

- 97 Editorial  
101 The Universal Dignities of Christ  
109 The Reconciliation of All to God  
117 In the Father's Hands  
121 Marriage and the Believer  
133 Among the Philistines  
136 God at Work in Genesis Two

**MAY, 2001**

**Volume XCII**

**Number 3**



UNSEARCHABLE RICHES, volume 92, number 3, May, 2001, Portable Document Format (PDF) Edition, for use with Acrobat® Reader. Copyright © Concordant Publishing Concern, 15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91387, U.S.A. This publication may be reproduced for personal use (all other rights reserved by copyright holder).

**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MAY 2001  
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY-TWO**

**EDITORIAL**

**GOD** is. This is not a matter for us to prove but to recognize and appreciate. But what is He like?

A great deal about God can be discerned in His handiwork. “His invisible attributes are described from the creation of the world” (Rom.1:20). He is often acknowledged in prayer in times of sorrow and trouble as a Source of comfort, as the One to Whom we turn when there is obviously no other. Although done so irreverently, God is frequently called upon in times of anger and frustration, in curses, and this is a kind of backhanded acknowledgment of His supremacy. But, apart from God’s grace, mankind avoids God (*cf* Rom.3:12).

However, the Israelite could say, “By many portions and many modes, of old, God, [spoke] to the fathers in the prophets” (Heb.1:1). God made Himself known to one people by words which were given through human spokesmen. The Sacred Scriptures recorded and preserved these words which were words of promise but also of law and thus necessarily of judgment. The testimony was to God’s knowledge and power and perfect standards of righteousness. Yet this did not change the fact that all avoid Him; rather it tended to increase the reality of that sad situation by the fruit of dread or hypocrisy and callousness.

But then, as the writer of Hebrews adds, “in the last of these days [God] speaks to us in a Son” (Heb.1:2). Similarly, John writes, “God no one has ever seen. The only-begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds Him” (John 1:18). It is when God makes Himself known as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Who is blessed, 2 Cor.1:3; Eph.1:3; 1 Pet.1:3; and Whom we

thank, Col.1:3) that we really begin to realize Who God is and what He is truly like. The *grace* of God, the *wisdom* of God, the *righteousness* of God, the *power* of God for salvation and life and peace and joy, and above all else the *love* of God, these are all discovered in God's gift of His Son, in the death of Christ for sinners, in His triumph over enmity and death in resurrection, and in all the assurance of good to come through Him.

#### AN EVANGELICAL MINISTRY

Our aim in our ministry is to point to the revelation of God made in Christ Jesus our Lord as recorded in the Scriptures. In the true sense of the word this is an *evangelical* mission. It announces good news. Someone recently said that whenever he hears the gospel he gets scared. If so, he cannot be hearing the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. If we present God only as He is revealed in His righteous anger without speaking of Him as the righteous Justifier through the faithful obedience of Christ and as the Saviour and Reconciler of all through the blood of Christ's cross, then we are not being evangelical.

A sister in the Lord has been collecting the favorite passages of Scripture of her friends for a small publication. I gave Romans 5:8 as my choice: "God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes." This is pure evangel. It speaks of God's revelation of Himself in the gift of His Son for sinners, and it tells each of us individually that we are loved, and not only loved, but loved by God.

But now as I write this editorial I am thinking I should have used Romans 8:31,32, which asks, "If God is for us, who is against us? Surely, He Who spares not His own Son, but gives Him up for us all, how shall He not, together with Him, also, be graciously granting us all?" The force of the negative verb, "spares not," along with the positive verb,

"gives," never fails to astound me. God's love is not only seen in the giving of His Son for sinners and enemies but in the fact that God did not lighten in any way the necessary burden that fell on His Beloved.

That's the problem with "favorite verses." When the evangel is the theme, they all seem to outshine each other, or at least shine forth with distinct and special light.

#### DIRECTED TO GOD'S WORD

We hope that the readers of our magazine will often find their thoughts directed to this evangel which reveals the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor.4:6). This is perhaps most easily done with the two articles on Colossians 1:20 which begin the current issue, and with the brief meditation entitled "In the Father's Hands." As we grow in realization of God's will and delight to reconcile all on the earth and in the heavens we are consoled and edified with assurance and praise.

But the considerations of such human matters as marriage problems or wrong choices (such as David's sojourn among the Philistines) are also very much concerned with the evangel. The revelation of God's grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus continually works in the believer in our personal lives in a way that the law could never do. Paul testified, "In the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace, which is in me, did not come to be for naught" (1 Cor.15:10). "For the saving grace of God made its advent to all humanity, training us that, disowning irreverence and worldly desires, we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in the current eon" (Titus 2:11,12).

Finally, the extremely difficult and crucial matter of God's relationship to the entrance of sin and death into this world, as brought up in the article on Genesis 2, can only be fully appreciated in light of the evangel of God concerning Christ's death for sinners. Clinging to the rev-

elation of God as given in the first chapter of Genesis, as Job seemed to have done, is certainly of great benefit in understanding the experience of evil. But the evangel announces that God not only has a good purpose for all He does, but that He has indeed assured the realization of that purpose in the gift of His Son.

When Paul wrote that "God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all" (Rom. 11:32), he did so in light of the evangel of God, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom. 1:1-5) which he expounded in Romans 3:21-8:39. The stubbornness which God Himself brings upon Israel and the nations is for the purpose of the revelation and appreciation of God's mercy. And to achieve that good consummation, God spared not His Son but gave Him up for us all.

The minister at a wedding told us God had known before they were born that the bride and groom would come to this happy day of their marriage, and that God had prepared the steps all along the way to this event. This was good, but when he later spoke of troubles and sorrows that were inevitably ahead for the couple, I could not help but notice he did not relate these to God. Perhaps it was just as well under the circumstances. But I prayed silently for the newly-weds that when they do experience hardships and disappointments they will see them as part of God's purpose for them. May God lead us all to relate our experiences, both happy and sad, to the operations of His hand, and in turn relate this view of the Deity of God to His gracious and loving gift of His Son for us. Indeed God would have Himself known ultimately to all by means of His evangel concerning His Son. The God Who is operating all things in accord with the counsel of His will is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who commends His love in the death of His Son for sinners.

D.H.H.

---



---

*That in All He May Be First*

---

## THE UNIVERSAL DIGNITIES OF CHRIST

THE SUPREMACY of God's Son depends on the *universality* or *totality* of His many dignities. How extraordinary is the emphasis laid on this vital fact in Colossians 1:16-20! Within the compass of five verses we read no less than *eight* times that the given glory is all-inclusive. He is the firstborn of *every* creature. *All* is created in Him, and *all* is created through and for Him. He is before *all*. *All* has its cohesion in Him. In *all* He is becoming first. The *entire* complement dwells in Him. He reconciles *all* through the blood of His cross. And on two occasions this is amplified and defined as all that is in the heavens and on the earth. It is said to include both visible and invisible. What more could be said to impress us with the universal scope of the Son's activities?

Here we have a gem of purest ray serene, fit for the diadem of universal majesty! He was first in time and He must become first in all else. How many of mankind have striven for supremacy! Some have drenched the ground with blood in order to attain the highest place for themselves among the rulers of the earth. Many more in other walks of life have sought to reach the top, above their less fortunate fellows. These all exalted themselves, finding a futile and a fleeting eminence. How marvelous the contrast! He Who never sought His own advancement but only God's glory, Who abased Himself beneath all, He will become first in all.

Let us be very jealous for His glory, and allow no one else to filch it from Him. Let us be very zealous for His supremacy, and accord it to no other name but His. And

let us guard each glory as we would a treasure trove. And, since His crowning glories as Complement of the Deity and Reconciler of all are so often denied to Him, let us make these the special theme of our meditation, and, if need be, let us maintain them and defend them to the last. In Him, the Firstborn from the dead, through the blood of His cross, God is completely equipped to consummate the purpose of love, and bring every enemy back to His bosom, not only saved, but reconciled.

#### THE ENTIRE COMPLEMENT

It is quite possible to imagine that God would delegate the honor of creation to one mediator and that of reconciliation to another. God needs both to carry out His purpose, so that each, in his measure, would contribute to the fulfillment of His plans. Then the honor of being God's complement would be shared by them. To put it figuratively, one would receive a place at His right hand, the other at His left. Indeed, some have taught that God's complement consisted of a whole series of beings, independent of His Son, to whom He delegated creation. Not so! The *entire* complement, *all* that is needed by God in order to fulfill His will in connection with His creatures, finds its fit residence in His Son.

