of God's omnipotence. They tell us that He is the Almighty Subjector, the All-Sufficient One. The creation sabbath day points back to the great works which God performed in the previous six days, even as Israel's weekly sabbath recalls His work of delivering the people out of Egypt. The annual sabbaths, especially, according to God's own counsels, serve as "a shadow [i.e., as types] of those things which are impending" (Col.2:17). As the epistle to the Hebrews declares in reference to God's national people, Israel, in their millennial kingdom, "a sabbatism [a period of cessation] is left for the people of God" (Heb.4:9). "Those who, like Caleb and Joshua, spy out the land and have confidence that God will fulfill His promise, enjoy the sabbatism by faith. All the rest are strewn along the wilderness."\*

None of the sabbaths, however, give credence to the notion that contemporary believers are doubtlessly sinning should they ever do any work in the hours between Friday sunset and Saturday sunset. All such conclusions are gratuitous, and only evince poor reasoning.

The sabbath (*sabbaton*, not a day of "rest," but a day of ceasing, or stopping) was not "made for man," even

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\*CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.339, A. E. Knoch

if the Authorized Version says that it was (Mark 2:27). Contrary to popular tradition, the idea of this passage is *not* that since man was constituted in such a way that he would need one day a week for "rest" as well as for pondering the ways of his Creator, God made such a day for his sake, resting upon it Himself to set us an example that we should do the same. Such a notion is sheer fable, based upon mistranslation and human sentiment.

The Lord Jesus did not say that the sabbath was "made for" mankind, that is, for its sake. Instead, He said that it "*came because of mankind*" (*dia ton anthrōpon egeneto*; Mark 2:27). That is, man needs to be taught the lesson which is inherent in the sabbath. That lesson is that salvation is "of the Lord." True salvation is that phenomenon which occurs when God *undertakes* and man *stops*, when God begins to save and man ceases from all his proud attempts to save himself, including all his assiduous efforts to help God out by doing his own independent "part."

#### THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE SABBATH

When God was about to deliver Israel from Pharaoh and all his army, Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Station yourselves ["stand still," AV] and see the salvation of Yahweh which *He* will work for you today . . . . Yahweh, *He* shall fight for you; *as for you, you shall be silent*" (Ex.14:13,14; cp Rom.15:4).

At Horeb, Yahweh spoke to the people saying, "You are to observe the sabbath [the ceasing] day to hallow it . . . . the seventh day is a sabbath [*un*]to Yahweh your Elohim. You shall not do any work in it . . . . Remember that you had become a servant in the country of Egypt, and that Yahweh your Elohim brought you forth from there with a steadfast hand and with an

outstretched arm. *Therefore* Yahweh your Elohim instructed *you* to observe the sabbath day" (Deut.5: 12-15).

This is the true message of the sabbath, and this is why this convention (or ceremonial) was given to Israel in the first place. The fact that it was a part of the "Ten Commandments" speaks of the central place it was to have in Israel's obedience, not of its containing some type of timeless, inherent essence which somehow requires all men at all times to keep its letter should they wish to live righteous lives.

Even as circumcision (the token cutting off of a small portion of flesh) represents being done with man and trusting *only* in God (*cp* Jer.17:5,7; Phil.3:2,3), thus also the sabbath reveals that God *alone* is our Saviour. Even when, relatively speaking, we "save ourselves" from some failure or calamity, we should be of this same spirit, glorying not in ourselves but in the One Who is the *Lord* of the sabbath. We should glory only in the God Who made it so, not in a god whose provision was on the one hand quite indispensable and yet on the other terribly inadequate.

#### UNDER GRACE, NOT UNDER LAW

It is evident that Paul's main desire was simply to present his evangel of grace, an evangel which is—whatever the place of the law may be—"apart from law" (Rom.3:21). Until this is seen and fully accepted, there is really little point in considering any controverted particulars of law. Special observances such as the sabbath are usually so sacrosanct to us that it is difficult or impossible for most even to listen to any suggestion that such things may not have the place in God's counsels that we had supposed. As well, though we may be ever so zealous for the sabbath or for other

external distinctives, all too often we may not be nearly so devoted to the pursuit of kindness, goodness, humility or other universally recognized points of personal purity.

