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**JANUARY, 1999**

**Volume XC**

**Number 1**



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# Unsearchable Riches

A BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE  
FOR GOD AND HIS  
WORD

VOLUME XC

*co-editors:*  
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and  
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*Found of them  
that sought Him not*

I will arise and to my Father go;  
This very hour the journey is begun.  
I start to reach the blissful goal, and, lo,  
My spirit at one bound her race has run.  
For seeking God and finding Him are one.  
He feeds the rilllets that towards Him flow.  
It is the Father Who first seeks the son,  
And moves all heavenward movement, swift or slow.  
I dare not pride myself on finding Him.  
I dare not dream a single step was mine.  
His was the vigour in the palsied limb—  
His the electric fire along the line—  
When drowning, His the untaught power to swim,  
Float o'er the surge, and grasp the rock divine.

John Charles Earle

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JANUARY 1999  
BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY

EDITORIAL

ACQUAINTANCE with those sacred scriptures originally written in Hebrew is most beneficial for believing and teaching and standing by the evangel brought by Paul (2 Tim.3:14-17). Every article in this issue of *Unsearchable Riches* is built around passages from this portion of God's Word. But also, every article either leads to a consideration of parallel passages in Paul's epistles or prepares our hearts for the revelations of the evangel.

All Scripture leads us to Christ, and thus to a full revelation of God. The revelation of God in creation is not enough. The deeper revelation of God opened up by the entrance of evil into the creation is not enough. God must be revealed in and through His Son, through His faithful obedience "even to the death of the cross" (Phil.2:8) if the "breadth and length and depth and height" of His power and wisdom and *love* are to be grasped (*cf* Eph.3:18).

Consequently, in meditating on Genesis and 1 Samuel and Ecclesiastes and the rest of the ancient, Sacred Scriptures, we feel a special need for vigilance lest we neglect the "evangel of the untraceable riches of *Christ*" which Paul brought to the nations (*cf* Eph.3:8; 6:18-20). It seems especially critical in these days, not so much because of the humanly devised date (1999), but because of strengthening signs of "the last days" described in 2 Timothy 3:1-7, that we hold firm to and announce clearly and joyfully the evangel graciously granted to Paul.

The trend of the current series of studies in this magazine is toward this end. In the twenty-seven years during which I have been closely involved in the production of this magazine, I cannot recall an issue of *Unsearchable*

*Riches*, that has caused me more struggle than this current one. This is partly because I just underwent major surgery for the second time in fifteen months (I am thanking God for bringing me through these operations safely and that I am recovering well). It is also partly because of added work required in bringing the CONCORDANT VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT toward publication, though we are excited and happy to see that the long project of translation is nearly complete. Above all else I feel certain that most of the struggle must be traced to that spiritual opposition Paul spoke of in Ephesians 6:12,16.

Yet my happiness in this work continues to grow, and I find much peace in the hope that the thoughts expressed in this magazine will be beneficial to many. If the passages from the “Old Testament” centered on in this issue direct the reader’s attention toward Christ and the evangel concerning Him, then this hope is sure of realization.

Finally, I am pleased that Brother Jim Coram has accepted the position of co-editor of the magazine with me. We have worked together since 1981, with Jim not only contributing his unique studies in depth on often controversial, scriptural themes, but also overseeing all, and handling much, of the publishing and distributing chores, besides serving as business manager. Now he will join me more extensively than before in compiling and editing the magazine. He will also be contributing more regularly to this editorial section.

I know our readers will remember us in prayer concerning these changes, not only regarding the magazine but the added work we are taking on in bringing the CVOT to a more finished and complete form of publication. God is faithful. He knows the longings of our hearts, and He will give wisdom and strength in accord with His will. To Him be the glory!

D.H.H.



I first learned of the ministry and teaching of the Concordant Publishing Concern in 1974. The following year I met Dean Hough. Ever since, I have been asking him questions, and receiving helpful answers. Dean has taught me many things about language and critical thinking, not to mention about exegesis and hermeneutics; and it was through Dean that my own interest in academic theology and philosophy blossomed.

But the most important things that I found in Dean were fairness and honesty, founded upon devoutness, in an awareness of the importance of competency, yet in the presence of the further awareness that competency, even as all else, is out of God.

I have often said that the three happiest days of my life were the day I married my wife, Suella, the day our son, Marc, was born, and the day the first box of *Unsearchable Riches* magazines arrived in our mail.

It goes without saying that the most important day of my life was the day that I first heard and believed that Christ died for my sins, that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day, all of these, according to the scriptures—which I suddenly found myself believing! Now that day (which occurred several years before I first heard of the Concordant ministry) was a happy day, indeed. Still, it was also a day in which my joy in Christ promptly became stifled by the fear-based, man-centered, and anti-grace teaching which I also then accepted.

Like most others, in the most artful of terms (ones not designed to deceive yet no less effectual unto that end), I was taught that though Christ, potentially, was my Saviour, I nonetheless must save myself from disqualification for His actually being my Saviour! Above all (and most frightening of all, too, for I knew my own heart), it was insisted

that I must not only endure unto the end to be saved, but that I alone must determine my own destiny, based upon my own “inner resources.” At the critical juncture, I could not look to God to save me, for that would not do. When it mattered the most, I myself must independently save myself from “disqualification.”

In a word, the “gospel” I received was that the gate was strait and the way narrow which leads to eternal life, *and few there be* that find it. Hence, it was unlikely that I would find it. Furthermore, those who would find it, would only do so finally thanks to themselves, not to God. (While this was never said, this was precisely the notion advocated, albeit in more delicate language.) If I should fail to be sufficiently upright and cooperative, then God would have no recourse but to subject me to endless punishment (so I was told, “only” an endless punishment consisting of death, not conscious torment).

Until I first heard and realized the *grace* of God in truth through the printed and spoken ministry of the Concern and its friends, I too held to the usual, mistaken teachings. It was solely through the *power* of the marvelous message of God’s overwhelming grace, the evangel of our being justified gratuitously in God’s grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, that the spell of delusion was broken for us (for my wife Suella, too, as well as myself).

What a privilege and joy it is for us to continue on in the ministry of the Concern, now in its ninetieth year. Especially as we approach the final work (though that consists of so much) in the translation and publication of the Concordant Version of the Old Testament, we covet your prayers on our behalf that God would grant us strength of mind and will, together with diligence of heart in the completion of this tremendous task. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gratuity (2 Cor.9:15). And, thanks be to God for His goodness and faithfulness to us all. J.R.C.

## THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

THE BEGINNING of *both* creation and generation is the burden of the scroll the Greeks called “Genesis,” which denotes *Generating*. Since the first and foremost function of this book is a record of God’s *creation*, we use the Hebrew heading, *B-rashith*, IN-HEAD, or IN-BEGINNING, as a title of the whole book. Thus we discover the inspired summary of this sacred scroll, which presents God’s creative work, as well as the first generations of mankind, which fill the balance of the book.

It is characteristic of mortals, when estranged from God, to look back to the *time* of creation, rather than to the creation itself. The rendering “In the beginning,” is probably as close to the significance of the Original as English idiom will allow; still it is sufficiently inexact to cause cloudy conceptions and questionings to arise. It seems to fix a definite point of *time*, and to be limited to the single act of creation, whereas the Hebrew is not the name of a specific instant in the past, but a descriptive term, giving *priority* or *origination* to the contents of the whole book.

The Hebrew stem, *rash*, denotes HEAD, and is used idiomatically in the sense of *principal*, *summit*, *top*, *beginning*, *first* (in time). The special form used here, *rashith*, must usually be rendered by *first of*, or *beginning of* in English, as “the *beginning of* his kingdom” (Gen.10:10), “the *first of* the firstfruits” (Ex.23:19). The very phrase with which the Bible begins, *B-rashith* (B is IN), occurs four times elsewhere, and is translated “In the *beginning of*” (Jer.26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34), and is always followed by a noun,

“the reign of.” But in Genesis it is followed by the *verb* create—In the beginning [of] He-creates . . . This seems to show that it is not a part of the sentence, but the title.

The beginning spoken of in this section is *creation*, in contrast to the rest of Genesis, which speaks of *generation*.

#### CREATE

“To make something out of nothing,” that is the usual definition of *create*. This is confirmed by the 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 Pet.2:13). No man can create anything out of nothing. 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. This includes all the substance of all later creations, for 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 AV has it, “the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev.3:14). And He Himself also said, “I *came out* and am arriving *out of God*” (John 8:46). 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.