In Him the complement *delights* to dwell. It is not alone that He has the ability, the fitness, the competence to cope with all that is involved in this most marvelous function in the universe. All this He has, and far more. At His baptism, when the heavens were opened to Him, the voice declared, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I *delight*" (Matt.3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). So again, when He was transformed on the high mountain, a voice came out of the cloud and testified to the delight of the Father in His Beloved (Matt.17:5; Mark 9:7). Peter reminds us of this in his epistle, and tells us that it brought Him honor and

glory from God the Father (2 Peter 1:17). Long before, Isaiah records the same fact (Matt.12:18; Isa.42:1): "My Beloved, in Whom My soul delights."

Is it not striking that this recognition of the Son is one of the very few statements directly spoken by the Deity in the later Scriptures? This should give it the prominence which is due in our hearts. What a contrast to His testimony concerning the rest of mankind! When the Lord stooped down to see how they are, He found nothing in which to *delight*. Not one was even just or kind (Rom.3:10-18). Certainly there has never been one among Adam's descendants, apart from His grace, in whom He could find pleasure. In none of them could the complement find any place whatever.

The complement (*plêrōma*) is here personified (Col. 1:19). It is represented as seeking a suitable dwelling place from which to carry out the purposes of God. In Him it has found a delightful abode, for He is not merely a means of bringing back creation to what it was, but of bringing it on to fulfill its purpose. All too many of us imagine that we would be satisfied with a universe brought back to its pristine perfection, a world without sin, a sorrow-free existence. No such result would satisfy the heart of God. That would never justify the travail of the eons. That would never win the admiring approval of the universe. That would be vanity, a feeding on wind, a reaping of less than was sown, a losing venture.

And such would creation be, had it not been begun in the Son of His *love*, and should it not be finished by the same One through the blood of His cross. Love cannot be revealed without a background. Every blessing imaginable poured into the lap of a sinless creature is merely a matter of course, which evokes no thankful feelings, and provokes no response of love. I feel certain that Adam never thought of thanking his Maker for his superb health and

strength. Yet I am profoundly grateful for the very little vigor needed to pen these lines. And when we, who have suffered much from illness and weakness, once attain our body of glory, how deep and lasting will be our thankful love to Him for all His superabundant grace!

In this passage nothing is said directly of the entrance and course of evil and sin, because this is no part of the work of the Son. But the introduction of estrangement is clearly implied by His death and His cross and the necessity of the reconciliation of all. It is no glory or honor to destroy God's work. This must, indeed, be done, but woe to him who does it! His course must be down and not up. The glory of the Son lies in this, that He undoes the work of the Adversary. Great as were His glories in creation, now that all have been estranged by sin He gains far greater glory by His suffering for all, so that all will be saved and reconciled, and so attain the original object of their creation.

God pity us if we see our salvation from our own side only! The object of all is God, rather than His creatures. And the glory of God demands the exaltation of His Son. These are the chief considerations in the reconciliation of all. If a single one of those whom He created in love should fail to find the final goal which His love has set, then it is His wisdom and power which are brought into question, and *His* love which is open to doubt. Likewise, if one who was created in the Son of God's love should fail to be reconciled by the blood of His cross, would that not drag the Son down from the high place which God has given Him? Let us not darken the splendor of His achievement by our own dismal unbelief.

#### WHAT ARE "THINGS?"

The neuter gender, in English, is used only for *things* as a rule, not for persons. In Greek, however, the so-called "neuter" seems to be much wider in its scope, and to

include, rather than to exclude, the genders. This is evident in such passages as Galatians 3:22 ("the scripture locks up all together under sin") and John 6:37 ("All that which the Father is giving to Me shall be arriving to Me"). In Colossians 1:20 it is of considerable importance to be clear on this point. The more the passage is studied the more it seems evident that *not things*, but persons are intended. These "things" are *on* the earth and *in* the heavens, hence they cannot refer to the material creation as a whole. And how can *things* be reconciled? Were the Colossians (1:21) among these *things*? Reconciliation is possible only where enmity has prevailed. The introduction of the word "things," it seems to us, though warranted by the grammars, has thrown a veil over the whole passage and made it unintelligible to some extent.

#### PEACE THROUGH THE CROSS

Enmity has come in through the entrance of death and sin. All of mankind, without exception, are estranged from God. It is more than likely that this discord has affected the whole creation, in varying degrees. To make peace between God and His unfriendly creatures is the greatest of all achievements. In this world of strife and contention the role of peacemaker is a difficult and discouraging one. For the most trivial causes enmity arises between man and man, section and section, country and country. We talk of peace, yet there is unrest and misunderstanding almost everywhere, and the din of arms does not cease.

The cross, the inglorious, the disgraceful, the infamous, the opprobrious, the outrageous stake, the most disreputable death that man can devise, where weakness and shame combine to dishonor the High and Holy Son of God—here is where peace was made for all who are estranged, where the world was conciliated to God. With this as a basis, the Son will reconcile all God's enemies with Him when the

eons have run their course. In the cross we see the utter worthlessness of man as well as the supreme exhibition of the love of God. Reconciliation is effected by the revelation of God's love in the deepest display of human hate.

The cross, like a lightning flash, reveals the heart of man. He Who hung upon it was the Touchstone by which all things may be tested. When He appeared among His people humanity manifested itself as it really is. He should have been welcomed and honored and adored. By the condemnation of the only One Who deserved to live, mankind has condemned itself, and sealed its own death warrant. By the shameful crucifixion of the Lord of glory men made it manifest that they, not He, deserve the death detestable. O that we all may learn what we really are in the light of the cross! This will burn out all our pride and prepare the way for peace. And thus it is that reconciliation comes. The cross will abase all into the dust, and humble their hearts before the Deity, and prepare them for the revelation of His love.

But if the cross only revealed what is in man it could not reconcile the race but would rather destroy it. Thanks be to God that it also reveals what is in God! It is the fullest revelation of His love. In it He seemed to side with man. Instead of rescuing His Beloved from their hate, He sends fire from above into His bones. He makes Him to be sin, Who knew no sin. He forsakes Him instead of the ones who deserved His displeasure.

The divine alchemy which transformed the Victim of human hate into the Sacrifice for their sins is almost too wonderful for human apprehension.

#### THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS

The cross was the supreme crisis in universal history, an event unique, unparalleled in the annals of time. Nothing has ever occurred which has such a profound effect upon

the world. It will transform an alienated universe into adoring worshipers. It is a permanent, an abiding power which will never lose its potency. Today the cross avails to conciliate the world, and to reconcile those who receive the conciliation. But this will by no means exhaust its power. It will be the basis of all blessing in the eons to come, and will bring immortality and peace to all at the consummation. Death cannot stop its course, for Christ arose, the Firstborn, and all for whom He died (and He died for all!) will share His life when death is finally abolished.

The blood of *Christ* is a most expressive figure of the permanent power of His sufferings. The soul, sensation, feeling (not the life) of the flesh is in the blood. In the days of old this was sprinkled in the holy of holies once a year on the day of propitiation, and for a twelve-month preserved the potency of the sacrifice. So it is with the suffering of Christ. Thank God it is past, but its potency is permanent. It avails today, and will never lose its power. The blood remains, as it were, within the holiest in heaven, to witness to His offering.

But the blood of His *cross*—this goes far deeper still. Only here do we have this notable expression. It is not a mere literary variant, but a deliberate endeavor to distinguish between the death of God's Son and the *manner* of it. This is done because here we have not merely the salvation or the justification of all, but the *reconciliation* of the universe. It is not a question of sin so much as of offense and enmity. In fact this passage is concerned with salvation only insofar as it is included in reconciliation. *Peace* is made by the blood of His cross. The blood is a reminder of its permanence.

This blood does not merely remind us of His death and suffering, but of the *shame* and *enmity* of man, and the *darkness* and *distance* from God endured by Him because of the *crucifixion*. Stoning would have brought death, but

would have avoided much of the suffering and the curse of the Deity which rested upon the One Who was hanged upon a tree. The marvelous truth that all will be reconciled to God is based, not only on the suffering and death of Christ, but especially on the abject abasement involved in the manner of His death, coupled with the curse which it drew down from above.

The cry of the august Sufferer, "My God, My God, why didst *Thou* forsake Me?" finds its answer in the *cross*. With any other form of death God would not have forsaken Him. He would rather have turned against His murderers. It would have increased the distance and estrangement between God and His creatures. It would have made enmity, not peace. But because He voluntarily placed Himself beneath the curse of God for the sake of His enemies, the result was reconciliation.

May God graciously give us faith to believe it! May our love for His Beloved constrain us to receive it! May mistaken translations of other passages not bar our way into this holy of holies, beyond the veil of His eonian dealings with His creatures! May not the false philosophical terms "everlasting" and "eternal," or "eternity," blind our eyes to the eons, the scene of the Son's glories, their commencement in love, and their consummation in reconciliation!

A. E. Knoch

---

#### MALAYSIA FELLOWSHIP

From April 13–25, Jim, Suella, and Marc Coram enjoyed fellowship with friends in faith in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. As in their previous visit there in December, 1995, the Corams' time was occupied with many scheduled meetings besides tourist activities and further informal fellowship. The theme of the meetings was, "Seeing God as God," and all the messages presented related in some way to this theme.