It must be emphasized that we are not lawless people. To the contrary, God's saving grace is training us to be living "justly" (Titus 2:12); Christ died that He should be redeeming us from all lawlessness, that He should be cleansing for Himself a people to be about Him zealous for ideal acts (Titus 2:14). Consequently, we would present our members to God as "implements of righteousness" (Rom.6:13).

These facts notwithstanding, however, since we are not *under* law at all (Rom.6:14), we are certainly not under the law which was given through Moses.

On the other hand, even though we are not *under* law, we are not without God's "law" (1 Cor.9:20,21) — His rules of action which *do* concern us. It is only that we are not *under* them. That is, relative to future eonian life, Sin *shall not* be lording it over us; it cannot speak our condemnation, *for* we are not under law but under grace (*cp* Rom.6:6,9b,14). "Now the consummation is life eonian. For [while] the ration of Sin is death, *yet the gracious gift of God is life eonian*, in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom.6:22b,23). "Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those in Christ Jesus" (Rom.8:1,2).

"Righteousness" and "law" are not proper nouns. These expressions by no means necessarily refer to or include any particular laws given by Moses. "Righteousness" constitutes all that is *right*. This includes, in its own proper place, every divine imperative throughout Scripture. All scripture is beneficial for *discipline* in righteousness (2 Tim.3:16), but we must not take its precepts and promises to ourselves presumptuously or

without warrant. Many things are recorded that are not directed to the ecclesia which is Christ's body.

Misplaced truth frequently becomes insidious error. Since it is "in the Bible," its practice seems to have the divine stamp of approval. In light of this danger, it is evident that we must, "Beware of *curs*, beware of *evil workers*" (Phil.3:2)—even if they should be upstanding citizens, sincere, zealous, persuasive, and full of good works. Like dogs which find desirable scraps of food amidst household refuse, such take to themselves those things in God's Word which, however excellent, the apostle Paul nonetheless forfeited, being constrained to deem them as refuse. He did so "because of the *superiority* of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" (Phil.3:8) inherent in the message which the Lord had revealed to him, the evangel with which he was subsequently entrusted.

Paul's evangel reveals Christ in a distinctive, greater glory than that revealed in those portions of Scripture including the Circumcision writings which present him as the Son of David and the King of Israel. Paul proclaims not mere conditional pardon for those who will obey, but gratuitous justification for the irreverent who are not working (Rom.4:5). In addition, he makes known the transcendent grace of conciliation, both for the ecclesia (Rom.5:10,11) and for the world (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom.11:12,15). He reveals Christ's universal Headship (Eph.1:10), the abolition of death (1 Cor. 15:26), and finally the reconciliation of all (Col.1:20). These are far greater revelations than those concerning the Messiah's terrestrial kingdom, according to the prophets; consequently, the entreaties for service which attend these untraceable riches of Christ must accord with them.

In light of the nature and greatness of his evangel,

many things which were formerly "gain" to the apostle were now perceived as impediments. There was no longer any advantage in being of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:5)—or of becoming blameless in the righteousness which is in law (Phil.3:6,7). *This includes sabbath observance.* In Christ, neither ancestry nor law obedience can gain anything for us; for we are already complete in Him (Col.2:10).

"Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing" (Rom.10:4). Under Paul's evangel, in Christ, "law for righteousness" has no place whatsoever. In Him, Paul wanted to be found, "not having my [own] righteousness, which is of law, but [as one having] that [righteousness] which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God for faith" (literally, "on this faith" [the faith of Christ]; Phil.3:9). Since we cannot, in fact, add to His all-sufficient finished work, we should not, in practice, act as if we either could or should. We are to "pursue righteousness" (2 Tim.2:22), that righteous service which does concern ourselves, strictly out of love for God and in a realization of the practical benefits of His ways for us. Indeed, since grace can only superexceed should sin be increasing (Rom.5:20,21), let there be no motive but love for God in our service unto Him.

