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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MARCH 2000
BEING THE SECOND NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY-ONE

EDITORIAL

WHY should we spend so much time and space in the magazine on the subject of God’s purpose to become All in all? While Paul writes of justification for all mankind and the vivification of all in Christ, this theme is only one aspect of the evangel he brings to us. Yet the apostle’s whole ministry assumes this welcome message of truth. All is out of God and through Him and for Him. God is righteous, powerful, wise and loving. Christ died for sinners. All are sinners (*cf* p.63).

There is little in God’s Word to us that can be fully appreciated apart from appreciation of God’s delight to reconcile all enemies through the blood of Christ’s cross. The earliest revelation of God in His Word, that of the wise, powerful and purposeful Creator (*cf* pages 51 and 93) is a bedrock of assurance that nothing will be finally lost, for all creation is the work of God’s hands.

Our present experiences in this world of darkness are deeply troubling in themselves, but in focusing our attention on the living God (Who is the Saviour of all mankind) we find there is “light amid the shadows” (p.97), and such a great light it is! “Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ . . . For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God’s righteousness in Him” (2 Cor.5: 18,21). In that light we say with Paul, “Lo! Now is a most acceptable era!” (*cf* p.73).

Perhaps it is possible for some to feel that the curses and judgments upon sinners like Saul and Doeg (*cf* p.78) must stay in force forever, and that the blessings reserved for suffering saints (who also have sinned) like David are

enhanced by this vicious display of hopelessness. But evangelically speaking, that is, speaking in light of the evangel, and in light of the revelation of God given by the evangel, such a consummation is impossible. Babylon will not howl forever (*cf* p.55), but instead will (along with all humanity) acclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord for the glory of God the Father!

We want to defend the truth, but it is the practical and spiritual needs of the believer that especially press us to meditate on and speak so often of God's glorious goal of becoming All in all. The idea of eternal hell has been forced into the Scriptures themselves by wrong translation and false interpretation, and we would expose this great evil. But the harm it has done to the believers' spiritual growth and their testimony to the grace and power and righteousness of God distresses us even more.

The sickness that can say God will be satisfied to see some of His creatures suffering forever, and the saint will rejoice in this as a display of God's justice, is hardly relieved by saying that while God will regret this loss, He will acquiesce to man's free and independent choices. Such ideas cripple our faith and stifle the spirit.

To understate the case, we are greatly harmed in bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace and goodness (*cf* Gal.5:22) when we hold to a message involving everlasting hate, sorrow, turmoil and evil. The believer cannot grow in faith, expectation and love with such a message, and God cannot be glorified.

To be sure the denial and even the neglect of any aspect of Scriptural truth affects our appreciation of the whole. We lose much in spiritual growth and in joy and peace by any misunderstanding or rejection of what God has said. But the denial of the reconciliation of all through the blood of Christ's cross has certainly proved to be an insidious error in the hearts of God's people. D.H.H.

THE FIFTH DAY

²⁰ **And Elohim** ^lsaid: **Let the waters swarm** with **swarming** things, **living souls**, and **let flyers fly** ^{om}above the earth on the **face** of the **atmosphere of the heavens**. ⁷**And it came to** ^lbe so^o. ²¹ + **Elohim** ^lcreated ^lthe ^ggreat sea monsters and ^lall the moving living souls with which the waters swarm according to their kind, and ^levery winged flyer according to its kind. **And Elohim** ^lsaw that it was good. ²² + **Elohim** ^lblessed ^lthem, ^gsaying: **Be fruitful and increase; + fill** ^lthe waters in the seas, and **let the flyers increase** ^lon earth.

²³ **And it** ^lbecame evening, and it ^lbecame morning: the fifth day.

LIVING SOULS

In the corresponding section of the account of earth's restoration (Gen.1:6-8), we were told of Elohim's work in bringing forth the atmosphere and separating the waters. Now in Genesis 1:20-23, on the fifth day, soul-life is created for the waters and the atmosphere. The air and the sea were provided with *swarming* and *moving* souls before the land-life was placed on the ground on the sixth day. Preceding this, on the third day, *life* had appeared on the dry land, but it was insensate, soulless, plant life. It could not feel or hear or see, but, more than that, it was rooted in the soil, stationary, dependent largely upon constant contact with the ground in which it grows for its sustenance. In these things it differed from the life created in the water and the atmosphere.

SWARMING, MOVING SOULS

The words *swarming*,¹ *moving* and *soul* indicate differences between living animals and living plants.

For “Let the waters *swarm* with *swarming* things,” the AV reads, “Let the waters *bring forth abundantly* the *moving* creature.” But plants also *bring forth abundantly*. In its second occurrence, the AV translate the word “moving.” This is much nearer the mark, as the usage of the word in the following passages indicates.

“. . . bring them forth with you, so they can *swarm* in the earth and be fruitful and increase on the earth” (Gen.8:17).

“As for you, be fruitful and increase, *swarm* in the earth and hold sway over it” (Gen.9:7).

“The waterway will *swarm* with frogs, and they will ascend and enter into your house” (Ex.8:3).

“This is unclean to you among the *swarmers swarming* on the land” (Lev.11:29).

“It will come to be that every living soul that *swarms* wherever the watercourse is coming shall live” (Ezek.47:9).

The AV has “living *creature* that moveth” in verse 21. The word rendered “creature” in the AV has no connection with the Hebrew word *create*, but is the word *nphsh*, usually rendered *soul*. It is used here to differentiate *plant* life, which has no sensation, from *animal* life, which has many means of sensing the world about it.

FLYERS AND MARINE MONSTERS

Hebrew has a special term for *bird* (*tzphur*), which does not appear in Genesis 1:20. The term used here is

¹*Editor's note:* While Brother Knoch felt the word “swarm” was better than the AV rendering “bring forth abundantly,” he preferred the word “roam” as a translation of the Hebrew term used here. Yet the word “swarm” does suggest movement as well as abundance and may fit all the occurrences even better than “roam.”

the noun of the verb *fly* (which immediately follows), so it should read “and let flyers fly.” The context here calls for *all* winged creatures which mount up into the atmosphere.

The AV reads “whales” in verse 21, but the Hebrew term is not so specific. It seems wisest to choose a more inclusive term such as *monster* which may be used in other contexts where this Hebrew word appears.

HABITATS AND MOTIONS

Scientists have varied much in the classification of the animals. Most of them are based on differences of *structure*. The divine division seems to be based on habitat and mode of motion. There are *flyers above* the earth, *moving souls* in the waters and *land animals* on the earth, besides *creepers* of the ground.

Swarming animals are also classified by their means of locomotion. The flyers have *wings* as well as legs, the beasts have legs, and the lowest of all, which bend their bodies with a sinuous motion, such as fish and those amphibians and reptiles that have no legs.

FRUITFULNESS AND INCREASE

After God had created the many species of these living souls, He adds the blessing of fruitfulness, so that they increase and fill the water of the seas, and the air of the atmosphere.

I once had a very realistic experience, which gave me a little idea of the results of these words. I was out fishing from a small rowboat near the island of Santa Catalina, off the shore of Southern California. As I passed another boat, I asked if they knew where the fish were. All they said was, “Look down.” Shading my head with a large sombrero, I was astonished as I saw such a solid school of fish that I could not see through them! I can't say I enjoyed fishing that day. It came to be tiresome to let down a hook and

pull one up, without a wait between. So I left an innumerable shoal of fish when I departed.

Another time I was standing on the shore of the lake of Galilee, north of Tiberias. I could not see any fish from where I stood. Suddenly a man came down from the hill behind me and hurled a small bomb into the water. Within a minute the surface was dotted with floating fish, and he jumped into the water and gathered up a few dozen in a bag. Even in such a small body of water it was possible to net one hundred fifty-three large fish (John 21:4-11). The stem of the word *fish* in Hebrew means PROLIFIC. Genesis 48:16 should read, concerning Ephraim and Manasseh, "And that they may *proliferate* to a multitude within the land." These two were "fish-like" in that they outnumbered the other tribes.

Thus God has provided an account of the origin of the soul life with which He populated the atmosphere and the waters before the deluge. In this way He prepared the scene for a habitation for humanity, in such a way as to reveal Himself to the creatures of the heavens as well as the earth.

—adapted from A. E. Knoch

A LESSON OF CREATION:
MEDIATION

Nature supplies the illustrations for the book of revelation. On all sides are pictures of mediation. Our life is not inherent in ourselves, but depends, first of all upon our parents. Although we can extract the vital elements from the air directly, our physical frames cannot feed upon the soil. Its vitality can only come to us through *death*. Some may not believe that our eonian life will come to us through the death of a Mediator, but who can deny that our bodies can only be sustained by the *death* of plants and animals? Unless we are blind, every morsel of food should tell us of life *forfeited* for our sakes. Every edible plant, every food animal, is a reminder that, apart from mediation, we are doomed to death. Mediation is not an obscure doctrine of theology. It is plainly pictured for us in the primer of God's creation.