Probably the worst effect which this false view of creation produces, 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 creation 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.

#### TOWARD-SUBJECTORS

After the heading, “In the beginning,” the Word of God says that creation was by *Elohim*, by *Toward-Subjectors*. The key to this use of the plural soon follows, in the third verse. “Yet the *spirit* of *Elohim* is vibrating over the surface of the water.” God is *spirit*, and *He works by means of His spirit*, yet through *those to whom He has imparted it*.

Not only the Father, as Subjector, but also His Son was engaged in the creation of the heavens and the earth. God was the *Source*, for all is *out* of Him (Rom.11:36), but all is created *in* the Son of His love (Col.1:16). It also may have included such as those sons of Elohim who were present at the foundation of the earth (Job 38:7).

An absolute beginning is unknown to the Scriptures, as well as an absolute end. Such a thing is beyond human comprehension, even were it mentioned in the Word. The beginning of Genesis is not *the* beginning of all things, but only of the material heavens and earth. As all was created in the Son of God's love, He is *before* all else, and all has its cohesion in Him. Although there were no *human* beings before Adam, there *were* sons of Elohim present at the founding of the earth, as made known to Job. In order to put him where he belongs, with all the rest of humanity, Job was asked some pointed questions (Job 38:4-7):

*Where were you when I founded the earth?  
Tell if you know with understanding,  
Who determined its measurements—for surely you know!  
Or who stretched out a measuring tape upon it?  
On what were its sockets sunk?  
Or who directed its cornerstone in place,  
When the stars of the morning were jubilant together,  
And all the sons of Elohim raised a joyful shout?*

Here we are introduced to those who were present in this work of creation. They were powerfully and joyfully impressed by the founding of the earth. It seems to have been a prolonged process, a period of time, rather than an instantaneous miracle, which is here likened to the erection of a great edifice on earth.

God's spirit is literally imperceptible, even when present in others. It would be impossible to describe it in literal terms, so that these early sons are also presented

under the figure of stars. The coming of Christ was predicted by a Star out of Jacob (Num.24:17), which guided the magi to His birthplace (Matt.2:2). Abram's seed are compared with stars (Gen.15:5). The moon and stars are messengers of the ecclesias (Rev.1:20), and the Root of David will be the resplendent Morning Star, harbinger of the coming kingdom (Rev.22:16). So, in the beginning, the stars of the morning celebrated the advent of the earth. This is most suggestive. When the earth was founded, the day was about to dawn, for it was to be the means of God's fullest revelation to all His creatures.

#### THE EXERCISE OF DIVINE POWER

The Disposer, or Subjector, *created* the heavens and the earth. This shows that that title *God*, in English, or *Elohim* (Alueim), in Hebrew, or *Theos*, in Greek, is broader and more comprehensive than *Creator*, and includes it. The meaning of the title Elohim, Toward-Subjectors, is by no means limited to creation. In the first chapter of Genesis Elohim goes on to *vibrate* by His spirit, and so inaugurated all *motion*, which resulted in the light and the atmosphere and the waters and the dry land. In other words, His power was exercised in subjecting or placing all the elements He had created to prepare the earth for the living souls which He was about to create.

May we not take this as a primitive example of His way of working? There is to be a future new creation. Is the Disposer idle meanwhile? Is He not doing as He did in the beginning, operating in the present creation in preparation for the new? By His spirit He has already introduced His saints into the new creation, in anticipation of that which is to come. This should show us that God is far more than Creator. He is the *Operator*, the Controller of that which He has made. Otherwise how could He make any advance toward the consummation?

All intelligent creatures are overwhelmed with awe when they contemplate the innumerable, immeasurable, infinitesimal, incomprehensible marvels of creation. Nothing is so great and nothing so small but it reveals the wonders of His workmanship. We cannot except the tiniest atom from His attention, for who else could create it? Nor can we excuse Him from the task of making such an incalculable number, for no one has the power or the skill to form even one. It is well for believers to contemplate these things, and meditate upon them, for they are tangible and material, so present no problem to faith. These marvels of the *Creator* should prepare us for the more marvelous movements of the *Subjector*, Who *operates* the creation in order to work out His will.

If God, the Subjector, had simply flung the stars into space, and did not hold them to their orbits, all would soon be confusion, and chaos. Their *movements*, as well as their creation, are due to His disposal. If He did not regulate the times and seasons on the earth, life would soon vanish from its surface. His revelation tells us very little about creation. It is almost altogether concerned with His operations among the sons of Adam. The unbeliever does not see His hand, or realize His presence. Although the Scriptures are full of examples of His directive and corrective influence, few of the saints fully realize the pervading power of His spirit. Indeed, it was not fully revealed until Paul's full and final unfoldings show us that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). May He give us grace to receive it and believe it!

A. E. Knoch

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The preceding article is compiled from portions of studies by Brother Knoch, appearing in *Unsearchable Riches*, volumes 40, 42 and 45.

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*In the Beginning*

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GENESIS 1:1

**1 In the Beginning:  
Elohim created the heavens and the earth.**

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SKELETAL STRUCTURE

1:1-2:3 Heavens and Earth—eneological Annals 2:4-50:26

1:1 Creation—Disruption 1:2a

NOTES AND CROSS REFERENCES

*in-beginning*: preposition prefixed to noun, *beginning*, which belongs to the Hebrew family, HEAD, ENGLISH-MAN'S CONCORDANCE (E.C.) p.1147 (*cf* Prov.8:22; John 1:1).

*Elohim (Toward-Subjector-s)*: Title of Deity, plural in form but generally used with singular verb, occurs over 2000 times, belonging to Hebrew word family, SUBJECT; E.C. p.76 (*cf* Psa.136:2-6; Isa.45:5-10; John 1:2; 1 Cor.15:25-28).

*created*: simple, active, complete verb form, third person singular, CREATE; E.C. p.270 (*cf* Psa.148:4,5; Col.1:16).

*the heavens*: direct object particle with definite article prefixed to plural noun, *heavens*, in the Hebrew family PLACE; E.C. p.1286 (*cf* Psa.8:3; 96:5).

*the earth*: direct object particle with definite article plus singular noun, *earth*, in the Hebrew family LAND; E.C. p.776 (*cf* Job 38:4-7; Psa.102:25; Prov.3:19; Isa.40:28; 45:12,18; Jer.51:15).

### THE VERB “CREATE”

A CONCORDANT STUDY of scriptural words is the best approach for understanding their meanings. In the absence of a Concordant Keyword Concordance of Old Testament words, we hope to provide lists of references for certain important terms in passages being studied in the pages of this magazine. The first of these is presented herewith for the verb of Genesis 1:1, “create.”

All the occurrences of this verb in its simple form, as given in ENGLISHMAN’S HEBREW CONCORDANCE, page 270, are provided. This list does not include references to the uses of the “make” and “cause” aspects of this Hebrew verb, which are used for actions that cannot well be expressed by the English verb *create*. This list of references for the occurrences of the simple aspect of this verb is divided into various forms of the verb, such as active and passive, complete and incomplete, infinitive, participle and imperative.

The Concordant Version does not recognize the verb “create” in Isaiah 4:5 even though it appears in the Masoretic Hebrew Text (based on manuscripts dating back about one thousand years). On the basis of the Septuagint Greek translation (based on even older manuscripts), we conjecture that the original Hebrew manuscript read differently here and that the verb “create” was introduced into the Hebrew text in error. But we include Isaiah 4:5 in the list and provide our translation as it would be if we had accepted “create” as the correct verb, with the entire reference put in square brackets.

We hope our readers will find a survey of these occurrences of the Hebrew verb for “create” edifying and enlightening.

### The Occurrences of “Create”

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#### CREATE

##### SIMPLE, ACTIVE, COMPLETE:

- Gen.1:1 Elohim *created* the heavens and the earth.  
Gen.1:27 male and female He *created* them.  
Gen.2:3 ceased from all His work that Elohim had *created*.  
Gen.5:2 Male and female He *created* them.  
Gen.60:7 wipe out humanity that I have *created*,  
Dt.4:32 from the day that Elohim *created* humanity  
Ps.89:12 The north and the south, You *created* them;  
Ps.89:47 have You *created* all the sons of humanity?  
[Isa.4:5] [Yahweh *will create*]  
Isa.40:26 Who *created* . . . these?  
Isa.41:20 the Holy One of Israel, He *created* it.  
Isa.43:7 for My glory I *created* him;  
Isa.45:8 I, Yahweh, I *create* it.  
Isa.45:12 And *created* humanity on it;  
Isa.45:18 He did not *create* it a chaos;  
Isa.54:16 I Myself *created* the craftsman,  
Isa.54:16 I Myself *created* the ruiner.  
Jer.31:22 For Yahweh *has created* a new thing.  
Mal.2:10 Did not one El *create* us?