The apostle Paul declares that in Christ, we were chosen before the disruption of the world, to be holy and flawless in God's sight, designated beforehand for the place of a Son for Him through Christ Jesus (Eph.1:4,5). Now, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, we are justified gratuitously in God's grace (Rom.3:24). In Christ, what need have we for sabbath observance, or for *any* righteous deeds of our

own? Now if it should truly be so that our service in the Lord could be carried out more profitably through the observance of the sabbath, surely our apostle is quite capable of making this known to us. Indeed, *were this the case*, doubtlessly he would have done so.

God's Word reveals many *principles*—whether through the law, the prophets or psalms—which, *as such*, constitute timeless wise counsel. But this is by no means to say that the *particulars* through which certain principles are made known are applicable to ourselves, or even appropriate at all. Indeed, much wisdom will be needed to learn the actual principles inherent in the various “just statutes for the flesh” (Heb.9:10) which were given to ancient Israel. For this we will need the insight which is only afforded us *through the apostle Paul's evangel*.

It is simply mistaken to employ the phrase “God's law” so as to suggest that it is incapable of any proper reference except to the Ten Commandments or other such laws. There is nothing at all in this expression that somehow makes it necessary that all today who wish to be obedient to God must obey the Ten Commandments. However, since so many do not understand, not realizing that the observance of holy days, months and seasons and years (*cp Gal.4:10*) is solely for Israel and is not at all for ourselves, “One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for every day. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind” (Rom.14:5). It is far better for the sincere believer to be personally disposed to some sort of observance of “days” than for someone else—even if the other person should have more light—to impose his own will.

Therefore, let *no one* be scorning his brother, for whom Christ died and lives (Rom.14:9,10)—whether

he should observe the sabbath or not observe the sabbath. "The faith which you have, have for yourself in God's sight. Happy is he who is not judging himself in that which he is attesting" (Rom.14:23). "Not that we are lording it over your faith, but are fellow workers of your joy . . ." (2 Cor.1:24). Paul declares, "I am entreating you, then, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, *bearing with one another in love*, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace" (Eph.4:1-3).

Unlike the believing Israelites under law, we neither avow nor persevere in order to gain or maintain either our present positional salvation or our future eonian life. Yet when we do avow our faith before others or otherwise faithfully serve our Lord, such service is the *fruit* of the salvation which we already have, which God is working in our lives. We do not avow or persevere in order to escape divine wrath or to make ourselves worthy of future life. Since God unveils His Son in us by giving us the gift of faith, we come to know that we are in Him. What a joy it is to know that our position is permanent and secure — apart from any question of our obedience (*cf* Rom.8:35-39; 1 Cor.15:50,51; Col.3:3,4).

Under Paul's evangel, insofar as membership in the ecclesia and eonian life is concerned, not only is self-produced righteousness not essential but it has no place at all. Our confidence is not in our obedience to law, but in Christ's obedience to God, even unto the death of the cross. We do not care to scrutinize days, but we long to realize Christ. For we know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, because of us He became poor, that we, by His poverty, should be rich (2 Cor.8:9).

James Coram



## THE ONLY AND WISE GOD

(Romans 16:25-27)

GOD IS THE SUBJECT of Scripture. Although it may deal directly with the events in Israel's history, with rules and instruction for right living or with the special calling for believers today, God's Word is designed to make God known. It is only by growing in the realization of God that we can enjoy the blessings and live the lives that are set before us in the Word. All that is written must be related to Deity and His glory.