A.E.K.

Questions and Answers

CHRIST ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY;
*
"LUCIFER," OR "HOWL!" IN ISAIAH 14:12?

Question:

In your article, "Enoch and Elijah" (vol.87, pp.211-213), you conclude by saying, "May these present considerations increase our faith, affording us further assurance that Christ 'alone has immortality' (1 Tim.6:15b)." This statement in 1 Timothy 6:15, however, is made about One Who "is making His home in light inaccessible, Whom not one of mankind perceived nor can be perceiving." How can this text be talking about Christ? Would it not, instead, be talking about the God, "Who no one has ever seen," mentioned in John 1:18?

Likewise, if you are saying that Christ alone has immortality, which Strong's defines as "deathlessness," then how can it be that He died?

In addition, in regard to your saying that Christ alone has immortality, what about Melchizedek, of whom it is said that he had "neither a beginning of days nor consummation of life," and even that he had an "indissoluble life" (Heb 7:3,16)?

Answer:

As a preliminary word, I would note that in approaching the issue of this phrase in question (1 Tim.6:15b,16), we must carefully read the entire passage (vs.13-16) as a whole:

"I am charging you in the sight of God, Who is vivifying all, and of Jesus Christ, Who testifies in the ideal avowal before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this precept unspotted, irreprehensible, unto the advent of our Lord, Christ

Jesus, which, to its own eras, the happy and only Potentate will be showing: He is King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, making His home in light inaccessible, Whom not one of mankind perceived nor can be perceiving, to Whom be honor and might eonian! Amen!”

Thus read in its context, the thought appears to be that *God*, Who is vivifying all, Who is the happy and only Potentate, will, in that day, be *showing Christ* thus: (1) as the One Who, even today, is King of kings and Lord of lords; and (2) as the One Who, today, alone has immortality” Understood thus, the scope of “alone” (in reference to the One “Who alone has immortality”) is relative, not absolute. That is, it is Christ “Who alone” *among men* (*cp* “a Man, Christ Jesus,” 2:6) has immortality.

Hence this phrase in question (“Who alone has immortality”) is not an absolute, universal statement in reference to all beings that exist so that even God Himself comes under its purview, but is a relative statement, made in relation to humanity. We would then understand what follows, as being in reference to Christ as He is today, in His present glory: “[He is] making His home in light inaccessible, Whom not one of mankind perceived nor can be perceiving.” Christ, then, is the One of Whom Paul speaks as well, in further ascribing to Him, “honor and might eonian! Amen!” Thus Christ, Who *died* for our sins, *now* alone enjoys immortality, or deathlessness. In that day, however, we too shall be granted this blessed gift, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality (1 Cor.15:53).

Now, as to your question about Melchizedek: Hebrews 7:16 does not speak of Melchizedek but of *Christ* coming to be according to the power of an indissoluble life. It speaks of “a *different* priest [Who] is rising according to the likeness of Melchizedek, Who has not come to be according to the power of a fleshy precept [as was the case

with those of the Aaronic priesthood], but according to the power of an indissoluble life” (Heb.7:15,16).

This statement indicating that Christ enjoys an indissoluble life does not say nor does it entail that Melchizedek also has such a life (or, certainly, it does not entail it being so, as some have claimed, that Melchizedek actually was Christ Himself). The text merely speaks of a “different priest,” Christ—Who *has* come to be according to the power of an indissoluble life—as being the One Who, in some respect, is rising according to the *likeness of Melchizedek*; that is, as One Who, in coming into His office, sustains *a certain likeness* to Melchizedek.

The question concerning Melchizedek—who, in a certain respect, “*pictures* the Son of God” (7:3)—being “fatherless, motherless, without a genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor consummation of life” (Heb.7:3), is whether these things are so concerning him *inherently* (i.e., according to his own intrinsic nature) or *referentially* (i.e., insofar as the Scriptural record is concerned). I would conclude that the latter sense is surely the correct one, since, reading the text carefully, there is no reason to suppose that Melchizedek himself was other than an ordinary man, insofar as his own nature is concerned.

In any event, such suppositions as many have made as to the supposedly immortal nature of Melchizedek are a distraction, and, largely if not entirely, miss the point of the passage.

The Ideal Priest combines the office of king with that of priest, even as the characteristic of being without genealogy. *Insofar as the scriptural record is concerned*, these ideals of Christ were typified in Melchizedek.

“Melchizedek is notable chiefly for what is *not* recorded of him. There is no reason to believe that he was, personally, the mystical and miraculous character which is his as a picture of the priesthood of Christ. He doubtless was a man like other men

“The Melchizedek priesthood should be studied in its contrasts with the Aaronic priesthood. Its greatest difference lies in the fact that it combines the office of king with that of priest. This is the ideal way. It was only because of the failure of Moses that Aaron was given a share in his mediatorial office. It is God’s purpose that the nation of Israel shall be a kingdom of priests (Ex.19:6), a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). They will rule the nations for God and bring the nations’ offerings to God. So it behooves their Head to be both Priest and King.

“The other great point of dissimilarity lies in the point of succession. The continuance of the Aaronic priesthood was made a matter of descent, and nothing was so vital to a priest as his genealogy. He must be able to tell his father and his mother and trace his lineage clear back to Aaron or he could not even be a priest. And he must provide for this succession by marrying within the priestly caste. In notable contrast to this we have no recorded genealogy of Melchizedek whatever, no mention of father or mother, and no succession, for his death is carefully excluded from the fleeting glimpse we get of him on the pages of inspiration. These omissions are intentional, for only thus can his priesthood picture the priesthood of Christ, Who does not require a genealogy or a successor.”¹



Question:

A year or so ago I bought your book *THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD* by A. E. Knoch, and have enjoyed it immensely. On page 41 it explains that the word “Lucifer” should never really appear in the Bible and is actually the word “howl.” All of the texts in which this Hebrew

¹ I. A. E. Knoch, *THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY*, p.341.

word in question is used are given as well as a fairly detailed explanation of the problem, which is adequate for me.

However, when I try to tell others about this, they look in Strong’s Concordance and say, “No, the word ‘Lucifer’ is a totally different word from ‘Howl.’ They each even have different numbers in the concordance.” And, in Strong’s Concordance, if you look at the Hebrew word for “Howl,” in the Hebrew letters of which it is therein comprised, the word obviously does look different from the word translated as “Lucifer.”

Now, I admit, this is like the blind leading the blind, as I am not a Hebrew scholar, nor are the people to whom I am talking. However, these folks then point out that the Hebrew scholars who translated all the other versions of the Bible we know of (including the Authorized Version, New International Version, etc.), evidently (i.e., since they translate accordingly), understand that the word for “Lucifer” is different from the word for “Howl.” So, these folks conclude, “Why should we believe the Concordant people when they claim that the word is the same?”

Answer:

Your question concerns Isaiah 14:12a, which the Concordant Version translates, “How you have fallen from the heavens! Howl, son of the dawn!” yet the Authorized Version renders, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” This, as you know, is a principal text from which the traditional doctrine known as “The fall of Satan” has been derived.

“In this text, Isaiah’s description of the king of Babylon in the yet future day of Israel’s restoration, is . . . taken as referring to Satan’s fall in the past (Isa.14:3-20) As this is still future, it can hardly refer to Satan’s primeval ‘fall.’ At that time, Satan will have been literally cast out from heaven (Rev.12:9; *cp* Luke 10:18). But these facts

give us no license to identify the two. There will be a king of Babylon who will arrogate divine honors to himself and who will lord it over the kings of the nations, and who will shake kingdoms. Yet he is a *man* (Isa.14:16), and Satan is not a man.

“Moreover, *an examination of the Hebrew text* will convince anyone that the evidence for the title ‘Lucifer’ is exceedingly slight. It is precisely the same word which the translators [themselves] rendered ‘howl’ in Zechariah 11:2. In the feminine it occurs again in this very chapter, at the beginning of verse 31. In slightly different forms, it is found again in Isaiah ten times, and it is always rendered *howl* (13:6; 15:2,3; 16:7; 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14). There is no valid reason why Isaiah 14:12 should not be rendered, ‘Howl!’ instead of ‘Lucifer.’ This name is a human invention, and should have no place in the Scriptures.”²

Your friends, however, having been taught that Satan was once a righteous angel named “Lucifer,” who, long ago, through the misuse of his free will, one day “fell” into sin, are reluctant to accept these simple facts. In addition, since they have noted in Strong’s Concordance that the entries “Lucifer” and “Howl” have different numbers and reflect different spellings according to the typeset Hebrew corresponding to these respective entries, they suppose that what we say must be mistaken. They further suppose that such a conclusion is warranted, since popular theology approves the doctrine of Satan’s fall, and popular, modern translations follow the Authorized Version in the rendering “Lucifer” or its equivalent.