It was encouraging to note the stability of faith among many of our brethren there. And so we are remembering these honored friends in prayer to God in their work of faith and toil of love and endurance of expectation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

---



---

### *If One Died For the Sake of All*

---

## THE RECONCILIATION OF ALL TO GOD

ALL who are estranged from God will be brought into the enjoyment of that reconciliation and peace toward God which has been established through the blood of Christ's cross. This is assured in the words of Colossians 1:19,20: *For in [Christ] the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens.*

#### A PIVOTAL POINT

This passage is a pivotal point in Colossians. It is the climax of the hymn of 1:13-20 which focuses on Christ as the Son of God's love, the Image of the invisible God in Whom the entire complement delights to dwell. As such Colossians 1:20 is vital for the realization of God (1:10) as He is revealed as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3). It is also the major basis for our appreciation of the reconciliation God has made and for persistence in the faith day by day, as presented in the rest of the epistle. Colossians 1:20 cannot be passed over lightly. All believers should take this announcement of universal reconciliation very seriously and with the highest degree of optimism.

Indeed Colossians 1:20 is a vital key for the realization of God and our honoring of Christ. It is also fundamental for our appreciation of the evangel and enjoyment of the peace and assurance that the evangel holds for us. These are Paul's particular concerns in writing this epistle. The truth of universal reconciliation is critical to our realiza-

tion of God, our recognition of the honors of Christ and our daily lives as believers.

#### THE REALIZATION OF GOD

In Colossians 1:10, Paul prays for growth in the realization of God. The great impediment to this realization is the presence of sin and estrangement which keeps God's creatures at a distance from Him. It is in the removal of this estrangement that God would make Himself known to us, and this operation is carried out in His Son. Hence, Paul precedes his prayer for the realization of God Himself by reference to the realization of God's *grace* (1:6) and the realization of God's *will* (1:9), both of which relate to the death of Christ. God would have us become acquainted with Him effectively and deeply, as He is presented as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's *grace* is made known to us in the evangel which declares that Christ died for our sins, was entombed and has been roused (1 Cor.15:3,4). We are sinners, being justified gratuitously in God's *grace*, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Rom.3:23,24). In *grace*, through faith, are we saved, and this is not out of ourselves; it is God's approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting (Eph.2:8,9). The evangel tells us that God gives and we receive. It declares that God acts and we are blessed.

God's *will* is similarly revealed in the message of Christ's death for sinners. God *wills* that all mankind be saved and come into a realization of the truth (1 Tim.2:4). Hence God counseled (intended) the death of His Son (Acts 2:23; 4:27,28), sparing Him not, but giving Him up for us all (Rom.8:32). Not only was this God's intention, but because of the glorious results of the cross it was God's *will*, as our Lord indicated in Gethsemane (Matt.26:42).

We cannot grasp the riches and power and glory of God's grace or perceive the righteousness and wisdom and love

of His will as they are manifested in the death of His Son apart from seeing their results. His will involves the giving up of His Son to death in light of the good it would achieve (and it alone could achieve) not only for human sinners, but for all of estranged creation in blessing and realization.

In Colossians this evangel is expressed most strikingly in Paul's outstanding hymn of praise in 1:13-20.

#### THE CHRIST OF COLOSSIANS

In this marvelous passage Paul sings of Christ, of Whom God is the God and Father, and in Whom all are reconciled to God (Col.1:13-20). This hymn speaks of Christ in relation to God three times. First of all He is the Son of God's love (1:13). Then He is the Image of the invisible God (1:15). And finally He is the One in Whom the entire complement [of the Deity] delights to dwell (1:19).

Colossians 1:19,20 is the climax of this hymn. All else leads forward to this conclusion. Christ reveals God as the One Who brings estrangement and enmity and evil itself to an end by means of one astounding act at the cross.

#### THE SON OF GOD'S LOVE

Thus the apostle begins with reference to the Son of God's love, and he ends with reference to the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:15 also involves a similar connecting of good with Christ's death, for the deliverance which we have in Christ is through His blood (Eph.1:7) in God's grace for sinners (Rom.3:24). So also the phrase "pardon of sins," in a remarkable condensation of thought joins the truth of justification through the blood of Christ and conciliation through the death of Christ expounded in Romans 5:1-11. Such a direct relating of God's love for His Son with the death of His Son seems wholly incongruous. God not only associates His will with the death of His Son, but He associates His love with the cross.

Once again, this is beyond hope of realization, unless we see the glorious purpose of the cross, including the reconciliation of all.

#### THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

As the One in Whom, through Whom and for Whom all is created (Col.1:16,17), Christ reveals the invisible God. In the work of creation Christ images God's power and intelligence. But until the cross He could not reflect God's love which shapes His power and which infuses His wisdom.

We cannot realize God as He is if we see Him only as a God of supreme ability and power. Christ as Creator mirrors God's power and divinity (Rom.1:20). We must also know the joy and peace that comes with a realization of God in reconciliation. Consequently, in His love for His Son, God counseled that Christ would not only be the Image of His hand, but also be Image of His heart. In all things Christ becomes first (Col.1:18).

Other creatures, created in Christ Who is the Firstborn of every creature, are referred to in verse 16 as "thrones, lordships, sovereignties and authorities." But they cannot reflect the love of God. Certain among them might be able to bring creation into an imposed order, but they could not gain what God wills for His universe in expressing the righteousness and wisdom and, most importantly, the love which is in His heart. The Image of the invisible God must be also the Son of His love in order to convey this love to all His creatures personally.

This Christ does for us as the Head of His body which is that out-calling of human beings, chosen and called in grace, delivered from sin and death into righteousness and life by His death and resurrection. He also does this as Sovereign over all the powers of the universe, exalted as Saviour and Lord in light of His obedience to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8-11). And again He does this as the

"Firstborn from among the dead," the One in Whom all who are dying will be vivified, He Himself leading the way (1 Cor.15:22).

Consequently, Christ is the Image of the invisible God, not simply by the work creation itself, but also by His loving and powerful work of bringing all of creation to its intended completion. This is the theme now of the dramatic, closing lines of the hymn.

#### IN WHOM THE ENTIRE COMPLEMENT DWELLS

The Son of God's love, the Image of the invisible God, is now to be seen as the One in Whom the entire complement delights to dwell. It may have been that some people, known to the Colossians, were referring to spiritual lordships and sovereignties as the "pleroma" or complement of God. History records such a religious concept some years later, and the terminology used here suggests it was already appearing to the dilution of Christ's honors in people's minds.

Christ is One and the only One in Whom the "entire complement" is making its home. In Colossians 2:9 we learn that this "entire complement" is the "entire complement of the Deity." It refers to that which makes God complete. God delights to reveal Himself in the fullness of His love in Christ as the One Who shed His blood at the cross for the reconciliation of all. As the One in Whom the entire complement [of the Deity] delights to dwell, Christ brings all the estranged universe into reconciliation to God. In doing this, Christ makes God fully known and appreciated everywhere throughout the universe.

#### "AND YOU"

Paul has finished his hymn recounting the glories of Christ, ending with Christ as the One through Whom God reconciles all to Himself. Now he turns back to the

“brethren in Christ” (1:2), and addresses us personally: “And you, being once estranged and enemies in comprehension, by wicked acts, yet now He reconciles by His body of flesh, through His death, to present you holy and flawless and unimpeachable in His sight” (Col.1:21,22).

All the requirements for reconciliation are accounted for. There is estrangement and enmity. That is the sorry but necessary contribution we have made to the process. There is the death of God’s Son Who has come among us in a body of flesh like ours. And there is the God and Father of Christ Whose will and delight is to bring us to Himself in realization and appreciation of Himself.

What God intends the blood of Christ’s cross to accomplish for all who are estranged from Him, He has already granted to us. What we have now is based on what Christ has gained for all. In seeing the certainty and the grace of this peace which we have received on the basis of Christ’s death for us, and in “persisting” in this faith (Col.1:23) we will surely be experiencing much of the peace of this reconciliation today. This is the basis of the believers’ assurance and walk in these present times of uncertainty and struggle. We believe this evangel which says that God has doomed the estrangement of His creation through the death of His beloved Son. And in believing this our hearts are consoled (Col.2:2) and our faith stabilized (2:5).

#### TRIUMPH AT THE CROSS

In such a context of grace and peace, how can thoughts of everlasting enmity and separation be introduced and sustained? God’s will in sending the Son of His love to die for His enemies is specifically directed to their reconciliation with Him. Our faith is centered on the certainty of this reconciliation for ourselves. No matter how contradictory what we see and experience in the flesh may be to this evangel, we believe it and, in God’s grace, are becom-

ing grounded and settled in assurance and thanksgiving. Our reconciliation to God is certain because Christ has made peace for all through the blood of His cross.