We now come to the end of Paul's letter to the Romans where praise and glory is attributed to the only and wise God. We recall that the epistle began by pointing us to the evangel of *God*, which concerns *God's* Son and the revelation of *God's* righteousness, and which is *God's* power for salvation. Throughout, the focus of our attention has been on God, on His grace, His power and love, all centered in His gift of His Son. And this emphasis remains before us in the concluding words:

*Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian, yet manifested now and through prophetic scriptures, according to the injunction of the eonian God being made known to all nations for faith-obedience . . . (Rom.16:25,26).*

## GOD IS ABLE

The epistle opened with an evangel concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom.1:1-5) which "is God's *power* for salvation to everyone who is believing" (1:16). It closes with an expression of praise to God, Who is *able*, or "powerful." This power is for the purpose of establishing us in accord with Paul's evangel and a special revelation of Christ Jesus. Even though the specific subjects need to be distinguished, there is clearly a cohesion of themes here, all of which relate to God's glory: God is great in His power; God issues good news; God centers His work around His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The evangel is God's power for salvation, and God also has the power to establish us in all aspects of His good news. If it seems that not many are currently established in the mature revelations given through Paul, this does not mean that God has been unable to manifest it to our hearts. "The God Who says that, out of darkness light shall be shining, is He Who shines in our hearts, with a view to the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor.4:6).

That God does illuminate these glories to anyone at all in these days of darkness and human pride is evidence of His power. Yet we do not expect this evidence to be highly visible, even to the body of believers in this eon. Our blessings are spiritual, and we walk by faith; similarly, then, God's ability to establish believers in the faith and bring them to maturity is pretty much hidden from view. It was this way in Elijah's day when the prophet felt all alone even after the astounding contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:17-19:14). Yet if Yahweh revealed Himself then in "the sound of a gentle stillness" (1 Kings 19:12 CV), how

much less audible and visible to the general populace are His glories today!

Indeed, Paul's evangel and the secret hushed in times eonian are rarely spoken of today, and we wonder if the messages of justification and conciliation were known at all during many of the long centuries of the past two millennia. Yet might it be that even in the "dark ages" God established and preserved His "seven thousand" or even seven hundred or even seven in these revelations? We do not doubt that God was able to do this, and it is His ability that is being spoken of here in Romans 16:25.

#### PAUL'S EVANGEL

God is able to establish us in the message Paul called "my evangel." Regarding this message, A. E. Knoch wrote, "In the opening statement of [Romans] we are informed that [Paul] was *severed* for the evangel of God, concerning His Son (Rom.1:1-3). That this is a distinct message from that proclaimed by the other apostles is evident, for he was *severed for it*. Even in the book of Acts, where this is less definite than Paul's epistles indicate, we have the record of this severance and are confirmed in this by the fact that in that book he is the only one who sets forth Christ as the Son of God (Acts 9:20) and who proclaims the evangel of God. This is entirely absent from the preaching of the twelve apostles at that time . . . .

"Justification is never preached in the four 'gospels.' True, we have Wisdom justified and God justified and sinners seeking to justify themselves, but in only one instance do we read of a man being justified. The Pharisee justified himself on the ground of his own acts. It is in contrast to this that the tribute collector is . . . justified (Luke 18:10-14). Not that he enjoyed

the fullness of this blessing as we may, but he, rather than the Pharisee, was right . . . . Even so, the case is *not* the justification of Paul's evangel . . . .

"Pardon asked for at least a proper attitude of mind or repentance, without which its exercise would only encourage wrong doing. But justification is divine from beginning to end. While the grace and love it displays eclipses any pardon which might be offered, yet it is the strictest justice. It is the outcome of divine counsels which long preceded the advent of sin and which find fulfillment long after sin has left the scene.