In giving consideration to scholarly opinion, it is necessary to investigate much more widely and probe far deeper than Strong’s Concordance. In addition, most not only do

2. A. E. Knoch, THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, p.41.

not appreciate its limitations, but more especially fail to recognize their own. Hence they often reason to mistaken conclusions as the result of their own misuse of this potentially helpful tool.

The simple fact is that “‘Lucifer’ was . . . manufactured by translators. The Hebrew word *ill* is translated ‘howl’ by them more than twenty-five times. Once only, for decorative effect, they rendered it ‘Lucifer’ (Isa.14:12). It occurs with precisely the same letters in Zechariah 11:2 and Ezekiel 21:12, where they have rendered it *howl*. Our word *yell* is practically the same in sound and significance.”³

In Strong’s Concordance, the word used in Isaiah 14:12 is assigned the number: 1966. But the Hebrew word used in Zechariah 11:2 and Ezekiel 21:12 is assigned the number 3212. This is simply because the verb “howl” is *listed* under its main form, *ill* which has different spellings in different places, depending on the form of the verb. The spelling of the verb “howl” in Zechariah 11:2 and Ezekiel 21:12 is just the same as the spelling of the word translated “Lucifer” in Isaiah 14:12. In all these places the word has an extra letter, which we might show in English as: *eill*. In each of these texts, the word is a verb, in the Hiphil (cause) form, imperative mood.

Most modern commentaries and lexicons do not identify the word in Isaiah 14:12 as associated with the verb in Zechariah 11:2, etc., even though the spelling is the same. But we found this information from the Hebrew and English Lexicon of John Parkhurst (1823): “[The word in Isaiah 14:12] is in its form more like to the verb . . . *howl*, than to the noun, and accordingly the Syriac translation renders it here *howl*, and even *Jerome* on the place [i.e., in that location] observes that it literally means *howl*” (p.152).

3. A. E. Knoch, “The So-Called Angel World,” *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.25, p.160.

In this comment, Parkhurst was citing another lexicon, that of Michaelis, which we assume was a German lexicon. In light of the above and related considerations, Michaelis concludes (cited therein), "Therefore . . . I translate, 'Howl, Son of the morning' . . ." (p.152).

Another well-known scholar, Edward J. Young, states: "To fall from heaven is to fall from a great political height The form *helel* has been derived from a root, "to howl" which is followed [i.e., affirmed] by Aq[ui]la, Peshitto and Jerome

"Tertullian, Gregory the Great, and others have referred this verse to the fall of Satan, described in Luke 10:18. But the present passage [i.e., Isaiah 14:12] pictures the end of a tyrannical reign. The Babylonian king had desired to be above God, and so 'fell from heaven.'⁴ He falls to Sheol [i.e., to the "unseen," the state in which he is no longer seen], and his power is done away Inasmuch, then, as this passage describes a king's downfall and removal from the scene, it cannot apply to Satan."⁵

There simply is no evidence for the notion of the primeval perfection of the devil, much less for the sentiment that it was from this same one's misuse of his free will, that sin thus entered the universe.

Whether or not these considerations help you in becoming more convincing in your presentations, I do hope that they will be instrumental in reaching those who are open to the facts. Let us look to God Who is able to do superexcessively above all we are requesting, graciously granting faith and assurance in the testimony of His Word. J.R.C.

4. *cp* Matthew 11:23, where our Lord uses similar language concerning the city of Capernaum: "And you Capernaum! Not to heaven shall you be exalted! To the unseen shall you subside"

5. Edward J. Young, *THE BOOK OF ISAIAH, Volume I, Chapters 1 to 18*, pp.440,441 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company).

If One Died For the Sake of All

**GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND HUMAN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS**

THE EVANGEL which Paul evangelized, for which he was severed from his former associations, is called "the evangel of God." It concerns God's *Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord* (Rom.1:1-5).

In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4, the apostle presents it this way: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and . . . He was entombed, and . . . He has been roused the third day according to the scriptures." Here in Romans Paul expresses this good news as follows: "While we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes" (Rom.5:8). In our previous study in this series we concentrated on 2 Corinthians 5:14,15, where this evangel concerning the death of Christ for sinners is related to the whole of humanity: "Christ died for the sake of all." With more detail, this truth is brought out in Romans 5:18,19, where we read that it is through one just award, through the obedience of the One, Jesus Christ, that "life's justifying" comes to all mankind, who are "the many" who shall be "constituted just."

NOT ASHAMED OF THE EVANGEL

This evangel of God concerning His Son is expounded in the book of Romans. Right from the start it is apparent that this evangel is a message of salvation from sin that is all-encompassing. What is said points surely and effectively to the conclusion that all mankind will be blessed because of the death of Christ. This is indicated by the fact that God reveals His righteousness in this evangel concerning

Christ's death for sinners, and in the emphasis given to the fact that all mankind are sinners.

Hence, Paul 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. For not ashamed am I of the evangel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who is believing—to the Jew first, and to the Greek as well. For in it *God's righteousness is being revealed*, out of faith for faith, according as it is written: 'Now the just one by faith shall be living.' For God's indignation is being revealed from heaven on all the irreverence and injustice [unrighteousness] of men [human beings]" (Rom.1:14-18).

In strikingly similar terms Paul introduces the evangelical theme of justification in chapter three: "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" (Rom.3:21-23).

God would have us see His righteousness in the way in which He deals with universal, human unrighteousness. It is in view of the fact that all are sinners that God's righteousness is publicly manifested through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The challenge is no minor one. To the measure that we comprehend God's achievement in saving irreverent and wicked people, we will be able to comprehend the revelation given here of God's righteousness.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IN SALVATION

Is God righteous? Yes, God is righteous!

Do we see that God is righteous? That's another question.

It is impossible to see God's righteousness with any clarity at all in a message that includes a doctrine of everlasting torment in hell or hopeless annihilation. Such corrupt

doctrines lie at the root of the failure to associate God's righteousness with His work of saving sinners through the faith and faithfulness of Christ. The idea that God's indignation and fury will forever engulf a certain portion of humanity, of whom God is the Creator, while the rest are spared that fate, in God's grace, and granted everlasting bliss, makes the whole subject of divine righteousness an insolvable mystery.

Few portions of the Hebrew Scriptures speak more of the righteousness of God than the Psalms. Whoever composed Psalm 71, it well expresses a human longing for salvation from troubles by the righteous God: "In Your *righteousness*, rescue me and deliver me . . . My mouth, it shall recount Your *righteousness* the entire day, Your salvation, for I do not know their number . . . Your *righteousness*, O Elohim, reaches unto the height . . . Moreover, my tongue shall soliloquize of Your *righteousness* the entire day" (Psa.71:2,15,19,24). Yet even more impressive are the words of David in Psalm 51 when his own sinfulness is in view: "Rescue me from bloodguilt, O Elohim, the Elohim of my salvation, that my tongue may be jubilant at Your *righteousness*" (Psa.51:14).

These psalms speak of God's righteousness in God's works of salvation and rescue from outward enemies, and also from the inner enemy of one's own unrighteousness. The "number" of instances where God's righteousness and His works of salvation merge in the psalmist's experience or in his longing were beyond measure. They occupied him continually with praise and thanksgiving regarding his blessings, and with hope and supplication in view of his sins. He had full confidence in God's righteousness and in the way in which it operated in His works of salvation.

These psalms do not speak simply of God as the psalmist's righteous Judge, but of Him as his righteous God of salvation! It was with respect to God's saving work that

the psalmist directed his thoughts concerning God's righteousness. This is what Paul also does in Romans 1:16,17 and 3:21-23. It is in the evangel which is God's power for salvation that God's righteousness is being revealed.

But, because of the evangel, Paul is able to go beyond these psalms. Paul speaks of salvation in a higher and more critical sense, a deliverance from sin and death into righteousness and life. But also Paul speaks not only of "everyone who is believing" who are now finding the evangel to be "God's power for salvation." The apostle adds mention, even mention at great length, of the fact that all mankind are in need of God's righteous salvation. What Paul does, and the psalmists did not do, is to bring the Philistines and Babylonians, besides Saul and Uriah and Bathsheba, and every single human being from Adam on down, into the theme of the manifestation of God's righteousness.