The message is so simple. God has not based His work of reconciliation on human requirements. It is a work of grace. And God has not entrusted the work of reconciliation to a group of intermediaries but to Christ alone, Who has done the work by putting enmity to death in His death.

This work of Christ at the cross is brought before us not only in Colossians 1:20 (“the blood of His cross”) and 1:22 (“by His body of flesh, through His death”), but again in Colossians 2:14,15, when the apostle speaks of hostility of “sovereignities and authorities.” Concerning this hostility, the apostle assures us that God nailed it to the cross, “stripping off the sovereignities and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it.”

In Colossians 1:20 the cross is associated with peace. In Colossians 2:15 it is associated with triumph. And taking these two points, some have claimed that Christ’s triumph over hostile forces defines the nature of their reconciliation as one of disarmament and pacification. The estrangement, enmity and hostility remains, but these creatures, these wicked beings, are forcefully subdued and kept from exercising their hostility. In effect, this is a bringing in of everlasting hell into the book of Colossians and its presentation of God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a twisted conclusion!

Colossians 2:15 is in full accord with Colossians 1:20. The triumph of Christ is over hostility and over estrangement and enmity as well. It nails the enmity of human beings to the cross as well as the hostility of spiritual forces of wickedness. In losing their sovereignty and authority they also lose their hostility and become willingly subject to the One Who has conquered them in His work of love at the cross. As long as estrangement exists between God

and the creatures of His hands, the triumph and reconciliation of Christ through the shedding of His blood is unrealized. If enmity continues to exist “throughout eternity” the triumph is exposed as a sham and the reconciliation as a shameful pretense.

#### PERSISTING IN THE FAITH

According to Colossians 1:23, if we believe that we have been delivered from estrangement and enmity by the death of Christ and have been brought into reconciliation by His blood, apart from our own works, and we persist in this faith, we will be experiencing this reconciliation even now. The evangel is full of riches of assurance. But the horror of unending torment or annihilation debilitates faith. And the view of God that such concepts demand constantly erodes the peace of reliance on Him and the assurance of His glorious will in Christ that the evangel of Colossians 1:20 presents.

We cannot grow in realization of God’s wisdom and power or His goodness and love if we suppose He is not able or not willing to bring all into that peace and happiness which the cross of Christ has gained. It is what such a tragedy painted by traditionalism says about God and the cross of Christ that should convince us that all passages of Scripture dealing with judgment and condemnation speak of temporary means and not everlasting states. There is no deficiency in the effectualness of the cross of Christ and no dualistic contradiction in the will of God.

Christ did die for all, and therefore all will be reconciled to God.

We are thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His glorious triumph in the cross of Christ. It is a triumph over our enmity and hostility, and that of all His estranged creatures, and it will be manifested in the deeply felt and truly appreciated reconciliation of all.

D.H.H.

---



---

*Grace and Peace from God, our Father*

---

#### IN THE FATHER’S HANDS

As we emerge from the shadows of confusion into the realization of the glories of our God and Father, we begin to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment. With the apostle Paul we thrust behind us those things which brought us, through distress and pain, to humility, then adoration.

#### MEANS AND END

From the Seventeenth Century there is a proverb, “The end justifies the means.” All of us are subjected to the results of Adam’s disobedience, but these are means, not God’s goal.

The need for subjection is presented through the disobedience of our ancient parents in Eden and the judgment that followed. Concerning this, Yahweh Elohim declared, “Behold, man has become like one of Us in knowing good and evil. Now lest he should stretch out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live for the eon—” (Gen.3:22).

The silence of this unfinished declaration yet speaks volumes. Heed the judgment: “Because you hearkened to your wife’s voice and ate from the only tree that I instructed you, saying, ‘You must not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground on your account; in grief shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and weeds shall it sprout for you, and you will eat the herbage of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread, until you return to the ground,

for from it were you taken. For soil you are, and to soil you shall return” (Gen.3:17-19).

#### PRAISE CANNOT BE COMMANDED

A precious blessing lavished by God upon humanity was to confer the riches embodied in the relationship of *Father and children*. This is not a mere figure of speech. God addressed our Lord as “. . . My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight” (Matt.3:17). Such a bond is very important. Before the Deity we are prostrate in dread and awe, but this loving title of *Father* invites and welcomes us into His very presence. It reveals His care, provision and affection. “If God is for us, who is against us? Surely, He Who spares not His own Son, but gives Him up for us all, how shall He not, together with Him, also, be granting us all?” (Rom.8:31,32).

We earnestly beseech our gracious Father’s patience in the use of a human proverb in considering His judgments in Eden. The grim record of human history reveals, when the means become an end in themselves, then this could lead to shameful brutality. It is not so with our God and Father.

Mankind could not be created as they will ultimately be at the consummation. When God is All in all, a mighty acclamation of loving praise shall resound throughout the universe.

Obviously, *such exultation cannot be commanded*. This would be contradictory, and an affront to His loving wisdom and mighty glory. Ask parents, “Could you . . . would you simply trust in a spontaneous love from your offspring?” It is impossible for them to adequately present conclusive proof of their love for their children, no matter how profound their heart’s desire. And even if this were possible, what the response? Such comparison is feeble,

a mere shadow of God’s omnipotent love, but there are some thoughtful similarities.

#### REVEALED THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

There is something God cannot do. He cannot lie! What He has declared concerning His purpose will be fulfilled.

Thus far, we have been considering the means toward a desired end. But what of this end? The importance of this determines the severity or otherwise of these same means. It might be erroneously concluded that the fearful toll of suffering is disproportionate. So reasons puny man of these perilous periods, “always learning, and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth” (2 Tim.3:7).

As proposed above, parents are not sufficiently able nor wise enough clearly to demonstrate a love which knows no limits, a love which reaches far, far beyond all weak, human capacities. Our Father reaches out to His helpless children, presenting His relationship with His blessed Son, Christ Jesus. The tremendous significance of this is full of compassion, for it communicates as nothing else could. But in our weakness we must always be reminded that our spirits are entering hallowed revelation.

“That which the eye did not perceive, and the ear did not hear, and to which the heart of man did not ascend—whatever God makes ready for those who are loving Him. Yet to us God reveals them through His spirit, for the spirit is searching all, even the depths of God” (1 Cor.2:9,10).

#### RECONCILIATION FOLLOWS ESTRANGEMENT

“The usual way is to view the goal with the darkness of the way. We go back to passages which deal with judgments and allow them to throw their dark shadows across the consummation. We should *believe* that *God* will *justify all* mankind (Rom.5:18), and view the previous judgments in the light of this final achievement. We bring up

passages which tell of death to darken God's declaration that it will be abolished. We should *believe* that *God* will make death inoperative at the *last*, and view the previous passages in this glorious light. We turn to texts which prove that unbelievers will be lost or destroyed, and, with these passages, dim the great declaration that God wills the salvation of all. We should illumine them with the later and higher revelation. We find God's enemies in the fiery lake at what seems to be the close of revelation, and misuse this fact to deny God's declaration that all will be reconciled (Col.1:20). We should not take one to destroy the other, but believe both, for reconciliation *follows* estrangement, and it alone accords with God's final goal . . . .

"Let us allow the light of the latest revelation to illuminate the earlier, partial unfolding, and let us not use the earlier to eclipse the latest, the highest, and the only complete unveiling of God's mind and heart."<sup>1</sup>

This brief contemplation of the means and the end of God's vast purpose is best concluded with words from the sacred Scriptures:

"For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

"Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the *Father*" (Phil.2:5-11). Donald Fielding

1. A. E. Knoch: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, pp.338,339.

## MARRIAGE AND THE BELIEVER

(Part One)

SOME churches or fellowships today are believing and teaching that death alone dissolves the marriage union. Consequently, they forbid their members to marry (*cp* 1 Tim.4:3); that is, they forbid them to remarry if one of the previous mates is yet living on the grounds that "in the sight of God" the partners in the original marriage are still bound to one another. Consequently, all such second marriages are viewed as being of the same essential nature as any other sexual relationship which is engaged in outside of wedlock.

They insist upon this view regardless of what the nature of the second marriage relationship may be. Any who wish to remain or become members of such groups are told they must renounce the sinful union immediately, either to return to their first mate or to live singly in celibacy.

No doubt, such beliefs are sincerely held and expressed. Indeed, since in the eyes of those holding such views, such is the teaching of Scripture, they feel it is their duty to "cry aloud and spare not."

We realize this is a sensitive subject. Many, especially among those who have living first mates who are partners in second marriages, simply reject as false the claim that marriage can only be terminated by death. Yet they do so being aware that if somehow this claim is true, they are "living in sin." Many sincere believers who enter into a second marriage while their first mates are still living do so simply out of human desire and in less than a clear con-

science (or at least in less than a good understanding) as to the disputed passages which, in the views of some, preclude such a second marriage.