"In this brief outline of the doctrine of Paul's 'my' evangel, it is necessary to note that *it was never recorded by any other inspired writer*. Although James speaks of justification, his justification is by *works*, the very *opposite* of the evangel Paul preached . . . ."\*

Thus we can see that in Romans Paul gave a great deal of emphasis to this message which he calls "my evangel." A new epoch of revelation begins with the proclamation of justification, thoroughly reviewed in Romans 3:21-4:25 and again reflected upon in the corresponding section of 9:30-10:21. Although the case of Abram in Genesis 15:1-6 provides a precedent for justification by faith, never before was God's righteousness so clearly manifested as it is now made known through the obedience of Jesus Christ.

#### A SECRET

Concerning the secret hushed in times eonian, Brother Knoch wrote, "The 'evangel of God' was promised before 'through His prophets in the holy scriptures' (Rom. 1:2). But those writings will be searched in vain for any trace of the *secret*, which God 'hushed' during

\*A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 54, pp. 149, 154, 155, 160.

the eonian times past, when those prophets had lived. Even Paul himself, during the ministry then about completed (Acts 19:21; Rom.15:19,25) had not proclaimed this secret by word of mouth, for it is said to be 'manifested *now*' through his prophetic *writings* (scriptures) (Rom.16:26). The eonian God issued the injunction to herald it to all the nations for the obedience of faith . . . ."\*

This secret is identified with the message of the conciliation, brought out in Romans 5 and 11, and in 2 Corinthians 5, where we read, "Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation" (verses 18 and 19).

These are glorious revelations from God which speak of His grace and love to us. But they are especially glorious revelations in that they not only speak of blessings for us, but in and above this they reveal the depths of God's glory.

#### THE EONIAN GOD

God hushed His purpose of conciliation during the eonian times preceding the cross, but as the "eonian God," He not only keeps some things secret during entire eons of time, He also makes His secrets known at His designated times during the eons. This is one of the glories of God being underscored here. Our God is the God of all the eons and of the operations worked out during the eons. The phrase used in the King James Version, "the everlasting God" tends to put God at a distance, in another realm from us where time and

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\*A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.53, p.55.

change have little meaning. It speaks of something beyond our comprehension. But the words "the eonian God" remind us that God is operating here where we are, in the eons. He is carrying out a purpose of the eons. Hence, changes and adjustments in His revelation are all instituted by Him, by the injunction of the eonian God.

#### FAITH-OBEDIENCE

The use of the striking expression "faith-obedience" in Romans 1:5 and now in 16:26 calls for special consideration. In both instances faith-obedience is related to the commission God had given Paul for the nations. In the previous ages, the eonian God had related obedience to His works of physical deliverance and protection, to the displays of His power to Israel in the wilderness and in the land, and to the express instructions of the law. But now, in Paul's evangel, obedience is something that grows out of *believing* that evangel. There are no miraculous signs, no supernatural provisions of physical strength or displays of fiery wrath to impose obedience upon us. Rather God tells us that we are being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Rom.3:24). He lets us know that, though we were enemies, we were conciliated to Him through the death of His Son (Rom.5:10).

It is in believing this good news that we are led to obedience. This pattern of faith-obedience, our being led by God's spirit, our logical divine service, is made especially clear in Romans 6-8 and 12-15.

#### TO GOD BE THE GLORY

*... to the only, and wise God, through Christ Jesus, be glory for the eons of the eons. Amen!* (Rom.16:27).

In full accord with our apostle we are led to these closing words of praise. A doxology is an expression attributing glory to God, and this has been a doxology of doxologies.

It is thus a truly fitting end to this epistle which has expounded the glories of God. He has manifested His righteousness which is marked out "for all" (Rom.3: 21,22), has opened the way of peace and access in the work of conciliation (5:1-11) and has poured out His love which is steadfast in all situations (5:5; 8:35-39). These richest of blessings are all established "through Christ Jesus," even as this closing word of praise is channeled.