It is the revelation of God's righteousness with respect to the abominable and pitiful state of irreverence and injustice that exists throughout humanity that Paul is speaking of in these passages from Romans. The stakes are much higher than the rescue of one afflicted and sorrowful sinner such as David. And they are higher than the salvation of us who are now believing.

HUMAN FAILURE

Paul does not give light treatment to the problem of human unrighteousness. Between Romans 1:17 where Paul first speaks of God's righteousness and Romans 3:21 where he speaks of it again, there are 63 verses dealing with the unrighteousness of humanity. In no uncertain terms he exposes our hopeless condition apart from the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus. We human beings are irreverent, unrighteous, vain and stupid (1:18-23). We have been given over by God to uncleanness and dishonor, effecting indecency, filled with all injustice and are deserving only

of death (1:24-32). *Every* human being is defenseless and unqualified to judge others because each of us is a sinner like everyone else (2:1,2).

The just statutes of the law demand our endurance in good acts if we would earn life eonian (2:3-10). If we would be found righteous under God's righteous judgment, we must be faithful doers of righteousness whether Circumcision under the law or Uncircumcision who have the guidance of "nature" (2:11-3:8). But not one human being is righteous; no one will be or can be justified by his works (3:9-20).

The universality of the human condition of sinfulness is made absolutely clear. Paul writes of *humanity* without qualification (*cf* 1:18; 2:1). The *Jew* is charged with transgressing the law and dishonoring God (2:17-24), and the Gentile is no more able to follow the instruction of conscience and nature. In truth there are no doers of righteousness in view of God's standards.

The Scriptures speak of individuals who are "righteous," but that is only in relation to other human beings who are more unrighteous. It is a figure of speech, not a literal assessment based on God's standards of perfect righteousness. Romans 1:18-3:20 is clear. We are all in the same boat. The problem is universal. All sin and are wanting of the glory of God (Rom.3:23).

THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

It is against this extensive, thorough, and uncompromisingly honest account of the human condition that Paul presents the evangel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. God's righteousness is revealed in that evangel and is set forth in connection with universal, human unrighteousness. Paul does not overstate his case. He is not presenting a problem that is beyond the actual extent of God's solution. The apostle knows exactly what he is doing here in this work

of evangelizing. Every accusation made in 1:18-3:20 must be met and overset by the righteous, saving work of God in the gift of His Son.

THE JUST JUSTIFIER

The evangel speaks of the justification of sinners, but in doing so it reveals the righteousness of God. Sinners are righteously saved because Christ died for their sins. God justifies sinners through the deliverance which is in Jesus Christ, in His blood (Rom.3:24; 5:8,9), and in this His righteousness is revealed. He is both just and a Justifier (Rom.3:26).

We are not justified by our works but by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ which He faithfully carried out. For us, this justification is fully gratuitous. But it has a real and righteous basis in Christ's death for us.

But if God righteously saves me, a sinner, gratuitously justifying me in His grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, how can I grasp His righteousness if the fate of other sinners is ultimately based only on God's righteous judgments?

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS AND CHOICES

At two points in Romans Paul brings up questions that have arisen in people's minds concerning the rightness of God's ways. While the apostle quickly affirms the righteousness of God in all His operations, he nevertheless finds these objections relevant to his theme. The first problem has to do with God's righteous judgments, and the second with His righteous choices.

In Romans 3:5-8 the question concerns the fact that human unrighteousness makes God's righteousness much more obvious and glorious than it would appear otherwise. "If the truth of God superabounds in my lie, for His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?" Why

should God condemn sinners for their unrighteous acts when His glory is enhanced by the contrast afforded by these unrighteous acts?

The second question appears in Romans 9:14-24 and concerns the justice of God's choices as well as the judgment that comes on those who are not chosen for honor and glory. "What, then, shall we be declaring? Not that there is injustice [unrighteousness] with God? May it not be coming to that!" (v.14). "You will be protesting to me, then, 'Why, then, is He still blaming? for who has withstood His intention?'" (v.19).

The apostle immediately dismisses any implication of divine unrighteousness. He does so simply by pointing out that God must be judging the world (Rom.3:6) and that He has the right to choose some to be "vessels for honor" and others to be "vessels for dishonor" (Rom.9:21). Within the light of the evangel of God and the revelation of God's righteousness placed in that evangel, these replies of Paul are reasonable and fully satisfactory. Since God has dealt effectively with human unrighteousness through the faithful obedience of Jesus Christ, all will finally be delivered into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:21). Humanity's unrighteousness and God's indignation against that unrighteousness are not final conditions but experiences along the way toward the time when God grants all the righteous effects of Christ's obedience. The evangel assures us that all of God's processes toward this goal have their purposes for good in God's great wisdom and knowledge, even though we cannot grasp all the reasons for His judgments or comprehend the intricacies of His ways (*cf* Rom.11:33).

But the common mixture of the gospel with the irreverent concept of eternal hell for some along with eternal happiness for others makes Paul's arguments in Romans 3 and 9 more than puzzling. If God, Who was not merciful to

Pharaoh because He wished to display His power in him, condemns Pharaoh to everlasting damnation, then Paul's words, "O man! who are you, to be sure, who are answering again to God?" can hardly dispel the objection. The believer who wishes to glorify God as God will still maintain that God is righteous. But with such a distorted view of the evangel, we must still cry out with dismay that we cannot *see* God's righteousness in these works of judgment and choice; at best we can think of them only as operations independent of the evangel and independent of the revelation of God's righteousness that is in the evangel.

It is the evangel in which God's righteousness is revealed that gives us understanding of the righteousness of God's judgments and choices. These operations are important pieces of experience given to humanity during the eons for wise and good reasons by God. But they are not in themselves the good news announced by the evangel; rather they are operations that are good and glorifying to God only as the good news of God's grace for sinners is true and operative. In fact, God's choices and God's judgments could never be justified had Christ not died for sinners.

GOD'S POWER FOR SALVATION

Indeed, the judgments of God are righteous (Rom.2:5). But they have no power for salvation. In righteously judging humanity God "will be paying each one in accord with his acts" (2:6). And since all are sinners, and not one human being is righteous, the righteous judgment of God inevitably results in all being brought under "indignation and fury, affliction and distress" (2:9). As a consequence solely of God's just judgments no flesh at all can be justified in God's sight (3:20).

"Yet now" (Rom.3:21) we turn to listen to the words of the evangel. This is where the evangel comes in. This is where the death of Christ for sinners comes in. This is the

only channel for justification and salvation. God can justify sinners only one way: "gratuitously in His grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom.3:24).

VIEWS THAT OBSCURE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS

If we say that Christ died *only* for the elect (a fantastically twisted concept), we must admit that God's righteousness remains a mystery, operating on the basis of Christ's blood for some and on the basis of judgment for the rest. Under such explanations the dilemma presented in Romans 1:18-3:20 remains a dilemma. And for the believers, the real issue is no longer the revelation of God's righteousness in dealing with sinners through the faith of Christ. Instead, those involved in this sort of thinking, if they are able to accept the idea of eternal hell for the non-elect and still keep their sanity, must be occupied, not with the evangel, but with themselves.

First of all they must find assurance that they are truly among the elect. And then they must develop some sort of rationalization for any real, "Christian" concern for the mass of mankind who are, in their view, doomed to everlasting hell. Most devastating of all, they must become adept at explaining how it is that the qualities of love and righteousness and wisdom can be attributed to God under such a scheme, apart from reference to the death of Christ for sinners as a whole. Even for the believer (one might even say *especially* for the believer) the entire subject of God's righteousness is made bitter and painful to the heart.

On the other hand, if we say that Christ's death will not ever be effectual for many sinners because God can never interfere with their free will (is this not basically an idolatrous idea?), then we are once again obscuring the righteousness of God manifest through the faith of Jesus Christ. The center of attention has shifted from the evangel to what the human must do. Once again we are occupied

with problems centered on ourselves, just exactly what we are to believe, and how genuine and pure our faith must be, and whether or not our believing must be accompanied by deeds (and, if so, what these deeds must be).

Again, under this scheme, there is a continuing need for clever rationalization in speaking about God. His love is enclosed by the perimeters of what He would like to do if we would let Him, and His power is limited to doing the best He can without violating human freedom. As for His righteousness, it is pretty much confined to His works of future judgment. If there is any room for grace in the believer's salvation it is not particularly appreciated as a matter related to divine righteousness.

It is not that such thinking overlooks the great problem of human sinfulness. Romans 1:18-3:20 remains a popular basis for many sermons and "evangelistic" efforts. But the fact of universal unrighteousness is seldom truly related to the revelation of God's righteousness through His act of giving His Son for sinners. The problem and the solution are not matched up.