##### SIMPLE, ACTIVE, INFINITIVE:

- Gen.5:1 On the day Elohim *created* Adam.

##### SIMPLE, ACTIVE, IMPERATIVE:

- Ps.51:10 *Create* for me a clean heart,

##### SIMPLE, ACTIVE, INCOMPLETE:

- Gen.1:21 Elohim *created* the great sea monsters.  
Gen.1:27 Elohim *created* humanity in His image.  
Nu.16:30 should Yahweh *create* an unprecedented

##### SIMPLE, ACTIVE, PARTICIPLE:

- Ecc.12:1 Yet remember your *Creator*  
Isa.40:28 *Creator* of the ends of the earth;

Isa.42:5 *Creator* of the heavens  
 Isa.43:1 Your *Creator*, Jacob  
 Isa.43:15 *Creator* of Israel  
 Isa.45:7 and *Creator* of darkness,  
 Isa.45:18 *Creator* of the heavens;  
 Isa.57:19 *Creating* the produce of the lips.  
 Isa.65:17 behold Me *creating* new heavens and  
 Isa.65:18 future which I shall be *creating*,  
 Isa.65:18 *creating* Jerusalem an exultation  
 Am.4:13 And *creating* the wind,

## SIMPLE, PASSIVE, COMPLETE:

Ex.34:10 marvels which *have not been created*  
 Ps.148:5 He Himself determined, and they *were created*.  
 Isa.48:7 Now *are* they *created*,  
 Ezk.21:30 place where you *were created*,

## SIMPLE, PASSIVE, INFINITIVE:

Gen.2:4 the heavens and the earth when they were  
*created*  
 Gen.5:2 on the day they were *created*.  
 Ezk.28:13 In the day of your *creation*  
 Ezk.28:15 From the day of your *creation*,

## SIMPLE, PASSIVE, INCOMPLETE:

Ps.104:30 send forth Your spirit; they *are created*

## SIMPLE, PASSIVE, PARTICIPLE:

Ps.102:18 a people yet *being created* shall praise



In an idiomatic translation, Hebrew verb classifications termed “complete,” “incomplete,” “infinitive” and “participle” cannot always be rendered by the corresponding forms in English. In such cases the particular Hebrew verb form used is indicated in the CVOT by small vertical or horizontal strokes before or after the English verb used, as shown in the Abbreviation Key accompanying the translation.

## ELOHIM CREATES

THE FIRST sentence of the Sacred Scriptures lays the foundation of divine revelation. God’s Word begins with the simple and momentous claim that Elohim creates everything. He is the Cause; we are a small part of the caused.

God is the Cause. Consequently He is responsible, and He receives the glory or blame in accord with the end results. With creation comes the responsibility of the Creator for what He has created, but if He brings the creation to a good consummation, the glory for creating and following through to this good outcome is His alone. There is no room for dualism in Genesis 1:1. It is true that the title, Elohim, is plural, referring to the fact that the Subjector (the Father) is operating in and through the Toward-Subjector (the Son), but the work is singular, by one spirit and under the hand of the Supreme. God is the One Who achieves creation, and He is the One Who will be finally acclaimed when the heavens and the earth and all connected with them reach the glorious position He has purposed.

## THE BEGINNING OF GOD’S REVELATION

All revelation from here on stems from this revelation. The whole of Scripture finds its point of reference from this statement in Genesis 1:1. What is said concerning humanity and its various divisions, needs and hopes must ultimately be seen in relation to the fact that God has brought everything into existence and takes full responsibility for what He has done. We must never lose sight of the truth that God is the One Who created this universe

in which we live. Passing pleasure or continuing pain can never change the facts set forth here concerning the power and intelligence of the Creator.

It would be difficult to find a claim that is more fundamental. Yet it is stated with the greatest of simplicity. It says nothing unnecessary and everything essential for beginning our acquaintance with God.

God's existence is assumed. This is unacceptable for many today; those, however, who believe that "God is" (Heb.11:6), and that He speaks to us in His Word and in His Son (Heb.1:1,2) should eagerly accept what is said here in Genesis 1:1, without qualification. Three revelations of God in this passage are irrefutable. God has the powerful ability to create the heavens and the earth. Furthermore, God has the intelligent skill to do so. And finally, God actually puts this power and knowledge to work, and thus creates the heavens and the earth.

#### DIVINE LIMITATIONS?

The first verse of the Bible instructs us clearly that there are no limitations to God's power and knowledge. It is foolish and irreverent to claim that God cannot accomplish something He promises or wills to do. If God tells Abram He is going to bless him and make him a blessing, both him and his seed, and allot to him a certain piece of land, He will do so. God knows how to do so and has the ability to do so. If God declares that He wills to save all mankind and bring them into a realization of the truth, nothing can keep Him from this achievement. Since God was able to create the heavens and the earth, He is able to bring the world to the consummation He has set. Such conclusions are drawn both logically and convincingly from the facts of Genesis 1:1.

The creature is the one with limitations. No created being can rise up above the Creator and spoil his work.

Evil is not a power independent of God. The human will can never change God's will, let alone defeat it. God is supreme, and this is made clear from the beginning.

#### THE COMPLEMENT OF GENESIS 1:1

In a sense, the entirety of the rest of God's Word, from Genesis 1:2 forward, is the complement of Genesis 1:1. It is the *complement*, not only a *supplement* to the first verse. We cannot leave the truth of Genesis 1:1 carefully wrapped and put aside in its own compartment and look (for example) at Genesis 1:2 or Exodus 20:3 or Matthew 25:46 or Philippians 3:20 by themselves without any recognition of the fact that God is responsible for the whole of creation.

We cannot glorify God as God without seeing that as the Creator of the heavens and the earth He is glorious, indeed glorious in purpose, glorious in operation, glorious in achievement. The fact that God creates the universe is not enough. A universe that is without order or meaning or contains that which never contributes to the glory of its creator is not the creation of the God of Scripture.

Therefore, when we come to Genesis 1:2 and learn that the earth became a chaos, there is only one solution bringing glory. This darkness and lifelessness and disorder cannot be absolute waste if the powerful and intelligent Creator is still employing His power and exercising His intelligence in accord with a purpose beyond the present chaos. Surely Genesis 1:1 tells us He is *able* to carry out a purpose for good even in and through the chaos itself.

We will hold to the revelation of Genesis 1:1 as vitally relevant to the evil that bursts forth in Genesis 1:2. God is powerful and God is intelligent, and therefore the evil of the second verse of Scripture is firmly within the province of God. It *must not* be something beyond the Creator's power to handle or an unexpected development that escaped His all-knowing foresight.

The whole question of responsibility has been established. As the Creator, powerful and intelligent, God must be recognized as the ultimate Cause of everything. Consequently He holds ultimate responsibility. We must not shrink from this truth. It is to God's glory.

#### GOOD AND WISE

However, the revelation of God in Genesis 1:1 is only two-dimensional. We have learned, as noted above, that God has tremendous ability and intelligence, but Genesis 1:1 does not, in itself, show us that God's power is fully directed to good or that His knowledge is employed wisely. On the other hand, the entrance of darkness, chaos and vacancy into the world, if deliberately and specifically counseled by the Creator, introduces a third dimension. We are seeing not only God's ability and skill but also are seeing an extraordinary test of His *character*. Are His powerful works ultimately for good, and are they wisely carried out so that even those temporary elements which are not good in themselves are truly needed for the achievement of that good consummation? These are vital concerns that Genesis 1:1 does not answer.

This is exactly what is shown in Genesis 1:2-31. Within the overall responsibility of God Who created the heavens and the earth, evil enters in the form of chaos and vacancy and darkness. Then God, Who created the heavens and the earth, speaks, and light and order and life come about, ending with the revelation that "it is very good."

Genesis 1:1 is not enough to reveal the goodness of the Creator. We do not *know* anything about the goodness of the heavens and the earth apart from a contrast with the evil of chaos, vacancy and darkness. But now that Genesis 1:2-31 is added as a complement of Genesis 1:1 we glorify the Creator indeed. He is wise beyond our greatest

thoughts and able beyond our highest hopes. His power and knowledge are employed for the highest good.