What if our God were not the One and Only God carrying out a purpose through the eons? All the good news of Romans would be cast in doubt. Our blessings would be but passing dreams. Paul's letter to the Romans has focused attention on the Only God worthy of that title. He is the sovereign Placer, the One Who establishes and manifests His divine righteousness, Who makes peace and opens up the way of access to His presence, Whose love is vast and sure, Who operates in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob and Esau and Pharaoh and in the history of Israel and the nations, Who calls us and directs us as believers in this world, while ever settling our hearts in expectation of the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans has also made it clear that God's wisdom is matchless. It consists of calling what is not as if it were (Rom.4:17). It consists of giving up His Son for sinners (Rom.5:8; 8:32). It consists of conciliating His enemies through the death of His Son (Rom.5:10). It consists of glorifying, justifying and calling those whom He designates beforehand rather than waiting for them to choose Him by their own independent wills (Rom.8:30). And

concerning these whom He calls, we learn in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 that they are part of the stupidity, the weakness and the contemptible things of the world.

God's wisdom is deep (Rom.11:33). It is centered in the word of the cross (1 Cor.1:18-31). It is manifested through Christ Jesus, through His faith and His obedience. It consists of giving, and that gratuitously.

Finally, the doxology is directed to God's great future, the achievements to be manifested in the eons of the eons. In the current eon, man is a sinner who lacks the glory of God (Rom.3:23), but as believers we are glorying "in expectation of the glory of God" (5:2). In our sufferings, we anticipate the eons ahead where God will truly be glorified, though indeed our sufferings do not deserve such glory (8:18). God Himself has subjected this world to vanity, but He has done so "in expectation" that the creation itself shall be freed from the slavery of corruption and delivered into the glorious freedom of the children of God (8:20,21). What a prospect of glory is thus laid before us! This is good news from and concerning our great God.

To Such a One be glory for the eons of the eons.  
Amen! D.H.H.

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Note: the preceding article is the final installment of a series of studies on the last eight chapters of Romans. The series began in the January 1981 issue of *Unsearchable Riches*.

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#### "THE PATHWAY OF FAITH"

Grace and Truth Chapel, Box 84, Baldwin, MI 49304 is preparing a reprint of Brother Gelesnoff's study, "The Pathway of Faith," currently appearing by installments in our magazine. It should be available by the end of the year both from the Baldwin address or ourselves. Pastor Lloyd Hibberd notes that this publication is being undertaken in memory of Brother David J. Anderson, who died last June.



## THE PLACE THAT YAHWEH SHALL CHOOSE

“THESE ARE THE STATUTES AND THE JUDGMENTS which you shall observe to obey in the land that Yahweh Elohim of your fathers gives to you to tenant it all the days that you are alive on the ground” (Deut.12:1).

At the end of the preceding chapter, Moses had pointed to Yahweh’s blessing if the people would hearken to the divine instructions; and he had alluded to Yahweh’s malediction if Israel would withdraw from the way of obedience and go after other elohim.

With the introductory verse (12:1) to the “Specific Stipulations” of the divine law, Moses implied that it was Yahweh’s faithfulness that sustained the surety of His promises, given to the fathers. And His faithfulness should motivate Israel to obedience. Moses’ audience would remember his former words (in the second address in the plains of Moab):

“Then know that Yahweh your Elohim, He is the One Elohim, the El, *Who is faithful*, keeping the covenant and the *kindness* to those loving Him and to those observing His instructions for a thousand generations, yet repaying the one hating Him right to His face, so as to destroy him. He shall not delay toward one hating Him right to His face; He shall repay him. Hence observe the instruction and the statutes and the judgments which I am enjoining on you today, to keep them” (Deut.7:9-11).

## OBLITERATE IDOLATRY

“You shall destroy, yea destroy all the places where the nations (in whose stead you are tenanting) have served their elohim on the high mountains, on the hills and under every flourishing tree. Tear down their altars and break their monuments; their Asherah poles you shall burn with fire, and the carvings of their elohim you shall hack down; thus you will destroy their name from that place” (Deut.12:2,3).