Many others, though they may not actually *forbid* such marriages, nonetheless look upon those believers who thus remarry as somehow "second class" members of the body of Christ.

We disapprove of adultery, separation and divorce, even as we hate the evil and love the good. Similarly, we wholeheartedly concur with the Lord's own imperative, "What God, then, yokes together, let not man be separating" (Matt.19:6). Let no one say that we make light of sin or seek to encourage it. Our only counsel is: Though it is true you were called for freedom, brethren, do not use this freedom for an incentive to the flesh (*cf* Gal.5:13).

The question, however, is not whether adultery is a sin, but whether those who are divorced are yet somehow married. Likewise, the question is not, where both are believers and divorce has occurred, *should* such ones either remain unmarried or be reconciled to one another, but, how does God view and deal with the matter with which we are concerned.

#### "A GENERATION, WICKED AND AN ADULTERESS"

It is important to recognize that Christ's own personal teaching on this subject was directed solely toward the sons of Israel. They alone were the adulterous "wife" of Yahweh. In that day, the days of His flesh, our Lord's *only* commission was to that *adulterous* nation. Though they were indeed, "a generation, wicked and an *adulteress*" (Matt.16:2), even so, the Lord Jesus "was not commissioned except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt.15:24) as He said.

It is taken for granted that our Lord has risen out of Judah (Heb.7:14). Christ came to His own (John 1:11); He came

under law (Gal.4:4); He came as the Servant of the Circumcision (Rom.15:8). While, in His ministry, Christ elucidated the law (e.g., Matt.5:28) and evinced His lordship over it (e.g., Mark 2:23-28), He by no means annulled it (*cf* Matt.5:17-20). The law of Yahweh, which came through Moses, remains in full force today; even so, it is *applicable* solely to the nation of Israel and to her proselytes.

In due time, the twelve also became associated with Christ in His work and were commissioned of Him themselves, both to herald the kingdom and to make His teachings known. If any non-Israelites who believed should wish to approach Israel as proselytes and serve her Messiah faithfully, they were free to do so. But, it was as essential for any such to obey His words as it was essential for those who were Jews by birth.

#### THE SCOPE OF "ADULTERY"

The sin of adultery is always *connected with* "marriage." But it does not follow from this that it is a sin that can only be committed *by* those who are married (i.e., by those who themselves are either husbands or wives). "Related to marriage," and "committed by those who are married," are not the same thought. For example, while in itself a single man's unlawful intercourse with a married woman, with respect to the man's own deed, would be an act of "prostitution" (*porneuō*, "fornication," AV), with respect to its *adulterating* effect upon the woman's marriage, it would also be an act of "adultery." Such a man's act, indeed, is related to marriage; but it is not committed by a married person.

It is true that the common English definition of "adultery" is "voluntary sexual intercourse *of* a married person with someone other than his or her lawful spouse" (THE RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY, p.12). It must be noted, however, that "of" is not "by." "Of" signifies "pertaining to" or "concerning"; "by" refers to "the one who acts," or

“the performing agent.” Much of the false reasoning on this subject is based upon a failure to recognize this fact, and otherwise to reason in reverse, from English to Greek. Yet modern, non-scriptural definition can never be the basis of ancient, scriptural meaning.

We have found nothing in the Hebrew (Old Testament) or Greek (New Testament) Scriptures themselves which confines the thought of adultery to the idea of “unlawful intercourse *by* a married person.” It does not follow from the fact that adultery can be committed by those who are married, that it cannot be committed by those who are not married.

Indeed, in Leviticus 20:10, we do not read, “As for a *married* man who commits adultery with another man’s wife,” but simply, “As for a *man* who commits adultery with another man’s wife . . . the *adulterer* and the adulteress shall be put to death, yea death.”

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word “adultery” is not formally defined. While its usage is often constricted, it seems to possess an essentially wider sense.

Since “marriage” is the righteous union between man and woman (between husband and wife), it would seem that “adultery” is *any maritally-related injury*, inclusive of but not confined to unlawful intercourse between the sexes.

The rich man of Mark 10 included Moses’ prohibition of adultery as a precept which he had maintained “from [his] youth” (Mark 10:17-22). A righteous youth would not wish to engage in any uncleanness which would be injurious to his future marriage, upon reaching his majority. In this sense, he too would seek to obey the precept against committing “adultery.”

It would seem that “*prostitution*” (*porneia*) simply speaks of the unlawfulness of illicit sexual intercourse in general (whether or not for pay), apart from the thought of *marital* infidelity, as such (whether or not the violation of a

proper marriage should be involved as well, in any certain instance of this sin). On the other hand, “adultery” (*moicheia*) draws our attention to the thought of such a sin’s *injuriousness* to the institution of *marriage*.

“Adultery” and “prostitution” appear together in Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21, Galatians 5:19, and Matthew 19:9. In Hebrews 13:4 and in 1 Corinthians 6:9, “adulterers” appears in conjunction with “paramours” (*pornous*; a male who commits “prostitution”; i.e., not merely a “male prostitute” in the common, secular sense, but any man who uses his body for unlawful intercourse, whether or not for pay).

#### FURTHER RAMIFICATIONS OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

In the Greek Scriptures, however, the Lord Himself makes evident the full scope of that which constitutes “adultery.” According to Christ, “adultery” includes not only the act of the man who lies with another man’s wife, but includes as well, “*every* man *looking* at a woman to *lust* for her”; such a one “*already* commits *adultery* with her in his heart” (Matt.5:28), even if he does not consummate his desires by means of his bodily members.

In light of the practical conditions in Israel which the Lord encountered during the days of His ministry, He said, “Now it was declared, Whoever should be dismissing his wife, let him be giving her a divorce [*cf* Deut.24:1-4]. Yet I am saying to you that everyone dismissing his wife (outside of a case of prostitution) is making her commit adultery, and whosoever should be marrying her who has been dismissed is committing adultery” (Matt.5:31,32).

In the economy of our Lord’s time on earth, a wife was wholly dependent on her husband for her subsistence, her needs for living. She could not go out and get a job and support herself. A dismissed wife no longer had the husband’s provision for her needs. What was she to do? Become a

prostitute? Starve to death? Become a “homeless person”? Yet according to the Lord, if she should indeed take up with someone else, even so, she would be committing adultery. In addition, He plainly said that, in so doing, the one marrying her would himself commit adultery.

Similarly, if the original husband, upon dismissing his wife, should marry someone else, he too would commit adultery (Matt.19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18). For that matter, if a wife, upon dismissing her husband, should be marrying another, she likewise would be committing adultery (Mark 10:12), even as the man marrying her (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18).

Thus, under such circumstances, all involved would become “adulterers”; for all involved would be engaging in one form or another of maritally-related wrongdoing or injury.

Having been informed thus by the Lord (Matt.19:9), the disciples declared, “If the cause of a man with a woman is thus, it is not expedient to marry” (Matt.19:10). Jesus replied, saying, “Not all are containing this saying, *but those to whom it has been given*. For there are eunuchs that are born thus out of their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who are emasculated by men, and there are eunuchs who emasculate themselves because of the kingdom of the heavens. The one *able* to contain it, let *him* contain it” (Matt.19:11,12).

Only those who were chosen of God and begotten anew by His spirit, could possibly endure such drastic, albeit metaphorical, “emasulation.” Even then, such continence would be quite impossible if it were to be the work of man of himself. Instead, in the case of those to whom it was *given* “from heaven” (*cf* John 3:27) to emasculate themselves, their faithfulness was the work of God in them; such ones alone were able to contain this saying (*cp* Matt. 19:26; 1 John 5:3,4).

The Lord’s point in such a case as that in which the husband had divorced the wife and simply cast her out on her own, seems to be that by so doing and yet making no further provision for her, he was, effectually speaking, “making” her commit adultery. That is, in most cases, if not all, the woman would have little practical recourse but to turn to some other man.

Moses had neither *approved* nor *promoted* divorce; but merely, in view of the hardheartedness of the people, had *permitted* them to dismiss their wives (Matt.19:8). Yet where this dismissal occurred, he directed that the wife should not merely be sent away, but be provided with a scroll of divorce (Matt.19:7). In order for legal dissolution to be effected and the woman thus be in a position to remarry, this scroll must be supplied.

Indeed, she might well marry the second man only to find that since this latter husband simply “disliked” her, he too would dismiss her. However, under Moses, if he too should send her away or even if he should die, then the former husband who had originally dismissed her was not permitted to reverse himself to take her back to become his wife “after she had had herself *defiled*” (Deut.24:2-4).

In the nature of the case, the second marriage obviously “defiled” (i.e., violated the chastity of) the first marriage. Likewise, we are told that any subsequent remarriage between the original parties was “an abhorrence before Yahweh” and was “a sin in the land which Yahweh your Elohim is giving to you as an allotment” (Deut.24:4).