#### THE LOVE OF GOD

This test of the divine character is rehearsed anew starting with the creation of humanity and the deception in Eden which leads to the entrance of death into our world. For "through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind" (Rom.5:12). The goodness of the powerful and all-knowing God is put to the test, and throughout the rest of Scripture this remains the pivotal question until God reveals Himself in His Son.

Then, in the most fearful and astounding act of God giving His Son for sinners, in the death of Christ and the results of His death, entombment and resurrection, the full truth is set before us. God is not only able to create humanity, but with supreme wisdom and the purest of righteousness and love, God's goodness is displayed as never before. The God of Genesis 1:1 is revealed in all His glory, though none of us have yet been able to grasp its dimensions.

It is with the commendation of His love in the giving of His Son (Rom.5:8) that all questions of God's character are finally and completely settled. This love of God is such a glorious aspect of divine goodness that Paul had to speak of it in a measure of four dimensions. Thus he prayed that believers, "having been rooted and grounded in love" should be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and depth and height of this revelation as it affects us and ultimately all in the heavens and on the earth (Eph. 1:10,11; 3:14-19).

#### STRONG TO GRASP

Only God can give us spiritual strength for grasping the vastness of His love as revealed through the sufferings and

exaltation of His Son, and the operations of His choice and call and blessing of us in Christ. But this is true of every revelation of Scripture. For us who are called there is an awareness that God is working all together for good (*cf* Rom.8:28). This is why we claim that in creating the heavens and the earth, God was beginning a good work that will ultimately bring Him glory in every aspect, in everyone, everywhere and always.

Chaos will give way to order, to a glorifying of God that could never come about apart from the temporary chaos.

Vacancy will give way to life and activity, to the praise of the Creator Who intended that vacancy to exist for awhile.

Darkness will give way to light that will be fully appreciated to the honor of the One Who planned even the darkness itself for its time.

These glories will come about because God will bring them about. The Creator will be revealed as the Saviour, the Reconciler, the wise and loving Subjector of all.

#### THE CREATOR

When the Scriptures are complete, the revelation of God given in the first verse is greatly enlarged. There we saw One Who commands power and intelligence effectively. But now we are seeing that He is wise and righteous, and above all, He is love. The Creator never turns away from His creation or ceases to carry forward His purpose for its good and His glory.

Today we still live in the midst of darkness and sufferings. “For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it” (Rom.8:20). But this vanity is a transitory state; it is not everlasting. The Creator has subjected His creation to this vanity “in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom.8:21). D.H.H.

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#### *The One Who is Operating All*

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#### WRITTEN FOR THIS TEACHING OF OURS

OUR THEME in this series of writings is the *deity* of God (commonly termed His “sovereignty”). By this we mean His “GOD-ness”; that is, His *subjectorship* or *placership* (*cf* “deity,” KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.71: “*theotês*, PLACERSHIP, ‘that which pertains to God’”).

Humanity’s fundamental sin is its failure to glorify and thank God *as God* (“not *as God* do they glorify or thank Him”; Rom.1:21). Nevertheless, that which *is* known of God is apparent among them, “for God manifests it to them” (Rom.1:19). This is because God’s invisible attributes are “descried” (i.e., “made out” or “detected”) from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His imperceptible *power* and *divinity* (*theiotês*, PLACERSHIP). Hence man is “defenseless” (Rom.1:20b) in making the claim that since nothing can be known of God, therefore he is to be held guiltless in neither honoring nor serving Him, in neither glorifying nor thanking Him as God.

Any such defense will fail, for however limited their knowledge may be—and however insistent they may be in seeking to deny it—*humanity knows God*. That is, even if they will not admit it and may not *realize* it, they *have* a “relationship” with Him, according to the knowledge which they possess concerning Him. To be sure, their relationship to Him is largely one of estrangement. Nevertheless, just as surely as a former husband or wife continues to sustain a certain relationship to his or her former mate, humanity, in the midst of its darkness and estrangement from God, still sustains a certain relationship to Him.

Humanity's problem is not that they do not know God at all, but that they do not know Him well. The apostle Paul declares that they *do know* Him, saying that they *are* ones "knowing God" (Rom.1:21a). It is not that men do not know God at all, but that, "*knowing Him, not as God do they glorify or thank Him*" (Rom.1:21b).

This failure to glorify and thank God as God, common to mankind, remains our failure as well, even though we are believers in Christ Jesus and are growing in the growth of God (*cf* Col.2:19). During this present lifetime, the "growth of God" is a very slow growth and a very limited growth, even for those who may have been granted comparatively more progress therein. All who are saints are still members of the old humanity, which is corrupted in accord with its seductive desires (*cf* Eph.4:22). Considered in ourselves, we are but "flesh," and, even as our Lord, can do nothing of ourselves (*cf* John 5:30; *cp* John 15:5; Rom.8:7).

Yet we do not *think* that we can do nothing of ourselves; hence neither do we *believe* that this is so. We are taught to have confidence in ourselves; that God helps those who help themselves; and that *self*-confidence is essential to success.

Now it is true that we must first act before the grace which is appointed to follow such initial acts will be granted. Likewise, practical confidence in one's own abilities, *under God*, is ideal. There is nothing, however, in any of this that denies that the vital first act, or any other needful acts of our own along the way toward the achievement of a goal, is something for which we should neither glorify nor thank God.

In accord with the wisdom of the world, most of us, in fact, embrace the sentiment of the Roman statesman and orator Cicero, who declared, "No wise man ever thanked God for virtue." Our notion is that while the grace of God is indispensable, it is also insufficient. In our fancied inde-

pendence of God, we imagine that were it not for ourselves, we would be "even as the rest of men."

Many have convinced themselves that such a schema is essential to "human dignity." This artful phrase, however, is little more than a euphemism for self-pride. For most of us, it is not that we sometimes fail to ascribe our all to God, but that the thought of doing so does not even cross our mind. And, it is not that we simply fail to ascribe our *all* to Him, even the evil, which will eventuate in our good and His glory, but that we fail even to ascribe our virtue to Him! Never mind gracing Him with our trust concerning His purpose in our shortcomings, we refuse even to thank Him for whatever goodness we do possess. Instead of thanking God for His saving grace which alone has wrought our salvation, we insist on claiming that He has merely made our virtue possible. Our claim is that while we could not have succeeded apart from Him, still, all His help notwithstanding, it was finally something of ourselves (hence, thanks to ourselves) that turned defeat into victory.

The reason why we both entertain and maintain such stupid notions (notions from which, at least in spirit, perhaps none of us have been fully delivered), is because, *knowing God, not as God do we glorify or thank Him*. Consequently, we ourselves, in our own measure, "even as the rest," have been made vain in our reasonings, even as darkened in our unintelligent heart (*cf* Rom.1:21b).

From this fearful foundation have proceeded all of the evils which continue to dog us all our days. We may not have crafted idols of stone, but who among us has not engaged in "prostitution [i.e., sexual impurity], uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed—which *is* idolatry" (Col.3:5)? It may be true, in our circle of acquaintance, that not many have "effected indecency" by altering the natural use of their bodies, taking part in passionate acts with those of their own gender (Rom.1:27). But even if

so, who among has not effected various *other* indecencies himself, ones such as envy, strife, guile, whispering (i.e., gossip), vilification, pridefulness, ostentatiousness, stubbornness, implacableness, or unmercifulness (*cf* Rom.1: 29-31)? Do we realize that these too are acts of indecency, just as surely as unnatural sexual relations?

It is my prayer that through the ongoing careful consideration of our theme, which is, “The One Who is Operating All,” both the reader and the writer might be built up together in faith and love. Therefore we would not cease praying for one another, requesting that we might be filled full with the realization of God’s *will*, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, we to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in *the realization of God*; being endowed with all power, in accord with the might of His glory, for all endurance and patience with joy (*cp* Col.1:9-11).

The reality of our situation is that for mortal sinners, it is difficult to walk by faith, not by perception. Indeed, beyond difficult, it is impossible for us to do so, that is, for us to do so of ourselves. How, then, we rejoice to learn that when we *are* walking “beside God,” all is possible (“with [lit., ‘beside’] God [all is possible]”; Matt.19:26). We therefore soberly look to Him in His grace that He might condescend truly to grant us discernment of His will and acquaintance with His mind. Thus, and only thus, may we be learning to glorify and thank Him truly “as God.”