It is the *evangel* that is God's power for salvation, not election and not the human will, "free" or otherwise. And it is in the *evangel* that God would have us grasp the full measure of His righteousness. It is in the *evangel* that we will find God's achievements of righteousness in relation to His works of salvation becoming our song of praise the entire day, for "their number" (Psa.71:15) is as great as humanity's need.

Romans 1:14-18 does not say specifically that all will be constituted just. But the charge of universal human unrighteousness recorded here in association with the righteousness of God which is being revealed in the *evangel* concerning God's Son already offers assurance of the race-wide justification spoken of Romans 5:18,19.

D.H.H.

Lo! Now is a Day of Salvation

A MOST ACCEPTABLE ERA

THERE is much acute suffering for the believer in the present era. As our years increase, so also the dangers of weariness and bitterness are intensified. Indeed, were it not for the sustaining strength of God's revelations, we would have drowned in a veritable sea of despair. But with that sustaining strength we may be appearing as luminaries in these perilous periods. With personal experiences and blessed foreknowledge, the apostle Paul realized that, inevitably, we would appear as beacons in a world of increasing moral darkness and gloom (*cf* Phil.2:15; 2 Tim.3:1-13).

Brother Donald Hayter once wrote, "Bitterness results from the loneliness and misunderstanding that are part of the pathway of truth. But bitterness is a spoiler of joy. Let it be taken away, writes Paul in Ephesians 4:31. It defiles and annoys, says God in the Hebrew epistle (12:15). Those who advance in the ways of truth are most prone to it. But we need not be defiled by its presence, for the grace of the Lord can take it away, and replace bitterness by sweetness of thought, disposition and action!"¹

Yet in this "crooked and perverse" generation it is frustrating to observe the many corrupting influences. Some years ago, my grandson, on vacation from his university, completely stunned me with the report of a question which had been imposed by one of his tutors: "Did God make man, or did man make God?" "Alleging themselves to be wise, they are made stupid, and they change the glory of

1. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.77, p.96 (cited from *Grace and Truth* magazine).

the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being" (Rom.1:23).

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR GLORY

What are the blessings of God's revelations? "That inner calm and happiness, which we all desire because of the turmoil of the eon, can be found in lasting measure only by a realization of God and His superabounding glory (*cf* Col.1:10-12). We sing, 'In acceptance lieth peace,' yet we should not mean merely an acceptance of our lot but a triumphant acceptance of our lot as a part of God's purpose for glory. The appreciation of God's love, power and wisdom in everything is the key to real peace and genuine joy. It is with this in view that we enter into Paul's great hymn of praise in Romans 11:33-36 and come to recognize and experience its power to settle our fears and lift up our spirit.

"We learned in Romans 3:23 that the great human lack is the glory of God. We are hopelessly removed from the perfect bliss of security and blessing in His presence as far as our own abilities are concerned. Yet we have also discovered that, as believers, 'we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God' (Rom.5:2). Finally and most joyfully we have been shown that the whole creation 'shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God' (Rom.8:21)."²

THE GRACE OF HIS LOVE

Recalling the above incident of my grandson's tutor, I thought at the time that the proposition was so cunning in its deception as to disclose the real author of such base evil. This in turn led me to reflect that were it not for the supreme ordering of God on Satan, this same "messenger of light," we would be completely helpless before

² *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.76, p.139.

the onslaughts of his wicked power. Yet Paul confidently declares: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom.8:38,39).

This is invigorating reassurance. Yet how sobering to reflect that such evil is no longer subtle, but blatant! However, we have the further delight of learning from the Scriptures (how precious these words are to our spirits) that our very presence restrains the evil and the awful hurt instigated by Satan (*cf* 1 Thess.5:8,9; 2 Thess.2:6-9). We already know that this one will be confined during the impending eon when all the promises made to Israel shall be confirmed (Rev.20:1-3), but how glorious to note that our God and Father exercises such tremendous control in protection of His beloved ecclesia, members of the body of His Son (Eph.1:22,23).

A TIME OF CONCILIATION

The indwelling of God's spirit enables the ecclesia to identify the effects of continuing deterioration. It must often appear somewhat drastic, but when confronting depression or sadness, I have to lift a victim from some despair by challenging the current media headlines. Someone once observed, "Bad news is good news, since it sells newspapers." I ask whether matters are so grave. Above all that we *see*, stands the word we *believe*. "Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). "For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!' For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him" (5:20,21).

The best news that we can ever present is not that we are bringing humanity to Christ, but rather, we are bringing Christ to humanity. Here is conciliation. Let us anticipate the consummation and rejoice in this. This is our evangel. This is our good news.

With such a message to share, we can say with Paul, "Lo! Now is a most acceptable era! Lo! Now is a day of salvation!" (2 Cor.6:2).

This should not be misconstrued as indifference to the troubles of our times. Sadly, the soulish appetites increase, yet through the refining influence of God's spirit, we become acutely sensitive to the grievous conduct of this world. Day after day, on all sides, we witness the shameful behavior of those with disqualified minds.

How might we survive amid this degradation? Our dear brother, A. E. Knoch points the sure and certain way, urging a resting in trust and confidence in all of God's loving wisdom: "The knowledge of God's Word is good, an acquaintance with His ways is better, but a realization of Himself is best. Faith accepts His sayings, confidence acquiesces in His ways, love rests in His essence. Let us believe what He says, and we will not only delight in what He does, but exult in what He is."³

NOT ALWAYS

What a marvelous boon God has granted in providing fellow believers who present His precious Word through writings and gracious fellowship. May I share one such delightful memory which occurred in the happy days of fellowship with the late Alan Reed:

My own brother was visiting from Canada and had indicated that he would like to meet others at our annual fellowship in England. Somewhat timorously, I escorted him

³ 3. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, p.340.

to the meeting and then to where Alan was. There I introduced them. "Alan," I began nervously, "This is my own brother, Tom. He is here on a visit from Canada." Then, boldly, but undeterred, I added, "He claims to be an atheist." I waited, but noted a twinkle in Alan's eyes. With a loving smile and in his delightful Scottish brogue, he replied, "Donald, he'll not always be!"

At the consummation, every knee bows, and every tongue acclaim Christ Jesus as Lord! Goodness and glory abounds, and evil, in all its many aspects, is completely eradicated. Indeed it then would be redundant. During the eons and because of creature disability, there is need for the experiences of evil, but when the last enemy, death, is abolished, this need will have ceased.

A dictionary definition of the word, *optimism*, is "Doctrine of the ultimate triumph of good over evil." Here is an implied suggestion that the influence of both good and evil are independent concepts, which are outside or apart from God's ordering. This is a mischievous heresy which should be recognized and immediately rejected.

As we ponder these verities, rest assured we can certainly trust our loving God and Father. From His beloved Son, He shall receive a universe, resplendent and glorious, in which He will rejoice to be All in all. Amen!

Donald Fielding

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES VOLUME 90

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A TURNING POINT

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER of 1 Samuel describes a new beginning. As Saul's persecution escalated, David became more and more lonely and isolated. Anyone found with him would also be in danger from Saul. David was alone.

At Gath, with his feigning madness, David's humiliation reached a peak. But after reaching this measure of humiliation and persecution, a number of people began to assemble to David. It became obvious that David and Saul could never peacefully coexist. And so, in David, those who were at odds with the current administration found one to whom they could turn as their hope for a better day. It became common knowledge that Saul intended to kill David, and so all his family was in danger from Saul also.

Similarly, Christ would be at odds with the leadership of His day. And for Him also, Headship comes after times of humiliation.

DIFFERING LEADERSHIP

22 + David ^{lg}departed from there and ^lescaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's house ^hheard, + they went ^ddown there to him. ² And others ^lconvened ^garound him: every man under constraint, + every man who ^ghad a creditor^l, and every man bitter of soul. + He ^hbecame ^gchief over them, and there ^{lb}were ^{as}about 400 men with him.

³+ From there David ^lwent to Mizpah of Moab and ^lsaid to the king of Moab, ^{pr}Please let my father and

my mother come forth and stay ^wwith you, until ^wI ^lknow what Elohim may do for me. ⁴+ So he ^{sg}left them^w ^win the presence of the king of Moab, and they ^ldwelt with him all the days that David ^bremained^w in the fastness. ⁵+ Yet Gad the prophet ^lsaid to David, You should not ^{sit}stay in the fastness; ^{go}depart! + You must come yourself to the area of Judah. + So David ^{lg}left and ^lcame to the wild-wood of Hereth.