Yet it simply does not follow from these facts, however, that if similar acts should occur today, God will or will not deem them a sin, even an abhorrence, any more than one’s refraining from circumcision or sabbath observance.

This is because believers today are not under the corpus of law given to Israel of old. God has not imposed these laws upon us, notwithstanding the excellence we may per-

ceive in them or any suppositions of our own as to their perceived appropriateness for our obedience today.

One may not “pick and choose” which of Moses’ precepts he will take to himself and which he will not, according to his own speculations and reasonings. Intrinsicly, the *entire* law—even in its most minute particular—was holy, just and good; and it was ideal for the Israelite to follow it.

But it by no means follows from this that its precepts and statutes constitute timeless righteousness with respect to the personal behavior of all men, everywhere, regardless of era or divine administration. Therefore, it is both false and foolish to claim that if we would be holy and do what is just and good, we must do what Moses declares.

If God would have us know what is pleasing to Him with respect to the walk of the believer today, He must send us an apostle to make this known to us. And if it should be that any particulars encompassed within His will for us at present should include certain explicit counsel which, *incidentally*, was once also His counsel to Israel of old, then He will need to send us a spokesman or prophet to make this clear.

May the reader be given the eyes to see that God has done this very thing; and that He has done so through the ministry of the apostle Paul, as recorded in his prophetic scriptures (*cf* Rom.11:13; 16:26).

“LET NOT MAN BE SEPARATING”

The Lord, however, would not have his listeners merely comply with Moses’ accommodation, *but would not have them divorce at all*. Consequently, He boldly declared, “What God, then, yokes together, *let not man be separating*” (Matt.19:6). Moses had never said that they *may* divorce, or that there was no evil in so doing. Furthermore, Christ did not *rescind* Moses’ instruction as to what should be done in case of dismissal, but made it explicit

that divorce should not occur in the first place. Instead, having pointed out that whenever man and woman unite in matrimony there is no longer division but *unity* (Matt. 19:5), Christ simply forbade separation altogether.

In the Scriptures, there is no vital distinction between “separation” and “divorce.” Both speak of essentially the same thing. Separation is practically a divorce, and may be legalized as such. With respect to each other, these terms are synonyms; with respect to “unite” and “marry,” they are antonyms.

In Matthew 19:9 (where the Lord’s words, “not for prostitution” are found), Christ is speaking in response to the Pharisees’ trying questions, (1) “Is it *allowed* one to dismiss his wife for every cause?” (Matt.19:3) and—if according to the Lord man is simply not to separate what God yokes together—(2) “Why, then, does Moses direct to give a scroll of divorce and to dismiss her?” (Matt.19:7).

These words in Matthew 19:9, “not for prostitution” (*cp* Matt.5:32), have reference to the *only* case in which it was *not* an act of *adultery* to dismiss a woman taken in marriage (whether, in a case, with respect to an event prior to marriage, in which charge of iniquity was made and no proof of virginity was found, or in a case of infidelity by the married; *cf* Deut.22:20; *cp* Deut.22:13-20; 1 Cor.6:18; 10:5-8).

One cause for which Moses *permitted* dismissal of wives was the unfavorable appraisal of the wife by the husband due to discovery of some aspect of her “nakedness” (Deut. 24:1) upon consummation of the marriage. Evidently, this discovery concerned bodily imperfection, or perhaps simply unattractiveness.

Certainly the woman, however, once she became *divorced*, was no longer still *married*. To deny this fact would be to accept a contradiction in terms. Moses did not say that those who divorced did *not* commit adultery. Similarly, Christ did not say that those who divorce are still

married. Indeed it becomes evident from the fact that if when a divorced woman's second husband should die and the former husband should wish to reverse himself to take her back "to become his wife" (Deut.24:4), that she could hardly become his wife once again if she were *still* his wife already; or to say the same thing, if they were still married. This example alone shows that those who become divorced are no longer married. "Divorced" is a synonym for "separated," which is a synonym for "unmarried."

To review, let us recall a case in which the wife had *not* committed "prostitution," and yet, even so, the husband had dismissed her and married another. Under these circumstances, the husband was, first, committing adultery "against her" (Mark 10:11), second, making her commit adultery (Matt.5:32), and third, creating a situation which would entail the act of adultery by the one marrying her (Luke 16:18). The husband, by having effected the separation, involved not only himself but also his wife and potentially any future husband of hers in maritally-related injury.

It is not that the original husband and wife were still married, for since they had divorced, they surely were not. Nonetheless, should the former wife be marrying a second husband, and should a second husband be marrying the original wife, both actions cause her to be defiled making it illegal for her to remarry her original husband under any circumstances (Deut.24:4). These sins all had a most injurious effect upon the *original* marriage; thus they constituted maritally-related injury, or, to say the same thing, adultery.

In a case in which the wife *had* committed prostitution, since this act entailed her "leaving" her husband (even if only for a short time and solely for this unclean purpose) and *joining* herself to another man, she, in so doing, dis-united herself from her husband and united (or "married") herself to the second man. Since, in such a case, she thus

had already defiled herself and entered into an unholy second union, strictly speaking, she was no longer *married* to her husband but to a *paramour*. Consequently, if under such conditions, her husband should "put her away" (*cf* Matt.1:18,19 AV; John 8:41), he would not be committing *adultery* (i.e., *maritally*-related injustice or injury). Since the "marriage," actually, would no longer exist, the dismissal of the defiled woman would not entail *adultery*.

"THE TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH"

Thus we perceive the awful consequences, wherever "prostitution" is engaged in. The formal, civil marriage may remain, but the actual "marriage" not only has been violated, but has been nullified as well. This is so, even if, upon forgiveness, the original "married couple" should "come together" again. Civil law and formality is beside the point. Not man's formalities, but that which is so in the nature of things—and therefore, in the sight of God—is the stark reality.

The accounts in which the so-called "exception clause" is not *recorded* (Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18), neither deny nor preclude the words, "outside of a case of prostitution," which is *recorded* in Matthew 5:32, or, the similar phrase, "not for prostitution," which appears in Matthew 19:9. There is nothing that requires that these accounts, those of Mark and Luke, be appraised in a "without-exception" sense. Consequently, there is actually no contradiction between the various accounts.

Mark's and Luke's accounts should be understood in reference to the *ordinary circumstances* under which men dismissed their wives. Most commonly, wives were dismissed when, after the passage of time, their hardhearted husbands, having come to *dislike* them (*cf* Deut.24:3), simply no longer desired their presence. Matthew's account merely adds the apposite word of clarification, "not for

prostitution,” in order to make reference to those less frequent circumstances under which a wife was dismissed; namely, in case of the woman’s own infidelity.

These respective inspired accounts all record substantially the same events, in which, as a matter of history, the Lord spoke the precise words which those present actually heard. Whether or not any certain account has actually preserved the entirety of His exact words, is beside the point. Each account, correctly understood, is *true*. In the nature of the case, then, if Matthew’s record of these events is to be received as the work of divine inspiration, Mark’s and Luke’s accounts must be understood in a way that allows essential accord between all three of these slightly varied *accounts*.

Much of the confusion surrounding these records is due to the common supposition that the words “for prostitution” (Matt.19:9; rendered, “for fornication” in the Authorized Version) refer to a special circumstance under which *divorce* is no longer merely tolerated but is now *sanctioned* and *justified* (i.e., to a circumstance under which an “innocent party” may, with divine approval, obtain a divorce from a “guilty party”). This is simply factually incorrect. Christ’s words here—that is, the *primary* statement comprised in Matthew 19:9—refer to a circumstance under which *adultery will* occur, should dismissal be made. The only exception is in the case of “prostitution.” Since it is true that, if a man dismisses his wife *not* for prostitution, he commits adultery, it seems clear that, if a man, instead, dismisses his wife *for* prostitution, he does *not* commit *adultery*. But it hardly follows from this, that, where prostitution has occurred, divorce is thereby *sanctioned*. Similarly, the fact that it was right for *God* to “divorce” the ten-tribed kingdom (Jer.3:8), constitutes neither warranted precedent nor divine sanction for men to dismiss their wives.

J.R.C.

### AMONG THE PHILISTINES

**29** + The **Philistines** <sup>l</sup>convened <sup>l</sup>all their armed forces at<sup>d</sup> **Aphek**, +while **Israel** was encamping <sup>i</sup>by the **spring** <sup>w</sup> in **Jezeel**. <sup>2</sup>+As the **chieftains** of the **Philistines** were <sup>p</sup>advancing <sup>l</sup>with their **hundreds** and <sup>l</sup>thousands, + **David** and **his men** were <sup>p</sup>advancing in the <sup>af</sup>rear with **Achish**. <sup>3</sup>+ The **chiefs** of the **Philistines** <sup>ls</sup>a<sup>s</sup> asked, **What** about <sup>l</sup>these **Hebrews**? + **Achish** <sup>ls</sup>a<sup>s</sup> replied to the **chiefs** of the **Philistines**, **Is this not David**, the **servant** of **king Saul** of **Israel**, **who has** <sup>b</sup>been <sup>l</sup>with me **this year’s days** or **this** <sup>7</sup>second year~? + **I have not found anything** <sup>i</sup>against him from the **day he fell** away <sup>7</sup>to me<sup>o</sup> until <sup>l</sup>this **day**.