#### MOTIVE AND INTENTION

“Whoever should smite his associate without knowledge when he was not hating him heretofore, or he who should come with his associate into the wildwood to chop trees, and his hand may be impelled with the axe to cut down a tree, and the iron head flies off the wooden handle and finds his associate so that he dies, that man, he

shall flee to one of these cities [of refuge] that he may live” (Deut.19:4,5).

“The smiter of a man that dies shall be put to death, yea death. But if he had no malicious intent, *yet the One, Elohim, He had fated him into his hand*, then I set for you a place where he shall flee” (Ex.21:12,13).

With this striking example of God’s deity, we begin our endeavor, that of gaining a realization of the great truth that God is the One Who is *operating all* in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11).

Note that in this precept of Moses the general rule was that the smiter of a man that dies was to be put to death. In a case, however, in which the one effecting the killing had no malicious intent, such a one was not to be put to death, and was rather appointed a place where he might justly flee from any who sought to injure him for the evil done, albeit unintentionally.

From this we learn that divine judgment is concerned with intent, or motive, not simply with action, considered in itself. No act is wrong of itself, but only in relation to its motive and purpose. For example, the removal by incision of the human heart from the chest cavity in order to save a life by organ transplantation, is surely a noble deed. Yet if the same surgeon, with equal skill and expertise, should excise a human heart in order to effect murder even as to engage in cannibalism, it is recognized by all that such a one has committed an ignoble deed. How can this be so, in reference to the same act? It is because it is not, in itself, the act of excising the organ that we either praise or condemn, but the surgeon’s purpose in so doing, even as his subsequent acts, in consideration of the consequences thereof to the patient, or victim.

Note especially, however, that, in Israel, in any such cases as above in which a man killed another accidentally, as when the iron head of a workman’s axe flew off and fatally

injured his associate, or, in any other instances in which one man killed another unintentionally, such acts were to be accounted for as having occurred by God's appointment.

If the smiter of a man unintentionally killed another, it was to be understood that Yahweh must have fated him into his hand. Any such tragedy, though accidental from the human standpoint, was to be recognized, according to truth, as having been purposed of God.

Now rather than jumping ahead and presuming that God does or does not appoint all evil events—ones of whatever kind—to occur, from this present text itself, one should simply learn that whenever accidental or otherwise unintentional homicide occurs, it is because God has wisely determined that it should come to pass. It is not that He merely “allows” such things to happen, but that, having *appointed* all such events to occur, He then, also, allows them to come to pass.

We should therefore appraise all similar events in our own lives today in a similar light. Hence, when, due to a complex chain of unintended events, a great ocean liner sinks resulting in the deaths of many hundreds of souls, it must be because God had determined beforehand that this should occur, according to His own wise counsels. Or, when a school bus driver accidentally drives over a cliff and a large group of children die bringing sorrow to an entire community, it must be because God had fated this to occur.

Unless we accept those occurrences of both good and evil recorded in the Scriptures which are expressly declared to have been decreed of God as indeed having been decreed of God, not only will we be disbelieving, but we will lose the benefit of realizing that such events are not exceptions to the rule but are rather the rule itself. Only as we view such occurrences as, first of all, *true*, and then, as *representative* rather than exceptional, will we be in a position to realize that, “*Whatever* was written before, was written for this teach-

ing of ours, that through the endurance and the consolation of the scriptures *we* may have expectation” (Rom.15:4).

If we do at least acknowledge that whenever accidental evil events occur, they occur because God has purposed them to occur, we will then be in a position to receive the still more astounding revelation that *all* is out of God (Rom. 11:36). This is even as Isaiah is saying, “O Yahweh our Elohim, You shall *set* peace on the hearthstones for us, *for* indeed, *all our doings* You have *made* for us” (Isa.26:12).

#### KEPT BACK FROM SINNING

Let us now take note of a number of further specific revelations of God's deity, recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In Genesis 12, God makes certain promises to Abraham. Specifically, He promises him that He will *make* his descendants a great nation, and that He will give them the land which He had appointed unto them. Then, in Genesis 15:1-5, God further promises that Abraham shall have an heir, even as an innumerable posterity. Most significantly, in Genesis 17:1, God declares that He is “the El-Who-Suffices,” that is, the Almighty God or Subjector. God can do whatever He pleases to do. He can operate upon an elderly woman's body so that she can bear a son; *and*, He can also cause Abraham to choose to migrate to Palestine and later cause Jacob to migrate to Egypt in order to fulfill the prophecy of Genesis 15:3, “Behold, You have given no seed to me; and now a son of my household will take over from me.”

In light of this prophecy we should ask, Was it possible for Jacob to will never to descend to Egypt? Can man “choose” to prevent God's predictions from coming to pass? Must not man rather will to fulfill them?

Though it may seem odd at first, it follows from the fact of God's promise to Abraham that he should have both an heir and a vast posterity, that Abraham could neither commit suicide nor decline to have sexual relations. If God

promised to give Abraham's seed the land of Palestine, then it was certain that Abraham would have children. He had no free will by which to commit suicide. God controlled Abraham's will so that he could not choose otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

Consider, too, another verse where Abraham had moved south to Gerar, in the kingdom of Abimelech. Abimelech immediately was attracted to Sarah. He took her. God then spoke to the king in a dream. "Elohim came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him: Behold, you are to die on account of the women whom you have taken, for she is the spouse of a possessor. Now Abimelech had not gone near her, and he said: My Lord, are You going to kill even an unknowing and righteous nation? Did not he himself say to me, She is my sister? And moreover, did not she herself say, He is my brother? In the sincerity of my heart and in the innocence of my palms have I done this. The One, Elohim, replied to him in the dream: I too know that you have done this in the sincerity of your heart, and *I was also keeping you back from sinning* against Me. Therefore I did not allow you to touch her" (Gen.20:3-6).

Abimelech had no free will. He simply could not have chosen to lie with Sarah that night because God controlled his will and caused him to refrain. This is because God is Almighty, because He is the All-Sufficient One. *He did not need Abimelech's help to achieve His own purpose.*

Perhaps most notable of all in Genesis in relation to God's deity concerning human events is Genesis 50:20. Joseph declares to his brothers: "You devised evil against me, *yet Elohim devised it for good* in order to accomplish, as at this day, to preserve many people alive."

Joseph's jealous brothers had originally entertained murdering him; later, however, they changed their minds and

1. cf Gordon H. Clark, PREDESTINATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, p.5 (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1978).

sold him into slavery. They could not have remained resolute in their proposal to kill their brother, since God had determined that Joseph should go to Egypt, later to save his family from starvation. The brothers were neither free to kill Joseph, nor to let him go. Their motives were impure; but God's purpose was good and could not fail. In the same event, *they* devised evil against Joseph, yet *God* devised it for good, according as He was intending.

In Exodus, God's deity is presented in most striking terms concerning Pharaoh. In Exodus 4:21, Yahweh says to Moses: "When you go to return to Egypt, see to all the miracles which I place in your hand, that you do them before Pharaoh. Yet I shall make his heart *steadfast*, and he shall not dismiss the people."

In Exodus 3:19, God had already declared: "*I know* that the king of Egypt *shall not* give you leave to go yea not even by a steadfast hand." Since God had made Pharaoh's heart steadfast in its resolution not to let the people go, how can anyone say that Pharaoh was "free" to let the slaves go? Is not God omnipotent, and is not His knowledge perfect? Now, we may hedge and say that God *can* control His creatures, but out of respect for their "dignity," He *will* not control them. However, what we may say God will not do, Exodus 4:21 says He did do.

Moreover, God expressly declares that, "I Myself shall *harden* the heart of Pharaoh and increase My signs and My miracles in the land of Egypt" (Ex.7:3).

The facts are these: Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh, Elohim of the Hebrews . . . Dismiss My people that they may serve Me!" (Ex.7:16). Pharaoh said, "Go!" (Ex.10:8). "Yet Yahweh made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, so that he did not dismiss the sons of Israel" (Ex.10:20).

This is all according as Paul recounts, "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.' Consequently, then, to whom He will, He is merciful, yet whom He will, He is *hardening*" (Rom. 9:17,18; cit. Ex.9:16).