⁶+ Then Saul ^lheard ^twhere David was known to be, he and the men who were ^wwith him; + now Saul was ^tat Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk ^ton the high place, + with his spear in his hand and all his courtiers ^{stationed} ^{on}by him. ⁷+ Saul ^lsaid to his courtiers ^{stationed} ^{on}by him, Hear ^{pr}now, sons of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse ^{mr}also ^lgive fields and vineyards to all of you? Will he ^{pl}constitute ^gall of you chiefs of thousands and chiefs of hundreds, stbecause all of you have conspired ^{on}against me, and no one was revealing^l ^win my ear ^twhen my son contracted^w ^{7a}a covenant^o with the son of Jesse? + No one ^fof you was ⁷sparing^l ^{on}me and revealing^l ^win my ear ^twhen my son set up ^wmy servant ^{on}against me to wait in ambush^l as he does ^wthis day.

Verses 1-4 are set in contrast with verses 6-8. David "escaped to the cave of Adullam" (verse 1), while Saul is seen "sitting under the tamarisk on the high place, with his spear in his hand and all his courtiers stationed by him" (verse 6). Those who came to David are described as ". . . every man under constraint, every man who had a creditor, and every man bitter of soul" (verse 2). But those convened around Saul were the recipients of fields and vineyards and political position (verse 7). Saul reminded those with him that he was the source of their enrichment, and then charged them with disloyalty in their failure to make known to him Jonathan's league with David. On the other hand, David had nothing to offer his followers but devotion

to common goals and mutual loyalty (1 Chron.12:16-18). Saul's followers had immediate temporal blessings, which carried obligations. David's followers had acceptance without obligation, and they had expectation. Also, their association with David brought them under contempt.

ILL GOTTEN GAINS?

Saul's gifts of fields and vineyards and positions (verse 7), to his officers may indicate the slaughter of the Gibeonites referred to in 2 Samuel 21. Kish, Saul's father, appears to have been a man of some substance. He had some servants and a number of donkeys. But there is no apparent evidence that Saul had any substantial wealth, other than what he accumulated while he was king. These gifts bestowed upon his officers and adherents were likely the spoils of military conquests. In this case, it may have been a campaign which broke Joshua's treaty with the Gibeonites (Josh.9). The Gibeonites lived in the area of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. And Saul addresses his officers as "sons of Benjamin." It is not at all unlikely that there would be prejudice against foreigners in the land, especially by those who shared a border with them. Such prejudice could lead to conflict, especially if Saul saw the opportunity to use the acquired possessions to secure his dynasty.

Saul's actions are reminiscent of the deeds of the unjust steward in Luke 16. Saul bought loyalty and service, probably with means which were not his to use. His close relationship with Doeg, an Edomite, also seems misplaced. All the nation of Israel was at his disposal. Were there none in Israel of equal skill? In Christ's day there was the unlikely collaboration of Pilate, Herod and the Sadducees, as they bonded together against God's Anointed.

That Saul despised David is also seen in the way he refers to him repeatedly as "the son of Jesse." He would not even speak his name. Similarly, Christ was referred

to as "the Nazarene." "Can anything good be out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

PSALM 142

Psalm 142 displays David's frame of mind and heart at the cave. This Psalm and comments on it may be found in *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 84, pages 175,186. David's needs caused him to cry out in prayer to Yahweh. God's answer to the prayer may be seen in the assembling of the band of malcontents to David. David's spirit was encouraged, and many of his needs met in his meeting the needs of others. Fellowship has great power to encourage, and hardships shared become a source of strength. "Affliction is producing endurance, yet endurance testedness, yet testedness expectation" (Rom.5:3,4).

David was alone, but at the cave he became the nucleus of a traveling city. Gad the prophet came to be with David (1 Sam.22:5), and he instructed David to return and remain in Judah. Soon Abiathar, the priest, would be with David also. God's anointed king, God's prophet and God's priest are soon joined in a band with those people of conviction, who believed God's people must have new leadership. The early verses of Psalm 142 show the depths of loneliness, but verse 7 closes, "The righteous shall compass about me, for You shall deal bountifully with me."

Saul's course is a downward spiral. His persecution of David soon betrays the obvious—that he has refused to submit himself to God. Saul rejects God and God's anointed. He slays God's priests, destroying the channel of approach to God. He adamantly believes that he can rule God's people and serve God without submission, guidance or worship. Such is the mind of the flesh.

DOEG AND AHIMELECH

⁹ **Then Doeg the Edomite responded; + he was sta-**

tioned^l over the courtiers of Saul, and he ^lsaid, I saw ^lthe son of Jesse coming toward Nob to Ahimelech son of Ahitub, ⁷the priest^o. ¹⁰ + He ^{lask}inquired ^lof Yahweh for him and gave provisions to him; he ⁺also gave ⁷him ^lthe sword of Goliath the Philistine.

¹¹ + Then the king ^lsent to call ^lAhimelech son of Ahitub, the priest, and ^lall the priests of his father's house ^w ^lat Nob. ⁺So all of them ^lcame to the king. ¹² + Saul ^lsaid, Hear ^{pr}now, son of Ahitub! + He ^{lsa}replied, ^{bd}Here I am; ⁷speak^o, my lord. ¹³ + Now Saul ^{lsa}asked ⁷him, Why have you conspired ^{on}against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given⁻ ⁷him bread and a sword and have ^{ask}inquired⁻ ^lof Elohim for him, ⁷that he should rise⁻ ⁷against me and ⁷wait in ambush^l as he does ^lthis day? ¹⁴ + Ahimelech ^lanswered ^lthe king, ⁺ ^lsaying, ⁺But ^awho ^lamong all your servants is as faithful^l as David, ⁺ the king's son-in-law, ⁺ ⁷chief⁷ ⁷over your household-guard, and illustrious^l in your house? ¹⁵ Did I start ^lthat day to ^{ask}inquire ^lof Elohim for him? Far be it ⁷from me! Let not the king ^lplace anything ^lagainst his servant ⁷or^o ^lagainst any of my father's house; for your servant knew nothing ^lat all about this matter, small or great.

Doeg had been present at the tabernacle when David received bread from Ahimelech (1 Sam.21:7). His reason for being retained there was not given. Perhaps he was fulfilling a purification, or becoming a proselyte, or simply stopping on a Sabbath because his journey was too long. But he kept an opportunistic eye on all around him.

Doeg, like Saul, referred to David as "the son of Jesse" (1 Sam.22:9). He said that Ahimelech had done three things for David: inquired of God, given him provisions, and given him Goliath's sword. The previous chapter bears out the record of the provisions and the sword, but is silent regarding whether Ahimelech inquired of God for

David. The fact that David went to Achish upon leaving the priest may indicate that he was acting without specific guidance from God.

Saul sent for Ahimelech to interrogate him regarding David. His threatening interrogation was suggestive that Ahimelech had inquired of God to aid David in revolting against him. Ahimelech protested such an insinuation on the basis of David's history of service and faithfulness to Saul. Ahimelech asked the question, "Did I start that day to inquire of Elohim for him?" (1 Sam.22:15).

This statement may be understood in a couple of ways. It may be true that Ahimelech inquired of God for David that day. If so, Ahimelech's response to Saul should probably be understood in this sense: "Would that have been the first time I inquired of God for David? No! Many times when he went forth to fight the king's battles against the Philistines, I inquired for him. And that was to the king's delight and service! Why would I hesitate to inquire of God for him?"

On the other hand, Ahimelech may not have inquired for David. The sword which Ahimelech gave to David was said to be "wrapped in raiment, *behind the ephod* (verse 9). This seems to suggest that Ahimelech was not wearing the ephod at that time. Usually the priest would wear the ephod when inquiring of God (*cf* 1 Sam.23:9-12; 30:7,8). Perhaps then Ahimelech's statement should be understood in the sense: "I did not even don the ephod that day to inquire of God!" Whichever sense is intended, his next statement, "Far be it from me!" certainly makes it clear that Ahimelech did nothing with the intent of disloyalty to the king.

¹⁶ + But the king ^{lsa}replied, To die⁻ shall you die, Ahimelech, you and all of your father's house. ¹⁷ + Then the king ^{lsa}commanded ⁷the runners^l ^lstationed^l ^{on}by him, Turn around and ^cput the priests of Yahweh to death, for their

hand ^{mr}also is with David + 'since they knew that he was running away and did not reveal it to my ear. +But the king's servants would not > stretch⁻ forth their hand to come upon ⁱ the priests of Yahweh. ¹⁸ +So the king said to Doeg, You, turn around! + Come upon ⁱ the priests! +Then Doeg, the Edomite turned around and came upon ⁱ the priests himself; + ⁱ on that day, he ^cput to death 85 men wearing the linen ephod. ¹⁹ +Also Nob, the city of the priests, he smote >with the edge of the sword ^fboth man and ^{fr} women, ^fboth infant and ^{fr} suckling!, +also bull, + donkey, and flocking, all >with the edge of the sword.