<sup>4</sup>+**But** the **chiefs** of the **Philistines** were <sup>w</sup>wrathful <sup>on</sup>against him; and the **chiefs** of the **Philistines** <sup>l</sup>said to him, <sup>c</sup>Make <sup>l</sup>the man return! + **Let him** <sup>l</sup>turn back to his <sup>n</sup>place where **you posted him**. + **He should not** march down with us <sup>i</sup>to the **battle** +that he may not become <sup>l</sup>an **adversary** to us in our <sup>7</sup>camp~. +**For** <sup>i</sup>with what could **this** man <sup>l</sup>approve himself to his lord, if not <sup>i</sup>with the **heads** of <sup>l</sup>these, <sup>o</sup>our men? <sup>5</sup>Is **this not David** <sup>l</sup>about whom they <sup>l</sup>responded <sup>i</sup>with dancing in **choruses**, <sup>l</sup>saying~,

**Saul has smitten** <sup>i</sup>his thousands,

+**Yet David** <sup>i</sup>his myriads!

<sup>6</sup>+**So Achish** <sup>l</sup>called <sup>l</sup>David and <sup>l</sup>said to him, **As Yahweh lives**, <sup>i</sup>you have been **upright**, and your **marching forth** and your **coming** <sup>l</sup>with me into the army **camp** has been **good** in my eyes, **for I have not found badness** in you from the **day you came** to me until <sup>l</sup>this **day**. +**Yet** in the eyes of the **chieftains** you are **not good**. <sup>7</sup>+**So now return and go** in peace +that you may not do anything **bad** in the eyes

of the chieftains of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup> + David <sup>lsr</sup> replied to Achish, 'But what have I done?' + What have you found 'against your servant from the day on which I came to be before you until 'this 'day, that I should not come +to -fight 'against the enemies' of my lord the king?

<sup>9</sup> + Then Achish 'answered and 'said to David, I know that you are good in my eyes, like a messenger of Elohim. <sup>9</sup>Only the chiefs of the Philistines, they have said, He shall not go up with us into the battle. <sup>10</sup> + So now, 'rise early in the morning, <sup>7</sup>you<sup>o</sup> and your lord's servants who came 'with you, <sup>7</sup>and you will go to the <sup>r</sup>place where I posted you. + You must not <sup>hpl</sup>keep any decadent word in your heart, for 'in my view you are good.<sup>o</sup> + So you will 'rise early in the morning; +when there is -light for you, +then go! <sup>11</sup> + So David 'rose 'early, he and his men, to go in the morning 'and return- to the land of the Philistines, +while the Philistines went up <sup>7</sup>to fight Israel~.

---

#### DAVID'S FALSE POSITION

1 Samuel 29 recalls the events mentioned in 28:1-4, giving more specific details regarding David's experiences at this time. Chapters 27 through 31, and the first two chapters of 2 Samuel should be read together to get a view of the events that closed out the rule of the house of Saul, and brought in the accession of David to the throne.

God had told David to stay in the land of Judah (1 Sam. 22:5), but in fear of Saul he went among the Philistines. Now this disobedience was about to bear its fruit. Accepting favors places one under obligation. David placed himself under obligation to Achish by accepting the city of Ziklag (1 Sam. 27:5-7). Circumstances were about to force him into fighting against his own countrymen as an ally to Achish. We think, like the lords of the Philistines, that David's loyalty in battle would have been with Israel. His

whole time of allegiance to Achish was feigned (1 Sam. 27:8-12). He was fighting Israel's enemies, while pretending before Achish to be fighting Israel and her allies.

"Withdraw the false way from me, and favor me with Your own law" (Psa. 119:29). "Behold, You delight in truth even in the hidden parts" (Psa. 51:6). A number of times David resorted to lying in order to deliver himself from awkward situations. He asked Jonathan to fabricate a story for Saul when he was absent from the new moon feast (20:5-6). He lied to Ahimelech the priest when he was fleeing from Saul (21:1-2). And David lied to Achish regarding his military campaigns (27:8-12). Later, when David reflected on his life and composed many of the psalms, he realized that there must always be a better way than resorting to falsehood. The same principle applies to us. "Wherefore, putting off the false, let each be speaking the truth with his associate, for we are members of one another" (Eph. 5:25).

For the third time the song of the women celebrating David's victory over Goliath is rehearsed. "Saul has smitten his thousands, yet David his myriads!" (18:7-8; 21:10-15; 29:5). Flattery seldom reaps any benefit. The first instance of the singing of the song incited Saul's jealousy against David, and initiated his persecution of David. The second mention was when David was hiding from Saul at Ziklag, and had to feign madness before Achish in order to escape with his life. The third instance, here in the 29th chapter, was the focal point of the Philistine lords for sending David back from the battle.

It is primarily David's shortcomings and unfaithfulness that come before us in this chapter. David left Israel because Saul's persecutions had exhausted his patience. But David's failing serves as a backdrop for the glorious faithfulness of God. God's faithfulness and deliverance of His chosen is dependent upon Him, not on their faithfulness.

J. Philip Scranton

## GOD AT WORK IN GENESIS TWO

THE ACTIVITIES OF GOD recorded in Genesis 1:1-2:3 are fundamental and vast in scope and significance. Elohim *creates* and *speaks* and *sees*; He *makes* and *separates* and *calls*; He *gives* and *blesses*. These basic actions inform us that God is the Primary Cause of all that occurs, that what God says goes and that the eventual result is very good. As a whole, Genesis chapter one reveals God's power and divinity (*cf* Rom.1:20), but it does not reveal His depths of wisdom and love. That will come through a long process which continues during the present eons leading up to the revelation of God in and through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ which involves finally the reconciliation of all through the blood of Christ's cross.

### YAHWEH ELOHIM ACTS

The early glimmers of this revelation of the depths of God begin immediately with His preparation for humanity on the earth, His forming and placing and instructing of the human and the building of the woman recorded in Genesis 2, starting with verse 4. At this point the Name *Yahweh* is added to the title *Elohim*, thus presenting the powerful and majestic Creator on a more personal level, within the events of human history. He is not only the supreme Subjector, towering above His creation, but He also is here with us in time, past, present and future.

Including one negative ("not make it rain") there are twenty-two action words in Genesis 2:4-25 with Yahweh Elohim as the subject. Altogether they present God as the

One Who is operating all the affairs of our world in accord with a plan, that is, "in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11). "Out of Him and *through* Him and for Him is all" (Rom.11:36). The record as given in the CONCORDANT VERSION is as follows:

Yahweh Elohim *made* earth and heavens.

Yahweh Elohim *had not made it rain* on the earth.

Yahweh Elohim *formed* the human out of soil from the ground.

He *blew* into his nostrils the breath of life.

Yahweh Elohim *planted* a garden in Eden.

There He *put* the human whom He *had formed*.

Yahweh Elohim *made sprout* from the ground every tree desirable to the sight and good for food.

Yahweh Elohim *took* the human and *settled* him in the garden.

Yahweh Elohim *instructed* the human, *saying . . .*

Yahweh Elohim *said*, It is not good for the human to be alone.

I *shall make* for him a helper as his complement.

Yahweh Elohim *had formed* from the ground every animal of the field.

He *brought* each one to the human to see what he would call it.

Yahweh Elohim *caused* a stupor *to fall* on the human.

He *took* one of his reproductive organs and *closed up* the flesh over its place.

Yahweh Elohim *built* the reproductive organ that He *had taken* from the human into a woman.

He *brought* her to the human.

### ADDED DETAILS

The acts of God in Genesis 2 are more specialized within a narrower scene than in the opening chapter, but what

they say about God is no less significant. Now Yahweh Elohim is seen *making* things and *saying* words in relation to humanity within a limited locality. First of all, in repeating the opening revelation of the Scriptures, Genesis 2:4 mentions the creation of earth first, and then verse 5 immediately narrows our view in focusing on shrub and herbage and field. The detail that plants need water is noted as God's responsibility. He had not yet caused it to rain, but the irrigation from mists is obviously due to His arrangements. This speaks of God's creative ability, as in chapter 1, but more than that it shows God's involvement in preparing the earth for the human.

Furthermore, in drawing attention to vegetation and irrigation as provisions of God, the passage prepares the reader for important revelations of God ahead concerning a fruitful tree in a well watered garden.