This injunction (to eradicate all symbols of idolatry) adds further details to an earlier one: “You shall tear down their altars, break their monuments, hack down their Asherah poles, and you shall burn their carvings with fire” (Deut.7:5). At mount Sinai, forty years before, Moses had warned the older generation with almost identical words (Ex.34:13).

We know of Canaanite religious practices that they tended to promote sexual immorality (*cf* Num.25:1,2) and to sacrifice even their own children (Deut.12:31). Hence Yahweh hated every abhorrence which the seven nations in Canaan performed for their elohim (gods) at all their shrines, on high mountains and hills as well as under certain sacred trees which symbolized fertility.

Hence Yahweh's command to tear down the Canaanite altars, to break down the monuments of stone pillars (which represented the local god or Baal), and to burn the wooden poles (which symbolized the fertility goddess Asherah). The carvings, earmarked for destruction, were sculptured wooden objects (in the shape of an animal or a human), overlaid with silver or gold.

In this context (Deut.7:5), Moses had warned against any form of liaison with the people of the decadent nations of Palestine; any intermarriage with the inhabitants was strictly forbidden, “for it might take away

your son from following after Me, and they might serve other elohim [gods], and the anger of Yahweh would grow hot against you, and He would exterminate you quickly" (Deut.7:4).

Yahweh, in His *faithfulness* toward Israel, demanded the complete destruction of all foreign cult centers in Canaan, so that the existence of such places might be forgotten in later years, and the names of their idols may be no longer remembered. As a result of their eradication, it would be *easier* for the Israelites to keep the first commandment: "I, Yahweh, am your Elohim . . . You shall not come to have other elohim ([gods] in preference to Me. You shall not make for yourself a carving nor any physical representation of that in the heavens above or that on the earth beneath or that in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor be made to serve them, for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am a jealous El, visiting the depravity of the fathers on the sons, on the third and on the fourth generation, to those hating Me, yet doing *benignity* to thousands, to those loving Me and observing My instructions" (Deut.5:6-10).

#### GUARD YOURSELF

Yet destroying all idol shrines so as to leave no trace in the landscape might not be enough. Hence Moses wanted his audience (and future generations of Israelites) to obliterate from their minds *even the idea of idol worship*. So he said (at the end of chapter 12): "When Yahweh your Elohim cuts off before your face the nations where you are entering to tenant in their place, then you will tenant in their place and dwell in their country. *Guard yourself* lest you should be trapped to go after them after they are exterminated before your face, and lest you inquire about their elohim [gods],

saying: How do these nations serve their elohim that I, I too, may do thus? You shall not act thus toward Yahweh your Elohim, for every abhorrence which Yahweh hates they perform for their elohim, for even their sons and their daughters they burn with fire for their elohim" (Deut.12:29-31).

#### THE PLACE THAT YAHWEH SHALL CHOOSE

We find this phrase (in this or a similar wording) 21 times in the book of Deuteronomy, and six times in chapter twelve. This frequency underlines the importance of the *one central sanctuary* for Israel when the promised land would be theirs. This theme is introduced with the words: "Not so shall you do to Yahweh your Elohim" (12:4). With this injunction Moses meant to say that Israel should not build altars and offer sacrifices to Yahweh in a multitude of places throughout the land (as had been customary with the Canaanites).

According to the circumstances prevailing in future times, Yahweh Himself would select the proper place for the tabernacle with its tent over it and the coffer of the testimony within it. (For a detailed description see Exodus 40:17-33.) In the following centuries (until Solomon's temple became the central sanctuary) the tabernacle would be moved from place to place. We know only some of them, such as Shilo (Josh.18:1; Judg.18:31), Bethel (Judg.20:18,26,27), and Gibeon (in David's day, 1 Chron.16:39; 21:29; 2 Chron.1:3-5).