The vital thing to see is that God was *operating* counter to His revealed will, and yet according to His intention. His preceptive will was, "Let My people go!" Yet His decretive will was to make the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, so that he would not dismiss the sons of Israel.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 2:30 we are told that "Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through it, for Yahweh your Elohim *made* his spirit obstinate and *made* his heart resolute, that He might give him into your hand (as is known this day)."

Finally, in considering various passages from the writings of Moses about God's deity, let us turn our attention to Deuteronomy 30:6. This is not a text concerning God's causing of evil but of His determining good. The day will yet come concerning Israel when, "Yahweh your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed so as to love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may stay alive."

This will occur in the coming eon, in the day when He *cleanses* them from *all* their uncleannesses. In that day, He will bestow His law in their inward part, and write it upon their heart (Jer.31:33). Gloriously, He will give them a new heart and bestow a new spirit within them. Indeed, He will bestow His own spirit within them, and *make it* that they will go in His statutes even as that they will observe and do His judgments (Ezek.36:26,27).

In order that we might truly believe the Scripture's own testimony regarding God's deity, may we be given an awareness that whatever God actually does is right, even if it should go counter to the popular ethics of our day. To Him be the glory!

J.R.C.

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*Notes on 1 Samuel*

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## JONATHAN AND DAVID

THERE is no mention of Jonathan in the seventeenth chapter where Israel stood trembling before Goliath. He was among the crowd of the fearful. His previous exploits showed a faith in God unknown to his father Saul. Yet his faith was one which looked for signs and direction (1 Samuel 14:6-10), while David's faith was one of much greater confidence in God and self-abandonment. Perhaps the complexities of court life had affected Jonathan. Though he had a follower who could say, "My heart is like your heart" (14:7), it seems he himself had no one on whom to lean and with whom to fellowship.

### 1 SAMUEL 18:1-5

**18 + It <sup>h</sup>came about <sup>as</sup>when he had <sup>all</sup>finished<sup>-</sup> > speaking<sup>-</sup> to Saul, <sup>+</sup>that Jonathan's soul was tied <sup>i</sup>to David's soul; and Jonathan <sup>l</sup>loved him as his own soul. <sup>2 + i</sup>On <sup>t</sup>hat day Saul <sup>l</sup>took him and would not <sup>g</sup>allow him to return to his father's house. <sup>3 +</sup> Jonathan <sup>l</sup>contracted a covenant <sup>+</sup>with David, <sup>i</sup>since he loved<sup>-</sup> <sup>h</sup>im as his own soul. <sup>4</sup> And Jonathan <sup>l</sup>stripped himself <sup>-</sup>of the robe <sup>w</sup>that was on him and <sup>l</sup>gave it to David along <sup>+</sup>with his coats and <sup>fr</sup>even his sword and <sup>fr</sup>his bow and <sup>fr</sup>his girdle. <sup>5 +</sup> Then David went <sup>l</sup>forth with the men of war; <sup>i</sup> wherever Saul <sup>l</sup>sent him, he <sup>c</sup>proceeded <sup>l</sup>intelligently, so <sup>+</sup>that Saul <sup>h</sup>set him over the men of war; and it seemed <sup>l</sup>good in the eyes of all the <sup>wi</sup>soldiers and <sup>m</sup>also in the eyes of Saul's courtiers.**

### JONATHAN CAPTIVATED

"It came about when he [David] had finished speaking

to Saul, that Jonathan's soul was tied to David's soul; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (18:1). Saul may have been expecting to learn something from David's lineage that might explain his courage and military prowess. Perhaps David's grandfather or great uncle had been a valiant warrior. Saul would look for such explanations that were acceptable to the flesh. But Jonathan, witnessing David speak with Saul, was totally captivated by something he recognized—something to which Saul was blind.

Jonathan had been a military leader for some time, and would have been familiar with all the ploys used by soldiers to curry favor with their leaders. Probably he had been standing by when David was brought before Saul on the field of battle and refused Saul's armor. What did Jonathan see in David now? Perhaps it was something in his answer to Saul. "Saul said to him, Whose son are you, young man? David replied, The son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite" (1 Sam.17:58). David's humility was remarkable. There were no claims of glory, either for self or family. And his simplicity and humility gave credence to his actions and all he had said before.

David continued acting intelligently and humbly, and his favor with all the people grew. In this respect he represents Christ, Whose disposition led to His emptying, His service, His humility and His unparalleled obedience (Phil.2:5-8). Paul exhorts us to possess and display this same disposition (Phil.2:1-5).

#### TIED

"Jonathan's soul was *tied* to David's soul; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The word *tied* simply means *to bind* or *tie* together. But when it is *souls* that are bound, the strands that unite are something other than can be touched with hands. It is very interesting that the Hebrew word here translated *tie* is frequently translated *conspire*.

*Conspire* is from the Latin, a compound of "con" (together) and "spire" (breathe). The thought is "breathe-together." Those who are so united in purpose that they are willing to give up self for the common goal are conspirators. They are not only united in purpose and action, but the unifying cause is so dear it is as if they even "breathe together."

*Conspire*, of itself, has neither a good or evil connotation; it simply refers to those who are bound together for a common goal or purpose. But perhaps the evil conspirators of our day illustrate it best. Revolutionists bond together with a common purpose, willing to give up their lives to accomplish the goal and what they consider the ultimate good of the many.

It seems that Jonathan had yearned for a *conspirator* who shared his devotion to Yahweh and his patriotism and his values. Jonathan's persuasions and arguments with Saul show that they truly had little in common. But in David, Jonathan not only found one who hungered and thirsted for the same things as he, he found one who excelled himself. In David, Jonathan found someone with whom he could share all that was truly precious. His response was love and self-abasing devotion.

Christ was once so tightly surrounded by listeners that His own mother and brothers could not reach him. His response to one questioning this was, "For anyone who ever should be doing the will of My Father Who is in the heavens, he is My brother and mother!" (Matt.12:50).

#### ACCEPTANCE OF THE SAVIOUR

The 17th and 18th chapters of 1 Samuel speak of four different sets of armor. There is the armor of Goliath, David's armor (if a stave, a sling and a shepherd's bag with stones may be termed armor), Saul's armor and Jonathan's armor. Both Saul and Jonathan offer their armor to David with respect to his being their deliverer. But

their means and attitudes in offering it are strikingly and instructively different.

Saul greeted his deliverer with denial, “You are not able . . .” (17:33). Upon David’s insistence of God’s faithfulness and care, Saul consented and pronounced an affirmation of Yahweh’s presence, but his actions denied that he believed Yahweh’s presence would be sufficient. “Then *Saul clothed David in his coats*, placed a helmet of bronze on his head and put on him a body armor” (1 Sam.17:38). This is as if to say, “You may, in fact, save me, but you must wear the armor I provide and use my weapons to do so.”

Jonathan met David, accepting him as his deliverer, declaring his love and allegiance to him and making a covenant of loyalty to him. No effort does Jonathan make to regulate David, but “Jonathan *stripped himself* of the robe that was on him and gave it to David along with his coats and even his sword and his bow and his girdle” (18:4). Jonathan offers to David, not only all that he has, but also all that he is. David went forth with the men of war and became their leader—this was Jonathan’s position. Jonathan could easily have required that David be second to him, but his disposition was, “You shall reign over Israel, and I myself shall become second to you” (1 Sam.23:17). Saul’s attitude was, “I shall retain you in my service. You will fight my battles and lead my warriors and avenge me of my enemies.”

These same attitudes are displayed daily a millionfold. There are many that would say to Christ, “You may be my Saviour, but you must wear the robes of my righteousness and the coats of my works, and you must wield the weapons of my strength.” The armor of the self-righteous is heavy, and they prize it highly. But to those, like David, who know something of grace, it is only wearisome.

Then there are those with Jonathan’s attitude who say, “I will love the Lord my God with all my heart and with

all my soul and with all my understanding” (*cf* Matt. 22:37). Or, with the Baptist they say, “He must be growing, yet mine it is to be inferior” (John 3:30). Or with Paul they say, “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death . . . I am also deeming all to be a forfeit because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, because of Whom I forfeited all, and am deeming it to be refuse, that I should be gaining Christ, and be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God for faith” (Phil.1:20; 3:8,9).

#### JOINED IN SOUL

Not only should the believer be united with Christ and the Father in love and devotion, but there should also be a great and deep unity between members of the body. “. . . Fill my joy full, that you may be *mutually disposed*, having *mutual love*, *joined in soul*, being *disposed to one thing* . . .” (Phil.2:2). Paul gave the Philippians an exhortation (Phil.1:27-2:4) which he followed with four examples (Phil.2:5-30). The exhortation was to be united and steadfast regardless of circumstances.