#### MAKING A LIVING SOUL

Then Yahweh Elohim *forms* the human out of soil and *blows* into his nostrils the breath of life so that the human becomes a living *soul* (2:7). A living soul is one who responds to the environment, who has emotions and sees and hears and feels.

Yahweh deliberately makes plants and supplies water for them; He is the Cause of these provisions. He also personally forms the human body, and He Himself blows into it the breath of life with the result that the human becomes a living soul. Again God is responsible for this.

#### PLANTING A GARDEN

Next we learn that Yahweh Elohim *plants* a garden and *sprouts* trees which are "desirable to the sight and good for food" (2:8). And particular reference is made to two specific trees that are included in His work of planting and sprouting (2:9).

God is responsible for making the human in such a way that he has desires, and God is responsible for making vegetation that is desirable to the human's sight as well as good for the human's food.

As though to emphasize this provision of an environment that would both meet his needs and appeal to the human, Genesis 2:10-14 tells of rivers and gold and precious stones in the area of Eden. Although not directly stated, these also must be associated with God's deliberate arrangements.

#### PLACING THE HUMAN

"Then Yahweh Elohim *took* the human and *settled* him in the garden of Eden to serve it and to keep it" (Gen.2:15). Here God takes the human He has formed and made to be a living soul, and He puts him in the garden He has planted with trees that are attractive to the soul. By *settling* the human in the garden, He makes him comfortable in a place that exactly fits his needs and wants. These are not simply miscellaneous actions of God which serve as representative indicators of His abilities. They are important and significant actions, each adding another point in the list of God's responsible involvement for the events of Genesis chapter 3.

The garden, the trees, the human, the soulish constitution of the human and the desirability of the fruit, all of these are products of the purposeful actions of God. They all have their necessary place in the drama about to unfold.

#### INSTRUCTING THE HUMAN

At this point the Scriptures introduce a different type of divine activity, one which is repeated often afterward. Yahweh Elohim *instructs* the human (Gen.2:16). The verb "instruct" is like the verb "say" which was first used in Genesis 1:3, but there is an important difference in what the

two actions tell us about God. When Elohim *said*, “Let light come to be!” light came to be. The word and its fulfillment involved God alone. But when God *instructed*, “But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat from it,” it did not come to be that the human did not eat. God instructed, but His instructions were not followed.

God’s act of instructing involved the human.

Many people would stop there; they seem satisfied with the inference that the human kept God’s act of instruction from being a successful operation.

But the Scriptures will not permit us to stop there. They will not permit us to think of God as being thwarted by the human, or even being surprised at his response. In fact the Word makes it clear that God Himself made it highly unlikely, in truth He made it impossible, that the human could keep His instructions. God Himself made the human as he was. God Himself made the tree as it was. God Himself settled the human in the garden where He had planted and sprouted the tree. And God Himself drew the attention of the human He had formed to the forbidden tree He had planted.

If God is as He is revealed to be in Genesis 1, then we must conclude that God did not intend that the human would keep His instruction. And if God is as He is revealed to be throughout all of Scripture, then we must conclude that God did not intend the disobedience and the judgment of that disobedience to be the final outcome of His act of instruction. The instructing of Genesis 2:17, as well as its similar and extensive development in the law given at Sinai, is a deliberate act of God as a step in a whole process of acts and experiences leading forward to the revelation of God’s wisdom and power and love through that most holy act of God in all the eons, the giving of His own Son in death for sinners.

#### THE OTHER TREE

Yahweh Elohim, of course, had planted another distinctive tree which He had made sprout. This was the tree of life. The eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil led to the blocking off of access to the tree of life. But God had planted it in accord with His own counsel and placed it in the midst of the garden, and in this there is great promise.

The fruit of this tree was beneficial, and so there was no need to draw special attention to it by way of instructions. From Genesis 3:23 we infer that this tree was for the sustaining of the life of living souls. It would not be a blessing to corrupting humanity today, but it appears again in the new earth as described in Revelation 22:2. This means that God will provide ongoing life for humanity in the future, but a humanity that is acquainted with good and evil. This will be a humanity that is able to appreciate the goodness of God because of its experience of evil.

#### A THIRD TREE

But how can the evil of sin, offense and dying be removed so that the ongoing life can truly be beneficial? This would occur in connection with a *third* “tree,” when, in Peter’s words, Christ would carry up our sins in His body “on to the pole [wood]” (1 Peter 2:24). For as Paul puts it, “Christ reclaims us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for our sakes, for it is written, Accursed is everyone hanging on a pole . . .” (Gal.3:13,14).

All of this was in God’s purpose, and the indication given in Genesis 2 of His responsibility for the events of Genesis 3 extends to the preparation He was making for the cross in His work of the planting and sprouting of trees. We know this after the fact, as believers who have accepted that “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). And yet even in Genesis 2 God's responsibility for making the human a living soul and making trees associated with sustained life and with knowledge of good and evil gives assurance that He has all under control and will deal successfully with the intervening evils.

#### MAKING A COMPLEMENT

Genesis 2 closes with a further act of God that can only serve to establish more decisively the point we have been making. "Yahweh Elohim *said*: It is not good for the human to be alone by himself. I shall *make* for him a helper as his complement" (Gen.2:18). With the making of the woman, God was simply adding to the arrangements He had planned. Altogether these preparations made it impossible for the human to keep God's instructions.

God first spoke of the real need of the human for a complement, and then He *caused a stupor* to fall on the human and *took* an organ out of the human and *built* it into the woman (2:21,22). All of this was excellent in itself, but it definitely contributed to the events of chapter 3. It all was in accord with God's intention as steps toward His ultimate goal of good.

Within the passage concerning the making of Eve we learn that Yahweh Elohim *brings* the animals He *had formed* to the human for naming. But unlike the instruction not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Yahweh Elohim had not set any roadblocks to this human assignment. And it is carried out. Genesis 2:19-20 foreshadows the happy conditions and good effects of God's words on human actions when God saves and justifies and reconciles His chosen ones, and ultimately all of humanity, and God becomes All in all.

#### KEEPING GOD IN VIEW

Genesis 2 tells us with clarity and power that we need to keep God in view through all the records of human failure and the serious consequences of sin which follow in the rest of God's Word. Before and above and beyond human activity is God's activity. This does not mean that human disobedience does not lead to suffering and loss. It surely does, and we cannot and should not cover it over. But it does mean that God's activity accords fully with God, authoritative and wise, purposeful and determinative, and good.

God had not yet spoken the evangel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not learn from Genesis 2 of that great work of God to come, when He would *send* His own Son for the condemnation of sin (Rom.8:3). God was about to subject creation to vanity and the slavery of corruption, but He was doing so "in expectation" that it will ultimately be freed from this corruption and delivered into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom.8:20,21). Yet even as early as Genesis 3 there are intimations of this future deliverance (*cf* Gen.3:15,16). And there is assurance in the actions of God recorded in Genesis 2, for they are actions *of God Himself*, not actions of some malignant force beyond Yahweh Elohim, taking Him by surprise and placing Him in a bind. They are orderly and intentional and accord with Deity.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOD

God's direct involvement in laying the groundwork for the disobedience and resultant curses of Genesis 3 may startle us at first. But it is plainly set forth. And in recognition of the fact that sin does exist, there is no better prospect (in fact no other prospect at all) for its removal than that all is in the hands of God. God is not experimenting in Genesis 2. He is not acting in ignorance or arbitrarily.

There is no dualism, as though the God of Genesis 2 is a different God from the God of Genesis 1.

The Book of Beginnings, Genesis, is our primer. The first lesson concerns God. All is out of Him. He is successful in what He seeks to do. And it is for good. The second lesson concerns God also. But it is far more puzzling, and consequently far more difficult for us to accept because we do not yet see the good result. Nevertheless, even in chapter 2, God does not cease to operate, and He is ultimately responsible for all that occurs. This truth of divine responsibility is of the greatest value to us as we live in this present wicked eon and as we hear and believe the evangel concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Genesis 2 is like Genesis 1 in that God alone is acting. But in this second chapter God's actions do not lead directly to an end that is very good; rather His actions prepare the way for the entrance of sin and death and the long centuries of toil and sorrow, selfishness and greed, anger and hate that have characterized human history. To put it bluntly, God is making certain that all will be locked up together in stubbornness (Rom.11:32).

From Genesis 3 forward we will meet up with human corruption and failure along with divine instruction and judgment. But there is also the good word of God which speaks of His faithfulness to the revelations of Himself given in Genesis 1. There will be the Seed of the woman. There will be the Sin Offering. Because it is the God Who is revealed in Genesis 1 Who is responsible for the events of Genesis 2 which lead inevitably to the events of Genesis 3, we are assured that ultimately the highest of good will be achieved, that good which could not have otherwise been gained.

The God Who prepared the way for human failure has provided the way of deliverance through the death of His Son.

D.H.H.