The Israelites in the plain of Moab were told that their religious life in the promised land had to be different from their forms of worship during the years in the wilderness. "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, each man everything that is upright in his own eyes because until now you

have not come to the resting place and to the allotment that Yahweh your Elohim is giving to you. When you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land that Yahweh your Elohim is giving to you as an allotment, and He gives rest to you from all your enemies from round about, so that you may dwell in serenity, then it will come to be:

*“The place where Yahweh your Elohim shall choose to tabernacle His Name, there shall you bring all that I am instructing you, your ascent offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand and all your choice vow offerings which you shall vow to Yahweh. You will rejoice before Yahweh your Elohim, you, your sons and your daughters, your servants, your maidservants and the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion or allotment among you”* (Deut. 12:8-12).

What Moses said had to be committed to memory by his audience. So for emphasis he had to repeat some of the major points he had just made (in verses 5-7): “But rather for *the place that Yahweh your Elohim shall choose* from all your tribes, to establish His Name there, you shall inquire for His tabernacle, and there will you come. You will bring there your ascent offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the heave offerings of your hand, your vow offerings and your voluntary offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and your flock.”

#### GUARD YOURSELF

Then, in order to drive home his points, Moses told his audience what they (and later generations) ought *not* to do: “Guard yourself lest you bring up your ascent offerings in any other place which you see. But rather in *the place that Yahweh shall choose* in one of

your tribes, there shall you bring up your ascent offerings, and there shall you do all that I am instructing you" (Deut.12:13:14).

#### EAT BEFORE YAHWEH

In the wilderness no secular slaughter of domestic animals had been permitted (Lev.17:2-6). If "any man from the house of Israel" wanted to provide meat (a rare luxury in the desert) for his family, he had to bring his own bull or sheep or goat to the opening of the tent of appointment as an approach present for Yahweh. The priest would sprinkle the animal's blood against the altar and would "cause the fat to fume as a fragrant odor to Yahweh." After the priest had taken his small share (Lev.7:33), the worshipper, together with the members of his household, would eat the remainder of his animal. This was a peace offering, a festive meal, eaten near the sanctuary, "before Yahweh." This was a feasible ordinance for the years of the wilderness wanderings when the tent of appointment was easily accessible in the center of the wide campsite.

Deuteronomy 12:15-28 deals with the situation in the near future, when the Israelites would dwell in many cities and hamlets throughout the promised land, when the multitude of their domestic animals would permit them to eat their meat with all the yearning of their soul (*cf* 12:15,20; i.e., as much as they desire). Yet these animals should be "slaughtered sacrificially" (this is the meaning of "sacrifice" in 12:15). Only the blood was to be poured out on the ground like water (12:16,23-25).

For emphasis, Moses repeated the new ordinance in 12:21. "In case *the place where Yahweh Elohim shall choose to place His Name* is far from you, then you may sacrifice [slaughter sacrificially] of your herd and of your flock which Yahweh gave to you."

## GUARD YOURSELF

It was El's faithfulness and kindness (Deut.7:9) that prompted Moses to say twice, eat before Yahweh and rejoice (cf 12:7,18), namely "*in the place that Yahweh your Elohim shall choose, you, your son and your daughter, your servant and your maidservant and the Levite who is within your gates. Then you will rejoice before Yahweh your Elohim in every undertaking of your hand. Guard yourself lest you should forsake the Levite any of your days on your ground*" (12:18,19).

## TITHE AND HOLY GIFTS

The tithe (the Levites' allotment, Num.18:26) and the holy gifts were to be carried to *the place that Yahweh shall choose*. Only there would the sons of Israel bring their ascent offerings, in the manner prescribed in Leviticus 17:5,6. There, at the sanctuary, they "may eat the flesh" (Deut.12:27). And Moses added: "Observe and hear all these words which I am instructing you today, that it may be well with you and with your sons after you until the eon, for you shall do what is good and upright in the eyes of Yahweh your Elohim" (12:28). H.H.R.

(To be continued)

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