The first example was of Christ, Who emptied Himself of the glory inherent to His form, and took a lower form in which He manifested God’s love. His complete and selfless emptying was a display of His equality with God in love and truth. Secondly, Paul testified of his willingness to give up his life in the service of the evangel to the Philippians. Timothy was the third example, one who was “equally sensitive” (or, *equal-souled*) with Paul, and who would be genuinely solicitous to the Philippians’ concerns (2:20). Finally there was Epaphroditus, who risked his soul to perform the ministry of the Philippians (2:30).

All these examples hark back to the giving up of one’s

own life and the display of the love of God. They are examples of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians, "Become, then, imitators of God, as beloved children, and be walking in love, according as Christ also loves you, and gives Himself up for us, an approach present and a sacrifice to God, for a fragrant odor" (Eph.5:1,2). How closely do we approximate this in our fellowship?

J. Philip Scranton



#### ADDITIONAL NOTES ON GENESIS 1:1

The Concordant Version of Genesis 1:1 given on page 13 differs in several respects that given in the 1957 edition. These changes are generally made in the interest of consistency with similar expressions elsewhere in the Version, or because of demands of idiomatic English when these do not conflict with Concordant principles. Two of these changes may call for special explanation, as follows:

Brother Knoch was surely correct in his insistence that the Hebrew title of this book does not refer to some sort of absolute beginning. Yet the use of "the" in lightface type, does not, in itself, indicate such an inconceivable idea (see the Concordant rendering of John 1:1). The whole book deals with beginnings, especially the beginning of creation as far as the earth is concerned, and the beginning of generation on the earth.

It is also correct that the verb "created" appears before the subject "Elohim" in the Hebrew word order of the first sentence of Scripture. But this is the normal word order for a simple, direct statement in Hebrew (verb, subject, object). It seems to us that this sentence ought to be expressed in the normal word order for a direct statement in English (subject, verb, object). In this way the emphasis is given to the entire statement itself rather than to any particular word.

D.H.H.

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### *The Words and Work of God and Man*

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#### INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIASTES

UNDER the general title, "The Words and Work of God and Man," I am presenting a series of studies in Ecclesiastes. While the exposition developed in these pages must be allowed to speak for itself, a few explanatory remarks regarding the process by which the conclusions advanced have been reached seem both desirable and necessary.

Those seeking the mind of God through the Scriptures are confronted with a critical obstacle of an unusual kind. The current versions of the Bible often translate the same Hebrew word in various ways, and quite as often one English word is made to do the duty of several words in the Original. In this way a veil of mystery has been thrown over many a passage, and a certain amount of human opinion and guesswork has been imported into God's truth.

The Book of Ecclesiastes has severely suffered from this inconsistency in translation. Evidence of this fact will come before us in these studies. Meanwhile an illustration will serve to show the way in which the Scriptures have been unconsciously obscured. The noun *chesbon* in verses 25, 27 and 29 of the seventh chapter, is represented by "reason," "account," and "invention" in the AV. It must be evident to the least critical reader that the author's thought is necessarily obscured when in a brief paragraph with a sustained argument the same word is rendered by different terms conveying divergent, and even unrelated, ideas.<sup>1</sup>

1. The CV of Ecclesiastes renders this word "design" and "devisings" in these passages.

Another powerful factor in determining one's conception of Ecclesiastes is the question of the Hebrew text. The Massoretic accents are used not only as signs of interpunction, but often as a Rabbinical commentary on the text. We are not bound by the accents in any case and should scrutinize them carefully, especially in Messianic prophecies. Of great value, yet they are *no part of the sacred text*. It is possible also that we may not fully know the reasons of their location in important places, and may impute wrong motives to the Jewish editors of the text. That they can be perverted is plain enough from the fact that the vocalization often foists upon a passage a meaning out of harmony with the context.

#### AIM

No sacred book has ever been so much misunderstood in its whole aim and spirit as Ecclesiastes. The opinions of learned men have been put on a level with sacred writings. Eventually the views which became popular have been considered "authoritative"; and to this day theology is unable to free itself from the trammels of tradition and confess that authority in matters of exegesis rests exclusively with facts derived from the Bible itself. Our aim should always be to adjust our thoughts to the facts, and never to adjust the facts to our thoughts.

Applying this principle to the matter in hand, our prime concern is to ascertain what the book of Ecclesiastes has to say about itself. In the epilogue we read, "The terminus of the whole matter has been heard: Fear the One, Elohim, and keep His instructions, for this is the whole duty of humanity. For the One, Elohim, shall bring every deed into judgment concerning all that is obscured, whether good or whether evil" (12:13,14). Hence we may say the book aims at achieving a threefold object: (1) Recognition

of God as God; (2) Reception of His revelation; (3) Regulation of life in view of a future rectification or judgment.

#### CHARACTER

What the author wrote was upright and true. "The Assembler sought to find words of delight, and what was written is uprightness and words of truth" (12:10).

This statement explodes the idea in vogue which reads into Ecclesiastes the pessimism of a broken-spirited debauchee. Some have even placed this gem on a level with the works of Byron, Heine, and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

To substantiate this theory appeal is made to the speeches of Job's associates as examples of utterances by misguided critics, who had less understanding of God's ways in providence than the man whom they sought to correct. Concurring in this opinion of the discourses of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, we would point out that the case of Ecclesiastes is by no means analogous. At the end of the book of Job, Yahweh informed his associates that they had not spoken concerning Him what was rightly so (Job 42:7). The opposite is true of Ecclesiastes. The categorical statement of the epilogue describes its contents as words of uprightness and truth.

#### AUTHOR

We are now prepared to consider whether Ecclesiastes asserts itself as the work of Solomon. When we turn to the prologue and epilogue, where it is most natural to expect information respecting authorship, we find no mention whatever of Solomon, nor anything to suggest his personality. On the contrary, there are many things in the book incompatible with the historic Solomon. But it may be said, While Solomon is not mentioned by name, the designation "Son of David" is equivalent to it. This seemingly decisive argument is in reality of no weight. The Hebrew "son" may

equally well mean “descendant;” hence evidence from the book itself must decide between the alternative meanings.

The thrice repeated reference to those who were “over Jerusalem before me” (1:16; 2:7,9) proves that Ecclesiastes looks back on a series of predecessors, a thing Solomon could not do. To say that the writer may have had in mind the old Jebusite princes is gratuitous. What Israelite, not to say anointed of the Lord, would think of identifying himself with the rulers of an accursed nation?

There are three problems which preoccupy Ecclesiastes—death, succession, the just suffering as a sinner. Death occupies a large place (*cf* 2:16; 3:19; 4:2; 7:1,17,26; 8:9; 9:3-5), the special point of perplexity being the just dying the death of the unclean. The prominence given to Succession (2:18,19; 4:8; 6:2) is not surprising, seeing the writer himself is a king, for with royalty it is a paramount question, especially in Israel, where the Messianic hope was bound up with the perpetuity of the Davidic house. Hence the kings of Judah occupied a place which no other kings ever have, or could, occupy—they were *forerunners* of the Messiah. The violent fate overtaking the just—his being carried off from the holy place—is also a matter of grave concern (7:15; 8:10-14; 9:2,3).

A moment’s consideration will show that the problems contemplated in Ecclesiastes do not fit with Solomon’s experience. As to death, in his old age Solomon lapsed into idolatry; therefore death in a manner indicating the Lord’s displeasure—a possibility which dismays Ecclesiastes—would, according to Hebraic conceptions, be a just reward of his deserts. As to succession, Solomon reigned forty years. As Rehoboam, his son and heir, was forty years of age at the time of accession to the throne, he must have been born the very year of his father’s coronation. Solomon’s succession was thus assured from the beginning of his reign. As for the trials of the just, the calamities which

marred the close of Solomon’s tranquil reign were inflicted by the Lord because of his apostasy.

The author of the book, being a king of the Davidic line, the question of date is restricted within definite bounds. It cannot be earlier than Rehoboam, nor later than Zedediah. Now, there is only one king possessing the necessary requirements: Hezekiah of Judah.