²⁰ +Yet one son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub escaped; + his name was Abiathar, and he ran away following after David. ²¹ +Then Abiathar, told > David that Saul had killed the priests of Yahweh. ²² + David ^{lsa}replied to Abiathar, I knew ⁱ on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would tell, yea tell > Saul. As for me, ~I am debtor~ ⁱ to every soul of your father's house. ²³ Do ^{sit}stay with me; do not fear, for he who seeks my soul is seeking your soul too; but you are under guard with me.

Saul was furious with Ahimelech. He ordered the slaughter of Ahimelech and all his household. The same Saul who rejected God's command to obliterate the Amalekites, Israel's enemies (chapter 15), now commands the obliteration of God's priests. The Benjamites balked at such an outlandish command, but the Edomite saw this as his chance to curry favor with the king. There was not enough reverence for God in his heart to keep him from slaying God's priests when there could be personal gain. He slaughtered the men, women, children, and even the beasts of Nob, a city of priests.

YAHWEH PURGES THE PRIESTHOOD

"Soon I shall do something in Israel about which both ears of anyone hearing it will tingle" (1 Sam.3:11).

"Behold the days are coming (this is the averring of Yahweh), when I will hack down your seed and the seed of your father's house, to keep them from becoming old in your house. Then you will look on a rival in My habitation, in all that he does good with Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house all the days . . . And this is the sign for you that shall befall your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: On the same day shall both of them die" (1 Sam.2:31-34).

Yahweh pronounced a curse on the house of Eli (2:27-36), and confirmed this curse through the mouth of the child Samuel (3:11-14). The death of Hophni and Phinehas on the same day was not the fulfillment of the curse but only the verification of it. This was a terrible evil performed by Saul and Doeg, yet it was the hand of God.

The books of Samuel show us failings in worship and rule. These are personified in the characters of the books, and that is why Christ is typified in these events. In Him we find the perfection of priesthood and rule. To us is given the challenge of applying to ourselves the principles illustrated regarding our worship and the rule and submission of our life before God. Our worship and approach to God should not be beset with the failings of Eli, who honored his own sons above God. Nor should the rule of our heart and actions reflect the failings of Saul, who continually rejected God's instruction in favor of what seemed expedient to himself. In events so horrendous as the massacre of a city of the priests and so despairing as the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, we may find a deeper insight into Paul's exhortation to us to "crucify the flesh" (Gal.5:24; 6:14; Rom.6; Col.2:10-12).

PSALM 52

The superscription of Psalm 52 relates it to Doeg's recounting to Saul of David's visit to Ahimelech. This Psalm

and a meditation are found in Volume 68 of *Unsearchable Riches* on pages 87-91.

When Doeg related the events at Nob to Saul, he said nothing of the facts that Ahimelech was anxious about David's presence there or that David asked Ahimelech to supply these things for him. Apparently Doeg knew what would incite Saul's anger, and he emphasized his statement that Ahimelech inquired of God for David by mentioning it first. The Psalm shows that David had insight into Doeg's character, "Your tongue devises woes, like a honed razor, you who practice deceit" (Psalm 52:2).

There are some interesting figures in the Psalm. The evil one who worked woe with his mouth is like a plant that would be *broken down*, its branches *raked up*, and its *roots* pulled out of the ground (verse 5). Its leaves would wilt and its roots and branches would dry in the sun. This would be done, not by David in retaliation, but by God in righteous judgment. On the other hand, David is likened to a *flourishing olive tree* (verse 8). Olive trees are known to live for hundreds of years, and have been said to reach 1000 years of age. Throughout the Psalm, David makes a contrast between the short-lived existence of evil and the endurance of the chosen for "the eon and further" (verse 8). The wicked weed would be torn from his tent, while the flourishing olive is planted in the impregnable "House of Elohim" (Psa.52:5-8).

These are tremendous words from David. In the previous chapter he was fleeing in fear. But when David was finally and fully cut off from Saul, God strengthened David's heart. In spite of the massacre of the priests, and in spite of still being a fugitive, the strength and conviction of David's faith returned. David had passed through the darkness of night, but now the light of morning was bright and full and warm upon him. Evil would not endure, and God's power and goodness will not fade.

J. Philip Scranton

The Words and Work of God and Man

LIGHT AMID THE SHADOWS

- 7 + **The light is sweet,**
And it is good for the eyes to see `the sun.
- 8 **For if `a man `lives many` years**
he should rejoice in them all,
+Yet he should remember `the days of darkness,
For they shall ^bbe many`;
All ^wthat will come is vanity.
- 9 **Rejoice, choice youth, in your childhood,**
And let your heart ^cmake you cheerful
in the days of your prime;
+ Walk in the ways of your heart
and ⁱby the sight of your eyes,
+Yet know that ^{on}for all these the One,
Elohim, shall bring you into judgment.
- 10 + **Take away vexation from your heart,**
And ^pexpel evil sufferings from your flesh,
For `childhood and `early days are vanity;
- 12 **+Yet remember `your Creator^l**
in the days of your prime,
*fr***While ^w the evil days have not yet ^lcome,**
+Or the years encroach ^wwhen you shall say:
There is no delight for me in them,
- 2 *fr***While ^w the sun and the light is not yet ^ldarkened**
+Or the moon and the stars,
And before the thick clouds return after the downpour:
- 3 **In the day ^wwhen the keepers^l of the house**
^lstir in a sweat,
And the men of valor bend down,

- +When the grinding maids halt 'because they are few,
And 'those seeing out 'through the crevices are darkened,**
- ⁴ **+When the double doors 'to the roadway are closed,
'When the sound of the grinding becomes low,
And one 'rises 'at the sound of the bird,
'Yet all the daughters of song are 'prostrate;**
- ⁵ **Moreover, one 'fears / lofty heights,
And catastrophes are 'on the road,
'When the almond tree 'flowers,
And the grasshopper is 'burdensome,
And the caperberry's effects are 'annulled,
'When 'h man goes' to his eonian home,
And 'those wailing turn about in the roadway;**
- ⁶ **Remember Him, 'while the silver cable is not yet 'pulled away~,
And the golden bowl is 'splintered,
And the jar is broken ^{on}at the fount,
And the rolling wheel is splintered 'at the cistern,**
- ⁷ **And the soil 'returns ^{on}to the earth just as it ^bwas,
And the spirit, it 'returns to the One,
Elohim, Who gave it.**

BOOK FIVE

The fifth book of Ecclesiastes (11:7-12:7) gathers up the threads. Its opening phrase breathes the serenity springing from a faith grounded on the hope that creation's goal is the perfection of the Creator.

The light is sweet,

And it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

In this sweet, winsome spirit the Assembler brings home to the heart the moral in his own inimitable way.

Remove vexation from your heart, and expel evil sufferings from your flesh, for childhood and early days are

vanity (11:10). The brevity of life is a reason to make the most of it. Old age with its infirmities will soon overtake you; do not indulge in follies lest your declining years be saddened by regret (12:1).

Then follows a most exquisite *tour-de-force* of symbolism under which are veiled the symptoms of senile decay followed by death. Probably some of the symbols are lost; but on the whole it is possible, without straining, to see a possible interpretation for each. The poetic beauty of the passage is marvelous.

In interpreting symbolism as with all the higher forms of allegory, the first critical requirement is restraint. To press details to too literal significance is gratuitous and risky exegesis. I attempt no more than a simple suggestion for each detail.

While the sun and the light is not yet darkened or the moon and the stars (12:2, lines a and b). Since the opening words of Book Five take the *light* and *sun* as symbols of the happiness of conscious existence, it seems evident that the *darkening* of this light is the gradual fading of the joy of living.

And before the thick clouds return after the downpour (12:2c). This symbol carries the idea of the preceding a step farther. In our prime we quickly rally from the overstraining of health; this is a storm that quickly clears up. In old age the rallying power is gone: "the clouds return after the downpour."

-The keepers of the house stir in a sweat (12:3a), probably the trembling of hands and arms.

-The men of valor bend down (12:3b), the stooping frame.

-The grinding maids halt because they are few (12:3c), the teeth.

-Those seeing out through the crevices are darkened (12:3d), sight becoming dim.

–*The double doors to the roadway are closed* (12:4a), probably refers to the clenched jaws.

–*When the sound of the grinding becomes low, and one rises at the sound of the bird, yet all the daughters of song are prostrate* (12:4), failing appetite, early waking or short sleeping, low tone of the voice.

–*Moreover, one fears lofty heights, and catastrophes are on the road* (12:5, lines a and b), the unsteady gait of old age compared to the gait of a frightened person.

–*When the almond tree flowers, and the grasshopper is burdensome, and the caperberry's effects are annulled* (12:5, lines c through e), the last stage of the decay.