The problems which engage Ecclesiastes present a striking analogy with Hezekiah’s experience. When Israel came out of Egypt Yahweh promised not to put on them the diseases of Egypt, if they would heed His commandments, and keep His statutes (Ex.15:26). King Hezekiah gave himself to Yahweh’s service, loved His law supremely and trusted in Him implicitly. Yet he is smitten with the disease of Egypt, and his death is decreed by the God he served: “Thus speaks Yahweh: Give instruction to your household, for you are going to die; and you shall not remain alive” (Isa.38:1). Surely here is an experience to stagger faith and arouse questionings.

Succession was no less pertinent with him. He faced a dynastic, and therefore a Messianic, crisis, when brought to the gates of the Unseen having neither “son nor second.” The word of Isaiah announcing his certain death involved another grave fact—as his disease was a species of leprosy, it meant burial with the unclean, and this, coupled with childlessness, was to him, and to the nation at large, a sign that Yahweh had rejected him.

The problems in Ecclesiastes find an echo in the psalm of Hezekiah (Isa.38:9-20). Here is mourning over death and the rejection by Yahweh which parallels the somber mood prevailing in the first part of Ecclesiastes. “My life-span is uprooted and is deported from me like a shepherd’s tent; I have rolled up my life as a weaver does; He is clipping me from the thrum. From day unto night, You are finishing me up” (Isa.38:12). And even as hopeful-

ness is on the ascendancy in the second part of Ecclesiastes, so also Hezekiah's psalm concludes with acclamation: "The living! the living one! he is acclaiming You as I do today" (Isa.38:19).

The conclusion emerging from these considerations is that to designate the Book of Ecclesiastes as a "dissertation" and its author a "skeptic" is to ignore the practical intention or purpose enunciated in the book itself. The purview of this book is much broader and grander than Bible students have hitherto been willing to allow. It approaches no less a theme than the place of evil in the Divine plan.

This need not surprise us after what we have already seen of the relation it sustains to King Hezekiah. The character and experience of the man preeminently fitted him to assume a representative capacity in his discussion of the universe.

The affliction of Hezekiah, which paved the way to a glorious aftermath of prosperity and peace, furnished a concrete illustration of the gracious purposes subserved by evil. We cannot but believe that such unique experience would crystalize into a masterpiece of literature.

The view here advanced puts a different complexion on the alleged materialistic ideas. If we identify the words of Ecclesiastes with the unusual trial of a particular personage—Hezekiah, for instance—then the texts can be put into context. The so-called "materialistic" ideas are but reflections on the possible meaning of events which were suggested to the writer as he observed life. The occasion which brought this book into existence enables us to discern in it the plaint of a saint, holding fast to his faith in God, who is brought into perplexity before the strange dispensation of God's providence. V. Gelesnoff

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The original study from which the preceding article was selected appeared in *Unsearchable Riches*, volume 3.

### WHAT ELOHIM HAS GIVEN TO THE SONS OF HUMANITY

WE might well suppose that the theme of Ecclesiastes is the *vanity*, or *transitoriness*, of life, the world and its affairs. This is indeed one of the most obvious issues of the book, a very apparent point of interest. But this is no dissertation on resignation or despair. Rather it is an honest recognition of these evils viewed in the light of, and with firm attachment to, the existence of God.

There is all the difference in the world between the secular, sophisticated cynic or scholarly epicurean, who may soberly and calmly observe this vanity of things, recording it as boldly and grandly as the Assembler himself, and the writer of Ecclesiastes. The Assembler sees and states what we all see and feel but may not often state. But he observes and speaks always with God in view. And he never views the transitoriness and the seeming unfairness of things as they appear without relating them to God. God is the Creator. He is the First Cause. He has the ultimate responsibility.

Thus the book becomes a source of hope and praise. We are thankful that the scriptural sense of vanity is not eternal meaninglessness, but rather transitoriness. In recognizing God as the One responsible, we begin to realize that there is power and purpose behind the vanity. This means that the vanity finally is not in vain. We are caught up by the Assembler's frank recognition of vanity and stirring description of disorder, but if we listen carefully to the writer's contextual connection of this evil with the existence of God Who is wholly involved with all His creation

and its sad situation, we will not despair. Instead indeed we will say with exultation and thankfulness, "All is well."

The theme of Ecclesiastes is vanity and struggle and hurt *in relation to God* Who knows what He is doing with His creation and where He is going with it.

#### THE ONE, ELOHIM

Elohim, the One Who subjects all through His chosen channels and means is the Protagonist of this book. Since this is so, we are assured that our own experiences of weariness and being cast down are not meaningless or matters of absolute vanity, but are part of God's operations within the province of His purpose. They enlighten us concerning Elohim, or as the Assembler often designates Him, *the Elohim*. The Concordant Version renders this divine title which is preceded by the definite article, **the One, Elohim**. The word "One" in lightface type is not intended in the sense of "singular," but is used as a pronoun (so as to say, "that One, Elohim") in order to indicate the emphasis which the definite article suggests. *The One* being spoken of is Elohim, the Supreme Subjector.

It may be helpful to separate certain references to God in this book, stringing them together apart from the details concerning human experience and observation which occupy so much space. This may aid us in keeping this necessary aspect of Ecclesiastes in view later when we look more closely at the various details. The writer never loses sight of God or of His operations as he writes. Neither should we as we read and meditate on his writings.

The Assembler, therefore, reminds us:

Elohim has given us our experience of evil (1:13). He gives wisdom, knowledge and rejoicing (2:26). He gives experience (3:10) and makes everything and does His work (3:11). To eat and drink and see good is a gift of Elohim (3:13). What Elohim is doing shall be for the eon and can-

not be added to or subtracted from by others; He does it (3:14). The One, Elohim, shall seek out (3:15) and judge (3:17). He manifests and shows (3:18). The One, Elohim, is in the heavens (5:2), and He gives us the number of our days (5:18). He gives riches and substance and good (5:19) and keeps our hearts occupied (5:20). With His giving of riches He may not give power to enjoy them (6:2). He is mighty (6:10). He has overturned (7:13). He makes all kinds of days (7:14). The One, Elohim, made humanity upright (7:29) and gives us toil (8:15). The righteous and the wise are in the hand of the One, Elohim (9:1). He gives us the days of our transitory lives (9:9). The One, Elohim, made everything (11:5) and shall bring us into judgment (11:9; 12:14). The spirit will return to the One, Elohim, Who gave it (12:7).

Remember your Creator (12:1).

These are not words for discouragement. They are full of promise and hope, assurance and expectation. God is our Creator. Remember Him in all situations and at all times.

#### GOD HAS GIVEN EVIL TO US

In contemplating the experience of evil he has seen, the Assembler is not caught up in a feeling of hopelessness or selfish cynicism because he begins with the premise that God has given the experience of evil to us. The vanity and the apparent unfairness of our lives and the ways of the world "is an experience of evil Elohim has given to the sons of humanity to humble them by it" (Ecc.1:13; *cp* 3:10). There are two major revelations here that we must keep in view as we go through this book. First of all, this vanity and apparent injustice is given to us by God. And then: What is given to us by God is given to us for a purpose.

The particular evil that has captured the mind of the Assembler is the experience of not getting anywhere despite toil and honesty in our deeds and reverence in service to

God. But this is only apparent. It cannot be eternal if God does exist and He has a goal. To be humbled is a goal, and even if we cannot appreciate its goodness, at least it speaks of an end which God has in view. In time we will become thankful for this humbling, and so we will become prepared for the further glories God has for us, all of which will be realized with joy because of the background of evil that we experience during the brief years of the present.

#### THIS TREASURE FROM GOD

For us today the revelation of God is far more glorious than the Assembler could have discovered. In the evangel we are given “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor.4:6).

This does not mean that we will not observe or experience hurts and pressures and perplexities. In our transitory days there will be apparent injustices and real discouragements. When we see the foolish exalted and the wicked applauded, as we will, it will dishearten us. Death is all around and within us. But we have the awareness of the treasure of the love of Christ, Who died for the sake of all (2 Cor.5:14).

Having this treasure, the apostle Paul penned his own “Ecclesiastes” from time to time. “In everything, being afflicted, but not distressed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not perishing” (2 Cor.4:9). “For what is being observed is temporary, yet what is not being observed is eonian” (2 Cor.4:18). “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, because of you He became poor, that you, by His poverty, should be rich” (2 Cor.8:9). As we experience the vanity to which God has subjected the entire creation (Rom.8:20-25), we are aware that He is working all together for good (8:28), for He spares not His own Son, but gives Him up for us all (8:32).

D.H.H.