The failing powers at last give way, and then the symbolism is dropped: *When man goes to his eonian home, and those wailing turn about in the roadway* (12:5, lines f and g).

So far we have had symbols for failure of powers; now the Assembler speaks figuratively of actual death and dissolution. *Remember Him, while the silver cable is not yet pulled away, and the golden bowl is splintered, and the jar is broken at the fount, and the rolling wheel is splintered at the cistern* (12:6). The picture refers to life becoming extinguished with the sudden cessation of everyday functions. Then follows the dropping of the symbolism: *And the soil returns to the earth just as it was, and the spirit, it returns to the One, Elohim, Who gave it* (12:7). The latter part of this sentence by analogy with the preceding line must be interpreted to mean no more than that the man becomes just what he was before he was born.

THE EPILOGUE

⁸ **Vanity of vanities, says the Assembler,
The whole is vanity.**

⁹ **+Yet furthermore, ^wbecause the Assembler ^bwas wise,
He ^fstill taught [`]the people knowledge,**

And he listened and investigated

And **set in order many^r proverbs.**

¹⁰ The **Assembler sought to find words of delight,**
And what was **written^l** is **uprightness**
and **words of truth.**

¹¹ The **words of the wise** are **like goad points,**
And like imbedded^l bolts is the **possessing**
of gathered sayings;

They are given ^f by one shepherd^l.

¹² **+Yet furthermore, my son, ^f beyond these, be warned;**
Of the ^d**making^r** of **many^r scrolls** there is **no end,**
And much^r study is **weariness** to the **flesh.**

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ **For the One, Elohim, shall bring [`]every ^ddeed**
into judgment ^{on}concerning all that is obscured^l,
^{if} Whether good ^{or} ^{if} whether evil.

The salient points of the Epilogue (12:8-12) have been dealt with in connection with the Prologue.¹ There remains a word to be said regarding the conclusion of the book expressed by the writer in 12:13,14.

THE TERMINUS

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.

In Hebrew the word rendered “matter” is the same as that rendered “word.” “The whole *matter*” points to the precise discourse of this book, and therefore to the entirety of the “*words* of the Assembler” (1:1). This Hebrew term

1. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.90, p.90.

is frequently used in such a collective sense (e.g., 1 Sam. 3:17; Josh.21:43).

By “instructions” neither the decalogue nor the observances of the law are meant. This is evident from the fact that neither are mentioned. The reference is rather to the “times,” or God’s seasons of approving things. Ecclesiastes has already spoken (in Book Four) of God’s “design” in contrast to man’s many plans, and now the ground thought is advanced that man’s whole task is to attune his whole life with God’s plan.

The necessity for this is reinforced in the final verse by the thought of a coming season of rectification. “For the One, Elohim, shall bring every deed into judgment concerning all that is obscured, whether good or whether evil” (Ecc.12:14). Many have been misled as to the real import of the concluding statement by the wrong idea which confounds judgment with punishment. Judgment implies the thoughts of doing right and setting right. Thus the terminus to the book lays stress on the idea expressed in the course of investigation, that rectifying judgment is one of the appointed “seasons” (8:6) in the working out of God’s plan.

V. Gelesnoff

FREE WILL AND HELL

In a recent publication discussing his “eschatology” (study of “last things”), the European theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, identifies “the logic of hell” with “the logic of free will,” and argues against both concepts. He writes: “The logic of hell seems to me not merely inhumane but also extremely atheistic: here the human being in his freedom of choice is his own lord and god. His own will is his heaven—or his hell. God is merely the accessory who puts that will into effect” (Richard Bauckham, editor: *GOD WILL BE ALL IN ALL*, p.45 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999]). It is heartening to see such a bold criticism of entrenched errors, pointing to reliance on the living God of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:10). We hope that this testimony may give a push to some for re-examining what God’s Word says about the future on the basis of what was done on Golgotha’s hill.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

THE RICH WISDOM of the Assembler was his conviction that his experiences were all from the hand of Elohim (*cf* Ecc.1:13; 2:24-26; 3:10-17; 5:18-20; 6:1,2; 7:13,14; 8:15; 9:1; 11:5). It was given to him to avoid the evil of not recognizing God as God (*cf* Rom.1:21). As a consequence his words have timely force for us for guidance in our lives in the face of transitoriness and the inevitability of death. But of necessity, Ecclesiastes could not view the operations of God as they are channeled through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is wisdom for us in our days also to recognize, glorify and thank God as God. But in His Word especially as centered in the evangel concerning God’s Son, God has revealed Himself in a way that transcends beyond the wisdom of Ecclesiastes. We see that God Who gives us our experiences of evil is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who commends His love to us in Christ’s death for sinners. We see that whatever happens to us and around us, it is from the hand of God, but we also see the depths of God’s glory as revealed in Christ. We perceive there is a purpose for good in all the events of life, and this purpose is centered in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nevertheless, the wisdom given to the Assembler is truly instructive and beneficial for us as God’s creatures in this present world. We do well to recognize God as our Creator, Who places us and sets the events of our lives, and Who has prepared the future. Whatever is our “portion” in life it is given to us by God (*cf* Ecc.5:18).

IN THE DAYS OF OUR PRIME

When the Assembler says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your prime" (Ecc.12:1), he is not thinking so much of our youth as the time when we are most tempted to feel we can make our way by ourselves. This most often comes after our childhood when we are at the height of our strength. The recognition of our place as creatures created by the Creator is needed at all times, but in those times when we feel most self-sufficient we require special reminders of this need.

There is probably no more elementary truth in the Scriptures than the revelation of God as Creator. This is the message of Genesis 1:1, and it remains a fundamental revelation throughout the Scriptures. When Yahweh finally speaks directly to Job He speaks first of all of His works of creation. He "founded the earth" and "determined its measurements" (Job 38:4,5). No word could have been more welcome and more beneficial to this suffering mortal whose personal resources, both mental and physical, had been obliterated.

But it is so easy to forget that we are creatures, especially when things are going well. We are creatures who have been created. And God is the Creator Who created us. To imagine otherwise is to get above ourselves and put ourselves in God's place.

IDOLATRY

The irreverence of humanity reaches its height in idolatry. This is a sure sign of forgetting that God is our Creator. In His indignation upon this irreverence God has given idolaters over "to the uncleanness of dishonoring their bodies among themselves" (Rom.1:18,24,25). This can certainly be traced through many incidents recorded in the Scriptures concerning Israel and the nations.

In modern times this sin of idolatry has taken on more subtle forms than the veneration of wood, stone and metallic images in animal and human shape. Yet the results are very much the same. Glory is given to the creature rather than the Creator.

A most mischievous example of our tendency to honor ourselves for attributes that are God's alone is the dogma of human "free" will. We certainly have a will, but God alone is its Creator. God is not limited in the exercise of His will by human choices, sovereignly exercised by us. It is idolatry to say that God cannot do something that He wills to do because stubborn, willful sinners refuse to let Him.

We hear such things as: "God is willing to take the risk of losing His creation." "God knows that it is best in the long run that His creatures be free moral agents."

Free from what? Not free from the influences of evil forces! Not free from the selfishness and lusts and greed of the flesh! The idea boils down to the creature being free only from the Creator's molding and shaping and directing of His creation.

If God has the ability to create us He has the ability to bring us to the end He has in view for us. If He has accepted the responsibility of creating us, why should we suppose He relinquishes the responsibility of completing what He has begun? To remember God as our Creator is to recognize with thanksgiving and praise that He is powerful, wise and reliable.

The fact that God is our Creator is relevant to all that happens to us and all that we are and have. This is true even with respect to the highest blessings God grants the believer. We never reach a level where it is no longer essential for us to recognize God as our Creator. When Paul speaks about "the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God," he adds the reminder that God is the One "*Who creates all*" (Eph.3:9).

God's vast love and the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us are not matters to be traced to our wisdom or faithfulness but to God Who is the Creator of all, Who makes the eons and establishes their purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph.3:11).

THE CREATION FREED

As part of God's creation in its present state, human beings are subjected to vanity under the slavery of corruption. Yet as Creator, God can free, and expects to free, and will free creation from this slavery into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom.8:20,21). We do not have a free will, for we are enslaved to corruption. But the Creator will perfect His creation, and He will bring us all into a glorious freedom where there is no stubbornness or willfulness contrary to that which is good and well-pleasing to God.

Romans 11:32 settles the question: "For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all." God's creation never becomes independent of the One Who creates it. Its destiny is in His hands, and He will not fail to achieve that which He has purposed.

"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).

This is not only a fitting conclusion to Romans 9-11, but also to the words of the Assembler. He recognized that all is out of God, and learned that all that occurs comes through His operations. Paul completes the revelation by the message that all is directed to God and to His glory.

D.H.H.